

Title: Looking @ Black Art - *Art is My Country*- by Camille Turner

Subtitle:

Duration: 2 lessons

Best Courses fit: The Arts, English (Can be adapted to ESL), Canadian & World Studies (Geo & HSP)

Facilitator Reflection

As part of this project, participants are being asked to view a mini documentary of a performance piece that is a walking tour that “re-thinks and re-imagines our present day by illuminating histories of the African Diaspora in Toronto’s Grange neighbourhood.” This performance encompasses Turner’s archival research of Canada’s history of slavery in a walking tour.

The information is sensitive and difficult to research so there may be challenges to discovery as this history is buried deep. Keeping this in mind the intent of the Critical Consciousness questions, this story is to be lead with the understanding of revealing, illuminating and reimagining, not with slavery. It is an uncovering of history to imagine how we as a collective community can move forward in a way where we vision what inclusive spaces free from anti-Black racism could look like.

Overview

This activity is an Arts based activity based on the art piece *Art is My Country* by Camille Turner. Participants will View the short documentary of the performance piece and respond to the questions given. This activity can happen in groups or individually but the expectation is that a discussion will be generated so that everyone can contribute ideas and thoughts to the understanding of this piece. The [link to the documentary](#) can be put in a slideshow to share with all participants.

Looking at Black Art - Art is My Country - Camille Turner



The art work you will be reflecting on is a performance piece titled *Art is My Country* by Canadian artists Camille Turner. As noted in her bio, “Camille Turner is an explorer of race, space, home and belonging. Straddling media, social practice and performance art... “You will view the [mini documentary on Art is My Country](#) and respond to the questions below to dig deeper and analyse this piece.

The Artist

Who is Camille Turner?

She is also well known for her performance piece Miss Canadiana. What was the message of that piece?
Write down the title and message of one other artwork by Camille.

Camille uses the medium of performance art to deliver her message. What is performance art?
Feel free to provide some examples to clarify the understanding of performance art.

Exploring Quotes by Camille

Camille states in the doc, “the work I do is all about home and belonging.” Drawing upon your own personal experiences living in Canada, how would you interpret the words “home and belonging?”

Camille also states in the doc that she “knew there was a Black community here and most people have no idea they existed.” What have you been taught about early Black communities throughout Canada?

Camille speaks about the idea that in Canada there is “racial innocence” And that so much of the past has been “willfully forgotten.” Do you agree or disagree with Camille's statements? Justify your response.

In the documentary you are introduced to slave advertisements. These were found in the archives researched by Camille where she states, “How can you recoup the humanity of those who have been enslaved when in the archives they are seen as property?” Pause the screen on the advertisements featured and read them. What do these slave advertisements tell you about:

- the person enslaved
- the slave owners
- slavery in Canada
- the resistance of freedom seekers to slavery

“A Future where Nothing Is Hidden or Silenced”

What is the significance of Peter Street in downtown Toronto as it relates to this performance piece?

Camille envisions this performance as individuals coming from the future when nothing is hidden or silenced. She also speaks to **Afrofuturism**. Look at the link provided and write down your understanding of Afrofuturism. Now imagine what a future could look like should the history of Black folks have been revealed or accepted. What impact do you think this would have on society? On anti-Black Racism in society? Do you feel that the function of Art could be a way of sharing this information? Explain.

In Camille's concluding lines, she mentioned that we have to see the world differently in order to create a new world. That a mind shift is really necessary. In your own words describe what you think is integral in that mindshift.

In your opinion, do you believe that performance art is an effective means of disseminating important information about aspects of our history? Do you feel that it was effective in Camille's performance piece?

What questions do you have for the artist? List a minimum of 3.

What did you learn from viewing this performance piece?



**CANADIAN
BLACK LIVES**

