

MEMORY & MAPPING



Essential Question

How do artists make meaning of memories?



Presenting Sponsors





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Essential Question

How do artists make meaning of memories? Explore this question with students using the artwork reproductions, art historical descriptions, and student discussion prompts provided. Then, transition from talking about art to making art using the following student reflection prompts:

1. What is a memory?
2. How can you recall a memory?
3. How do artists use artmaking to recall their memories?
4. What are some approaches to depicting memory in a work of art?
5. How have these artists used different approaches and media to make meaning of their memories (whether intentionally or unintentionally)?

Classroom Activity

Capture a memory using two different media.

First, recall a memory from your own life. What stands out about this memory? What symbols, landmarks, landscapes, or people come to mind when you think about this moment in time?

Next, record the symbols, landmarks, landscapes, and people in a sketch. How might you rearrange these elements to create a composition? How can your composition evoke a visual metaphor or symbolic representation of your memory? Consider how you might arrange and then re-arrange these elements in two different compositions that express the same memory.

Then, think about the best choice of media (such as painting and video, printmaking and photography) to map your memory. How will media or form enhance the qualities of your memory? How well will your choice of media communicate your visual metaphor?

After creating your two works, write an artist statement that explains your inspiration. Compare and contrast which form best captures the meaning of your memory.

Vocabulary List

Memory, symbol, landmark, landscape, composition, metaphor, media, feeling, meaning

California State Content Standards for Visual & Performing Arts

Creative Expression: Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art

Grade 8	Standard 2.5	Select a medium to use to communicate a theme in a series of works of art.
Grades 9–12	Standard 2.5	Use innovative visual metaphors in creating works of art.
	Standard 2.6	Present a universal concept in a multimedia work of art that demonstrates knowledge of technology skills.

California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration

Grades 6–12	Standard 2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
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Patssi Valdez (United States, b. 1951)
The Dream, 2000
Acrylic on canvas
© 2016 Patssi Valdez
Courtesy of the artist



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Teacher Resource Guide
Visual Arts Theme

The Dream

Patssi Valdez

Have you ever awoken from a dream, straddling a state between slumber and wake? Patssi Valdez's *The Dream* is a vivid recollection of a dream—a woman at rest while on a journey across the edge of the earth, transported from wakefulness to sleep by the power of a dream.

This painting was inspired by a dream Valdez experienced while on vacation in Tijuana, Mexico. In a house perched atop a coastal cliff, Valdez spent days on the house's jettied deck, watching the rise and fall of the tide, fishermen harnessing the day's catch, and the occasional dolphin swimming by. One evening, the rhythmic lull of the ocean ferried Valdez into a deep sleep. While submerged in a dream, she imagined she was sleeping on a four-poster bed, being swept slowly and peacefully by the ocean's current. The tilt in perspective and the moon's looming glow give the feeling she is floating on the earth's surface as the patterned path of waves carries her away. Valdez awoke from the dream disoriented with a feeling so intense she wondered when and where the dream had ended. Instantly overcome by the desire to capture this sensation in painting, she recorded the memory in a small watercolor sketch. On returning to her Los Angeles studio, she recaptured the dream on a massive 72 × 96 inch canvas, the scale of which evokes the feeling of being lost in the ocean's expanse.

The introspective nature of this work has come to characterize much of Valdez's practice, using the media of painting and collage as a tool for self-exploration, reflection, and healing.

Discussion Prompts for Students

- What do you see?
- What details make it seem as though this woman is living in a dream?
- What parts of the painting look real or true to life? What parts look imaged or dreamlike?
- What do you think this woman might be dreaming about?

See this artwork in the exhibition *Judithe Hernández and Patssi Valdez: One Path Two Journeys* at the Millard Sheets Art Center

Within a culture, a sociopolitical movement, and a profession dominated by men, artists Judithe Hernández and Patssi Valdez have each created bodies of works that profoundly influenced the aesthetic voices of Latinas in the latter half of the twentieth century. The two artists took seemingly parallel paths from their childhoods in East L. A. to their coming-of-age during the Chicano civil rights movement in the 1970s. Hernández was the fifth artist, and the only woman, invited to join the artist collective Los Four, and Valdez was a founding member, and the only woman, in the Asco group. Both went on to successful individual careers. *One Path Two Journeys* brings these two artists together for the first time in an exhibition of current and work, including a collaborative installation.



Martín Ramírez (Mexico, 1895–1963)
Untitled (Large Cowboy and Rider), circa 1950–53
Wax crayon, graphite, and artist-made black ink on pieced papers
125th Anniversary Acquisition
Partial and promised gift of Jill and Sheldon Bonovitz, 2002



MEMORY & MAPPING

Untitled (Large Cowboy and Rider)

Martín Ramírez

A proscenium of line, shape, and pattern frames this inward look into the psyche of artist Martín Ramírez. Although Ramírez is one of the most celebrated self-taught artists of the twentieth century, the circumstances surrounding his prolific drawing practice are still emerging.

