

Developing an Intercultural Eye for Art

— The University of Chicago’s Laboratory Schools and Hiroshima University’s
Affiliated High School 2019 collaborative action research —

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Abstract: This paper serves as the report on the 2019 collaborative action research conducted by the University of Chicago’s Laboratory Schools and Hiroshima University’s Affiliated High School aimed at cultivating middle and high school students’ intercultural eye for art. An intercultural eye for art means perceiving and sympathizing with a worldview expressed in artwork from other cultures, and to foster the growth of this competency, an intercultural eye for art curriculum was designed and implemented through collaboration between the two schools. The educational effects of the designed curriculum were surveyed by administering pre- and post-questionnaires, and selected case studies demonstrated how individual students were able to establish intercultural communication through the language of art in the classroom. The research findings demonstrate that the designed curriculum was effective in broadening and deepening the students’ intercultural eye for art and their interests in further study. Furthermore, competency in an intercultural eye for art is likely to evolve in coordination with affective and cognitive responses to artwork.

Key words: Intercultural communication, Global citizen, Action research, Art education

1. A Progressive Vision of Art Education to Become a Global Citizen

To celebrate the centennial anniversary of John Dewey’s visit to Japan in 1919, the University of Chicago’s Laboratory Schools and Hiroshima University’s Affiliated Schools launched an art education research project for world peace in 2018 (Nakamura et al., 2019). This project aimed to foster children’s and young people’s intercultural understanding through art exchange across international boundaries. The concept for the project was drawn from Dewey’s educational art theory that viewed art as a language that enables people to share life values across cultures, and thus function as a means to develop a more harmonious civilization (Dewey, 2003). Art is a tool that enables global citizenship by facilitating learning to cultivate empathy for cultural others and aesthetic judgements in relation to them. The project aimed to develop an intercultural eye for art among children and youths (Nakamura, 2018).

The primary purpose of the 2018 collaboration between these schools was to test the hypothesis drawn from the nexus of Dewey’s transnational vision of art education: “When students are engaged in communication through art with cultural others in a different country, they develop intercultural

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empathy” (Nakamura et al., in press). The curricula developed for the project featured three approaches to optimize students’ intercultural learning: 1) curriculum flexibility determined and run by teachers’ intercultural collaborations; 2) application of globally significant theme(s) to the intercultural art unit; and 3) centrality of students’ meaning and values relevant to their life experiences and their own culture when developing intercultural communication through the art exchange. In the 2018 schoolyear, a total of 163 students in fourth through tenth grades participated in the project.

Pre- and post-questionnaires were administered, and case studies were conducted. The results supported the hypothesis; both the American and Japanese students successfully developed competency for intercultural empathy through their experiences of art in the classroom. The research also indicated that the evolution of the student’s advancement in intercultural communication is likely to progress through seven stages: 1) positive view—forming a positive attitude toward art through the cultures of other countries; 2) cultural otherness—awareness of otherness of lifestyles and art from other countries; 3) emotional qualities—awareness of differences and/or similarities in emotional qualities in art between one’s own and other countries; 4) means of expression—awareness of differences and/or similarities in ideas and means of expression in art between one’s own and other countries; 5) worldview—awareness of a worldview expressed in art from other countries in relation to one’s own; 6) cultural and historical (ideas and means of expression)—awareness of the relationship of ideas and means of expression used in art from other countries with social, cultural, and historical contexts; and 7) cultural and historical (worldview)—awareness of the relationship of a worldview expressed in art from other countries with social, cultural and historical contexts.

2. 2019 Action Research Design

2.1 Research Questions

Based on the outcomes of the 2018 action research, in 2019 three research questions were proposed:

1. Is the hypothesis supported by the current research within the two groups of American and Japanese students?
2. How do students develop competency in intercultural communication through the language of art?
3. What interests do children develop through designed intercultural art learning?

2.2 Research Sites and Participants

There is a rich multicultural learning environment in the Laboratory Schools with a diverse student body comprising 45% white, 17% Asian, 8% African American, 2% Latino, and 28% other. On the other hand, Hiroshima University Affiliated Schools are composed of 99% Japanese students, with the rest being Korean and Chinese.

Gina Alicea from the Laboratory Schools’ middle school and Shunroku Morinaga from Hiroshima University’s high school collaborated to develop an intercultural art curriculum. Participants were 16 seventh graders from Alicea’s art class and 49 tenth graders from Morinaga’s art classes. This was the first time that the students of both schools had participated in this type of art project involving art exchange with students from another country.

