MashUp:

The Birth of Modern Culture

The Late 20th Century:
Splicing, Sampling and the Street in the Age of Appropriation

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled* (*SmashUp*), 2016
site-specific installation at the Vancouver Art Gallery

TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE
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Vancouver
Artgallery

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Taking over all four floors of the Vancouver Art Gallery, the groundbreaking exhibition *MashUp* will offer an international survey of underline mashup culture, and illustrate how it has now become one of the dominant forms of creativity in the early 21st century. This tour will focus on the 2nd floor of the exhibition:

The Late 20th Century:
Splicing, Sampling and the Street in the Age of Appropriation

By the end of the 20th century, the emergence of new media—multi-track sound recording, portable videotape recording, instant photography, large-scale printing—and the numerous images and objects available globally, shifted mashup styles toward appropriation. This is evident in the works of conceptual artists such as Sherrie Levine and Barbara Kruger. Also, the newly emergent subcultures of hip hop and the street found expression in the art of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. Artists in this wave of mashup culture during the 1980s and '90s produced new images and objects informed by a heightened awareness of the politics of race, gender and ethnicity and their manifestation in contemporary life.

DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibition *MashUp: The Birth of Modern Culture – 2nd Floor*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *MashUp: The Birth of Modern Culture – 2nd Floor* has three main goals:
- to introduce students to the work of artists from the 1980s and '90s,
- to consider diverse artistic traditions and disciplines,
- to explore individual artworks within historical, social and cultural contexts.

THE EXHIBITION:
MashUp: The Birth of Modern Culture – 2nd Floor

The 2nd floor of the exhibition *MashUp* features works from the late 20th century that focus on splicing, sampling and the street in the age of appropriation.

In the 1980s, a new generation of artists—the first to be raised with television, fast food and an economy based on excessive consumption—embraced mashup methodologies as a way to question media culture, consumerism, identity and gender. This period was characterized by both the emergence of new media, in audio, video, photography and large-scale printing, as well as a massive expansion of the circulation of images and objects within a growing global economy.

In response, mashup methods shifted toward appropriation, as seen in the work of conceptual artists such as Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince and Barbara Kruger and in the emerging subcultures of hip hop and the street as seen in the art of Jean-Michel Basquiat. While changing and extending earlier practices, artists during this period used imitation and parody to question the nature of representation and expose the seductive power of images. In addition, the increased availability of personal computers in the 1980s and improvements in digital graphics, sound and design programs stimulated new approaches to art production, with the group net.art presenting the computer as a distinct medium. By the late 1990s it was clear that techniques used in musical and digital realms had transformed visual culture, with sampling emerging as the dominant creative force of contemporary culture in the 21st century.

ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

The following background information highlights some of the artists whose work may be explored in the school tour.

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988)
Jean-Michel Basquiat was born on December 22, 1960, in Brooklyn, New York. With a Haitian-American father and a Puerto Rican mother, Basquiat had a diverse cultural heritage that was one of his many sources of inspiration. A self-taught artist, he began drawing at an early age on sheets of paper his father, an accountant, brought home from the office. As he delved more deeply into his creative side, his mother strongly encouraged him to develop his artistic talents.
He first attracted attention for his graffiti under the name SAMO in New York City. He sold sweatshirts and postcards featuring his artwork on the streets before his painting career took off. He collaborated with Andy Warhol in the mid-1980s, which resulted in a show of their work. In 1986 he travelled to Africa for a show in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. That same year, at age 25, he exhibited nearly 60 paintings at the Kestner-Gesellschaft Gallery in Hanover, Germany—becoming the youngest artist ever to showcase his work there. Basquiat died on August 12, 1988, in New York City. Although his art career was brief, Jean-Michel Basquiat has been credited with bringing the African-American and Latino experience into the elite art world.

Keith Haring (1958–1990)
Keith Haring was born on May 4, 1958, in Reading, Pennsylvania. He moved to New York City in 1978 and began using the city as his canvas, making chalk drawings in subway stations. His art was eventually seen everywhere from public murals and nightclubs to galleries and museums around the world. In New York, Haring befriended Jean-Michel Basquiat and other fellow emerging artists, who shared his interest in the colourful graffiti art of the city's streets. Haring and other artists organized exhibitions at downtown nightclubs and other alternative locations, where art, music and fashion came together in a dynamic mix. Always wanting to make his art more accessible, Haring opened a retail store called the Pop Shop in New York City's SoHo neighbourhood in 1986; the shop sold posters, T-shirts and other affordable items featuring Haring's signature designs. He was also known for his activism in promoting AIDS awareness. He died of AIDS-related complications on February 16, 1990, at age 31. His works are in prominent museums and galleries all over the world.

