



Gallery
Inquiry &
Activity
Arthur
Jafa

ICA
MIAMI



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Over the past three decades, artist, filmmaker and cinematographer Arthur Jafa (b. 1960, Tupelo, Mississippi) has boldly explored the relationship between visual culture and blackness in his works. Often drawing content from an archive of images and video clips culled from popular magazines, books, media and digital platforms like YouTube, Jafa engages with a complex notion of authorship and legitimacy. In his work words, he seeks to “replicate the power, beauty, and alienation of black music.”

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Students will gain an understanding of contemporary and historic race relations.
- Students will explore different experiences of race and racism through the use of video and reading stories.
- Students will reflect on the importance of alternative narratives.



Arthur Jafa. Image: i-D Magazine.

VOCABULARY TERMS

Collage: The artistic process of gluing and assembling various materials to a surface. Collage can refer to both the actual procedure of cutting and pasting (the verb), as well as to the final artistic product (the noun).

Juxtaposition An act or instance of placing two elements close together or side by side. This is often done in order to compare/contrast the two, to show similarities or differences, etc.

Video Art: Art that relies on using video technology, simply *video as art*.

Race: Refers to the categories into which society places individuals on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin color, hair type, facial form and eye shape). Though many believe that race is determined by biology, it is now widely accepted that this classification system was in fact created for social and political reasons. There are actually more genetic and biological differences within the racial groups defined by society than between different groups. (Anti-Defamation League).

Racism: The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people. (Anti-Defamation League)

Whiteness: A set of privileges granted to white-skinned individuals and groups; these operations are "invisible" to those privileged by it (but not to those oppressed/disadvantaged by it). It has a long history in European imperialism/colonialism. Its meaning has changed over time ((i.e. Irish, Italian, Spanish, Greek and southern European peoples have at times been "raced" as non-white). It could be said that in American society, whiteness is the norm. Whiteness has been defined as default. A white person is just a person. Everyone else is defined by their racial identity.

VOCABULARY TERMS (CONT.)

White Supremacy: A term used to characterize various belief systems central to which are one or more of the following key tenets: 1) whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co- exist; 2) whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; 3) white people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures; 4) white people are genetically superior to other people. (Anti-Defamation League).

White Fragility: A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. (Robin DiAngelo)

White Privilege: The systemic and legal advantages given to white people. All who are white, by race, have white privileges, although the extent to which we have them varies depending on our gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical ability, size and weight, and so on. (Understanding White Privilege by Francis E. Kendall, PhD)

Allyship: An active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person of privilege seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group of people. (The Anti-Oppression Network)

ACTIVITY

GUIDE TO INITIAL REFLECTIONS

Age Range: 13 and up

It is important to understand that the above terms, like racism, whiteness, and white privilege, are very real and present in our society. Arthur Jafa's works are in conversation with these terms. Some of you may have experienced the above terms, or may have witnessed others engage with them. In this activity guide, we are here to learn and better understand ourselves and the world.

This activity is composed of a brief investigation that will be followed up with a conversation on May 11 via Zoom.

ACTIVITY MATERIALS

Magazines



Scissors (or X-Acto knife)



White Copy Paper

INSTRUCTIONS

GUIDE TO INITIAL REFLECTIONS

- 1) Select three magazines. Pick a magazine that tends to show a lot of people in it (think beauty, fashion, or culture magazine) – and preferably pick a magazine that was headed for the trash anyway!
- 2) Carefully cut out all the images of white people in the magazine.
For added precision, use an exacto knife.
- 3) Do the same with your other publications.
- 4) Compare your findings. Take pictures!
- 5) Reflect on the following questions:
 - a. How many faces are left in the magazine?
 - b. Is the cover missing a person?
 - c. How do you think this changes the meaning of the magazine?
 - d. Do you think the magazine is more representative of the U.S. as a whole like this?
 - e. What do the cut outs mean to you?
- 6) Optional: cover up all the patches in the magazine with white copy paper.
- 7) Reflect: