



## ***Russ Marshall: Detroit Photographs, 1958–2008***

**GRADES 6-12 | EDUCATOR RESOURCE**



Russ Marshall (American, born 1940). *The Ford Rouge Plant/Neighborhood from Fort St. Overpass*, 1995 (printed 2005). Gelatin silver print; 10 × 15 5/16 in. Gift of the artist, 2012.177.

### **LEARNING TARGET**

Through a variety of experiences, students reflect on the role of art in capturing parts of themselves, their communities, and society as a whole. Using an examination of 50 years of photographs by Russ Marshall as inspiration, students create their own Photovoice Project with the intention of capturing a slice of their lives in this moment in time.

### **STUDENT OUTCOMES | STUDENTS WILL**

- Make personal connections to a variety of photographs.
- Explore tools and techniques that the photographer uses to create the composition and effects of the photographic images.
- Create a photovoice exhibition that reflects their lived experiences.
- Think deeply about what actionable responses can be taken as a result of their exhibited photography.

**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD ALIGNMENT**

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**MICHIGAN SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS**

8.2.2 Policy Concerning Domestic Issues – analyze major domestic issues in the post-World War II era and the policies designed to meet the challenges by: • describing issues challenging Americans, such as domestic anticommunism (McCarthyism), labor, poverty, health care, infrastructure, immigration, and the environment.

9.1.1 Economic Changes – using the changing nature of the American automobile industry as a case study, evaluate changes in the American economy created by new markets, natural resources, technologies, corporate structures, international competition, new sources/methods of production, energy issues, and mass communication.

**MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM**

ART.VA.II.HS.8 Explore social and global issues through the application of the creative process. (21st Century Skills: III.7, III.8, III.9, III.10)

ART.VA.III.HS.1 Analyze and describe the formal characteristics of a work of art or design. (21st Century Skills: I.3, II.1, III.1)

ART.VA.III.HS.2 Describe how organizational principles are used to elicit emotional responses. (21st Century Skills: I.3, II.1, III.1)

ART.VA.III.HS.5 Recognize and understand the relationships between personal experiences and the development of artwork. (21st Century Skills: I.3)

ART.VA.IV.HS.1 Observe and describe artwork with respect to history and culture. (21st Century Skills: I.6, II.1, III.1, III.2, III.7, III.8, III.9, III.10)

ART.VA.IV.HS.4 Use knowledge of art and design history to inform personal artwork. (21st Century Skills: I.1, I.3, II.5, II.7, III.3, III.7)

ART.VA.V.HS.5 Recognize the role of art across the academic curriculum. (21st Century Skills: I.3)

ART.VA.V.HS.8 Identify the role visual arts play in enhancing civic responsibility and community. (21st Century Skills: I.3, I.6, III.2, III.4, III.7, III.9)

**21st CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS ALIGNMENT**

Communication

Creativity

Critical Thinking

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What tools and techniques are used to tell a story?
- How does art help us to better understand ourselves? Our city? Our society?
- In what ways does your Photovoice Project reflect our current moment in time?

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

### ACTIVITY | Through Their Eyes

1. Introduce the lesson by challenging students to reflect on their more recent feeling and experiences. Ask students to find one photograph to share with the class that they feel best represents a slice of their feelings or experiences over the last 12 months. While the photograph should be school-appropriate, give students the freedom to choose a photograph by anyone other than themselves. Remind students that memes and gifs are not photographs.
2. Post the photographs in a public space and allow students some time to closely look at each one before engaging them in a conversation. Ask students to consider which three photographs speaks to them the most.
3. Lead a discussion about why students chose their particular photograph, eventually engaging students on whether they connected with a classmate's photograph as well as their own. Use the questions below to draw out responses from students.
  - Why do you feel this photograph best represents your feelings or experiences over the last 12 months?
  - What emotions have been captured in this photograph? What do you see that makes you say that?
  - What tools and techniques are used to tell a story? Consider lighting, color, angles, and cropping.
  - Which additional photographs did you connect to as you examined the selections made by your classmates? What elements of the photograph gave you that feeling of connection?
  - How does art help us to better understand ourselves? Our city? Our society?

## VIRTUAL TIP

Instruct each student to post their chosen photograph on your Learning Management System (LMS) or plugging the photos into an interactive presentation like Nearpod for a virtual gallery walk.

## DURING VISIT

The exhibition includes these sections and themes:

Everyday Detroit  
Michigan Central Station  
Eastern Market  
Sounds of Detroit  
Observing Public Life  
Tribute to the Worker  
A Lens Toward Europe, 1987–1990

## SELF-GUIDE

Using the **Russ Marshall Presentation Slides**, lead a class analysis on two or three select photographs by Russ Marshall. Alternatively, encourage students to explore the **Russ Marshall Presentation Slides** on their own. Either way, allow students time to look closely before facilitating some or all of the engagements below, depending on what fits best with your curriculum and the needs of your students.

