

Program Name: We Wear Our Hearts (and Minds)  
on our Sleeves

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Artist: Sharyn Brooks Katzman

### Special Points of Interest:

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The culture of clothing includes our shoes. Many sneaker fiends keep sneakers “on ice”, saving them in just-bought condition in shoeboxes. Five years down the road, they break out their now-classic sneakers to the awe and admiration of their peers.

Other programs by this artist:

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- [Art and Culture of the Plains and Prairie Indians](#)
- [Greek and Roman Mythology](#)

### Workshop Description

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From Africa to Japan, from colonial America to today, the creation and wearing of clothing is a symbolic language. Using her clothing and object collection from around the world, Sharyn demonstrates the power of costume to convey history, geography, gender roles, cultural values, and more. Students learn to decode their own attire and get a chance to wear a kimono or Nigerian dress. Both cultural diversity and commonality are stressed as language and visual culture are decoded.

Sharyn begins the program with a slide show and follows with a presentation of her personal costume and clothing collection.

Critical inquiry is encouraged as students discover that clothes express native climates, occupations, status, family values, national identity, and even dreams and desires. Sharyn then invites the students to examine their own attire within these contexts so that they can *decode* the messages they convey.

Sharyn also traces the roots of modern clothing iconography by exploring the relationships between mythical archetypes and our fashion statements.

### Educational Objectives & Standards

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Students will:

- Be introduced to the concept that clothing reveals culture.
- Analyze pattern, animal symbolism, composition, media, design and other aspects of art fundamentals in clothing.

Behavioral Studies:

- Knows how people depend on, adapt to and change their physical settings.

Visual Arts:

- Understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture.



## Artist Bio: Sharyn Brooks Katzman

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A lecture or demonstration with Sharyn Brooks Katzman is dynamic and engaging. Sharyn holds degrees in history and art history, has written art criticism, works for museums and schools, and has a global view from living and working in various European and Asian countries. With experience in curating exhibitions and developing programs, she is attuned to a wide variety of audiences.

Formerly a printmaker, Sharyn creates jewelry and wearable art and

loves to teach at all levels. While grounded in academics and tied to curricula, her experience in local theater infuses her presentations with verve and fun. She is particularly knowledgeable in the fields of women's studies, African and African-American art, and Native American art and culture. Her programs aid critical and creative thinking, build self-esteem, encourage inquiry, and inspire ongoing study on the part of students.

### Vocabulary

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#### List of Resources:

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##### **Books:**

##### Clothing and Jewelry (Discovering World Cultures)

by Fiona MacDonald,  
Antonella Pastorelli, Ivan  
Stalio, Paola Ravaglia  
Crabtree Publishing Company;  
(June 1, 2001)  
ISBN: 0778702464

##### Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture

by Ruth P. Rubinstein  
Westview Press; 2nd edition  
(January 15, 2001)  
ISBN: 0813367956

##### Fashion, Culture, and Identity

by Fred Davis  
Press; Reprint edition  
(September 1, 1994)  
ISBN: 0226138097

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**Branding:** a trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer.

**Conformity:** action or behavior in correspondence with socially accepted standards, conventions, rules, or laws: conformity to university regulations.

**Culture:** the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.

**Garment:** an article of clothing.

**Gender:** sexual identity, especially in relation to society or culture.

**Rebellion:** an act or a show of defiance toward an authority or established convention.

**Statement:** An overall impression or mood intended to be communicated, especially by means other than words.

### Post-Workshop Activities

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1. Have students volunteer to critically analyze their own garments. How does their clothing illustrate and illuminate American culture, student culture, gender imperatives, conformity, social identity, and membership?
2. Have students bring in a few items of interesting clothing and analyze them by asking questions such as what is the garment's function, gender, climate or geography, and what does the color and pattern reveal?
3. Make a poncho from a large trash bag. Have students wear the poncho over their clothes. Ask the other students to describe the poncho-person's character. Does obscuring clothing change our perceptions of an individual's character?