

Cultural Identity and Art

TARTS 405a – Spring 2019

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Office: Whitney 001

Office Hours: T/Th 12:30-1:30

Class Meeting Time: T/Th 10:10 am – 12:10 pm Classroom: Whitney 104

Course Summary

Through reading, discussion, making art and the analysis of contemporary media and art, we will examine the concept of cultural identity, how to celebrate the buffet of our multicultural landscape and how many aspects of contemporary society play upon fears of difference via scapegoating and stereotyping. We will discuss current critical theories about race, including studies about the construction of “Whiteness” and a post-colonial framing of identity. We will examine “otherness” in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, geography, sexual orientation, age and ability. We will make art pieces that explore both personal and collective stories about cultural identity and fear of difference, and look deeply at contemporary art that discusses the same.

Course Objectives

- To explore a conceptual approach to art making
- To develop formal skills and fluency with visual grammar
- To experience hands-on collaborative art processes
- To be exposed to a wide variety of contemporary art forms including digital imaging, photo-collage, photo-text work, culture jamming, site-specific installations, and artists’ books
- To develop facility with the terms *INTENTION*, *AUDIENCE* and *CONTEXT* when discussing the goals of an artwork
- To become familiar with a variety ways of understanding cultural identity and discourse about “otherness” as they relate to art and to contemporary society
- To apply critical thinking in relation to the course topic

Course Requirements

- Reading and discussion of articles and view highlighted on this syllabus and on Canvas
- Journal – this will contain photos, collages, sketches, proposals, stories and notes about readings and from discussions. All ideas for art projects or in relation to the topic of cultural identity, racism, fear of difference are expected to be in the journal. The journal will be graded twice – once at midterm (10%), and again at the end of the quarter (20%). **Using the journal daily will assure the best learning and creative experience and assessment.** See more about what is required in the journal at the end of this syllabus.

- Assigned mixed media art exercises – *Cultural Heritage* Project, *Culture Jam* Project, *Photo/Text Project* or *Site-Specific Installation* focused on experiences of prejudice, fear of difference or cultural heritage
- A collaborative community-based project that explores some aspect of cultural identity in relation to community (this is ungraded but required)
- Class participation is essential and unexcused absences will affect grades. It will be difficult to make up the work outside of class. **Missing more than two class meetings will definitely take its toll on your work and affect the strength of your journal.**

Classroom Behavior

Food and drink are acceptable as long as you do not disrupt the class or bother your neighbors. **No food or drink is in the computer lab on the balcony.** Please turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and pagers when you come to class. **Texting and doing any internet activity other than research is off-limits during class time.** All phones should be put away and journals should be used for all note taking. Please be respectful and attentive when others are speaking in class. Arriving late or leaving early should never happen except on rare occasions; if you must arrive late or leave early, please do so in as unobtrusive a way as possible.

Grades and Self-evaluation

Students will share their journals, documenting their work during the first 5 weeks of class on May 2nd in a private conference with the instructor. A self-evaluation statement is required as part of that review and is due via email by May 1st. The self-evaluation should reflect on participation in class discussions, the art process in relation to collaborative and individual work, and the insights culled from writing, reading and research (questions to be answered will be posted on Canvas).

Students are required to share their studio projects during group feedback sessions and to participate in the discussions about their work.

All assignments are assessed according to the following criteria:

1. Familiarity with visual grammar in relation to the student's intention
2. Ability to be inventive both with content and form, and to take risks
3. Attention to craft and process (work created the night before the due date is usually painfully obvious and graded accordingly)
4. Responsiveness to suggestions to strengthen projects

Grades will be weighted in the following way: **Midterm Journal: 10%, Final Journal: 20%, Cultural Heritage Project: 20%, Culture Jam/Subvertisement: 10%, Photo-Text project investigating cultural identity, fear of difference: 20%, Oral Presentation: 10%, Participation: 10%**