Brian Jungen (b. 1970)
Brian Jungen was born in 1970 in Fort St. John, BC. His mixed parentage—First Nations mother and Swiss father—has deeply affected his life and art. Since he graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, he has lived in Montreal, New York and Vancouver. He has received numerous awards for his work, which has been exhibited internationally. Jungen has used ordinary mass-produced objects such as running shoes and plastic chairs to create hybrid sculptures and installations. His work often explores the complicated realities of urban Native youth struggling to integrate traditions while living in a non-Native consumer society. Most important, Jungen is known as a conceptual artist using contemporary found materials to create unexpected, visually arresting artworks. He was the winner of the inaugural Sobey Art Award in 2002 and the 2010 Gershon Iskowitz Prize.

Barbara Kruger (b. 1945)
Born in Newark, New Jersey, on January 26, 1945, Barbara Kruger is an American conceptual artist who challenges cultural assumptions by manipulating images and text in her photographic compositions. With a short declarative statement, she synthesizes a critique about society, the economy, politics, gender and culture.
Kruger attended Syracuse University (New York) and continued her training in 1966 at New York City's Parsons School of Design. Best known for laying aggressively direct slogans over black-and-

white photographs that she finds in magazines, Kruger developed a visual language that was strongly influenced by her early work as a graphic designer at magazines including *House and Garden*, *Mademoiselle* and *Aperture*. Informed by feminism, Kruger's work critiques consumerism and material culture, and has appeared on billboards, bus cards and posters, at train station platforms and in public parks and other public spaces. In recent years she has extended her practice, creating site-specific installations in galleries and museums consisting of vinyl lettering, video, film, audio and projection. In the Vancouver Art Gallery installation, the walls, floors and ceilings are covered with images and texts, which engulf the viewer. Kruger's work appears in the permanent collections of several major museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art, both in New York City.

Sherrie Levine (b. 1947)
Sherrie Levine was born on April 17, 1947, in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. She is an American conceptual artist known for remaking famous 20th-century works of art, through photographic reproductions, drawing, watercolour or sculpture. She attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison, receiving her BA in 1969 and her MFA in 1973. She moved to Berkeley in 1973 and two years later relocated to New York. Her appropriations question ideas about originality and authenticity in art. She believes that the loss of authenticity in art was a result of the abundant images that defined contemporary life and that it is impossible to create anything new. Levine's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide. Her work is held in major international museum collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others. Levine lives and works in New York and Santa Fe.

Christian Marclay (b. 1955)
Born in 1955 in San Rafael, California, Christian Marclay is a Swiss American visual artist and composer whose multidisciplinary work encompasses performance, sculpture, sound and video. Much of his art imaginatively explores the physical and cultural intersections between sound and image, often through the re-contextualization and editing of recorded media. Marclay, whose father was Swiss and mother was American, grew up in Geneva, where he studied at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel. While continuing his education in the United States, primarily at the Massachusetts College of Art, he collaborated on various musical projects, finding inspiration in the simple and lively energy of both performance and punk rock. Marclay's methods included standard scratching, playback on damaged turntables, the actual destruction (and reassembly) of vinyl records, and creating musical juxtapositions by mixing together a variety of radically different artists. Ultimately, Marclay gained more attention for his video art, showing montages of clips and visual repetitions, which he first pursued in the 1990s.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: About the Artists
(intermediate and secondary students)

Objective:
Students read, research and share information about some of the artists represented in *MashUp: The Birth of Modern Culture – 2nd Floor*

Materials:
- ❑ writing materials
- ❑ Internet. Some useful websites:
  www.artcyclopedia.com
  www.wikipedia.com
- ❑ Artist Information Sheet (p. 8) and Student Worksheet (p. 9)

Process:
1. Divide the students into eight groups. Cut up the Artist Information Sheet (p. 8) and assign one artist to each group.
2. Give each group a copy of the Student Worksheet (p. 9) and ask them to transfer the information about their artist to the appropriate box.
3. Have students figure out what they need to know to complete the section on their artist, and search the Internet, either at home or at school. Older students can find more information; younger students, just the basics.
4. Ask each group to find/copy/sketch a piece of work by each artist on a separate piece of paper. Do not label with the artist's name or any other information.
5. Have each group present the information on their artist while the rest of the class adds the information to their worksheets.
6. After the presentations, lay out the images and have the class guess which image is by which artist.

Conclusion:
Discuss:
- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Which artists and/or kinds of artwork made students curious about seeing the actual work in the exhibition?
- Are there any artists, ways of working or ideas that the students would like to find out more about?

