APPROPRIATION Students recycled catalog images to create Surrealist characters who comment on consumer culture. *Spoiled Brat* by high school student Tiffani McDuffy created at Spiral Workshop 2001. See Olivia Gude, e-Portfolio for variations of the Surrealist Character Collage project.

Appropriation

One of the most striking things about many of the curriculum projects was the routine use of appropriated materials. Whether created in the spirit of Romare Bearden's histories of the African-American experience composed of fragments of found photos (Bearden and Henderson, 1993) or of Kenny Scharf's Junkie in which painted purple vines entwine on a yellow field of retro insecticide ads (Tony Schafrazi Gallery, 1998), the student art work often used print materials as the stuff out of which their art was composed. For the students, recycling imagery felt comfortable and commonplace. If one lives in a forest, wood will likely become one's medium for creative play. If one grows up in a world filled with cheap, disposable images, these easily become the stuff out of which one makes one's own creative expression.

Juxtaposition

Robert Rauschenberg revolutionized expressive painting when he substituted the seemingly random <u>juxtaposition</u> of found images for the personally generated abstract mark (Forge, 1970). The modernist principle of *contrast* is not adequate to describe the energy generated by bringing together radically disparate elements—an artistic strategy utilized since Dada photomontage and Surrealist objects such as Meret Oppenheim's fur-covered teacup (Burckhardt and Curiger, 1996). The term <u>juxtaposition</u> is useful in helping students to discuss the familiar shocks of contemporary life in which images and objects from various realms and sensibilities come together in intentional clashes or in random happenings.

Recontextualization

Often the meaning of the artwork is generated by positioning a familiar image in relationship to pictures, symbols, or texts with which it is not usually associated. Hannah Hoch, one of the early Dada proponents of the new medium of photomontage created many provocative works by recombining found imagery.
In Die Braut of 1927, winged objects swirl around the central image of a traditional bride and groom. The woman's head is replaced by the oversized image of a young child's face (Makela & Boswell, 1996). This simple visual move changes any potential romantic fantasy reading of the bridal couple, shifting focus to society's degrading legal, religious, and cultural conventions regarding the status of women.

   Though deconstruction has a more specific meaning in the contemporary theory of Jacques Derrida who invented the term (Glusberg, 1991), in everyday art world parlancerecontextualization and deconstruction can often function as synonyms. The magazineAdbusters has many examples of deconstructing contemporary advertisements by pairing them with fragments of other images and texts that contextualize the consumer fantasies within environmental and global justice discourses.[i]

[i] Back issues of *Adbuster* are available at bulk rates for educators. Their many theme-based issues are a good start for creating curriculum units. The website is also a fine resource for visual culture curriculum ideas: www.adbusters.org

Layering

As images become cheap and plentiful, they are no longer treated as precious and placed carefully side by side, but instead are often literally piled on top of each other. Layered imagery evoking the complexity of the unconscious mind is a familiar strategy of Surrealist art and of early experimental approaches to photography. In postmodern works by artists such as David Salle, Sigmar Polke, or Adrian Piper, the strategy evokes the layered complexity of contemporary cultural life (Fox, 1987; Grosenick, 2001). Multiple layers of varying transparency will increasingly be a readily available strategy to students because it is a common feature of most digital imaging programs such as Adobe Photoshop (Freeman, 2001).