Grades will be given according to the grade point system. Please refer to this website for information about the grading scale: http://www.washington.edu/students/genocat/front/Grading_Sys.html

3.5–4 = **OUTSTANDING** work, significant extra time spent in developing work, risks taken, unity of concept and handling of materials to create an imaginative visual statement that challenges conventional

thinking and image making

2.5–3.4 = ABOVE AVERAGE work, solid concepts and skillful handling of materials, exploration of conceptual ideas evident with thought provoking results

1.5–2.4 = AVERAGE work, competent execution of ideas but not pushing conventions, craftsmanship acceptable with no outstanding qualities, overall investment fulfills requirement but no risk-taking apparent, no evidence of extra time invested to strengthen technical and conceptual issues

.5–1.4 = BELOW AVERAGE, little involvement in exploration of ideas or misunderstanding of assignment with little attention to craftsmanship

0 = FAILING, no attempt to articulate ideas and total lack of regard for craftsmanship

The following factors will be considered when determining a final participation grade: amount of effort expended throughout the course, amount of progress made in creative development, development of focused and productive work attitude, lateness, absences, and attendance. Development of a critical language is essential to your constructive participation in group feedback sessions and discussions. Evidence of this skill in the discussion of your work and other's work is expected and will be considered in your final grade.

Supplies

Blank-page, hard cover journal, pencils, erasers, glue stick, digital camera (they can be borrowed from media services) or traditional film camera.

You will be required to use a computer for creating some of the projects in class. You are strongly encouraged to get access to Adobe Photoshop. You can download trial copy online at adobe.com or you can purchase or rent a copy with an education discount via their website. It's also possible to use the free shareware, paint.net, or to download an older version of Photoshop (go to the computer labs on the campus to learn how to do that). Photoshop files transfer easily between Macs and PCs. Our lab has only Macs. You can save your files in a folder in the Whitney lab or bring a USB drive to upload and download files. The files should always be saved at 300 dots per inch (dpi) and can be saved as jpps or psds.

Our lab in the Whitney is typically open 10 hours per week. You can contact our lab technician for more information: Samantha Lewis, lewiss22@uw.edu You can also request time to work with me on your projects.

Aside from the Mac computers and scanners in our classroom, you are welcome to work with the lab technicians in the Multimedia Lab in the basement of Cherry Parkes. Any students with mild or severe technophobia should schedule time with me or the lab technicians AS SOON AS POSSIBLE so we can figure out a strategy that will ease you through the process of learning Photoshop and working with the computers. In some rare cases, students will be given permission to complete assignments without using a computer.

Support Services:

Campus Information, Resources, Policies and Expectations

<http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/teaching-learning-technology/e-syllabus-campus-information-resources-policies-expectations>

Calendar

April 2 - Introductions. Indigenous land acknowledgment. Review course syllabus and goals. What is cultural identity? Intersectional categories that the course includes: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation & gender fluidity, region, economic class background, learning differences, mental health, religion, and various subcultures. Why do we teach an art course with this kind of content? What are the many goals of art?

Questions to answer in class: **Where did you grow up? Where did your parents and your grandparents grow up? Do you have a regional identity? How many generations back do you know about? Do you know where your ancestors originated? If you are adopted, have you claimed a particular ancestry? If your family immigrated to the U.S., do you know why? Are there immigration, migration or displacement stories that have been handed down? Where have your cultural identities become layered, creolized* or intersectional due to ethnicity, sexual orientation, geographical region, able-ism, body image, social values and/or economic class? Have you ever felt like an "other," felt excluded or oppressed? Have you ever avoided or feared people because they appeared or spoke or looked differently than you do (did)?** Start creating a collage or drawing in your journal based on an emotional response to these questions.

http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2014/06/17/interactive_map_loss_of_indian_land.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWynJkN5HbQ>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2017/jan/18/the-west-was-built-on-racism-its-time-we-faced-that-video>