2.3 Measures and Procedure

Pre- and post-questionnaires were administered to a total of 65 participants. The questionnaires employed multiple-choice and open-ended questions. In accordance with each school’s yearly curriculum, the middle school (USA) started the project on September 3 and finished on November 1, and the high school (Japan) started on June 4 and finished on September 24. The competency of intercultural empathy in the experience of art, essential for developing an intercultural eye for art, comprised three factors: evaluative appreciation, sympathetic appreciation, and cultural and historical

appreciation of cultural others. Accordingly, the multiple-choice question items were composed of these factors (see Appendix 1). Questions 3, 4, and 9 focused on evaluative appreciation; questions 1, 2, and 5 through 8 looked at sympathetic appreciation; and questions 10 and 11 examined cultural and historical appreciation. Each of the responses was assigned a numerical score of 1 through 4, and mean scores from before and after implementation of the designed art curriculum were compared in terms of each factor's total score within each group and across groups.

The open-ended questions were aimed at gaining an understanding of students' newly formed viewpoints for and interests in intercultural communication through art. To elucidate any changes in their viewpoints before and after the art learning sessions, one of the questions presented an image (see Appendix 2) and asked students to describe any thoughts and feelings about the image. The image was selected based on two criteria: 1) it used both western and eastern visual symbols, and 2) it contained design elements and principles taught in the art learning sessions. The viewpoint dominant in each student's text answer was identified from among the seven categories obtained from past research and noted in the opening section of this paper: positive view, cultural otherness, emotional qualities, means of expression, worldview, cultural and historical (ideas and means of expression), and cultural and historical (worldview). General tendencies were then identified through quantitative analysis.

There was a second question included only in the post-questionnaire: Is there anything you are curious about and want to do following the art exchange lessons? This question was intended to find any qualitative change in the students' interests that would lead to their cognitive and affective growth. The descriptive answer texts for these questions were analyzed qualitatively to identify meaningful patterns as well as statistically to find general tendencies.

Furthermore, cases helpful for understanding the particularity and complexity of individual students' way of intercultural communication through art were selected and studied. Typical cases were chosen based on the median of the score of the post-questionnaire's multiple-choice questions and focused on individual students' formation of intercultural communication as it emerged in the classroom.

By using these multiple data sources and methods, the research team attempted to enhance the validity and reliability of the research (Stake, 1995). This attempt was enhanced by including schoolteachers, curriculum specialists, and a psychologist in the research team, as each had different practical and theoretical lenses to understand the studied phenomena.

2.4 Designing the Intercultural Art Unit

A self-identity unit addressing the promotion of cultural diversity, a globally significant theme, that had been part of the 2018 action research was reworked. Aimed at deepening and broadening intercultural communication between the American and Japanese students, materials for indigo dyeing were introduced for creating a self-portrait. The deep blue derived from the indigo plant was often called Japan blue or Hiroshige blue in Europe and America, and this material was expected to prompt cultural awareness of Japanese aesthetic taste, in both the American and Japanese students.

The students participated in indigo dyeing as part of their classroom activities and explored the possibilities for using the dyed fabrics in their self-portraits. Alicea and Morinaga collaboratively designed the classroom learning experience with indigo dyeing while working within the frameworks of their schools' educational policies and yearly curricula. An overview of Morinaga's unit plan exemplifies the features of the designed unit. This unit was originally created by Alicea (Alicea, 2017) and was modified for the current project.

Unit Title: Self-Portrait – Expression of Identity (Time Allocation: Ten 90-minute periods)

Objectives

Students will:

- Express the self creatively with a meta-cognitive viewpoint by selecting techniques appropriate to

their ideas.

- Create a self-portrait paying attention to composition, color combination, and background, and understand ideas expressed in others' self-portraits.
- Be active in making connections with the culture of another country and its artwork, take another look at one's self and culture, and seek mutual understanding with others.

Step 1. Engage (One Period): Promote students' interest in intercultural art learning in collaboration with the Laboratory Schools' students. Students draw themselves in pencil by looking in the mirror; they are asked to pay attention not only to the outer features including the eyes, nose, mouth, and other parts of the face but also to their inner thoughts. The key questions include "What is a self-portrait?" and "Who am I?"

Step 2. Respond (One Period): Promote students' understanding of the purpose of the art exchange with the Laboratory Schools. Students view self-portraits of various artists from different countries as well as of the Laboratory Schools' students from the previous year. Key questions include "Why does the artist create a self-portrait?" and "How do they turn their ideas into the art form?"

Step 3. Create (Four Periods): Students experience indigo-dyeing and explore the possibilities of using the dyed materials for their self-portraits. They identify items that make up their identities, including favorite words, birthplaces, what they value, and interests, and they compose their self-portraits. Key questions include "How is self-identity pictorially represented through symbols and composition?" and "What is central and what is supplemental in the work?"

