



Carlos Villa (1936-2013)

Teacher Packet

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Education

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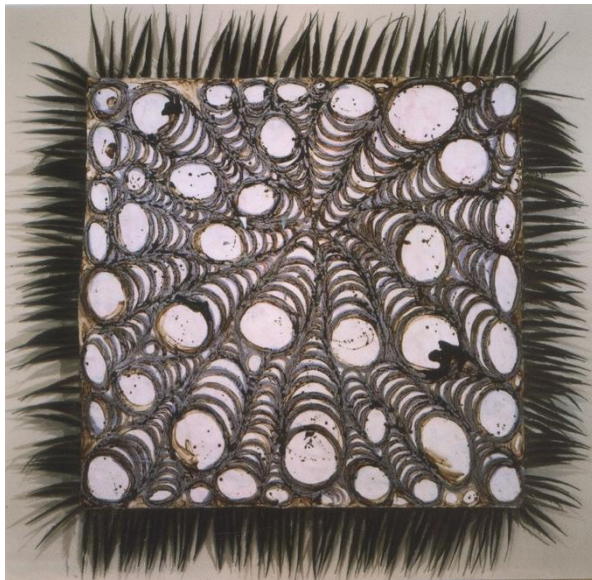
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Biography: Carlos Villa

Carlos Villa (pronunciation: KAHR-lohs VEE-yah, 1936-2013) is best known for his teaching, activism, and dynamic artworks. Rooted in the Bay Area, he grew up in the Tenderloin, attended the San Francisco Art Institute, and later became a teacher there. While he began as a minimalist artist, Villa was committed to spotlighting art and artists of the post-World War II era that were forgotten or neglected. He wanted to uplift underappreciated cultures, specifically their arts before colonialism and the displacement of war.

His commitment was found through his exploration of his own Filipino American background while in school: “I [had] remembered when I was a student, I remember asking Walt Kuhlman about Filipino art history and he said there is no Filipino art history. And, lo and behold, I go up to the library and, of course, there wasn’t any” (Villa 2010). As a result, he independently researched Pacific tribal art traditions and incorporated their materials and formats in his work. From his studies, he included the use of bones and feathers in mixed-media installations, such as performance and word-based conceptual projects.

Through his self-initiated ambitious exhibition and information programs, Villa was influential to many young artists. His most well-known initiative was the 2010 exhibition, symposium, and website, "Rehistoricizing Abstract Expressionism in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1950s-1960s." It attempted to rebalance the period canon by excavating overlooked contributions by women and artists of color. Similarly, Villa also organized “Worlds in Collision,” a series of exhibitions, symposia, curricula, publications, and web projects that address multiculturalism, education, activism, and identity politics to build a more inclusive art world and art history. Today, he is still remembered for his activism and contribution to Filipino American art.



Maturing, 1979.



Ritual, 1970–71.

Unit 1: *Roots and Rituals: A Timeline of Carlos Villa*

Objectives:

- Learn about the historical, social, and political forces that shaped Carlos Villa’s life.
- Reflect on what the timeline reveals about Villa’s identity and art.
- Research the topics and questions raised by the timeline to deepen your understanding of Filipino American history..

Grade Levels: Grades 8-12, College

Unit Duration: Two weeks of classes, including homework

Introduction: *Roots and Rituals: A Timeline of Carlos Villa* combines photographs and narration to highlight key historical, social, and political events that shaped the artist Carlos Villa’s life and work. The timeline helps students to understand the impact of U.S. imperialism and immigration law on Filipino Americans during the 20th century, and it spotlights the civil rights and labor movements that spurred Villa’s efforts as a teacher and activist. As part of the Asian Art Museum’s [Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision](#) exhibition, *Roots and Rituals* helps to place the displayed artworks in context, revealing Villa’s inspirations and how he also inspired others.

Content Standards Addressed (California):

Visual Arts:

- 6.VA:Cn11** Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.
7.VA:Cn11 Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.
8.VA:Cn11 Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity.

