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| **E’TOWN RISING: FALL/WINTER 2011** | | | | |
| **Check-In** | **Art Share** | **Prompt/Activity** | **Work Focus** | **Comments** |
| Participants wrote a list of five things that made them happy and five things that made them unhappy. | I offered my own photography to kick-start the group activity. | * Group discussion about point-and shoot vs. SLR camera photo results * Group discussion about the connection between photography and social justice issues * Group construction of a shared space constitution and a Q & A poster about photography | Getting comfortable sharing opinions, ideas, and personal information with one another while exploring photography and its connections with social justice issues | Background music adds a nice vibe and positive energy to the room during group discussion. It allows uncomfortable silences to feel more relaxed. Pandora (the online radio station) can serve as a tool to introduce democracy into the group space: if someone likes or dislikes a song, participants can vote on whether or not it will stay on the group’s radio station. |
| Participants gave short written responses to two questions and a prompt: 1) What is one thing you would like to accomplish before your next birthday?  2) If you could relive one event, what event would it be?  3) Finish this sentence: “When I was little, I thought I wanted to be…”  Participants then volunteered to share their responses with the group. | We watched a ten-minute YouTube video called “Vivian Maier, street photographer and nanny”. | * We commented on and discussed the Vivian Maier video as a group * We prepared a series of 12 interview questions together * Participants interviewed each other in pairs and took a portrait of their interviewees | Thinking about identity, personal background, and the ways in which we frame ourselves |  |
| We discussed next session’s field trip to Northampton, as well as the Declaration of the Occupation of New York, since there was a planned demonstration in Northampton in support of Occupy Wall Street. | We looked at videos, photos, and information on various “Occupation” websites to learn more about what the events were about and why people were participating in the events. | * Imported, sorted, and exported photos with iPhoto. * Opened, edited, saved, and printed photos using Photoshop. | Learning how to research and preplan photo shoot projects, and getting familiar with standard work flows involved in digital photo processing, organizing, and storage. |  |
|  | We looked at many different protest signs being used in the Occupy Northampton demonstration. | * Participants took photos of things they found attractive or striking, and they practiced telling a story through pictures (photojournalism) * Participants briefly interviewed those involved in the demonstration, asking questions about why they were there | Community engagement, journalistic observation, self-awareness in relation to crowds in an environment where risks need to be accounted for. |  |
|  |  | * Participants explored autumn nature in Northampton, while discussing and photographing what we observed * During the photo walk, we engaged in conversation about various social justice issues: child abuse, teen pregnancy, drugs, sexism, racism, and consumerism. We discussed how the media and different cultures influence the way we come to understand and accept various perspectives and behaviors. | Being aware of light, shadows, and composition while photographing outdoors. | It would interesting to organize an in-depth, ongoing project that could move from social justice issue discussion, to photography and photography processing, to an art share, to a relevant writing activity, and finally to a presentation. |
| Participants gave written responses to the following questions: 1) What did you do over the weekend? 2) Who was the most influential person you interacted with? 3) Why is this person significant to you? 4) Where did you spend your time? 5) What ideas or events did you think about? |  | Participants went on a photo walkabout in town. They framed and created photos of: Something/someone blue, something/someone energized, something/someone new, a random occurrence, a pattern in nature, an interpretation of ‘social justice’, ‘just us’, ‘just me’, and ‘what we want to see’. | Interacting with the social and natural environment through photography, connecting with the community, and generating a sense of creative capacity with the time and resources at hand | I spontaneously engaged a woman from the community, asked her questions, told her a little about our program and what we were doing, and introduced one of the participants. This allowed me to demonstrate to the participants how one can interview, photograph, and get to know somebody in the community who has stories to share. |
| Participants responded to questions inspired by the YAC Unity party: 1) Where’s the largest space you’ve been in with a lot of people? Did it feel personal? 2) Where’s the largest space you’ve been in with a lot of people where you felt comfortable with people on a personal, interactive level? | I shared a slideshow of photos from the YAC unity party, as well as Sheppard Fairy’s book, “Supply and Demand”, and “Freedom: A Photographic History of the African-American Struggle”. | Participants made photographs with the shallowest depth of field and experimented with slow shutter speeds and moving lights. | Making aperture and shutter adjustments quickly and accurately in order to properly compose intentionally exposed photographs | It would be interesting to focus on a select few photographs and discuss them in specific ways. Though this approach could lead us in many directions because the mood of the photos influences whether we end up talking about something exciting or something serious (ex: social justice documentary photography leads to more serious discussion). |