Artist Information Sheet

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988)
- Born and died in New York
- Was a self-taught artist
- Became well-known at first for his graffiti/street art done under the name SAMO
- Exhibited his paintings at galleries and museums
- Has been credited with bringing the African-American and Latino experience to the art world

Keith Haring (1958–1990)
- Born in Pennsylvania, died in New York
- Started his career using the city as his canvas, making chalk drawings in subway stations
- His art was eventually seen in public places, nightclubs, museums and galleries
- Opened a retail store called Pop Shop in New York City in 1986, selling affordable items bearing his designs
- Is also known for his activist work promoting AIDS awareness

Brian Jungen (b. 1970)
- Born in Fort St. John, BC
- Is of mixed First Nations and Swiss heritage
- Uses ordinary mass-produced objects such as running shoes to create sculptures
- Has received numerous awards and exhibited his work internationally

Barbara Kruger (b. 1945)
- Born in Newark, New Jersey
- Best known for layering words and direct slogans over black-and-white photographs from magazines
- Critiques society, gender, politics and culture
- Strongly influenced by her early work as a graphic designer
- Her work has appeared on billboards, bus cards and posters, and in public spaces, museums and galleries

Sherrie Levine (b. 1947)
- Born in Hazleton, Pennsylvania
- Known for remaking famous 20th-century works of art through photographic reproductions, drawing, watercolour or sculpture
- Her work questions originality and authenticity in art
- Has had numerous exhibitions and her work is held in major international museum collections

Christian Marclay (b. 1955)
- Born in San Rafael, California
- Swiss-American artist and composer
- Studied in Geneva and the United States
- Work includes performance, sculpture, sound and video
- Many works explore the relationship between sound and image, in which he changes and edits recorded media

Student Worksheet

	Personal Information	Type of Art	Known for	An Artwork
Jean-Michel Basquiat				
Keith Haring				
Brian Jungen				
Barbara Kruger				
Sherrie Levine				
Christian Marclay				

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Image ConText
(intermediate and senior levels)

Objective: Students use found images and text to create new meanings and heighten awareness of social issues, stereotypes and identity.

Discussion:

Barbara Kruger is known for works that provocatively integrate photographs and text (or, as she says, "pictures and words"). Her art reveals and challenges the ways in which images used in commercial media often objectify women, perpetuate stereotypes and encourage conformity. Informed by her earlier profession as a graphic designer, her imagery draws from American films of the 1940s and '50s, television and advertisements. Kruger takes images from their original context in magazines and sets them as the background against which she places her own confrontational phrases, challenging how the viewer might otherwise interpret the images. Because she alters visual material and uses text taken from other sources, her work is sometimes referred to as appropriation art.

Materials:
- ❑ magazines to cut up
- ❑ construction paper, or other background paper
- ❑ glue
- ❑ scissors

Process:

1. Introduce students to the work of Barbara Kruger using Internet image search or images provided on p. 11.

2. Have students create artworks that make use of two hallmarks of Barbara Kruger's work: dramatically cropped found imagery and the addition of the artist's own text.

3. Distribute magazines, or black- and-white copies of magazine images prepared in advance. Have each student select an image and crop it into a square or rectangle, bearing in mind the significance of what they crop out and what they retain.

4. Have students mount the cropped images on construction paper with glue, and draft a short phrase or sentence that makes use of pronouns to change the meaning of the picture.

5. Have them write their text on a strip or square of paper and glue it to the image, thinking carefully about where to place the text.

6. Display students' work.

Conclusion:

Discuss:
- How easy or hard was it to create the work?
- How did the image change from its original form?
- How did the text change the meaning of the image?
- Compare students' artworks. How are they similar? How are they different? Consider subject matter, composition, use of colour, etc.

Works by Barbara Kruger

Your Body Is a Battleground, 1989

Untitled, 1987

Belief + Doubt, 2012

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Materials with Memory (adaptable to all levels)

Objective:
Students explore the ways in which everyday objects and materials carry meanings with them, even when they are made into something new.

Discussion:
Brian Jungen uses everyday objects as his art materials and turns them into extraordinary artworks. The objects still carry their original meaning—for example, we all recognize Nike running shoes and know their purpose—but new meanings are formed as he reworks the materials in unexpected ways. He challenges viewers to think about how we see the world and the things in it that we take for granted.

Materials:
- ❑ images of Brian Jungen's sculptural works
- ❑ supply of familiar mass-produced objects: McDonald's Big Mac wrappers, Starbucks paper cups, old CDs, paper napkins, plastic or wood stir sticks, chopsticks, etc.
- ❑ glue
- ❑ scissors
- ❑ string, cardboard and other miscellaneous materials

Process:
1. Show students some images of Brian Jungen's sculptural works using Internet image search or images provided on p. 13. Ask them:
   - What do you see?
   - What has the artist used to make his works?
   - What would the original purpose of the materials and objects have been?
   - How have these materials changed in purpose and meaning?

   Have students discuss how the objects that surround us bring meaning with them.

