# Silk Screening

## Janice Rahn Unit Rationale

**Social Context**: This is a very motivational unit because it appeals to the everyday lives of the students. It is playful, irreverent, and relevant. It allows them to play with images and materials from their day-to-day lives.

Issues of identity are addressed in questioning what images they wear on their clothes and look at everyday in posters. How are their clothes like walking billboards for companies who work in third world countries? Do they question the right to own public space? For example, we are confronted daily with ubiquitous posters that advertise products yet public art has to go through a very lengthy juried process. Look at graffiti stencil art (Swoon and Banksy) who treat stencil art like posters, putting them up all over the city. This is an example of integration of art and social studies. – issues of democracy, globalization, market economies…

**Art curriculum**: The concept of positive/negative space is very important to learn at any grade level to understand compositional design concepts. It is reinforced in different ways from elementary to high school. It is important to make art public. By wearing t- shirts you can bring art into the school in a playful highly visible way. You could have all the classes print t-shirts on the theme of identity and logos for example, and have all the students wear their t-shirts on the same day. This is an example of how art can add to the sense of community in the school in the same way sports does with teams and team uniforms. Art on the other hand is promoting students to explore issues such as personal identity and marketing. Often the art room is used as a factory to create posters and t- shirts with readymade logos. I always resisted this becoming part of my program though I allowed students in the art club to use art materials to do things like this for the school.

I made it clear that such an entrepreneurial enterprise was different in intent then the art program. It was to contribute to the school community and students learned important skills, but our purpose in art education was not to be a servant to the needs of sports and other programs who needed promotional images. Warhol was very commercial, playing with the notion that art was separate from crass commercialization. However, he was in control of production and his approach was ironic.

Unit Objectives:

**Conceptual**: Sudents will learn to teach concepts by framing studio activities on a study of art history.

Students will compare pop art to graffiti art. For example: high/low culture, consumer culture, mechanical reproduction, and issues of public space.

Students will question pop and graffiti artist’s material methods through the work of Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenburg, Banksy, and Swoon.

Students will learn the relationship of positive and negative space.

Students will critique logo designs and create their own original design that references their personal identity.

## Psychomotor:

Students will draw and cut out a stencil.

**Affective:** Students will print on t-shirt as a way to personalize their images.

## Rationale

Introduce the history of silkscreening in pop art: Andy Warhol, Rauschenburg,

What is pop art? Pop art was playing with concepts of high/low art. It was reacting to the ideology of abstract expressionism that raised art to a lofty level, like a religion that only a few educated few could understand. You needed critics like Greenberg to interpret. You needed museums to house these icons of high culture. Pop art looked to the everyday images and materials. Dada was the beginning of pop art – Duchamp

Contemporary stencil artists who use stencil and reproduction of images in public space: Swoon, Banksy. Have students google urban expression and street art to find more stencil artists.

**Lesson One**

**Unit Introduction - Art History**: **Warhol**: Who is this person? (Marilyn) Why is this image considered an icon of the 60’s. Why did Warhol reproduce it over and over in different colours? How does this represent media in the 60’s? What new phenomenon was changing the lives of every home, (tv)? How has media changed since then? How is this approach different from Abstract art that was popular in museums and art academies at that time? Where did these artists get their ideas and choice of images? This was the sixties when media was being celebrated. Now we live in a time where such images often control our identity. Artists like Banksy remain anonymous because he is critiquing the idea of celebrity. He is more politically motivated.

Introduce **Banksy** slides and question his political motivation and sense of humor. He is a good example of the history of social critique in art.

lives. Art in the 20th century is often about critiquing media rather than celebrating it. (Look at book contemporary art and multiculturalism). Do you want to buy into the reality of advertising promoted through their logos on posters and clothing, or do you want to create your own symbols? Before critiquing logos, it is helpful to study what makes an effective logo design. Look at logos and advertising images. Analyze what makes a good design. Look at **Swoon** stencils.

# Procedure:

On newsprint, doodle thumbnail sketches using your image bank of personal images for ideas. The goal is to create a symbol that represents you. Be prepared to talk about what this symbol means to you. It can be a logo created from letters or a character.

This first class is to generate many sketches working uncritically and fluidly, like automatic writing, generating a resource to edit and rework into their own logos. Continue to draw different possibilities. Choose the one they like best to make into a silk screen. Silkscreening takes time to cut the stencil and to print. Therefore, this encourages students to work out their ideas in drawings first.

Once they decide on a drawing, they make it into a stencil drawing. They look at it in terms of positive and negative space. What areas do they want to print black and what areas will stay white. Paper blocks the ink. Wherever they want white lines or details, they need paper blocking the ink.

## Lesson Two

Wearable Art

Silkscreen a personal logo on a t-shirt.

Choose an image that has become a personal symbol for you.

Now that you know how to create a stencil, take your time to cut a good stencil that has detail and interesting use of positive and negative space.

## Lesson three - Poster

Create stencil art based on the work of Banksy. Print and put in a public space as a poster.

# Followup Printmaking Unit.

## Art history Part Two – Non-Western Printmaking traditions: Inuit and Japanese prints

Other cultures have used multiples as a way to make money. Printmaking is an industry in the Canadian North among the Inuit. John Housten who started the print industry in the Arctic was introduced to printmaking when he visited print shops in Japan. It is important to show how art functions in different cultures. Art production allowed the Inuit to maintain their autonomy like they had as hunters. Now they are dependent on southern goods where they money to purchase gas to hunt or southern foods. Art production allows them to create images of their own culture rather then consume southern images. It promotes their traditional way of life. These images often become controlled by the assumptions and desires of tourism. The co-ops often inhibit change and creativity by encouraging the Inuit to reproduce stereotypical images. If you had to represent your own youth culture, what would you reproduce? Like the co-ops, advertising can try to create your image for you. How can you take control of your own identity through self- representation?

Students will learn to create multiples by silkscreening their image in a series. They can print it on different surfaces: paper, canvas, a board, masonite, a piece of cotton cloth which could become sewed or collaged into another work. How does it change the image to create multiples? How does this reflect commercial art? What’s different about the

way artists play with multiples? How can the silkscreened images become a starting

point for a mixed media piece? (could silkscreen on canvas to combine the repeated silkscreened image with other methods and materials, such as transfers, painting, collage…)