

TV for Your Body

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GUIDE

HOW TO USE THE EPISODE IN THE CLASSROOM

“TV for Your Body” is about 20 minutes long and is meant to be viewed all the way through. There are four artists featured under the overall theme of bodies in contemporary art. For three of the artists, there is a prompt students can return to once the video is complete.

This guide is meant as a supplement to the episode. It expands on some of the ideas and artworks covered in the episode. While some of the sections could be shared directly with students for critical reading and discussion, they are meant to be additional research for teachers to incorporate the episode into their existing curriculum.

Teachers have used previous videos in a number of ways:

LIGHT - Assign the episode as homework and reflect on it as a bell ringer the following day.

MEDIUM - View the episode together in class. Break out into groups and invite each group to revisit a section of the video and complete the prompt.

HEAVY - On one day, view the episode together in class and complete the prompts in groups. On the following day, host an in-depth discussion or workshop based on one of the artworks or practices in the episode, developed on your own and aided with information from this guide.

For reference, full information about the artworks featured in the episode are collected below, along with big ideas, and prompts.

SEGMENT 1

Lilli Carré (American, b. 1983)

Glazing, 2021
High-definition video installation
(color, sound)
One minute, looped

Episode timestamp: 1:30 - 3:53

Big idea: Throughout history, artists have used nudity to try to convey the beauty of the human body. The kinds of bodies we see in artworks, commercials, movies and social media all influence and inform what people consider beautiful. It is great when things out in the world help you feel beautiful, but not all nudity is the same—and not all nudity is good.

Prompt: Talk with a friend or family member about a time when you saw something that made you feel good about your body, and a time when you saw something that did not feel so great.

SEGMENT 2

Emil Ferris (American, b. 1962)

Story Sequence: How Karen and DeeZ started working for Ghastly, 2019
Exhibition reproductions, six sheets

Ghastly cover paintings, 2020
Acrylic on board, sheets

Episode timestamp: 3:53 - 5:20

Big Idea: The main character in Emil Ferris graphic novel, Karen Reyes, is a queer girl in 1960’s Chicago who loves monsters, horror stories, and all things gross or scary. She depicts Karen as a wolf-girl, and, for Karen, monsters like her are not bad. They are extraordinary.

SEGMENT 3

Bianca Xunise (American, b. 1987)

“*Angry Black Girl*” *Panels 1, 4, 7, and 9*, 2020
Ink on paper

Episode timestamp: 11:25 - 16:20

Big Idea: Bianca Xunise draws comics about the ups and downs of life, as experienced by a non-binary Black femme in America. Because of how she looks, she is often policed for how she feels.

Prompt: What do you do to help yourself feel a lot less angry in your body? How do you release that?

SEGMENT 4

Christina Quarles (American, b. 1985)

Don’t They Know? It’s the End of tha World, 2020
Acrylic on canvas

Episode timestamp: 16:20 - 18:39

Big Idea: Christina Quarles paints each body part differently. When you are feeling all sorts of things, it can be helpful to slow down and try to locate where you are feeling that way. We

each carry happiness, trauma, stress, and fear differently, in different places in our body.

Prompt: If you ever have trouble managing your feelings, slow down and find them in your body. Take a few breaths and locate where in your body you most acutely feel negative or positive emotions. Try caring for them there.

TALKING ABOUT NUDITY

Bodies are not bad, inappropriate, or shameful. All bodies are beautiful and powerful and a part of our identity. There are also social and cultural norms and institutional rules about when nudity is inappropriate, or even harmful or dangerous. In school, students probably only encounter teacher-approved nudity in science class and in art class. When talking about nudity with your students, it is important to distinguish between different circumstances without stigmatizing people’s bodies or trivializing discomfort.

Before exposing your students to nudity in art, try grounding with some information and then having some discussion:

SHARE: Why is nudity permitted in some circumstances, but not in others?

