

## MAPPING IDENTITY LESSON PLAN

SUBJECT: VISUAL ARTS & ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADES 9-12

### INTRODUCTION >

**Mapping** is a method for connecting tangible criteria, including people, cities, and landscapes, with intangible social networks, interpersonal relations, and conceptual spaces. For contemporary artists, more important than its visual qualities, mapping is concerned with a politics of position, an examination of how the subject is spatially located within an environment. Mapping questions the social and cultural relations of people and **place**. Artists working in multiple media and alternative contexts participate in a form of social mapping, charting not just geographic coordinates but socioeconomic realities, historical data, and personal experience.

Built and natural places, as well as social, political, and economic environments, play an important role in the symbolic and physical dimension of identification. Individuals define themselves through their responses to these facets of society and their everyday experiences. How people navigate their surroundings can shape their **identity** and create psychological associations with places. Individuals incorporate places into the larger concept of self which range from intangible conceptions to specific physical settings, both large scale (nation, city, etc.) and small scale (homes, workplaces, etc.).

Iana Quesnell (American, 1969) is an artist who explores “the underlying codes that dictate our daily interaction with our surroundings,” contending with personal, social, cultural, political, economical, and technological ideologies. Quesnell maps her movements in ***Triptych: Migration Path*** as she crosses the U.S.-Mexico **border**. This large pencil and graphite drawing charts the artist’s path from her former art studio at the University of California San Diego to her home in Tijuana. These two territories are not only linked geographically but are intertwined politically, socially, and economically. Her work has the quality of multi-dimensional maps that follow her movements through a specific territory, exploring spatial connections, and narrowing on areas where she settles for periods of time. Her detailed drawings are narrative, focusing on the places where she lives and works. “Migration Path is part of the ongoing autobiography that forms the underlying structure or starting point for all of my drawings”, Quesnell explained. Regarding this work, Quesnell states, “**Boundaries** disappear, personal as well as political. Territories shrink to a perceivable whole allowing the beholder to imagine new ways of occupying space, not for the purpose of possession rather as a means of rethinking the social constructs bound to these territories.”



Iana Quesnell, *Triptych: Migration Path*, 2007, graphite on paper. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Museum purchase, Louise R. and Robert S. Harper Fund. © 2007 Iana Quesnell

## OBJECTIVES >

Students will be able to:

- Identify ways that artists convey identity without using the human form.
- Identify places that are central to their identity.
- Identify how their surroundings are socially, politically, economically, and culturally arranged.
- Use maps as a springboard for art making.
- Work collaboratively to draw a map of significant places in their city or neighborhood that provides the viewer with insight into their identity.

## VOCABULARY >

- **Map:** a representation of the whole or a part of an area (noun); to make a survey of for or as if for the purpose of making a map (verb).
- **Boundary:** a line that marks the limits of an area; a dividing line; a limit of a subject or sphere of activity.
- **Border:** the part or edge of a surface or area that forms its outer boundary; the line that separates one country, state, etc., from another; the district or region that lies along the boundary line of another (noun); to form a border or boundary to or around; to lie on the border of; adjoin (verb).
- **Place:** particular portion of space with definite or indefinite boundaries; a geographical space that has acquired meaning as a result of a person's interaction with the space.
- **Identity:** the combined set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known.
- **Migration:** the movement of persons from one region or country to another.
- **Triptych:** a set of three panels side by side, bearing pictures, carvings, or the like.

## PRE-PROJECT CLASS DISCUSSION >

Begin by showing Lana Quesnell's *Triptych: Migration Path* as a whole and the panel details (on Page 7, 8, 9). Allow students to carefully and quietly observe before beginning the conversation. Use the following questions to guide the discussion. Visual inquiry questions should provide you with a method to discover the visual qualities of the artwork. Interpretative questions allow you to use factual information to understand the artwork and how it relates to the theme of identity.