**Creolization is the process in which Creole cultures emerge in the New World.^[1] As a result of colonization there was a mixture among people of indigenous, African, and European descent, which came to be understood as Creolization. Creolization is traditionally used to refer to the Caribbean; although not exclusive to the Caribbean it can be further extended to represent other diasporas.^[2] The mixing of people brought a cultural mixing which ultimately led to the formation of new identities. It is important to emphasize that creolization also is the mixing of the "old" and "traditional" with the "new" and "modern". Furthermore, creolization occurs when participants actively select cultural elements that may become part of or inherited culture. Robin Cohen states that creolization is a condition in which "the formation of new identities and inherited culture evolve to become different from those they possessed in the original cultures," and then creatively merge these to create new varieties that supersede the prior forms.^[3]*

Homework: Write in your journal a story about your cultural heritage. You can write about particular ancestors, migration stories, the buffet that represents your identity or your lack of knowledge about your heritage. If your sense of cultural heritage is unclear due to adoption or other factors, you can use regional, economic class, religion, personal passions, sexual orientation, etc. help you define your personal cultural identity. **Bring story to class to help develop your project. We will work with collage and found objects as part of our creative process.** Watch this vlog:

<http://imaginingamerica.org/2014/08/14/exploring-cultural-identity-through-the-arts/>

And take notes on this video Birth of a White Nation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riVAuC0dnP4>

Write down some questions to bring to class.

April 4 - Discussion of visual grammar and how these tools can make a work of art compelling to look at and provoke discussion. Discuss how making art about cultural heritage is part of a decolonization process necessary for a healthier and more equitable society. Begin discussion about systemic racism and intersectional concerns. <https://www.facebook.com/theguardianaustralia/videos/623969811124119/>

Slide show may include work by the following artists: Pat Ward Williams, Fred Wilson, William Pope L., Betty Lee, May Sun, Young Soon Min, Lily Yeh, David Avalos, Daniel Martinez, Border Arts Workshop, Taller Boriqua, David Bacon, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Carmen Lomas Garza, Coco Fusco, Dawoud Bey, Guillermo Gomez Pena, Kerry James Marshall, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Jolene Rickard, Lorraine O'Grady, David Bacon, Celia Alvarez Munoz, Alison Saar, Delilah Montoya, Kay Walkingstick, Yolanda Lopez, Patricia Rodriguez, Rupert Garcia, James Luna, Glenn Ligon, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, Gu Xiong, Hung Liu, Dread Scott, Barbara Carrasco, Jason S. Yi, Juan Sanchez, Milton Rogovin, Art Spiegelman, Edgar Heap-of-Birds, Jimmie Durham, Joe Sacco, Emma Amos, Sonia Boyce, David Wojnarowicz, Mark Niblock-Smith, Catherine Opie, Brian Jungen, Elizabeth Catlett, Robert Gwathmey, Charles White, Carina del Rosario, Michelle de la Vega, Titus Kaphar, and Roger Shimomura. Choose one of these artists for your oral presentation.

Work on Cultural Heritage project.

Homework: Work on digital collage piece. Write about it in your journal. Read:

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2184754/chinese-were-white-until-white-men-called-them-yellow> and <https://www.gimletmedia.com/uncivil/the-sentence#episode-player>

April 9 – Work in class on Cultural Heritage piece. Discussion of reading.

<https://www.facebook.com/pushingblack/videos/357599218174866/UzpfSTE4Nzg3MzE4OTM2NT0xMDE1NjM5Njc0MDE0NDM2Ng/>

Homework: Finish Cultural Heritage piece. Bring first draft to class on a USB drive. Read for discussion: <https://africanah.org/africanah-org-at-5-a-space-cultures-identity-contemporary-art/>

April 11 – Feedback session for Cultural Heritage piece (rework). Discussion of readings.

http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/06/animated_interactive_of_the_history_of_the_atlantic_slave_trade.html

Homework. Collect magazine advertisements or photograph images of ads that reveal cultural prejudices or multiculturalism. Bring what you have collected to class, Read *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack of White Privilege* (on Canvas) and <https://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2018/11/settler-fragility-why-settler-privilege-is-so-hard-to-talk-about.html>

April 16 – Media Literacy workshop. Discuss readings.