History-Social Sciences:

10.4 Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: Africa, Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Philippines.

10.4.3 Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.

Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum:

Guiding Outcome 2 Working Toward Greater Inclusivity

Guiding Outcome 3 Furthering Self-Understanding

Guiding Outcome 4 Developing a Better Understanding of Others

Guiding Outcome 7 Supporting a Community Focus

Materials:

- Computers/laptops with Internet connection
- [Roots and Rituals: A Timeline of Carlos Villa](#), from the Asian Art Museum’s Google Arts and Culture site

- Paper, post-its, and pencils/pens
- Posterboards, scissors, glue, markers

Procedure:

Week 1

1. Teacher: Explain that the class will learn about Carlos Villa's life and work as an entry point to studying Filipino American history. Give students time to explore the *Roots and Rituals* timeline at their own pace, so they can pause where they need to.

Students: Explore the *Roots and Rituals* timeline and jot down any quotes, images, or topics that spark your curiosity or that resonate with you.

2. Write a reflection on what you learned about Carlos Villa from the timeline and what new questions you have about his life and the people and events that shaped him. Generate as many questions as you can.
3. Choose the question from your reflection that you're most intrigued by and write it on a post-it. (Or, you could create a [Google Jamboard](#) where everyone posts their questions.)
4. Group all of the post-its by general topic; some topic groupings might include:
 - The colonization of the Philippines by Spain
 - The colonization of the Philippines by the U.S.
 - The immigration laws that impacted Filipino Americans in the 20th century
 - Filipino American leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, the Third World Liberation Front, the United Farm Workers
 - The International Hotel evictions and the history of San Francisco's Manilatown
 - The creation of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University
 - The non-western inspirations for Carlos Villa's art during the 1970s and 1980s

In project groups (3-5 students each):

5. Do Internet research on your group's common topic and collaboratively decide on the **five** most important points you think your classmates should know about this topic to have a fuller understanding of Filipino American history.
6. Create a poster that illustrates your five chosen points. For each point, include an illustration or cited image as a visual aid.

Week 2

In project groups:

7. Present your poster to the class, giving a brief explanation for why each of your five points is significant/important—why should people care about this topic? How is it still relevant today?

As a whole class:

8. On laptops, explore these three artworks by Carlos Villa:

[First Impression](#) (click on the magnifying glass on the image and use the zoom-in feature to look at the details of this artwork; read the label information below the image)

[My Father Walking up Kearny Street for the First Time; image 2](#) (shows the words above and on the sides of the installation); [video](#) of Villa discussing this work.

[Tatu series: image 2](#); [video](#) of Villa discussing this work (watch until 1:16)

9. Discuss how learning about the topics you researched for your posters helped you to understand these three artworks more fully. At the same time, what new insights or questions on the Filipino American experience do Villa artworks raise?

10. Ending Reflection Prompt; free-write on the following topic:

When Carlos Villa was an art student in 1961, he asked his professor whether their class could learn about Filipino art history; his professor answered, “There is no Filipino art history” (Magsino). From what you’ve learned these past two weeks, why did the professor say that? As an artist, teacher, and activist, Villa worked to “create” Filipino and Filipino American art history. What other histories do you think need to be uncovered and told?

Possible Extensions:

Create a Musical Playlist for Carlos Villa:

Trisha Lagaso Goldberg, one of the curators for the [Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision](#) exhibition, polled students as well as friends and relatives of Carlos Villa to create a [playlist of songs](#) for him. During the *Worlds in Collision* exhibition, visitors were able to add songs to the playlist, so that it could continue to grow.

1. Listen to the songs on the playlist. What genres, themes, or lyrics stand out? (Note: Some of the songs include explicit lyrics.)
2. Now that you’ve studied Carlos Villa’s art and influences, brainstorm songs you could add to the playlist that might relate to his life, his work, and his legacy.
3. Create your own class playlist for Carlos Villa!

