

Schooling the Institution

# Lesson Plan

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# Introduction

Welcome to the first class of Schooling the Institution.



We are going to walk through the key points of today's lesson that will help you further understand how art institutions can negatively affect Black youth and the way these youth view themselves in the art world. We are also going to expand on how art institutions can support Black youth. We will touch on formats of an art institution, the importance of highlighting BIPOC artists, and provide more information to make BIPOC youth feel comfortable in an art space. We will also share the positive outcomes of visiting art galleries made for and by BIPOC artists.

This lesson is both positive and negative, do and don't. It will help generate ideas for fostering safe and inclusive art institutions.

# What You Need to Know

At our school, this is the curriculum.

*"I feel UNSAFE existing in galleries.  
[Because of] security. Policing. No  
interacting."*

We know that art spaces are racialized, and that even if Black art is appreciated, it can be **hoarded, fetishized, and inaccessible**. People in power in galleries and other institutions are usually white, and this is reflected in the spaces they create, how we feel within them, and our relationship to the arts and creative practices.

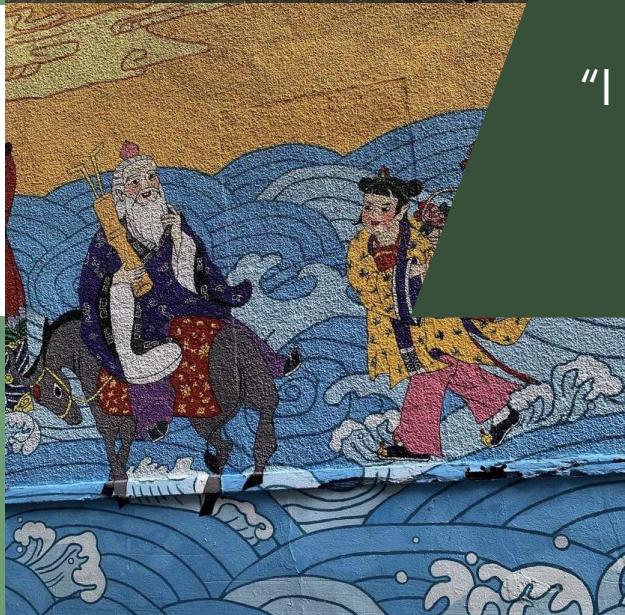


# What You Need to Know

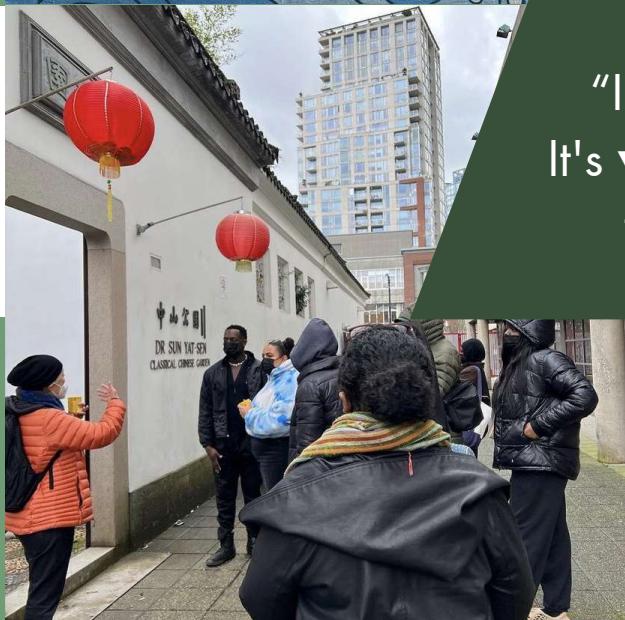


## Black Art is Hoarded...

"Really rich white curators and directors... They're **stashing** all of this amazing Black art."



"Most galleries aren't serving the **communities** they exist within."



"I feel like art is very, it's a white space... It's **white walls for white people**, and they sell the white art a lot of the time."

"It's a new change in the way we're being **exploited**."

# What You Need to Know

## Fetishized...

"[There is] a gap between Black curators versus Black artists. Black art is—as great as it is—it's there a lot because there's a lot of **pain and suffering**. But then the people curating and being like, 'Oh, I'm gonna put this in a gallery,' that's a **very white position.**"

"I make art for myself, and not really to share with anyone... My art teachers will bring up how **Eurocentric** the art curriculum is, but at the same time, they'll **perpetuate it**; all we learn is Eurocentric concepts and history."