It’s important to study all of the human body, whether that’s in science class to learn about how the body works, or if that’s in art class, to learn about the body’s cultural, social, and aesthetic aspects. Bodies are fascinating and beautiful, and a big part of who we are, how we experience the world, and how others experience us.

Bodies in and of themselves are not against any rules. However, when people are naked, they are vulnerable, and seeing other people naked can make you feel vulnerable. Vulnerability and vulnerable people should be protected and respected. Rules exist to protect people from being harmed or exploited when they are most

vulnerable, whether that be because they are naked, or because they’re seeing someone else naked. That is also why it important to be respectful, even if nudity is allowed. There are a few specific circumstances worth naming when nudity is particularly dangerous or harmful:

- **Consent.** If there is not explicit consent to be naked, to be seen naked, or to see others naked, nudity is dangerous and harmful because it is a violation. Always ask for consent when nudity—or any kind of vulnerability—is involved.
- **Power.** People in positions of power can influence others to do things that are not in their best interest. Nudity is dangerous and harmful when power is involved because consent can be extracted and people can be deluded. (Remember to check your power as an adult teacher before showing or talking to students about nudity.)
- **Sex.** Sexualized nudity is not necessarily dangerous or harmful, but it can be when it is also objectification (seeing and ultimately treating people as objects).
- **Diversity.** If certain body types, genders, or races are the only ones ever depicted nude, it is harmful because it distorts ideas about what kinds of bodies are beautiful, suggesting that only certain kinds should be depicted nude.
- **Vulgarity.** Since nudity is taboo in most situations, and some body parts are often sexualized, nudity can be used to deliberately shock or offend. Vulgarity isn’t always dangerous or harmful, but in certain contexts it can make people feel especially vulnerable.

Sometimes sex, like nudity, is unfairly stigmatized. How do you normalize these topics while taking their sensitivities seriously?

DISCUSS:

Artists throughout histories and cultures have made art that depicts the naked human body. Why do you think artists continue to explore this subject?

In museums, you can encounter nudity easily, usually without age restrictions or warnings. In other places, like schools, there are much stricter rules about nudity. Do you think strict rules about nudity are appropriate? Or do you think they are unfair?

All bodies are beautiful and powerful and a part of our identity.

MONSTERS & QUEER CURRICULUM

In Emil Ferris’s graphic novel *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, the main character, Karen Reyes, is a queer girl in 1960’s Chicago who loves monsters, horror stories, and all things gross or scary. She’s also an artist, and the graphic novel is written as if she were telling her own story by drawing in her notebook. Karen draws herself as a version of the Wolf Man, a character from the 1941 horror film, while she draws most other people as regular humans. For Karen, monsters like her are not bad. They are feared because they are different.

In horror movies, especially mid-20th century movies like those depicted in Emil Ferris’ *Ghastly Cover Paintings* like *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), the creatures are demonized as monstrous and grotesque. At the time those films were made, the Motion Picture Association was operating under a set of industry guidelines for self-censorship known as the Motion Picture Production Code. Any kind of depiction of queer identities or same-sex relationships were considered “perversions” and forbidden. It’s widely speculated that queer identities still found their way into films, just cloaked in characters like Dracula, whose feminine affectations disrupted masculine norms.

Queer readings of horror films are especially relevant—given that queer bodies are also demonized because they do not conform society’s heteronormative expectations about gender expression, the experience of those “monsters” is entirely relatable. They represent something perceived as threateningly other.

When those “monsters” become violent, the subtext is that it is the fear that made the monster, not the monster that made the fear.

In a 2020 Comic-Con panel on the topic, Sam Wineman, director of an upcoming documentary on LGBTQ horror, offered a summary of some of the ways the horror genre can be considered queer:

1. Explicit representation, when characters in the film have actual queer identities.
2. Queer coding, when there is an implication that a character is queer, whether that be intentionally or unintentionally.
3. Identification with otherness, when queer viewers see and identify with characters othered in the films, regardless of implicit or explicit queer coding.
4. Queer creators, when films are informed creatively by a queer perspective, regardless of whether there are queer characters.