Interaction of Text & Image

 In a 1990 montage, artist Barbara Kruger paired a photograph of a woman, peering through a magnifying glass, which greatly enlarges our view of one of her eyes, with the text "It's a small world but not if you have to clean it" (Emerson, 1999). The text does not describe the work, nor does the image illustrate the text, but the interplay between the two elements generates rich, (and ironic), associations about gender, social possibilities, and cleanliness. Students making and valuing art in the 21st century must to be taught not to demand the literal matching of verbal and visual signifiers, but rather to explore disjuncture between the two modes as a source of meaning and pleasure.
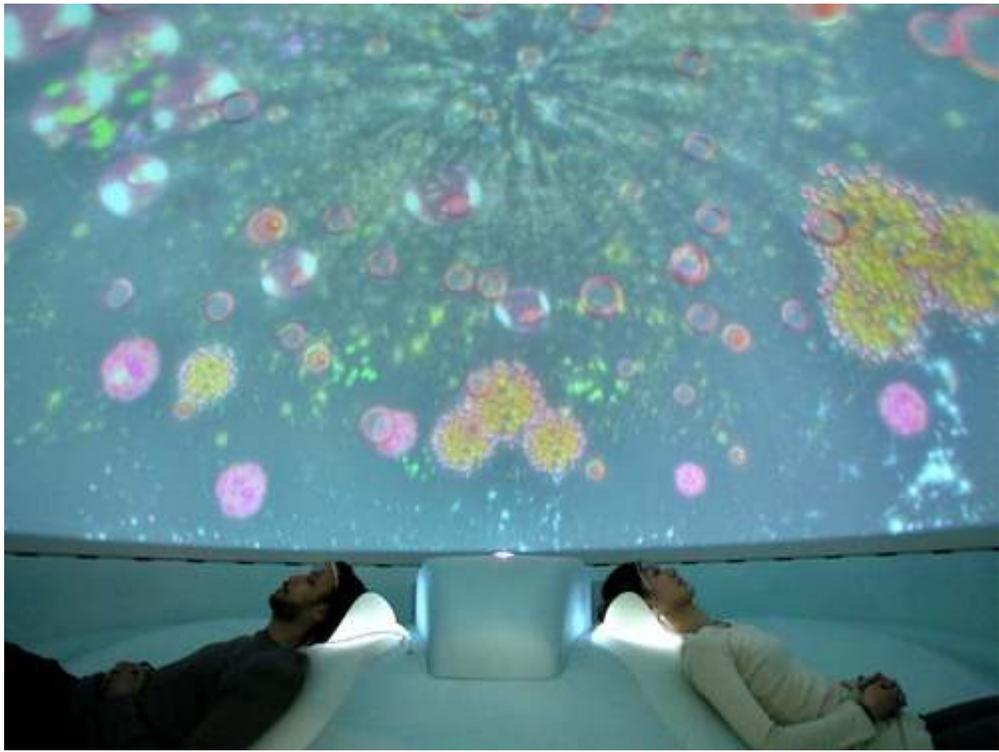
Hybridity

Today artists see the continuity of their bodies of work as the themes they explore, rather than the particular media they use. Many artists routinely incorporate various media into their pieces--whatever is required to fully investigate the subject. New media such as large-scale projections of video, sound pieces, digital photography, and computer animation are all routinely used by contemporary artists to create sculptural installations—indeed a multi-media approach to artmaking is now encountered in contemporary museums and galleries more frequently than traditional sculpted or painted objects.

The concept of hybridity also describes the cultural blending evident in many artists' productions. The New York and Tokyo-based Mariko Mori draws on costuming, make up, popular culture, and traditional Buddhist beliefs to create increasingly complex photographic and video installations. Her work explores boundaries between spirituality and cyberculture, between the human and the re-creation of the human through technology (Fineberg, 2000).
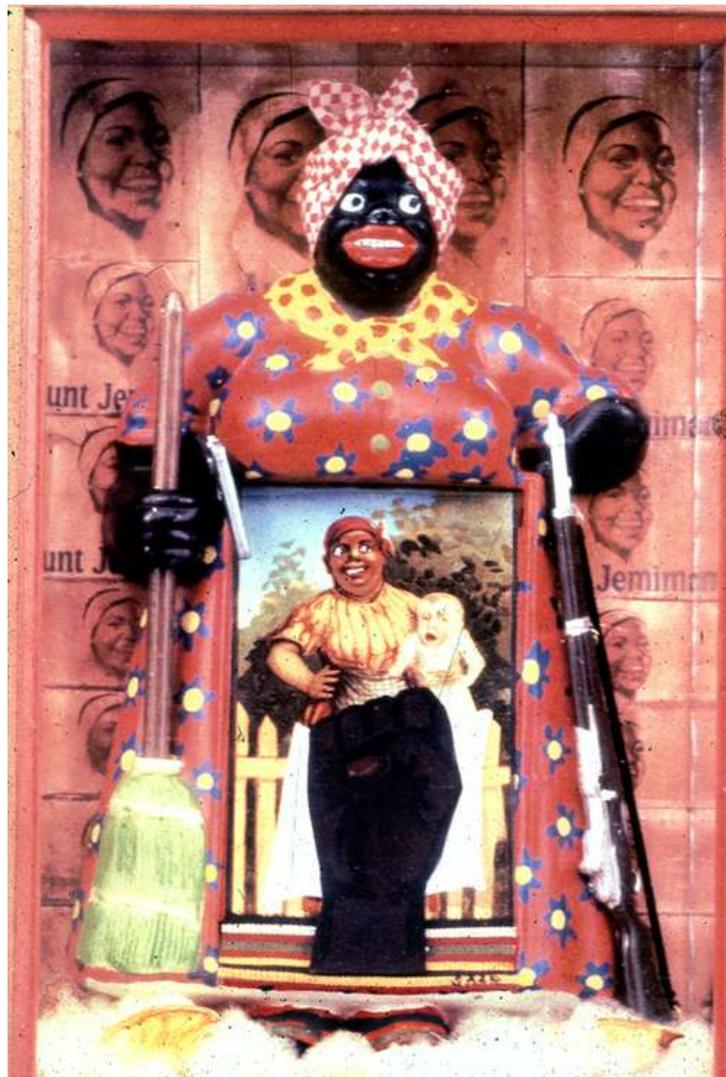
Gazing

