



WOMEN ON THE RISE!

TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS: Ellen Gallagher

THEMES:

- Pre-Civil Rights era African American experience
- Identity as unfixed/transformative
- Beauty products
- Collage

FEATURED WORKS:

DeLuxe (2004-2005), *Excelento* (2004), and *Preserve* (2001)

RESOURCES:

Links to images

- <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/gallagher/index.html>
- <http://www.gagosian.com/artists/ellen-gallagher/exhibitions/>

Books

- *Preserve: Ellen Gallagher* (2001): The Des Moines Art Center
- *Ellen Gallagher* edited by Jessica Morgan (2001): D.A.P./ICA Boston
- [Special Edition Book] *Ellen Gallagher: Murmur* (2005): Scalo Publishers
- [Special Edition Book]: *Ellen Gallagher: Excelento* (2005): Gagosian Gallery

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- View Art21 segment on Ellen Gallagher and pose related discussion questions to students (optional) <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/gallagher/index.html#>
- Generate questions on process stemming from the Gallagher images you highlight. What do you think Gallagher used as materials in this work? How do you think she was able to attach them to the image? Why do you think that this particular advertisement drew her attention? What is it trying to sell? How? What language and images are being used to draw in the consumer? What cultural values are revealed in the advertisement?
- Do you believe that items such as wigs, hair dye, make-up, clothing, etc. can help a person transform their identity? Is identity open to change or is it fixed? Is it possible to change who you are or who people believe you to be?

MATERIALS FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT: Ellen Gallagher

Sculptural Collage

- Crayola Model Magic multi-colored clay
- Construction or other heavy paper
- Photocopies of beauty ads
- Stick glue
- Self-stick wiggle eyes

PROCEDURE FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT:

Ellen Gallagher's collages are the inspiration for this project.

- Instructor will cover the eyes of models in beauty advertisements with White Out or white paint.
- Instructor will make photocopies of the altered ads to create a set for the class.
- Students will choose an image and glue it to a piece of heavy paper.
- Modeling clay will be used to alter the advertisement (students can create shapes, textures, and patterns). Students will need to apply stick glue to the area where they wish to apply modeling clay *before* affixing the material to the image.
- Students will also add self-stick wiggle eyes to the collage.
- The class can install the images in a grid formation

APPLICABLE NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS (GRADES 5 -12):

- NA—VA.5-8.1 (9-12.1): Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- NA—VA.5-8.3 (9-12.3): Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- NA—VA.5-8.4 (9-12.4): Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures



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STUDENT HAND OUT: Ellen Gallagher

Ellen Gallagher (b. 1965—Rhode Island)

Ellen Gallagher lives in New York City and Rotterdam, the Netherlands. She works in the mediums of collage, drawing, and film. Her work explores African American history and the complex nature of identity. Some of Gallagher's works are informed by her experiences as a bi-racial woman with a mother of Irish heritage and an African American father.

Gallagher never planned to be an artist when she was working as a carpenter. Her interest in art began in college, where she enrolled in a *Sea Semester* program where students studied **microscopic** underwater organisms. The watercolor paintings she created for her research projects inspired her to study art at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts.

One of her best-known projects is titled *DeLuxe* (2004—2005). In *DeLuxe* Gallagher used beauty advertisements from magazines such as *Ebony* and *Black Digest* from before the **Civil Rights era** (late 1950s-early 1960s) to create **sculptural** collages. The artist **altered** these advertisements by cutting the eyes out of the people in them, creating exaggerated wigs with clay, and painting designs over the image. Many of the advertisements Gallagher chose to transform were selling skin-whitening creams and wigs to African Americans. The artist used these advertisements to illustrate how many African Americans felt pressured to change or “whiten” their appearance in order to feel accepted in American society at the time. Gallagher recognizes the pain associated with these beauty products, which aimed to make African Americans feel that their skin color and hair texture were “problems.” However, she believes that wigs can be empowering by allowing the wearer to take on different identities. For Gallagher, wigs can act as **transformative** tools that allow people to look beyond rigid notions of race.

Vocabulary

Alter -To change.

Microscopic - So small as to be invisible without the use of the microscope.

Civil Rights era - A period in American history (late 1950s-early 1960s) when African Americans organized protests in an effort to eliminate discrimination and gain equal rights.

Sculptural – Appearing three dimensional.

Transformative -The act of changing from one thing into another.