

Title of Session: Arts and Literacy: Art21

Moderator: BJ Berquist

Guest Speaker: Jessica Hamlin

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BJ: Welcome to the Arts and Literacy discussion

BJ: our special guest today is Jessica Hamlin

BJ: from Art:21

BJ: before we begin, a couple housekeeping notes

BJ: if you're new to Tapped In discussions, click on the Actions menu in the top right of this chat window and highlight DETACH

BJ: we usually start the discussions in Tapped In with introductions

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

JeffC: Hi, I'm an educator, and on helpdesk here... always like to learn something new... I'm in Oregon.

ClaytonK: I'm an art teacher in southern Texas

DwightJ: I'm a physical education teacher in Washington State and I'm new to this site.

JessicaGst1: My name is Jessica Hamlin and I am the Director of Education and Outreach for Art21, I developed much of the Web-based educational materials we'll look at today. Thanks for joining in the discussion!

JessicaGst1: I thought that we might start out at the Education index page for the Art21 site and we could look around at a couple of the pages:

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/education>

BJ: . o O (click on the hyperlink to open a new window)

JessicaGst1: does everyone know how to get to open web pages from this window?

JessicaGst1: is anyone familiar with Art21 the PBS series and/or our Web site?

BJ: I skimmed the site last month for the arts and lit discussion, Jessica

BJ: Clayton, were you at that discussion?

JessicaGst1: anyone else?

ClaytonK: I've used other portions of the PBS site, especially when Chihuly came to town

ClaytonK: hmmm. not sure BJ

JessicaGst1: it's interesting how PBS is set up - we are a site within the PBS site but we are actually a separate, independent production company and education organization.

JessicaGst1: since it seems that few people have seen the site or know the organization, a quick introduction:

ClaytonK: Jessica....do you have anything to do with the Photographic Eye listing on the PBS site?

JessicaGst1: Art21 is a non-profit organization dedicated to introducing broad public audiences a diverse range of artists working in the US today.

JessicaGst1: we do that in several ways - through the PBS series, our Web site, educational materials and programs, and books.

JessicaGst1: No, we are not related to the Photographic Eye, what is it?

ClaytonK: an educational series on photography...focused on current photographic artists to teach photography concepts

ClaytonK: it ran on PBS for about 8 - 10 weeks

JessicaGst1: Our educational materials are designed to introduce contemporary art, specifically for the classroom and they are designed with interdisciplinary, thematic instruction in mind.

JessicaGst1: Hmm, I haven't seen that. PBS has such a wide range of wonderful programming.

JessicaGst1: Does everyone have the Web site <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education> open?

ClaytonK: I drink tea every morning out of my "Mystery" mug <<chuckle>>

BJ nods.

DwightJ: Yep

ClaytonK: Clayton nods

JessicaGst1: I was going to point out how the resources in the site are organized and show you a couple of lessons ideas and teacher projects

JessicaGst1: the navigation at the top - the stuff in blue specifically links to ways the education material on the site is organized.

BJ: sounds like a plan, Jessica!

JessicaGst1: lessons in the library are designed to help teachers address thematic ideas and make connections to other subject areas including language arts and social studies.

JessicaGst1: Using the sub-navigation links, teachers can search for lesson ideas by artist, by topic, or by subject area.

JessicaGst1: the introductory page for the online lessons found on the site is:

JessicaGst1: <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/onlinelessonlibrary.html>

ClaytonK: hmmm ... like the way the lessons are arranged ... hits the ways I search for ideas

JessicaGst1: I am always curious about how teachers search the web for resources...

JessicaGst1: I'm also interested in addressing thematic teaching - do you often use themes in your teaching?

ClaytonK: personally, I look for images mostly, that revolve around the theme or lesson I already have in mind. Otherwise, I look by artist or media/theme

JessicaGst1: so you start out with a particular artist who you'd like to focus on and go from there. anyone else?

BJ: I prefer establishing the theme first

JessicaGst1: one of the things I'm also curious about are themes that are relevant to what teaches are teaching. In trying to reach teachers beyond just the visual arts, we tried to make those themes really compelling to a broad range of curricula.