Early in the novel, Karen has dreams about a mob of everyday people attacking her. For her, the word “mob” is an acronym. M, O, B. Mean, ordinary, boring. Karen is proud to be a wolf girl. Whatever quote, unquote ordinary looks like, she is different, and it is good to be what she is instead: “a bit weird looking and fang-y,” as she puts it, even if it means she does not fit in. Karen identifies with the otherness of the monsters, regardless of any implicit or explicit coding.

In their writing about queer theory in education, Dennis Sumara and Brett Davis outline several tenets of queer curriculum, beyond simply including queer perspectives:

How often do you identify with a character’s experience instead of their identity?

Queer curriculum understands sexuality not as an object of study but a valence of all knowing.

Instead of focusing on the representation and interpretation of LGBT identities, queer curriculum seeks to make visible and disrupt the heterosexual normal calling into question the stability of heterosexuality.

Queer curriculum creates situations that allow the exploration of sexuality, identity, and knowledge as complex, entangled relations.

Queer curriculum practices are interested more in understanding differences among persons than in understanding differences among categories of persons by asking about the circumstances of identification, thus, opening possibilities for adaptation and rearticulation.

Queer curriculum explores questions of desire, pleasure, and sexuality and seeks to interrupt our understandings of each of these.

Queer curriculum creates heterotopic spaces that function as interruptions of normalized knowledge.¹

Including queer characters and stories in your curriculum is not enough. When introducing new content to students, especially content without explicit queer representation, make space for queer readings by disrupting fixed categories of identity such as sexuality, gender, bodies, and desire.

¹Sumara, D., & Davis, B. (1998). "Telling tales of surprise." In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Queer Theory in Education* (pp. 197-219), Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

TIPS FOR QUEERING YOUR CURRICULUM

- Center otherness and queerness. Instead of asking how characters do or do not fit into society, ask how society and norms don't fit the characters.
- Center difference. Making assumptions about the basic sameness or commonality of all people creates an "us vs. them" binary when people don't fit in. Instead of looking for ways we're all fundamentally the same, ask about the value of our differences.

MEDITATION: EMBODIED EMOTIONS

When you're feeling all sorts of things, it can be helpful to slow down and try to locate where you're feeling that way. Each carry happiness, trauma, stress, fear differently, in different places in our bodies. If you ever have trouble managing your feelings, slow down and find them in your body. Try caring for them there.

Begin by sitting in a comfortable place. Start with your hands resting somewhere on your legs and your back straight. To straighten your back, imagine there is a string connected to the top of your head, gently pulling upwards.

From that sitting position, close your eyes and notice your breathing. There's no need to change it from it's normal pattern. Just bring your awareness to the air that is entering and exiting your body. Feel it come in through your nose and mouth, pass down into your lungs, and then leave again. If you lose focus at any point, that's okay. Just be glad you noticed and gently return your attention to your breath.

After a few breaths, see if you can become even more sensitive to your breath. Can you focus on the exact place where the air stops being something outside of you, and starts being a part of you?

Now, move from a sitting position to a laying position. Lie on your back in a way that you can relax entirely. Try and feel supported by the ground, the floor, or whatever surface you're lying on. Return your attention to your breath.

First, try locating where it feels the best in your body when you are relaxing like this. Maybe there is relief in your back or your neck. Enjoy that feeling for a moment and try to breathe into that space. Breathe as if the healing energy of your breath is traveling directly to that place in your body.

Next, try locating a space where you feel some tension. Maybe it's somewhere that gets tense when you feel stressed or anxious. Or maybe it's somewhere that feels topsy-turvy when you're confused. Do the same thing here. Try and relax that space, and breath into it, as if the healing energy of your breath is traveling into your body and directly to that place.