<https://www.facebook.com/CollegeHumor/videos/10154365290562807/>

Francesca Ramsey's Decoded: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eTWZ80z9EE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmDCADWyaiI>

Racism History: Higher Education <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=345911869501347>

Begin *culture jamming* assignment. Discuss white privilege.

Homework: Read *And By the Color of their Skin: Tim Wise On The Myth Of A Post-racial America*
http://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/403/by_the_color_of_their_skin Art as a Political Act:
Expression of Cultural Identity, Self-Identity, and Gender by Suk Nam Yun and Yong Soon Min
<https://www-jstor-org.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/stable/pdf/3527433.pdf>
Work on transforming ad, scan, distort image and/or change text.

April 18 – Continue working on culture jam project. Discuss reading. Look at Southern Poverty Law Center website and hate group maps. Powerful White Nationalists Behind the “English Only” Movement <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=227000097714298>
Racist History: Banking <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=228222554362093>
Is "Talking White" Actually A Thing? <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=273025213266230>
Code-switching: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=192792728065233>

Homework: Read: <https://psychologybenefits.org/2013/09/26/how-latinos-experience-subtle-racism/>
What's the X in Latinx? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tk10RAIqsMo>, Are Hispanics White? | Decoded | MTV News <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aosT6Kecj24&t=21s>

April 23 –Magdalena Gomez, guest artist.
My descent into America's neo-Nazi movement & how I got out | Christian Picciolini
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSH5EY-W5oM>,
Secret life of Mac MC Kinney - He hated Islam and Muslims but finally he reverted to Islam
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsCql7SZkWw>

Homework: Finish culture jamming exercise. Read: <https://medium.com/@rmenakem/healing-our-thousand-year-old-trauma-d815009ae93>

April 25 – Feedback on culture jamming piece. Discuss community, collaborative project. Discuss reading. Watch – Stereotypes about Asians
<https://www.facebook.com/Upworthy/videos/1286524954770959/>
Adam Ruins Everything – Model Minority Myth - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg1X1KkVxN4>

Homework: Read and react to http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-beccio/racism-hurts-native-america_b_5812452.html and <http://www.quora.com/Why-does-racism-against-Asians-go-ignored-and-unpunished-in-the-United-States> and
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/etc/quiz.html> and
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/roots/overview.html>

April 30 – Discussion of readings. Work and feedback session for Cultural Heritage and Culture Jam Projects. All Lives Matter? <https://www.facebook.com/TheYoungTurks/videos/10154339902784205/>
All Lives Matter Satire <https://www.facebook.com/Upworthy/videos/1389701571070697/>
Reparations. <http://www.cc.com/video-playlists/qkhul9/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-between-the-scenes/yap3ce>

Homework: Write midterm self-evaluation and send via email by 10 pm on April 30th. Prepare journal for review. Read: <http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/> Bring USB drive with drafts for both projects: Cultural Heritage and Culture Jam.
May 2 – Midterms conferences. Come to class at the regular time with journal and USB drive in hand.

Homework: Revise projects based on feedback during conference. Develop journal based on feedback.

Watch: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/05/why-conservatives-think-taqiyya-means-all-muslims-are-lying.html> Read: <https://www.amaliah.com/post/55027/wearing-hijab-hours-will-not-eradicate-islamophobia-hijab-day>

Former KKK Member & Syrian Muslim Refugee: An Inspiring Friendship
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XqbH5Iu3lo>

May 7- Slide show on photo-text series dealing with cultural identity and/or racism. Introduce final project. Discuss collaborative project and form groups. Bring in ideas for photo-text series for discussion.