BJ: one of the threads on the artsednet has been art and music

JessicaGst1: when you hit the 'search the online lesson library' button, you will get a drop down menu of subject areas and topics. I'm curious to hear your thoughts about the topics we've included.

ClaytonK: most of my thematic units pair up with the language arts department, centering around the novel the kids are reading

JessicaGst1: these would be "individuals and collectives" "war and conflict" "the natural world" etc.

JessicaGst1: interesting about the themes paired with the language arts department - what kinds of themes do you work with?

ClaytonK: I like the abstract unit ... I have a devil of a time getting the idea across to some of my students

JessicaGst1: one of the lessons I'd like to show you is a language arts based lesson looking at the work of the artist Kara Walker.

JessicaGst1: you can visit the lesson by going to <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/war/lesson3.html>

JessicaGst1: Kara Walker's work deals with images from the antebellum south and slavery and much of her narrative is taken from the book *Gone With the Wind*.

JessicaGst1: abstraction is a tough one to get across to students. I like to think of abstraction in lots of ways, as both a movement but also a metaphor for how we see.

ClaytonK: Walker's stuff looks similar to the work my students produced for our slavery silhouettes

ClaytonK: We focused on slavery in the Sudan ... the kids had an evening where we raised money to free slaves there

JessicaGst1: silhouettes are a great way of working with students to think about representation and storytelling without having to get involved with looking completely 'realistic.'

JessicaGst1: each lesson in the library is connected with other resources on the site about that artist.

ClaytonK: definitely, many of my more uptight kids really got into the project because the silhouette let them relax

JessicaGst1: for Kara Walker there are accompanying pages that have transcripts from interviews with her about her work, and more images of other artwork

JessicaGst1: if you look through the lesson, everything in white is a link to another site or to an entry in our online glossary.

JessicaGst1: yes, we have received 3 different projects from teachers all over the country that have used Kara

JessicaGst1: Walkers' work and the silhouette to have students look at issues relevant to history or to themselves and current events.

JessicaGst1: Does anyone have any comments about the lesson or the resources?

BJ needs a minute to look some more

JeffC: I'm just soaking up the info... trying to bookmark these sites... not an art teacher ya know... though I could play one on tv some day.

JessicaGst1: I feel that way sometime too!

BJ: Jeff, your input is very important

JessicaGst1: sorry to rush you, I forget that you're looking for the first time!

BJ: because of all the funding cutbacks, many schools don't have art teachers

JessicaGst1: I also wanted to mention that there are video clips on the site too that you can download.

JessicaGst1: these are based on the complete series that is broadcast on PBS.

ClaytonK: really like the clips from the artists...helps to convince the kids that art is made by living folks not just "dead guys" as they like to refer to the artists we study

BJ: sometimes teachers from other disciplines need to use the arts to meet the needs of their students

JessicaGst1: the funding for arts education is really tough, with no relief in sight.

BJ: I like the glossary

JeffC: I helped facilitate an "Arts Literacy" program that was staffed by volunteers a few years ago at my son's elementary school. I built the website based on their "Artist of the Month."

JessicaGst1: that's why we hope that resources like these support teachers in all areas to bring the arts into their teaching.

JessicaGst1: wow, the artist of the month sounds great - did you focus on student artists, local artists, or past artists?

BJ: I think the art:21 resources make the arts much more approachable by non-art teachers

ClaytonK: I like the focus towards a particular core curriculum, I like to push our core teachers to use the arts to get their lessons across

JessicaGst1: I'm glad you like the clips - the series is really about letting artists talk for themselves about what they do

ClaytonK: that would be the hook for my students ... they want to hear other people talk about their art

JessicaGst1: we've started with the core areas but I do hope that eventually we are able to branch out to all subject areas including math, science, health, etc.

JeffC: It wasn't me who did it... it was the volunteers... they did quite a few... Monet, Escher, others...

ClaytonK: math and tessellations ... my one big math success

JessicaGst1: we really see all the artists in the series as creative role models - for both kids and adults!