Lastly, remember joy. How does your body feel especially alive when you are joyful? Where does it feel the best? Breathe into that space and imagine that the good feeling located in that space overflows with every breath. Feel that overflow spill and fill every little space in your body, like water rushing in.

In your own time, return to a seated position. Take a few last breaths and remember gratitude for your body. Then slowly open your eyes.

It can also be helpful to cultivate feelings of confidence or courage in your body during meditation, so that you can more easily find it when you need it. What other emotions could you find in your body to use a resource?

ADDENDUM: TV AND MUSEUMS

In our “TV” episodes, “TV” stands for “tour video” and reflects the lo-fi television style we’ve adopted. Museums and television, or more specifically video and broadcast technology, have a bit of history together.

By the 1970s, the gap between the technological capabilities of artists and mass-media makers had collapsed. Video cameras had just become inexpensive enough to be affordable, and so there was a widespread sense that, all of a sudden, everyone could make video that could be broadcast to television sets across the country. That access was no longer just the purview of television studios financed by media barons.

In January 1974, the Museum of Modern Art in New York held a conference called “Open Circuits: An International Conference on the Future of Television.” Artists, writers, critics, and media professionals all came together to dream about how this new, widely accessible broadcast medium would change how people experienced art. Artists like Nam June Paik and Joan Jonas talked about their early experiments with video. Theorists quoted philosophy to predict how the medium would change the next decades. Experts previewed how the technology might evolve. David Ross, who at the time was the director and curator of video art at Long Beach Museum of Art, talked about TV and museums.

In his section, Ross took “a speculative look at the application of video in the reformation of one of our culture’s most anachronistic institutions, the art museum.”¹ He shared several ways art museums of the time were taking advantage

of video technology and television broadcast capabilities:

At the Greenville County Museum, in South Carolina, they use a video-equipped bus (called Sam) to bring videotapes out into the community for viewing, and to produce tapes with children in various neighborhoods. [. . .] Coming closer to defining the traditional museum approach to television, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts has, since 1954, produced a wide variety of broadcast educational television programs based upon their own collection and general topics in art history.²

The purpose of these efforts was accessibility. At times, Ross’s words feel as if they were speaking to this current moment and not to an audience decades ago. He speaks intentionally about the importance of museums making their collections and exhibitions available to the public, even if some are “unable to avail [themselves] of the museum’s service by visiting the museum’s building” or if the museum’s educational services need to be accessed when the museum’s building is shut down. That kind of accessibility, for Ross, is not just an opportunity. It’s a mandate:

The notion of museum interaction with television is primarily based upon a societal model which requires that institutions dealing with information have the responsibility and should have the capacity to make the results of their activity accessible to their entire community. For the artist, this relationship is inevitable: for the museum it is imperative.³

¹ David Ross, “Video and the Future of the Museum,” in *The New Television: A Public/Private Art*, edited by Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 114.

² Ross, 114–15.

³ Ross, 115–16.

Given the kinds of media and communications technology available today, how could museums be more accessible to their public in the future?

Generous support for school programs is provided by Crown Family Philanthropies; Zell Family Foundation; Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund; Bluhm Family Foundation; Cari and Michael Sacks; Dr. Scholl Foundation; GCM Grosvenor; Andrea and Jim Gordon, The Edgewater Funds; the Harris Family Foundation; Jana and Bernardo Hees; Hindman Auctions; Illinois Tool Works; Anne L. Kaplan; JHL Capital Group, LLC; Katten Muchin Rosenman; Reyes Holdings; Andrew Rosenfield; William Blair & Company; Ariel Investments; Marilyn and Larry Fields; Cynthia Hunt and Philip Rudolph; Front Barnett Associates; and Ellen Wallace and Steven Gould; and Anonymous.

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Support for the *Tour Video* series at the MCA is provided by Discover, Dr. Scholl Foundation, the Polk Bros. Foundation, and the LeRoy Neiman Foundation.