| **E’TOWN RISING: WINTER/SPRING 2012** | | | | |
| **Check-In** | **Art Share** | **Prompt/Activity** | **Work Focus** | **Comments** |
| Participants responded to the following writing prompts: 1) Who am I? What am I about/what do I do? Who do I want to be in the future? 2) What is photography? Participants then put their names on a numbered list and took a self-portrait using a point-and-shoot camera. | I brought in Zines of various kinds and sizes to demonstrate the first project we will be working on as a group. | Participants went outside and took turns shooting through a picture frame, holding a picture frame, and modeling for each photographer. | Thinking inside and outside the frame and thinking about the multiple layers that make up a photograph. |  |
| Participants responded to the following writing prompt: What are you passionate about? What topic excites you? How does it connect you to yourself or others? Volunteers then shared their responses with the group. | I played my YouTube skateboarding video to demonstrate what I was passionate about, and I used it to illustrate how I personally got involved with photography. | Participants went on a photo scavenger hunt. They used DSLR and point-and-shoot cameras to check off each photo they took from a shot list. | Getting accustomed to using the cameras and learning about perspective, light, shadow, patterns, and other compositional considerations. |  |

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| **VIDEO VANGUARDS: FALL/WINTER 2011** | | | | |
| **Check-In** | **Art Share** | **Prompt/Activity** | **Work Focus** | **Comments** |
| Participants shared responses to the following questions: What’s your name and preferred gender pronoun? Have you been involved in Video Vanguards before? What do you like about video? If you could do anything for one day, what would it be? | We watched a segment from a Gumby video and part of a film called “Dimensions of Dialogue” by Czech surrealist artist Jan Svankmajer. | Participants made representations of themselves or of something they found exciting using molding wire and clay. This served as preparation for the short claymation video that participants would be creating in future sessions. | Experimenting with clay and acquiring immediate hands-on experience making something exciting. |  |
| Participants shared responses to the question: What do you love about yourself? | We watched a claymation called “The Mysterious Stranger”. | Participants polished up their clay figures, created props and scenery, and began putting together a claymation. | Learning how to make the clay figures interact and getting hands-on experience with different production positions. |  |
| Participants talked about dreams that they currently have or have had in the past. |  | * Participants completed camera training: They learned how to frame a shot, and learned several interview techniques. * We had a group conversation about what “We the People” and ideas of community evoke in us. We then discussed how we could translate this into interview questions. * We went to Amherst Center, and participants interviewed several people they did not know about community. | Acquiring more experience with various camera functions, engaging with ideas concerning community, and getting real-world experience working with the camera, approaching people we don’t know, and conducting street interviews. | After interviews in the community, several of the youth discussed the “foreigners” that they interviewed and commented on their English. It seems that in future discussions, it will be important to bring up the themes of identity, racism, and xenophobia that were implicit in some of the youths’ comments. |
|  |  | We had one-on-one and group conversations based on the following questions: 1) What are good and bad interviewing techniques and strategies? 2) What is community, what does it mean to you, and what communities are you a part of? | * Understanding what was successful and what was not in the previous week’s community interviews * Recognizing the diverse kinds of communities that exist and identifying which communities we are a part of * Learning how to connect with each other through peer leadership | * Taking five minutes of silence to reflect on the questions about community before engaging in the group conversation was very helpful. It allowed everyone to gather their thoughts and feel more dedicated to what we were discussing. * Pairing up youth who had never been to a session with returning youth for one-on-one activities was very successful. |
| Participants shared responses to the question: What is one of your fears? |  | Participants were introduced to FinalCut Pro. Each youth imported footage with their Mini DV tapes and practiced several editing techniques: cross dissolve, fade in from black, add text, superimpose. | Getting comfortable using FinalCut Pro and experimenting with various editing techniques. | Participants were introduced to FinalCut Pro with everyone around one computer watching what was going on. In the future, when introducing FinalCut or other editing programs, we should find a way to have the youth follow along with their own programs from the start rather than have information thrown at them without ways to fully absorb it. |