Homework: <https://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/i-am-my-white-ancestors-claims-legacy-of-oppression-20190326>

Photo-text project: The photo-text project involves a SERIES of photos. A series means a minimum of four photos that have a conceptual and aesthetic relationship to each other. Rhythm, composition and the rest of visual grammar needs to be employed skillfully for this project to be successful.

You will need to think about different ways to exhibit a series - will you put them on the wall in a line, and if so, where? All the work will be on display in the Library on campus, so please go and visit and choose a spot in either the upper or lower library hallways.

You can use text inside the image itself or outside the image.

Think about your goal or intention for the piece: are you raising troubling or confusing questions? Are you illustrating an experience you've witnessed or had yourself? Are you exploring a nightmare? Do you want your work to be provocative? Do you want your work to create dialog?

Think about your audience. Try and imagine them confronting your image in public space. What is the best context for you to find this particular audience?

Start working on this NOW. Do not wait. Get a camera, and start shooting images. Let the images tell you where you need to go. Do NOT wait for inspiration to hit. You need to be generating images first, and then ideas will flow.

Free cameras are in the media center for those of you who don't have them. They will help you figure out how to use them.

Homework: Watch "I Want to Know What It's Like"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ibVIVzGI9y0#

Watch: Sitting in Bathrooms with Trans People Ep. 1 -

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1145940282196030>

May 9 – Instructor away for memorial. Work on Oral Presentation, develop

Homework: prepare oral presentations. Origins of homophobia:

<https://reflectionsasia.wordpress.com/2007/09/01/the-surprising-history-of-homosexuality-and-homophobia/>

Oral Presentation Criteria:

- Present a few examples (about 10) of the artist's work which deal with cultural identity issues and discuss the meaning of the work and questions that you may have about it. Research should be from books or journals.
- A good place to find journal articles is via JStor or Project Muse - both search engines are easily accessible via the library electronic journals (go to the UWT library home page) - you will need to login to access them. There are many other search engines available via the library web page.
- You can also email the artists and ask them questions directly. Tell them that you are student in my class. Getting your information only from the artist and his/her website is not sufficient. You need to read interpretations about the artist's work written by others.
- If you discover that not much has been written about the artist you have chosen, then you will need to change artists. So it will be good to begin looking for articles several weeks before your presentation, just in case you have little luck finding material.
- After reading three articles by art writers or critics, summarize what you think that these writers feel are the intentions of the artist's work. It is fine to share quotes from these writers.
- Offer us a rough bio about the artist - it would be good to know where and when the artist was born, where or if s/he went to school, what class background the artist has, whether s/he teaches somewhere and what you think or what s/he says provoked him or her to be an artist who is dealing with the topics s/he is dealing with.
- The majority of your presentation should focus on the artwork itself (several different projects, if possible), and you should make a good effort to explain the artist's intentions through your discussion. In your conclusion, suggest a question that the class might want to respond to regarding the work.
- Presentation format can be in power point or you can just project scanned images of the artist's work on the large screen. Do NOT put the text of your presentation on the screen, only the title, date and medium of the works shown and then read biographical information, discussion regarding the content and intentions of the work and quotes from your notes instead.
- PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THERE YOU HAVE IMAGES OF ART ON THE SCREEN FOR US TO LOOK AT WHILE YOU ARE SPEAKING.

May 14 - Oral Presentations. Work on collaboration. Theater of the Oppressed Exercises.

Homework: Look at: <http://www.queerarthistory.com/category/love-between-men/>
<http://www.queerarthistory.com/category/love-between-women/>

May 16 – Oral Presentations. Work on collaboration. Theater of the Oppressed Exercises.

Homework: Read: <https://www.them.us/story/queer-art-moments-2018>

May 21 – Oral Presentations. Bring in 1st draft of final projects for feedback.