2. Introduce the materials and objects that will be the students' art supplies. Working together, make a list of the meanings they bring with them. A Big Mac container may make you think: fast, cheap, repetitious, available all over the world, disposable. It may be a symbol of global consumerism, failing nutritional standards, a need for environmentally friendly fast foods or the world's inability to slow down. Pebbles might evoke memories of the beach, the garden or a hike in the woods.

3. Have students choose their art supplies, and challenge them to design something new and original with these supplies. They might choose to create a 2D design or a 3D construction. Encourage them to consider purpose and meaning rather than randomly grabbing and gluing objects and materials.

4. Display finished works. Have students explain their designs to their classmates.

Conclusion:

Discuss:
- Have the materials been used in ways that comply with or challenge previous meanings, uses and associations?
- What new meanings arise?
- How do the meanings of the materials and the created object combine or conflict with one another?

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Works by Brian Jungen

Prototype for New Understanding #8, 1999
Nike athletic footwear, human hair

Cetology, 2002, plastic chairs

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Fun with Sampling and Street Art (adaptable to all levels)

Objective:

Students learn about and explore street art and hip hop culture through the use of websites.

Discussion:

Street art is a relatively new term and concept. It surfaced in the 1980s during the art world's corporate boom. This period saw the simultaneous explosion of hip hop in mainstream popular culture, with recording artists and DJs such as Grandmaster Flash, considered one of the pioneers of hip hop DJing, cutting and mixing. Hip hop began with collectives of artists, friends and community members. It was, and is, focused on positivity. Hip hop and mainstream art collided when Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and other artists shifted from making work on the street to showing in galleries and becoming globally valued "street artists."

Materials:
- ❑ access to computers and the Internet
- ❑ printer
- ❑ construction paper, or other background paper
- ❑ glue

Process:

1. Introduce students to the concept of street art. Look at the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, and graffiti art of the 1980s in New York City.

2. Have students explore these websites:

   - Street Art Creator: http://streetartcreator.com
   - Sampling and Mixing Music: http://www.incredibox.com

3. Once students have spent some time experimenting on these sites, have them create a final work using Street Art Creator, where they can save and print their work.

4. Have students mount their works on background paper.

5. Explain to students that some artists and/or DJs/hip hop artists have "street names" or DJ names. For instance, Jean-Michel Basquiat's street name was SAMO, Joseph Saddler's DJ name is Grandmaster Flash.

6. Have students sign their work with a street name they create. Encourage them to use stylized lettering or a graffiti-style font.

7. Have students work in pairs or small groups to share the sampling mix they've created with Incredibox.com.

Conclusion:

Discuss:

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Had the students used these websites before?
- Which websites were their favourites? Why?
- What did they like about using these sites? What didn't they like?
- Remind students that street art is illegal for the most part, but sometimes artists are commissioned to create site-specific work.

VOCABULARY

appropriation: the act of using text, images or objects, often without permission, in a context other than originally intended. In the visual arts, appropriation is the intentional borrowing, copying and alteration of pre-existing images and objects.

conceptual art: art whose idea or concept is more important than the finished artwork, and whose form does not necessarily conform to traditional art objects such as paintings or sculptures.

hip hop: a subcultural movement that formed during the early 1970s, led largely by African-American and Puerto Rican youth residing in the South Bronx in New York City. It is characterized by four distinct elements that represent the different manifestations of the culture: rap music (oral), turntablism or DJing (aural), b-boying (physical) and graffiti art (visual).

installation: art that is created from a wide range of materials and installed in a specific environment. An installation may be temporary or permanent.

mashup: a mixture or fusion of disparate elements from different sources as related to music, visual art, literature, film, fashion and other creative forms.

Modern/Modernist: a historical period of art practice—from 1850 to 1970—during which approaches to art embraced new ideas in science, political thought and many other areas. The Modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other values.

net.art: a group of artists who have worked in the medium of Internet art since 1994, producing a form of digital artwork distributed via the Internet.

sampling: the act of taking a portion, or sample, of one sound recording and reusing it as an instrument or a sound recording in a different song or piece.

site-specific: created for a specific site or venue. Usually a site-specific work is destroyed by the process of dismantling it.

splicing: the overlapping or interweaving of two ends of something to create the strongest possible attachment. Since 1912, when the infant motion-picture industry took over the word *splice* to refer to the cutting and joining of film in the editing process, *splicing* also refers to the editing of film or audiotape.

street art: visual art in public locations, usually unsanctioned artwork executed outside the context of traditional art venues. The term gained popularity during the graffiti art boom of the early 1980s and continues to be applied to subsequent incarnations.

visual culture: all visual imagery and visual experiences, both refined and popular, encompassing a wide range of visual objects from paintings and drawings to commercial advertising, film, video, television and computer graphics.

RESOURCES

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