### 1. Visual Inquiry Questions: Exploring What You See (15 minutes)

- Begin with a specific question about the students' first impressions of the work. For example, "What is the first

thing you notice about this work?"; "What associations come to mind?"; "What do you see that makes you say that?"; "If you were going to describe the work to someone who had never seen it, what adjectives would you use? Why?"; "What do you notice about the organization of this image?"; "What impact does it have? Why?"

- Follow with formal qualities of the work such as composition, materials, scale, color, etc.: "What images, materials, symbols, or texts do you recognize?"
- Integrate factual information about process, composition, and materials with student responses. Follow up by asking "How do the work's materials or form suggest what the work might be about?"; "Why do you think the artist chose to use these images/materials/symbols/texts?"

### 2. Interpretive Inquiry Questions: Exploring Meaning (15 minutes)

- Provide factual information about the work including title, date, artist, and background information.
- Tell students that this drawing conveys a sense of identity through non-figurative means by representing a map of the artist's daily movements between significant places in her life during one period of time. Communicate to students that a person's surroundings and interacts with places can provide insight into their identity and what they find important.
- Allow students to consider and integrate the information you have shared: "How does this work relate to that concept?"
- Guide students to form their own interpretations and to support these interpretations with visual evidence: "What do you see that makes you say that?"; "How would you describe aspects of the artist's identity based on what you see?"; "What details support your interpretation?"; "What identifies the artist based on the places she includes in her drawing?"; "How are these places clues to how the artist identifies herself?"; "What can we learn about the artist from looking at this drawing?"; "How does the artist tell you about these places?"; "What kind of social, political, and/or cultural attributes would you include in a drawing of places that relates to you?"; "What can you learn about a person from a map of the daily paths they take and the places that they visit?"
- Share information on the artist's overall practice. Encourage students to make connections to the larger world and to other social contexts, and to connect ideas to the overall theme of the exhibition.

## MATERIALS >

- 1 sheet of 14" x 17" tracing paper for each student
- Studio drawing pencils of varying hardness
- Pencil erasers
- Colored pencils
- Fine point permanent black markers
- Rulers
- Printed copies of maps for each student (use local transit map, map on city's website, or maps.google.com to find desired territory and zoom length) 14" x 17"

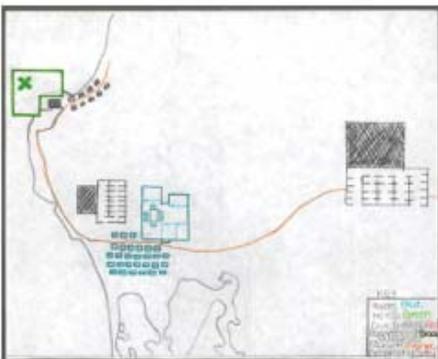
## PROJECT PROCEDURE >

### 1. Brainstorming (15 minutes)

- First have students consider their perceptions of the artwork including materials, theme, artist's background, etc.
- Ask students to brainstorm a list of places that they might include on their own "migration path." These places may include significant physical and geographical locations that they migrate to during their day to day movements and activities. They can include places in the neighborhood or city that they may not encounter everyday but that have impacted their lives perhaps through a moving experience or physical setting.
- Have students consider why these places are significant, ways in which they identify with the place, and what these places convey about their identity/who they are.
- Have students consider how the places function. Have students consider the places' cultural, social, political, and/or economic relations in the community.

### 2. Project (45 minutes)

- Divide students into small groups of 4 or 5 students with their materials.
- Each student will trace the map of the territory that the educator has chosen onto their tracing paper.



Project Example (one mapped layer)

- Instruct students to collaboratively create a key for their maps so that visible connections can be made later in the project. For example, the key could use colors to differentiate types of places. Blue could be used to draw students' houses. Red could be used to draw the school. Yellow could be used to draw civic buildings such as the public library. The key could also use different types of drawing materials (pens, pencils, markers, etc.).
- Instruct students to individually plot the places that they brainstormed onto their traced maps to create their own "migration path."
- Have students draw their maps based on how they imagine/visualize their surroundings. Students may choose to incorporate ideal places which may not currently exist but that they feel would benefit them or the community.
- Encourage students to draw more detailed areas of the significant places as Quesnell does.
- Once students are done drawing, have each group layer their maps to see visual connections and differences (places that are shared, difference in routes, etc.).
- Have the groups of students prepare to present their drawings to the class in a short presentation describing what they included on their maps and how the layers relate to or differentiate from each other. Have students describe how their work relates to the concepts discussed during the pre-project class discussion. Students may reference the Interpretive Questions previously posed when describing their own work such as "How would you describe aspects of the artist's identity based on what you see?"; "What details support your interpretation?"; "What identifies the artist based on the places included in the drawing?"; "What can we learn about the artist from looking at this drawing?"; "How does the artist tell you about these places?"; "What kind of social, political, and/or cultural attributes would you include in a drawing of places that relate to you?"; "What can you learn about a person from a map of the daily paths they take and the places that they visit?"

## EXTENSION >

Display an image of Maya Lin's artwork *Atlas Landscape: Rand McNally The New International Atlas* (2006) to show a second example of how artists use mapping as an art form and discuss what ideas and themes she represents (on Page 10). Allow students to respond to Lin's work by analyzing how it is connected to Quesnell's work either visually or thematically.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY >

(Could be used in a History-Social Science or English-Language class) Have students create a guidebook to narrate their paths. Have students write why they chose to incorporate the places on their maps. Have students discuss how they personally identify with these places on their map. Have students discuss how the places on their map relate to the identity of the city and/or neighborhood and the population living there. How have these places been shaped by the identity of different cultures and/or social groups in the city and/or neighborhood? What are the social, political, economic, and cultural associations of these places? This guidebook may include research that students have done on an aspect of their map (history of a street name, area of the city, or a building/business, etc.). Students may incorporate photographs of these places into their guidebook to compliment their written narrative. Have students present their guidebook to the class in a short presentation.

## PROJECT ADAPTATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS:

Elementary School (3rd to 5th Grade):

### 1. Brainstorming (15 minutes)

- Ask students to brainstorm a list of places that they might include on their own “migration path.” These places may include significant physical and geographical locations that they migrate to during their day to day movements and activities or places in the community that have impacted their lives perhaps through a moving experience or physical setting.
- Have students consider why these places are significant and what these places convey about their identity/who they are.
- Tally the types of places that are relevant to students and present them to the class so they can make connections between the shared places.

### 2. Project (45 minutes)

- Have students gather their project materials and work independently to create a “migration path” of places that they go each day. Elementary school student may choose to draw a path from home to school as home is the environment of primary importance, followed by neighborhood and school (according to place-identity theory).
- Have students draw their maps based on how they imagine/visualize their surroundings.

- Encourage students to draw more detailed areas of the significant places as Quesnell does using different types of lines, shapes, etc.
- Have students prepare to discuss their drawings and why the places they chose to include are important to them, or what they tell the viewer about their identity/who they are.

Middle School:

### 1. Brainstorming (15 minutes)

- Ask students to brainstorm a list of places that they might include on their own “migration path.” These places may include significant physical and geographical locations that they migrate to during their day to day movements and activities. They can include places in the community that they may not encounter everyday but that have impacted their lives perhaps through a moving experience or physical setting.
- Have students consider why these places are significant, ways in which the places represent them, and what these places convey about their identity/who they are.
- Instruct students to take photographs of their significant places to contribute to Stage Two: Project.

### 2. Project (45 minutes)

- Create a collaborate class Google Maps– My Places ([maps.google.com/maps/myplaces](https://maps.google.com/maps/myplaces)).
- Scan and/or import the students’ photographs to create a map of the community’s significant places.
- Have students prepare to present their photographs on the map and describe why they chose to include these places. Have students explain how these places represent them. Have students explain how these are significant places and how they function within the community.
- Students may reference the interpretive questions previously posed when describing the map, such as “How would you describe aspects of the artist’s identity based on what you see?”; “What details support your interpretation?”; “What identifies the artist based on the places included in the map of photographs?”; “What can we learn about the artist from looking at this map of photographs?”; “How does the artist tell you about these places?”; “What can you learn about a person from a map of photographs plotting places along their daily paths?”