Homework: <https://canadianart.ca/features/claudia-rankine-white-supremacy/>

May 23 - Work on collaboration. Why American TV Needs a Muslim Modern Family

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KURTPn0Nuzs>

Watch: Asian Americans respond to micro-aggressions

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004706646/thisis2016-asian-americans-respond.html>

Watch: Stereotypes about Native Americans:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHDW_LVfn28

Homework: Read: https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/this-restaurant-is-using-food-to-call-attention-to-native-american-strife

May 28 – Presentation of Collaborative project and discussion.

Homework: <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/news/whiteness-works-racial-imaginary-institute-kitchen/>

May 30 - Final critique of projects. Final projects must be printed and hung publicly with title, name and contact info.

Homework: <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/ku/2019/mar/28/lawrence-artist-roger-shimomuras-new-exhibit-touches-on-u-s-immigration-policy/> <https://hyperallergic.com/254224/five-ways-to-disrupt-white-supremacy-in-the-mainstream-art-world/>

June 4 – Visit to Tacoma Art Museum and the Jaune Quick-To-See Exhibition.

June 6 – Tour of campus projects. Turn in your journal.

June 11 – Return journals. Closing discussion.

***How to Make a Strong Journal**

Your journal is your open book exam – it's how I learn about what you've learned, what you're questioning, where you are taking risks. You need to make images (with any medium) at least 2 times per week. Follow these guidelines:

1. Make notes that are REFLECTIONS about the class discussions, readings and videos - not just what was said, but how do YOU feel about them. If you disagree with the dominant opinions in class, but aren't clear why, write about that. If you feel lost, write about that. The great thing about journals is that you are writing for yourself, and developing your voice. If your buttons get pushed, and you are feeling shy to respond, the journal gives you a venue in which to shout, cry, whine, argue or rally support. It is one of the most important tools I can offer you in this course, and journaling can truly help you the rest of your life, if you allow its power in, even in a small way.

2. Make a collage based on some of the ideas expressed in class or in the readings, at least twice a week. Bend your journal to your will, take risks, don't be afraid to make ugly, royal failures and lose your inhibitions. BRAINSTORM all your assignments in the journal – don't just think about them – do sketches, crude or otherwise.

3. Although the journal project is not scrap booking, you may think this process is similar. Some people HATE scrap booking, so do an anti-scrapbook (what would that look like?). Play with materials, collect things relevant to the course content or images you're working with.
4. If you come to class bored, you can always open your journal and slip away into its pages. I never complain when students are working in their journals during class time.
5. Use your journal as a place to dream about the world you would love to live in.
6. Remember to write down notes to the readings. If you haven't had time to read all the articles listed in the syllabus, read them now. Put in your thoughts about what your reading. Don't self-censor.
7. **But remember THIS journal is not your diary.** If you need a place to tell your innermost personal thoughts about your current life challenges (other than those related to the class topic), get another journal for that (OR you can create special pages that are hidden, pockets or envelopes in this journal that are off limits for anyone to read, including me).
8. **Finally, your journal is an important part of your grade, and is truly an open-book exam.** If your projects in Photoshop aren't going well, you can vent in the journal. If you have ideas for site-specific installations, and other forms, you can diagram them in the journal. If you are worried or excited about the collaborative project write about it there. USE it everyday if possible. Make it a discipline. You will be amazed at how it blossoms for you.

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Theory/History

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Contemporary Art

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La Frontera/The Border: Art about the Mexico/United States Border Experience (catalog), San Diego, Centro Cultural de San Diego and the Museum of Contemporary Art, 1993
Next Generation: Southern Black Aesthetic (catalog), University of North Carolina Press: Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, 1990

Websites

<https://crackingthecodes.org/>
<http://www.euroamerican.org/>
www.teachingtolerance.org
<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch>
<https://www.gimletmedia.com/uncivil/all#all-episodes-list>
<http://www.un.org/WCAR/exhibit.htm>
www.whiteprivilegeconference.org
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>
<https://artistsagainstracism.org/>
<https://hyperallergic.com/154288/is-this-art-racist/>
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