Unit 2: “Worlds in Collision” Proposal and Symposium

“[W]e must recognize that the organized identity groups in which we and others find ourselves are in fact not monolithic but made up of members of different and perhaps competing identities. Rather than viewing this as a threat to group solidarity, we should view it as an opportunity for bridge building and coalition politics.” (Crenshaw 76)

Objectives:

- Understand the importance of Carlos Villa’s work to prioritize and spotlight artists who are underrepresented.
- Apply Villa’s methods in creating a student symposium uplifting the work of artists from underrepresented communities today.

Grade Levels: Grades 9-12, College

Unit Duration: Three weeks of classes, including homework (one week to explore online exhibitions on Philippine art and research chosen artist; one week to write and present proposals for peer feedback; one week to revise proposals and present artists at class symposium)

Introduction: Carlos Villa organized an iconic series of exhibitions, symposia, curricula, publications, and web projects under the "Worlds in Collision" umbrella, from 1976 until his passing in 2013. These projects and conversations addressed multiculturalism, education, activism, and identity politics with the intention of shaping a more inclusive art world and art history. Specifically, “Worlds in Collision” sought to exhibit work of women artists and artists of color from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In this activity, you will pretend that you are part of the group organizing this year’s “Worlds in Collision” symposium, and you will need to find an artist who fulfills this event’s mission. You will also learn what inspired Villa to explore what “multicultural” means based on a video about curating and collecting Filipino art in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Content Standards (California):

Historical and Social Sciences (Grade 9-12):

HSS 10.4.2: Discuss the locations of the colonial rule of such nations as England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Portugal, and the United States.

HSS 10.4.3: Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.

Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View

HSS.9-12.2: Students identify bias and prejudice in historical interpretations.

HSS.9-12.3: Students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors’ use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications.

Historical Interpretation

HSS.9-12.1: Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.

Materials:

- Internet access, for exploring Asian Art Museum’s Google Arts and Culture resources and for completing research on a chosen artist.
- Access to a slideshow application such as PowerPoint or GoogleSlides.
- A way to project or share slideshows with the whole class.

Vocabulary:

Imperialism: state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas.

Western Colonialism: a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world.

Multicultural: the inclusion of the views and contributions of diverse members of society while maintaining respect for their differences and withholding the demand for their assimilation into the dominant culture.

Procedure:**Weeks 1-2***Looking at Art*

Students can work in pairs or small groups to do the following:

1. Explore the following online exhibitions on the Asian Art Museum’s Google Arts and Culture website:

[*Philippine Art*](#), including the video, *Filipino Community Voices, Bay Area* (be sure to watch the video before leaving this webpage)

[*Stephanie Syjuco’s “Fixed Focus \(Dead Center\)”*](#)

[*Santiago Bose’s “Native Song”*](#), including the video in which curator Natasha Reichle discusses this art work

2. Look closely at the art images, read the accompanying background information, and discuss:

- What’s going on (happening) in each artwork? What do you see in the artwork that makes you say that?
- What does the artwork make you wonder?
- Go on to explore the following questions from Thea Quiray Tagle and Jevijoe Vitug’s [blog](#) for their Spring 2015 course *Carlos Villa: Predecessors, Contemporaries, Legacies* at the San Francisco Art Institute:

In Carlos Villa’s critique class in 2009, before students presented their work, he always asked these questions- “For whom?” and “What for?”
–“For whom?” What is the work all about? Is the work intended for oneself, for the society (immediate environment, current social issues or concerns) or history (like paying homage to your past or investigating historical past that have been largely forgotten)?

–“What for?” What is the intention of the work that is relevant to the artist, in response to his/her immediate environment? What was the rationale of the artist? Or what triggered the artist in making such a work in that particular moment?

As individual students:

3. Write a reflection on what you learned from the online exhibitions and your discussions. Your reflection should address the following questions:
 - Why is it important to include and collect Filipino art?
 - What are the challenges faced by Filipino and Filipino American artists?
 - How might art be a way to confront and work through those challenges? Give examples from the online exhibitions.