## TEACHING TIPS >

We hope this lesson plan has inspired you to explore concepts of identity, mapping, and community. To learn more about the artists, artworks, and themes included in this lesson, please use the links to resources provided below.

## CALIFORNIA VISUAL ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS >

- Artistic Perception 1.0
- Creative Expression 2.0
- Historical and Cultural Content 3.0
- Aesthetic Valuing 4.0

## CALIFORNIA ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS

- Speaking and Listening 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0
- Writing Standards 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, 6.0, 7.0 (Alternate Activity)
- Language Standards 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 (Alternate Activity)

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY >

1. Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Triptych: Migration Path, <http://www.mcasd.org/artworks/triptych-migration-path>  
This is a direct link to the artwork on MCASD's website.
2. Pincus, Robert L., "The student steps out", San Diego Union-Tribute. October 18, 2007. [http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20071018/news\\_lz1w18pincus.html](http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20071018/news_lz1w18pincus.html)
3. Pincus, Robert L., "Behind the scenes", San Diego Union-Tribute. December 1, 2006. [http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20061201/news\\_1c01prize.html](http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20061201/news_1c01prize.html)  
These articles discuss Iana Quesnell's previous exhibitions, artwork, and practice.
4. Kelly, Patricia. "Mapping as Practice, or Finding the Subject in American Art circa 1970," *Behold America!* catalogue. [NEED PROPER CITATION]  
This catalogue essay examines mapping as a contemporary art form, artists who use mapping in their practice, and ideas/themes addressed in such artwork.
5. Hauge, Ashild Lappegard. "Identity and Place: A Critical comparison of three Identity Theories," *Architectural Science Review*, March 1, 2007.
6. Livingstone, D. "Space, Place, Identity", *Geographical Approaches*. 1992. <http://socgeo.ruhosting.nl/html/files/geoapp/Werkstukken/SpacePlaceIdentity.pdf>  
These articles address prevailing identity theories in relation to place and space. They discuss how identity is shaped by one's surroundings.
7. Artwork of Elizabeth Chaney, <http://www.mcasd.org/programs/teen-art-council-presents-night-forks-film>  
This is a direct link to MCASD's webpage posting of Elizabeth Chaney's teen program exploring the movement of people across countries and continents and meditates on unfinished journeys, all issues that relate to Quesnell's treatment of her movement over the United States-Mexico Border.
8. "Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego," *artdaily.org*. April 6, 2008. [http://www.artdaily.com/index.asp?int\\_sec=2&int\\_new=23788](http://www.artdaily.com/index.asp?int_sec=2&int_new=23788)  
This article discusses Maya Lin's artwork exhibited at MCASD.
9. The Center for Urban Pedagogy. <http://welcometocup.org/>

CUP is an organization that uses art to improve civic engagement. CUP encourages the public to participate in shaping their community through the understanding of urban policy and planning issues.

Mapping Identity Lesson Plan was developed by MCASD Education staff and summer intern, Alison Hendrickson.

Education Programs at MCASD are supported by The James Irvine Foundation, Qualcomm Foundation, the County of San Diego Community Enhancement Fund, the Samuel I. & John Henry Fox Foundation, the Price Family Charitable Fund, and contributions to MCASD's Museum Fund. Institutional support of MCASD is provided, in part, by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture.

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Iana Quesnell, *Triptych: Migration Path*, 2007, graphite on paper; Collection Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Museum purchase, Louise R. and Robert S. Harper Fund. © 2007 Iana Quesnell



Left Panel



Center Panel



Right Panel



Maya Lin, *Atlas Landscape: Rand McNally The New International Atlas, 1981, 2008*, recycled atlas. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Museum purchase. © Maya Lin 2006. Photo by Pablo Mason.