In Betye Saar's The Liberation of Aunt Jemima, the traditional meaning of the saccharine image is challenged when it is paired with an even more stereotypical depiction of a wide-eyed, red lipped African-American woman (holding a broom in one hand and a rifle in the other) and with a Black Power clenched fist (Broude and Garrard, 1994). By shifting the context within which a familiar advertising image is seen, students spontaneously engage in an important activity of visual culture education—questioning who creates and controls imagery and how this imagery affects our understandings of reality.

The term gaze is frequently used in contemporary discourses to recognize that when talking about the act of looking it is important to consider who is doing the looking and who is being looked at (Olin, 1996). Gazing, associated with issues of knowledge and pleasure is also a form of power—controlling perceptions of what is "real" and "natural." Much critical theory in art history and film studies makes use of the term to investigate the ways in which our notions of "others" are constructed through proprietary acts of looking and representing. Consider, for example, the standard art historical discussion of Gaughin's depiction of Tahitian women—his Orientalist theories and projections of spirituality, timelessness, and sensuousness determine the perception of these women (Janson, 1968).
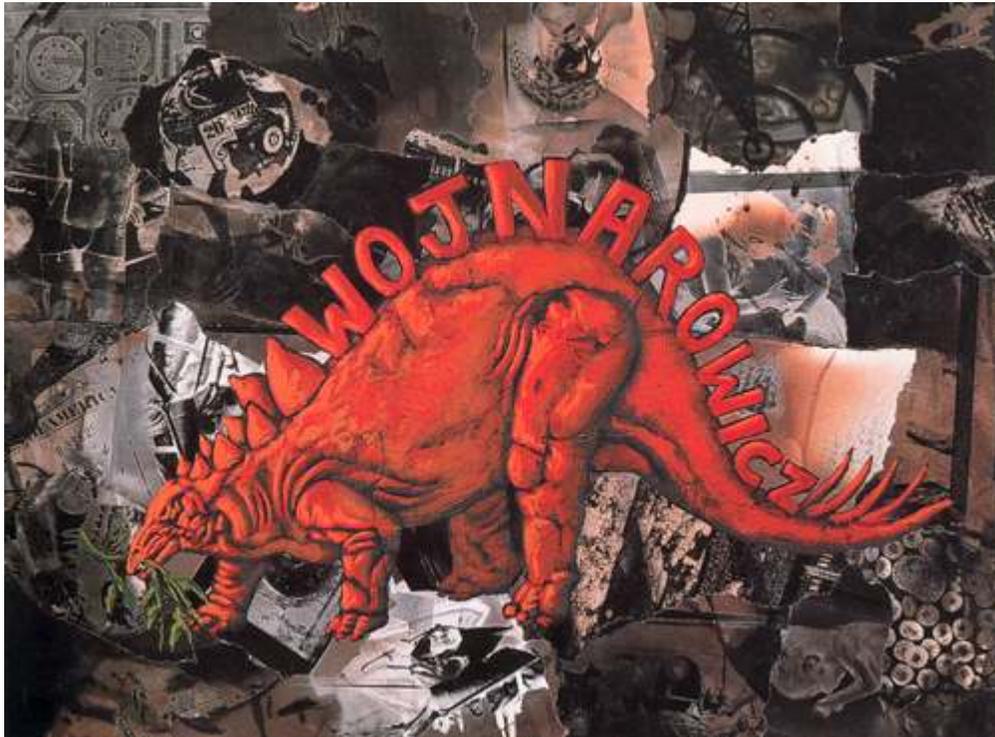
Representin'

U.S. urban street slang for proclaiming one's identity and affiliations, <u>Representin'</u>, describes the strategy of locating one's artistic voice within one's personal history and culture of origin. David Wojnarowicz grounded his art in his experiences as a gay young man in New York as the AIDS crisis enveloped the world (Scholder, 1999). London-based Tracey Emin makes funky mixed media paintings and objects that investigate all aspects of her biography—including crummy jobs, alcohol abuse, and sexuality (Reimschneider and Grosenick, 1999). Shirin Neshat, an Iranian born woman, creates video installations and photo text pieces that explore the psychological conditions of life in male-dominated traditional Islamic society (Grosenick, 2001). One of the goals of most art classes is meaningful self-expression; students understand how to be a representing, self-creating self when they see examples of contemporary artists using artmaking to explore the potentials and problems inherent in his or her cultural and political settings (Gude, 2003).