“Worlds in Collision” Proposal

As a whole class:

1. Discuss: Introduce who Carlos Villa is by reading his biography (on p. 3 of this packet, or, if the class did Unit 1 in this packet, review his life story) and discuss the mission of his [“Worlds in Collision”](#) project.
 - How does the video, *Filipino Community Voices, Bay Area*, connect to “Worlds in Collision”?
 - Are there other communities of artists that are not well known or represented?
2. Research: Based on the class discussion and your own reflections so far, go on the Internet or the Asian Art Museum’s [Education Resource Portal](#), and find an artist (living or deceased) who could be featured in a new “Worlds in Collision” symposium.
3. Activity: Pretend that you are part of the group organizing this year’s “Worlds in Collision” symposium. Write a proposal that argues why the artist you chose fulfills this event’s mission and should be featured. Your proposal should include:
 - The artist’s name and a brief biography;
 - The proposed artist’s relevance to “Worlds in Collision” symposium’s mission and the Asian American experience and/or another underrepresented group’s experience;
 - At least one example of their artwork and its relevance to the symposium’s mission;
 - Your interest about this artist and their artwork;
 - (Optional) The artist’s work in social justice or civic engagement;
 - Works Cited and Image Credit.

Week 3

Peer Reviews and Proposal Revisions:

1. As a class, create a rubric for approving the class’s symposium proposals. What criteria does an “accepted” proposal need to meet?

2. In small groups, share your proposals and use the agreed-upon rubric to give your peers feedback. How might they improve their proposals so that their chosen artists can be highlighted at the symposium?
3. Revise your proposal based on your peers' feedback. Then prepare a slideshow on your artist to present at the class symposium. Your slideshow should be between 5-10 minutes long and should be a combination of bullet points and images that convey why your artist should be recognized.

Symposium:

1. Give every student a chance to present on their artist and answer questions from the audience.
2. After all of the presentations have been given, discuss:
 - Who gets to decide which artists become famous or celebrated? What factors affect whether an artist gets noticed for their work?
 - How has Western colonialism and the Western art history canon impacted the lives and work of the artists discussed in this symposium?
 - If the artist was/is someone whose family immigrated to the United States, how was their life and art impacted by their experiences trying to integrate into “American” culture?
 - How can we uplift more artists from underrepresented communities? How does doing this impact those communities?

Possible Extension:

The Asian Art Museum’s *Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision* exhibition included works by artists who name Villa as an important influence and who have furthered his efforts to spotlight underrepresented voices. Learn about the installations below to understand Villa’s legacy as an educator, mentor, and activist. Apply Villa’s own teaching questions to these works: “For whom?” are these artworks and “What for?”

[*Caryatid \(Pacquiao\), 2015*](#), by Paul Pfeiffer
[Watch a segment](#) of *Caryatid (Pacquiao)*.

[*TNT Traysikel, 2019-2020*](#), by Michael Arcega and Paulo Asuncion
 Watch “[Discovering TNT Traysikel](#)”

[*Chatsilog Revisited, 2010, 2021*](#) by [Mail Order Brides \(M.O.B.\)](#) (Reanne Estrada, Eliza Barrios, Jenifer Wofford)
 Watch [Chatsilog](#).

[*THE STEP UP: WORLDS IN COLLISION, 2022*](#), by Lian Ladia and Sherwin Rio.

Unit 3: Identity Zine

“Zine-making remains a cornerstone for marginalized voices disseminating information and publishing creative work about things they love.” ([The Creative Independent](#))

Objective: Create a zine to reflect and critically consider identities and the relationship between identity and context.

Grade Levels: Grades 6-12, College

Unit Duration: One week of classes, including homework

Introduction: After Carlos Villa moved back to the Bay Area from New York, he continued to explore his identity as a Filipino American. In college, he studied Pacific tribal art traditions and incorporated their materials and formats to his art. From his research, he began to understand the complexities of Filipino traditions, as much of Filipino culture is layered with Western, Asian, African, Indian, and Oceanic cultures due to colonialism, war, and imperialism. As a result, he expanded his work to explore what cultural diversity and multiculturalism mean.