### Art Connection

- What tools and techniques are used to tell a story?
- Who is Russ Marshall? What do you think inspired him to take these photographs?
- How is photography similar to other forms of art, e.g. painting, sculpture, music, dance? In what ways is it different?
  - o In a written piece, provide an example by comparing one of Russ Marshall's photographs with an artwork that is not a photograph. Both artworks should be on the same subject matter, or topic.

### Writing Connection

- What tone, mood, or point of view is reflected in this photograph? What details do you see that support your response?
- Creative Writing: write a short story from the perspective of a person in one of the photographs. Include details about that place and time to help add depth and realism to your story.

### History Connection

Select two photographs from the **Russ Marshall Presentation Slides** and answer the following questions:

- What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that?
- After examining when and where this photograph was taken, explain how this photograph reflects its historical context. Research three events that took place in the year leading up to this photograph being taken to help you respond to this prompt. Consider place and time.

### Music Connection

Ask students to choose one photograph that they would like to explore more deeply.

- What tone, mood, or point of view is reflected in this photograph? What details do you see that support your response?
- Choose a song that you feel reflects the tone, mood, or point of view of your chosen photograph. Write a short explanation explaining how some of the details in the photograph translate into features of your chosen song.
  - o As an extension, write lyrics or poetry to go along with part of the song.

## POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

“I'm drawn to those subjects because that's what I know. That's where I live. I exist and move around in that culture. The advice to photographers and also writers has always been to shoot and write what you know. For years and years I carried a camera with me all the time. On trips, out on the streets and hanging out with my buddies. Everywhere. I knew early on and every photographer remembers those shots that are forever lost for lack of a camera at the ready.”

— Russ Marshall, *American Elegy*, 2012

## Directions | Photovoice Project

*Please note that students will need a camera for this project. Any type of camera will work, including a smartphone or a disposable camera, but you may need to consider access before beginning this project.*

In this project, student voices are elevated through the creation of a Photovoice Project that focuses on their current lived experiences in pictures. After students analyze their own collection of photographs and those of their classmates, they are challenged to consider what has led to the moments they captured and how this understanding might lead to an actionable response.

Using any type of camera, e.g. a smartphone camera, a disposable camera, a digital camera, or a manual camera, tell students they will take a roll (roughly 24 images) of candid photographs over a two to four-week period. Depending on your curriculum, you may want to direct students to focus their projects on a specific topic, such as school culture, nature and the environment, health and wellbeing, family, community, etc. It is crucial that whatever the focus of the project, students are photographing people, places, and subject matters that are of importance to them personally.

Part of your role as facilitator will be to check in with students throughout this process. While this project can be extremely empowering for students, especially students who struggle with language and literacy, it may also reveal some serious challenges that they regularly encounter. Some students may not want to share or may feel uncomfortable exploring certain topics.

### Phase 1 | Getting Ready

It may be helpful to reach out to parents, teachers, and other community partners to elicit their support with this project. Students will need access to a camera and may need permissions to take pictures of people, places, and subject matters that require consent. Discuss this with your classes before beginning this project.

Encourage students to explore their surroundings before they begin to photograph. Suggest that students take nature walks or walks in the community and sit in new places to gain a fresh perspective on an “old” environment.

### Phase 2 | Taking Photographs

Tell students that there are many techniques to consider when taking a photograph. Hand out the student resource called **Composing a Photograph**.

Students will use the allotted amount of time to take their pictures. Remind students that if they choose to use a disposable camera or a manual camera, they will need to have the film developed.

**Phase 3 | Reflection**

Display all of the photographs taken during the reflection. This could mean printing the photographs or creating a space online for students to make close observations. Engage students in a discussion that follows the SHOWeD approach (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988), which asks:

- What do you See here?
- What is really Happening here?
- How does this relate to Our lives?
- Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist?
- What can we Do about it?

**Phase 4 | Exhibition**

Hold a virtual event to showcase student work. Create a PowerPoint or Google slide template with a space for a student's name and their two favorite photographs so that each student will have their own slide. Ask students to curate the exhibition by filling in the template with the two photographs they choose to share with the community. Invite students, parents, teachers, and other community partners to participate in this event.

We'd love to see your student's Photovoice Projects! Students can share their work with the DIA community on social media by using the hashtag #DIAPhotovoice.

## TEACHER RESOURCES

“Statement of Ethical Practice.” PhotoVoice. 2019. <https://photovoice.org/about-us/photovoice-statement-of-ethical-practice/>

T. A. Abma & J. Schrijver. ‘*Are we famous or something?*’ Participatory Health Research with children using photovoice, *Educational Action Research*, 28:3 (2020): 405-426. doi: [10.1080/09650792.2019.1627229](https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2019.1627229)

Wallerstein, N., and E. Bernstein. “Empowerment Education: Freire's Ideas Adapted to Health Education.” *Health Education And Behavior* 15 (1988): 379 –394.