"We have always known that Black art is good and **deserves all the attention**. But part of what a lot of Black artists are doing in their work is to **inspire other Black people** to be like 'yo, look at this, this is an option for your life.' But when [Black art] is essentially locked up in this space, that is very problematic to me."



# What You Need to Know

## ...and Inaccessible

"Internships and stuff are not really peddled towards Black people. And it's also not really **sustainable** for Black people, too. Because before I did the internship, I had to explain to my mom... there are some folks who come from a lot of money, can afford to not work, or who can afford to work for free. And just do internship after internship. And then he gets the job... I think that just really **says a lot about the art world.**"

"At some point the Vancouver Art Gallery was closing very early. And I remember thinking, '**what if I work nine to five?**' Every day, I can't go to this gallery, I can't go to most of these galleries because they close at 5pm."

“I’m more interested in occasionally the river floods these places. ‘Floods’ is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be.”  
“[In galleries] I don’t read the didactic... I feel a need to rush.”

"When we went to [museums and galleries,] I remember I was looking at all these pieces of work, and they were crazy. They were amazing... And I just kept thinking, 'oh, all of this was made but **no one can see this** stuff.'"

"My relationship with art is that I never thought it was like a serious type of thing. Like I could **actually pursue it.**"

"I just go to galleries anytime. But I think that part of what drove me to have that **confidence** is the **knowledge** I have in art."

"When I pass a gallery, I'm like, 'well, I want to go inside.' And then I always have to look at myself, and I'm like, 'oh, **am I dressed appropriately** to go into a gallery?' I don't know if that's just how galleries are in general or that's just how I perceive it because of how media has made it seem. Like [o]n TV, anytime someone's going to a gallery, it's like champagne. You know; it's like a really nice event... I don't know if it's because galleries are to showcase art which is beautiful work. There's a **setting** where it is set up that makes me feel like I have to be dressed a certain way or prepared to go into a gallery and do the walk through or whatnot."

# For Next Class

Drawing on our own experiences and collaboration with Black artists and art professionals,

we have come up with ideas and tenets that art institutions can learn from. We have come to the conclusion that representation may not be enough, that art should be accessible, that leadership of arts institutions should be accountable to the communities they serve, that timelines might be longer, and that we need zones of comfort and safety. We hope to see these lessons in action. We hope you pass our test.



# For Next Class

## Acknowledge.

**"My lived experience is my expertise**

and it is as valid as what I have learned in school."

"The arts are and have been a **vital, reflective tool** for community and cultural development, especially for BIPOC people."

"It's ok to **take risks** and go out of your comfort zone to be what you want to be in life."



## Question.

**"Who is this work for?"**

"How do we make spaces catered to us? What are the systems in action that make art spaces inaccessible? Can galleries serve us?"

How can we bring **community, intergenerational learning, joy, and resistance** to the forefront of arts spaces?"

"There's a lot of surface level work. [Which] shows how **representation can be co-opted** a lot. And like, that makes me question. Should we be fighting for representation?"

## Implement.

"Starting from a place of **comfort** and then **expanding**."

"I want **youth** like us to have access to these kinds of workshops."

"I would rather invest my time learning about **Black artists** who don't code."

"I don't want to take the art away from the **community**."



# For Next Class

## Lead.

*"In order to enact change in the art world, I must understand the SYSTEMS that are faulty and work to change those systems."*

*"Real change requires the people in power to let go of that power."*

*"I have heard that all institutions have roots and values. That water has memory and land has stories and knowledge to share. That community is built on the foundation of trust. That we look at the present as a rear view mirror. Identity at its core is political. I have learned how to question what the roots and values of institutions are and how they oppress or uplift community. That refusal and ethics are more connected than I think."*



*"Decolonization is slow. This is in direct opposition to the distribution of leadership."*

*"If the board answers to the greater community, it should be better representative of that community."*

# Conclusion

Thank you for attending our class.

We hope you took in what we are teaching. Here's a little more about the program and our curriculum.

We have an understanding of how different art institutions can look or feel. Most of us don't have an artistic background or just have a broad knowledge of art institutions, but we have knowledge. We now have answers to questions we never knew we had and chances to see BIPOC people working in a field dominated by white people. For us, this program had a lot of value. It showcased that having racialized youth involved in art institutions is more important than just having galleries open for youth. We have come to understand the potential we have to make change. We have a place in art institutions, and we are needed to change the outlook of these institutions.

We will make ourselves welcome.