Ramírez was born in Jalisco, Mexico, in 1895. During the political and economic upheaval that followed the Mexican Revolution, he moved to California seeking employment to provide for his family. He briefly worked on the railroads, but found himself unemployed and homeless following the Great Crash of 1929. Ramírez was arrested for vagrancy in 1931 and taken to Stockton State Hospital, where he was diagnosed with schizophrenia. He would spend the next—and final—thirty years of his life at DeWitt State Hospital near Sacramento, seeking refuge in scraps and hospital supplies that he transformed into art materials.

While institutionalized, Ramírez created almost 400 drawings using matchsticks as drawing instruments, crushed crayons as paints, and pieces of found paper as ground. He utilized an obsessive, repetitive mark-making technique and a visual vocabulary of pistol-wielding rancheros, donkeys, and saints. The effect is at once psychedelic and nostalgic, perhaps reflecting his internal state of mind and revealing memories of the homeland and culture he left behind. As an attempt to seek comfort amidst an unimaginable experience, Ramírez's drawings serve as a diary of his resourcefulness, resilience, and creative spirit.

Discussion Prompts for Students

- What do you see?
- What symbols of Mexican culture do you notice?
- Who is the Ranchero (or cowboy) and what might he be fighting?
- What might happen at the end of his battle?

See this artwork in the exhibition *Martín Ramírez: His Life in Pictures, Another Interpretation* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

The Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, will examine the work of acclaimed outsider artist, Mexican-born Martín Ramírez, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia in the 1930s and confined to California state hospitals for most of his adult life. During the three decades he spent institutionalized, Ramírez produced a monumental body of work consisting of intricate drawings and collages whose linear rhythm and spatial tension have been compared to the techniques of Wassily Kandinsky, Frank Stella, and Sol LeWitt. His subject matter includes horses and riders, Madonnas, saints, trains, and tunnels. This first presentation of Ramírez's work in Southern California focuses on the artist's iconography and mark making, his formal connections to mainstream modern art, and the significance of his cultural identity as a Mexican-American. It also presents, for the first time, a 17-foot-tall scroll that comprises a glossary of the artist's singular imagery and a complete visual narrative of his journey from Mexico to California in the 1920s. Recent examinations of Ramírez's psychiatric evaluations have called his diagnosis into question, allowing an opportunity to recontextualize his life and work, and navigate the unsettled territory between outsider and mainstream art, as well as Mexican and American identity.



Julio Pantoja (Argentina, b. 1961?)
Pablo Gargiulo, 20 años, estudiante de abogacía (Pablo Gargiulo, 20 Years Old, Law Student), 1996,
from the series *Los hijos, Tucumán, veinte años después* (The Sons and Daughters, Tucumán, Twenty Years Later)
Gelatin silver print
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles,
Purchased with funds provided by the Photographs Council



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Teacher Resource Guide
Visual Arts Theme

Pablo Gargiulo, 20 años, estudiante de abogacía (Pablo Gargiulo, 20 Years Old, Law Student)
From the series *Los hijos, Tucumán, veinte años después* (The Sons and Daughters, Tucumán, Twenty Years Later)

Julio Pantoja

Memories survive because they are bequeathed from generation to generation. Shared experiences, such as birth, migration, and loss, are passed down from parent to child, forming the narratives that define familial life. Photojournalist Julio Pantoja used the medium of photography to document the living memories of families affected by political upheaval in Argentina.

The sociopolitical turmoil of Argentina in the 1970s was marked by state-sponsored violence. In 1975 President Isabel Perón declared the northern province of Tucumán a state of emergency in response to an armed communist resistance. The resulting military campaign, Operativo Independencia (Operation Independence), was declared a counterinsurgency attack against a growing guerilla threat, but, in reality, targeted civilian protesters, many of whom were union workers, political activists, and university students. Under General Antonio Domingo Bussi, commander of the operation, more than 350 people disappeared.

Twenty years later, upon the democratic election of Bussi as governor of Tucumán, Pantoja tracked down the sons and daughters of political protesters who went permanently missing. He created the series *Los hijos, Tucumán, veinte años después* (The Sons and daughters, Tucumán, twenty years later) by asking the now-adult children to scout locations and source objects of meaning to their families for staging in the photographs. The resulting portraits record collective injustices faced and honor the relics of individual lives.

Discussion Prompts for Students

- What do you see?
- How might the people in this photograph be related?
- What memory do you think the sitter is trying to capture?
- Why would the photographer choose a domestic setting for this memorial portrait?

See this artwork in the exhibition *Photography in Argentina, 1850–2010: Contradiction and Continuity* at the J. Paul Getty Museum

Photography in Argentina, 1850–2010: Contradiction and Continuity emphasizes crucial historical moments and aesthetic movements in Argentina in which photography had a critical role producing, and at other times dismantling, national constructions, utopian visions, and avant-garde artistic trends. The exhibition examines the complexities of Argentina over the past 150 years, stressing the heterogeneity of its realities, the creation of contradictory histories, and the power of constructed photographic images in the configuration of a national imaginary. With significant works dating from the decade of Argentina's first constitution to the bicentennial of its independence, the exhibition includes almost 300 photographs representing the work of more than sixty artists.