JessicaGst1: yes, that's a great connection (between math and tessellations).

JeffC: I'd just get images from the net and put them together with the artist's biography... the students also did artwork I think... but we really didn't get their work online.

JessicaGst1: there are so many possibilities, I just have to find the time to research them all!

JessicaGst1: I'm curious about the topics I mentioned before.

JeffC: I have quite a few fractals on my computer that I use as wallpaper.

JessicaGst1: did everyone get a chance to look at the list of topics that are included in the blue drop down menu?

JeffC just looked at the John McEnroe video clip.

JessicaGst1: the celebrity introductions are designed to get those folks who might not necessarily think they're interested in art - hooked!

JeffC: I'm really impressed at how you have worked at integrating art with the different subject areas... as you say... a must nowadays.

JessicaGst1: thanks!

JeffC: BJ... do you have this site backflipped?

JessicaGst1: what's backflipped?

JeffC: I often point people to BJ's Art site at backflip... my art resources aren't nearly as extensive. Backflip is an online bookmark site.

JeffC: I use mybookmarks.com ... you can see mine at

<http://www.mybookmarks.com/public/coops>

JessicaGst1: huh! I feel so technologically behind! I just use the ones at the top of my internet browser bar.

JeffC: BJ's is <http://www.backflip.com/members/bjberquist>

BJ: the advantage to online bookmarks is that you can access them from any computer, Jessica

JeffC: lol... that's what we're all here for Jessica... to create a collaborative pastiche of information.

JessicaGst1: do you teach interdisciplinary lessons or units with social studies or other subject areas?

JessicaGst1: I find that teachers are only able to do interdisciplinary work if the school is really supportive.

JeffC: I'm going to put your site in both my Arts and Social Studies folders... of course... they could go in others as well.

JeffC: Or if you can pigeonhole them into some sort of NCLB Standard (ugh).

JessicaGst1: that's great - spread the word! I also love to get feedback. we're always trying to hone our materials to best meet teacher interests and needs.

ClaytonK: yes, I also try to center some of my lessons to influence the core classes ... my Art 2's built life-sized sculptures for core teachers to help get some of their points across

JessicaGst1: there are places to submit comments and even to send in your own lesson based on the artists we feature in the series.

JessicaGst1: eventually we are also planning on having chat rooms for teachers to be able to discuss their ideas and issues with other teachers who are interested in the same kind of contemporary content.

ClaytonK: excellent idea for the interpersonal learners

JessicaGst1: I'm curious about how familiar you (both) are with contemporary art and artists. do you use contemporary art in your teaching now?

BJ: I use anything that will get the student's attention

ClaytonK: yes, I try to introduce contemporary art and the classics to support my lessons

ClaytonK: equal time

JessicaGst1: what kinds of resources do you use to introduce contemporary art?

JeffC: Jessica... why not set up a room *here* for Art... then the art teachers could link to your room... and the resources would be there. I'm sure BJ and I would be happy to help you do that.

ClaytonK: mostly my library at home to start with ... find the artist and then off to google

JeffC: Not just art teachers of course... all teachers...

JessicaGst1: hmmm, that's an interesting idea. I'd love to talk more about that with you.

BJ: you also might want to contact Eliza Licht from PBS POV, Jessica

BJ: she's set up a couple group rooms for POV

JessicaGst1: I also wanted to point out a couple of other resources on the site - I mentioned that teachers could submit lessons - those can be found at:

JessicaGst1: <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/studentartprojects/index.html>

BJ: that's exciting, Jessica.

BJ: who did the lessons that are already in place?

JessicaGst1: I have talked with Eliza Licht - we've met a couple of times to share materials and talk about our programs. She's great!

BJ smiles..yes, she is!

JessicaGst1: all the lessons that are on the site have been submitted by teachers around the country. Some of them have participated in workshops with me, and others just submit materials independently.

JessicaGst1: one of the newest lessons that was just submitted was one based on the Kara Walker silhouettes - I think it's the second one in the list from Burrillville, RI

JessicaGst1: I'm always eager to get more submissions - to have a real diverse range.