In this activity, you will begin to express your identity / identities in a visual format through a zine, a homemade booklet of various images, texts, and messages.

Content Standards (California):

Visual Arts:

- 1.2.1: Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.
- 1.2.2: Make art or design with various art materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.
- 1.2.3: Apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process.
- 1.2.6: Formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art.
- 2.3.2: Repurpose found objects to make a new artwork or design.
- 2.3.5: Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance.
- 2.3.8: Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.

Materials: Video, "[Carlos Villa and How I became an Artist August 2011](#)"; Video, "[How to Make a Zine](#)"; Blank piece of 8.5in x 11in paper; Scissors; Writing utensils; Glue or tape; Images to use for a collage.

Vocabulary:

Intersectionality: the ways that race, gender, sex, sexuality, class, identity, and other factors work together to create someone’s situation in a way that is multiplicative and not additive in its effects of access to power or oppression. A framework to understand how inequality and oppression occur on a multidimensional basis.

Zine: a homemade booklet of various images, texts, and messages that can be circulated among a small audience.

Procedure:

Introduction

1. Read the introduction and brief biography on Carlos Villa.
2. Watch "[Carlos Villa and How I became an Artist August 2011.](#)"
3. Discuss what identity means, the different identity groups, and intersectionality.
 - a. What may be some reasons why Villa wanted to focus on his identity as a Filipino American in his art?
 - b. How can artists investigate and express ideas about identity in their work?
 - c. How can art connect people from different identity backgrounds?
4. Discuss what a zine is and why it has become such a popular means of communication..

Prepare Your Zine Content

1. Brainstorm: Consider how you identify yourself.
 - a. Write down words that describe your identity / identities. These will be your keywords.
 - b. Find or draw images that complement your keywords.
2. Research: Based on what you brainstorm, search on the internet your keywords.
 - a. Can you find any history that can help contextualize your identity? How do they contribute to your identity?
 - b. Are there new words you never considered before that describe you?

Make a Zine

1. Watch "[How to Make a Zine](#)" by [Art Speak](#).
2. Follow the steps in the video to create your zine template.

Design Your Zine

1. Using a mixture of words and images, answer the following questions based on the page number of your zine:
Page 1: What part of your identity do you think people first notice about you?
Page 2: What part of your identity are you most comfortable sharing with other people?
Page 3: What part of your identity are you least comfortable sharing with other people?
Page 4: What part of your identity is the most important to you?
Page 5: For what part of your identity do you feel you receive privilege for most often?
Page 6: What do you want to learn more about your identities?
2. Decorate the cover and back of your zine.
3. Share your zine!

Options:

- Use the [Identity Zine template](#) inspired by artworks shown in the 2022 *Carlos Villa: Worlds in Collision* exhibition at the Asian Art Museum.
- Other Carlos Villa-inspired activities that explore the theme of identity:
 - [Design Your Own Personal Cloak](#)
 - [Pen a Pantoum](#) (poetry-writing activity)

Resources

General Resources

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Cover Page and Biography

Image Credits:

Carlos Villa, 1980, by Mimi Jacobs (1911-1999). Photographic print. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 5034.

Maturing, 1979, by Carlos Villa (American, 1936-2013). Acrylic, feathers, mirror fragments, Rhoplex, and blood, on unstretched canvas. *Crocker Art Museum, gift of the artist*, 1980.70. Photograph courtesy of Saint Mary's College Museum of Art.

Ritual, 1970–1971, by Carlos Villa (American, 1936–2013). Mixed media on unstretched canvas. *Estate of Carlos Villa*. Photography © Estate of Carlos Villa. Photograph by Jay Jones.

Unit 1: *Roots and Rituals: A Timeline of Carlos Villa*

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