|  |  | * The group played a version of musical chairs. When the music stopped, participants paired up by chairs and answered a given question, such as: What are three smells that remind you of your childhood? When were you really afraid? * The group engaged in a writing exercise in response to the following prompt: What do I learn from the media about myself? | Having the youth challenge themselves to open up; allowing the youth to make new connections with fellow youth and interns; practicing translating thoughts into words by thinking critically about how we engage with the media and what it means to us. |  |
| Participants shared responses to the question: What’s something that you bring to Video Vanguards and what’s something that you hope to gain? |  | * Participants thought of an instance in which they were annoyed, and wrote it down on a piece of paper. We then arranged participants into three smaller groups and each group received one of the prompts that participants had written. Each group created and performed a short skit related to the prompt, and we discussed the skits afterwards. * Youth broke into their video groups, and each group answered the “who, what, where, when why” of their video projects. Mentors listened to group members’ responses and offered support/feedback. | Considering theater as a way to work out real-life scenarios and see the many layers to a single problem or situation; narrowing our focus with regard to each group’s video project. |  |
| Participants shared responses to the following questions: What’s the story behind your name? What do you like or dislike about it? |  | * We designated one side of the room to stand for yes/agree, and the other side to stand for no/disagree. We then made a series of statements and asked everyone to line up on the side that they identified with. Statements included: I am a boy; I am a girl; When I meet new people they use my preferred gender pronouns to refer to me; I have been told that I’m in the wrong bathroom; clothes are designed with bodies like mine in mind; I am afraid of walking alone because of my gender; etc. * On a large sheet of paper, we drew a box labeled “man” and another labeled “woman”. We proceeded to fill the boxes with things that we think of when someone says “you act like a girl” or “be a man”. We then discussed why there are boxes, the advantages/disadvantages of having boxes, and how certain people receive privileges based on the boxes. | Focusing on gender: how it is constructed, how certain identities are privileged, how there are more layers than what we wear and what our anatomies are that connect to gender |  |
| The group played “Where the Cold Wind Blows”. | Youth shared the self-portraits they had made using in-camera edits and at least three minutes of footage. | We arranged ourselves into two lines, with each person facing another person. We talked to the person facing us in response to a specific prompt for several minutes. One line then moved to the right and we discussed a different prompt with the new person facing us. Prompts included: When have you discriminated against someone else? When have you been discriminated against? When have you seen someone get discriminated against and done something/nothing about it? | Acquiring skills for presenting and critiquing work; considering discrimination and understanding how we participate in it; considering how discrimination takes place and how me might respond to it. |  |
|  | * We watched Grace Jones’s music video, “Jamaican Guy” and Lady Gaga’s music video, “Marry the Night”. * We watched footage from the following video artists: Naim June Paik, Kara Walker, and Bruce Charlesworth. | * In response to the music videos we watched, we had a group discussion based on the following questions: What is similar about these videos? What is different? What kind of statement do you think these artists are making? Are they successful in their delivery? What do we think about seeing this on YouTube? What would we think about seeing this in a gallery or museum? * In response to the footage we watched from video artists, we discussed what it means to make video installation as public art. I spent time explaining what exactly installation art is. | Developing an understanding of both performance art and installation art. |  |
| **VIDEO VANGUARDS: WINTER/SPRING 2012** | | | | |
| **Check-In** | **Art Share** | **Prompt/Activity** | **Work Focus** | **Comments** |
| Participants shared responses to the following questions: What have you learned from Video Vanguards thus far? What would you like to learn in the future? |  | * Mapping Identities: Participants wrote their name in the middle of a sheet of paper and proceeded to write their different identities around it. These identities were related to gender, sex, nationality, class, education, citizenship status, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Participants then drew lines between the identities that were related to each other. As a group, we discussed what connected and what didn’t. We also talked about the things our different identity maps had in common. * We began to watch the movie “Crash”. | Recognizing that our different identities are connected, and that we constantly cross paths with one another and with our work. |  |

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| **GET UP GET DOWN: FALL/WINTER 2011** | | | | |
| **Check-In** | **Art Share** | **Prompt/Activity** | **Work Focus** | **Comments** |
| Participants introduced themselves and shared their YAC affiliation and something they felt strongly about. |  | * As a group we discussed: What is YAC? What is Youth? What is Action? What is Coalition? * We had a brainstorming session concerning the theme: Who are “we, the people”? * Participants began working on a collage book cover. The front cover’s theme was “Who am I?” and the back cover’s theme was “Who are we?” |  | It might have been helpful to have a few guiding questions to stimulate thinking and discussion as participants worked on their collage book covers. |