JessicaGst1: right now it is mainly art teachers who are submitting but eventually I hope that we get other subject areas.

ClaytonK: I can't seem to get to the Burrillville site, I keep getting whoops

JessicaGst1: hmmm, there is also a link from the picture box on the right side.

JessicaGst1: hmmm, I just did the same thing. how frustrating!

JessicaGst1: it looks like PBS has given us a bad link. I can give you the site here:

JessicaGst1: <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/professional/risd/project1.html>

JessicaGst1: did that work?

BJ: I got the silhouette project

ClaytonK: yes, excellent stuff too ... we've been having gangs creep into our area and I've been thinking about doing something about violence ... this is a get starting point

ClaytonK: I love the one about gangs killing a classroom every two days

JessicaGst1: Yeah, it's amazing work, and it got incredible coverage in the local press when the school asked them to take the images down...

JessicaGst1: it looks like we're almost running out of time. are there any questions I can answer?

JeffC: What I'm wondering about is art that borders on the controversial. Personally... I'd support it in a minute... but with the paranoia in schools nowadays... how would you handle that Jessica? Especially if you're integrating art with other subjects. Did you hear about the principal in New Mexico who fired a teacher because he refused to destroy poetry that a student wrote critical of GW Bush? Art lends itself to controversial creative expression.

JessicaGst1: yes, controversial content is always an issue. I must say that I tend to lead towards trusting the teacher to address what they feel comfortable and to asking students to think critically because it's important for their learning.

ClaytonK: personal opinion ... art is to reflect our culture, and that isn't always what we want to see...and that is really hard to do with kids...

JessicaGst1: the best I can do is help teachers become informed and help them find ideas and materials that are important to them as teachers, to them as individuals, and to them as citizens.

ClaytonK: The kids are more in-tune with some of the more controversial issues than the administrators are

BJ: take a look at <http://www.backflip.com/members/bjberquist/9639445> Clayton

BJ: there are some good teaching tolerance links

JessicaGst1: and yes, the students are often so beyond the adults that really they are the ones who are often more mature than we are as we try to ban things or keep in under wraps.

ClaytonK: Thanks

ClaytonK: That has some great stuff on it

BJ: we had a speaker at one of the correctional ed conferences who was talking about Columbine and bullying

BJ: he reported that the counselors were happy to see the kids back to bullying because it meant they were getting back to normal...

ClaytonK: what a gauge of normal...

BJ: totally oblivious to the fact that the bullying is what caused the problems in the first place!

BJ: Jessica, this is one of the problems that all teachers face today...

JessicaGst1: yes, the climate is pretty bad, I know. especially in New York, where our offices are located.

BJ: we're expected to use interdisciplinary lessons, be a role model, integrate values

BJ: . o O (and teach to the NCLB tests)

BJ: somewhere in there, we're losing sight of creativity

JessicaGst1: it really is a tall order to actually be a successful teacher - but again, I put trust in teachers being able to get the 'important' stuff across.

ClaytonK: <<chuckle>> wait till Bush gets the whole country on something like the TEKS ...

BJ: I've read reports that the TEKS aren't doing do well

ClaytonK: it makes it even more difficult

JessicaGst1: I hate to sign off of a great conversation but unfortunately I will have to sign off to make a meeting "off the computer"

ClaytonK: nope ... and that doesn't stop them

BJ: Jessica, the art:21 site helps us to meet some of those requirements

JessicaGst1: I really had a wonderful time talking to you all and hope that the Web site gave you some good ideas...

ClaytonK: thank you for the great resource Jessica

BJ: thanks for joining us to talk about the site.

JessicaGst1: I'd love to be in touch with you so feel free to send comments or other info - through the Web site, it will definitely get to me.

JessicaGst1: we can also talk about chat rooms if you think there would be interest from your community.

BJ: Thanks! And you're certainly welcome to join us in Tapped In any time

JessicaGst1: have a great evening!

JessicaGst1 left the room (signed off).

ClaytonK: g'night everyone

BJ: goodnight, Clayton. Thanks for joining us