

RiverArtsFest, Inc.
Art Education Conversations: Richard A. Lou and Jennifer Shiberou

Artist Richard Lou

Richard Alexander Lou was raised in San Diego, California, and in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Richard grew up in a biracial family which was spiritually and intellectually guided by both a Chinese father and a culturally affirming Mexicana mother. Educated at Southwestern College, Chula Vista, California, receiving an A.A. in Fine Art in 1981; California State University at Fullerton, receiving a B.A. in Fine Art in 1983; and Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, receiving an M.F.A. in Fine Art in 1986. As a Chicano Artist, his work explores family stories and the experiences of his community. Lou has exhibited in venues throughout the U.S. and internationally. His artwork has been published and/or cited in various newspapers, magazines, catalogs, electronic media, and over 30 books. Lou served for a total of 29 years as department Chair at three institutions of higher education, eight years at San Diego Mesa College, six years at Georgia College, and 15 years at the University of Memphis. Lou has curated/organized over 50 exhibitions and continues to produce and exhibit while teaching in the Department of Art at the University of Memphis.

- Richard Lou: Stories on My Back <https://crosstownarts.org/calendar/richard-lou-stories-on-my-back/>

Art Educator Jennifer Shiberou

Jennifer Shiberou is the Visual Art and Theatre Instructional Advisor for Memphis-Shelby County Schools with 20 years of teaching experience. She received a B.F.A. in graphic design from the University of Memphis and went on to pursue her teaching certification. She was named the 2021 West Tennessee Art Teacher of the Year by the Tennessee Art Education Association and the 2020 Middle School Teacher of the Year by Shelby County School District. Mrs. Shiberou has been recognized for the work done with students on the topic of social justice including racism, the Holocaust, poverty in Memphis, immigration, and human trafficking. Her students' work has been displayed across the community at the Benjamin Hooks Memphis Public Library, the Memphis City Hall of Mayors, the Jewish Community Center, Facing History and Ourselves, the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, and virtually as part of the Social Justice Sewing Academy. She is committed to teaching her students to not only develop high-quality technical abilities, but to use their art skills as a voice for justice.

- Colonial Middle Art Students Learn How to Become Activists Through Quilting <https://www.localmemphis.com/video/news/education/colonial-middle-art-students-learn-how-to-become-activists-through-quilting/522-544c457f-0006-4180-bd5c-45c263b89cdd>
- The Art of Understanding <https://www.watchlovework.org/the-art-of-understanding/>

Central Theme

The central theme of our Art Education Conversation is art as protection. We discussed the commonality of our large multi-cultural families and how that love served as a protection that we carried with us in our daily lives. Through our art project we aimed to create a physical representation of that protection in the form of wearable armor that outlined the stories of our families' heritage. As inspiration for our pieces, we looked to artists who create wearable art including Nick Cave, Meryl McMaster, and Yinka Shonibare. We also looked to triptychs during the Middle Ages and the Mexican tradition of making home altars. In our conversation, we discussed the armor as a form of wearable altars to the love, hard work, and sacrifice of our family members from the past to the present.

Key Understandings

- Familial bonds and stories shape our identity.
- We all feel a need to love, honor, and protect our families.
- Art can be a protective and healing force.

Key Vocabulary

Narrative art- art that tells a story

Wearable art- individually designed and crafted works of art meant to be worn

Talisman- magical object designed to repel harmful or evil forces, or to heal

Sculpture- art worked into 3 dimensions by carving, assembling, modeling, or casting

Assembling- art made by combining different materials together, often found objects

Armature- an underlying, unseen skeleton or framework used to provide support in a sculpture

Nick Cave- (b. 1959) American sculptor, dancer, performing artist, and professor noted for his creation of Soundsuits

Meryl McMaster- (b.1988) Canadian photographer whose work explores her Indigenous (Plains Cree member of the Siksika Nation) and European (British/Dutch) descent

Yinka Shonibare- (b. 1962) British-Nigerian artist who examines race, class, and cultural identity through the medium of sculpture, painting, and photography

Triptych- a work of art divided into three panels usually hinged together, often used to tell a narrative

Home altar- practice of setting up photos and mementos as an expression of faith, art, and cultural heritage, often to honor family members

Prompts to Spark Discussion

- What familial stories have shaped your identity?
- What images, objects, or people are symbolic of you and your family?
- What physical forms can artwork take to create protection?

Links to Additional Resources

- **Artist Nick Cave** - from Public Delivery, most visited arts nonprofit online. Nick Cave's Soundsuit sculptures: Everything you need to know. <https://publicdelivery.org/nick-cave-soundsuits/>
- **Artist Meryl McMaster** - <http://merylmcmaster.com/>
- **Artist Yinka Shonibare** - <https://yinkashonibare.com/>
- **Triptych Art** - <https://drawpaintacademy.com/triptych/>
- **Home Altars** – from the Texas State Historical Association, an independent nonprofit since 1897. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/home-altars>

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