|  | We went on a group field trip to a sculpture park at Park Hill Orchard in Easthampton. We walked around, looking at and discussing the work that we saw. |  |  | In the future, it would be nice to have a variety of structured facilitative activities when we take field trips to look at art. This would allow us to engage the youth to think critically and creatively about the work that they see. |
| Participants used clay to show how they were feeling at the moment, or to show something they felt like sharing with the group. | We read and discussed an artist statement by Kristine Yuki Aono and looked at her work. We then had a discussion about different kinds of self-portraits, racial identity, and the purpose of art (for oneself, for the viewer, must it be beautiful, must it have a purpose, etc.) | Participants brainstormed about traits related to their own self-portraits: 3 personality traits, 3 things that are important to you, and 3 groups or communities that you are a part of | Metal shop: Welding, building, etc. | It might be helpful to try different approaches to discussion (writing thoughts down, talking with a partner, etc.) to get more involvement from youth that are reluctant to participate. |
| * Participants shared responses to the following prompt: Tell us about a time you met someone and had an interesting conversation or connection. * We played the game “Guess Who”: Participants each wrote down two things that nobody in the group knew about them and we tried to guess who wrote what. |  | * One participant worked on a mini metal project. She took 7 pieces of square rod and 7 pieces of flat stock and welded them together any way she wanted. * Another participant worked on a portrait sculpture, and a third participant worked on creating a box for her cat portrait sculpture. |  |  |
| Participants shared responses to the following questions: How did it feel to work in the shop at first and how do you feel now? What are you thinking about or working on lately? |  | Mini-critique: We set up a sheet of paper for each project, and participants went around the room and wrote down words, comments, and phrases that came to mind as they looked at each project. Everyone got some meaningful feedback on their work. |  |  |
| Participants each shared something unfair that they had noticed in their communities lately. |  | * We brainstormed a collective definition of social justice. We discussed what we thought each word means and what the concept makes us think about. We then reviewed and discussed dictionary definitions of social justice. * Problem Tree Activity: We collectively created a problem tree with the leaves representing social problems, the branches representing institutions, the trunk representing systems, and the roots representing underlying problems, values, etc. We then discussed where we saw ourselves on this problem tree and whether we were part of this structure or not. We discussed the idea of prejudice + power = racism. |  | In the future, I might think of ways to make the actual tree-making part of the activity more interesting and aesthetically compelling. |
| Participants responded to the question: If you could go away on a vacation to anywhere on Friday, where would you go and what would you do? |  | * Participants listed their ideal job ideas in response to the question: what would you want to do? Participants also wrote about why they liked each idea * Participants listed ideas of what comes to mind when they think of work. * Participants listed ideas and created a drawing of what comes to mind when they think of economy. We then discussed how we felt about these things, grouping our feelings into an optimistic, pessimistic and neutral category * We discussed co-ops as an alternative and played Co-opoly. |  |  |
| Participants shared responses to the prompt: Think of a brand or company you really like or dislike. What is it that sticks in your mind about their message? How do they convey that message? | We watched an advertisement called “Fair and Lovely” and a video called “American Soldier. We then discussed how things can be framed from different points of view and different perspectives. We also discussed how the compositional choices made in an image affect what is perceived. We used the TV tool to analyze different aspects of media messages. | * Transition to 2D media: We brainstormed a list of logos that were well known among participants. We then had a discussion based on the following questions: Why do these logos work as images? What does each logo tell you about the product, service, organization, or movement? What makes a logo work? * Participant began drawing their own 2D images |  |  |
|  | We looked at examples of Media Advancing Movements (ACT UP, Black Panther, Zapatistas). We discussed what images they used, where the images were developed from, how they were used, and whether or not they were effective. | Participants picked 3 shapes to cut out in stencil form. They arranged them in different layered patterns and either traced or spray painted over them. They worked on making bold shapes and intricate designs. |  |  |
| **GET UP GET DOWN: WINTER/SPRING 2012** | | | | |
| **Check-In** | **Art Share** | **Prompt/Activity** | **Work Focus** | **Comments** |
| Participants shared responses to the following questions: What is a hidden talent you have? Or a skill you have that we don’t know about? |  | * Bench Design: Participants doodled, shared design ideas, created cardboard models, and worked together to choose the overall shape of the design. * Donna came and talked to us about solar electricity, and options for alternative power sources in our bench design. |  | It was difficult to get everyone equally engaged in the brainstorming and designing process. |