

The Life and Work of Dox Thrash: An Expression of Identity

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Abstract

Dox Thrash was an African American printmaker who lived and worked in Philadelphia from 1929 until his death in 1965. In this curriculum unit, middle school students in seventh and eighth grade will learn about the life and work of this prolific artist. They will learn about Dox Thrash by studying examples of his artwork and researching the social, political and cultural climate in America during his lifetime. Students will learn who discovered the effects of carborundum on a metal plate, how the discovery led to the invention of the carborundum printing method, and what benefit this innovative method brought to the field of printmaking. During the unit study, students will examine a collection of prints by Dox Thrash and other WPA artists, learn how to differentiate between printmaking techniques, and identify the steps in the printmaking process. Through a process of looking at and considering the art works, students will be learn how historical events connect to one another and discover ways to interpret and reflect upon the influences of art on personal thought and action.

Embedded within the curriculum unit, is the aim that students will contemplate how art connects to their lives and how daily events overlap one another to create a collage of experiences. By practicing how to look, reflect and respond to art based on personal perceptions, students will learn to trust their own powers of observation which in turn will give them confidence to engage in creative problem solving. A studio art project will serve to illustrate the printmaking process by involving students in skill building activities. They will learn through practice how to apply a variety of printmaking techniques to achieve desired effects. Students will then apply that knowledge and experience to create art print images based on their own unique perspective and vision.