Step 4. Present (One Period): Students write their artist's statement about the self-portrait, including their ideas and intention, and an explanation of the visual symbols they have used. Each student prepares to record a video presentation about their self-portrait for exchange with the Laboratory Schools.

Step 5. Reflect (One Period): Students critique the self-portraits and reflect on their learning. Key questions include: "What successes and challenges did you encounter in creating the self-portrait?" and "How could I improve my portrait?"

Step 6. Share and Connect (Two Periods): Students create their presentations about their self-portraits and video-record them to send to the Laboratory Schools. They view the self-portraits created by the Laboratory Schools' students along with their written statements. They discuss effective ways to pay attention to chosen subjects, design elements and principles, and composition. Key questions include "In what way does the self-portrait express the student's individuality?"

2.5 Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 shows the mean scores for three components of intercultural empathy in the experience of art gained from the multiple-choice questions on the pre- and post-questionnaires for the seventh graders (USA) and tenth graders (Japan). The analysis of variance test for nationality, test occasion, and three components as factors revealed statistically significant differences by nationality for each component (nationality: $F(1,63)=9.57$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=0.04$; the evaluative: $F(1,63)=3.93$, $p<.10$, $\eta^2=0.02$); the sympathetic: $F(1,63)=9.29$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=0.04$; and the cultural & historical: $F(1,63)=7.37$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=0.03$).

Figure 1 presents the statistical results shown in Table 1. The Japanese group's scores on all three components increased after the learning sessions. With regard to the American group the sympathetic as well as the cultural and historical scores increased while the evaluative scores remained almost the same. This result is the same as that obtained in the 2018 action research. This confirms the following interpretation, also found in the 2018 research: The American students, who attended a more multicultural school, possessed positive attitudes toward art from different cultures; thus, their scores were already higher than those of the Japanese students before the learning sessions, and there was little incremental change in their attitudes.

Chart 1 shows the ratio of dominant viewpoints in intercultural communication through the

language of art before and after the learning sessions for the seventh graders (USA) and tenth graders (Japan). The dominant viewpoints were identified through the qualitative data analysis of answer texts obtained from questions on the pre- and post-questionnaires asking about thoughts and feelings related to a presented image. The concordance rate for categorizing the descriptive answer texts was 85.3% on one-quarter of the data randomly selected from each group. The data analysis revealed that half of the American students and 73.5% of the Japanese students changed their dominant viewpoints through the sessions, and the rest remained the same. Regarding the American students, the ratio of art as a means of expression increased by 18.8% after the learning sessions, and the percentage of the worldview viewpoint rose from zero to 12.5%. As for the Japanese students, the biggest change in viewpoint was from art as a means of expression to art as a worldview; the ratio of the worldview viewpoint increased fivefold after the learning sessions, from 12.2% to 61.2%.

Table 1. Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Mean Scores for the Three Intercultural Empathy Components in the Experience of Art

Components	7th grade (USA) (N=16)		10th grade (Japan) (N=49)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Evaluative	3.5 (0.45)	3.4 (0.48)	3.2 (0.45)	3.5 (0.50)
Sympathetic	2.4 (0.78)	2.6 (0.40)	2.3 (0.46)	2.5 (0.56)
Cultural & Historical	2.7 (0.85)	2.9 (0.51)	2.7 (0.75)	3.1 (0.64)

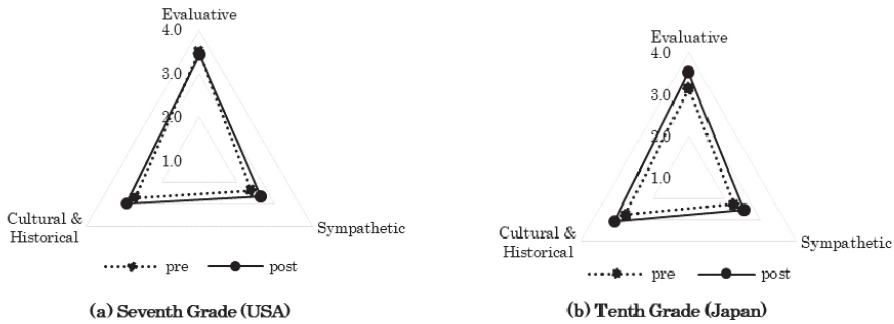


Figure 1. Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Mean Scores for Three Intercultural Empathy Components in the Experience of Art: (a) Seventh Grade (USA); (b) Tenth Grade (Japan)

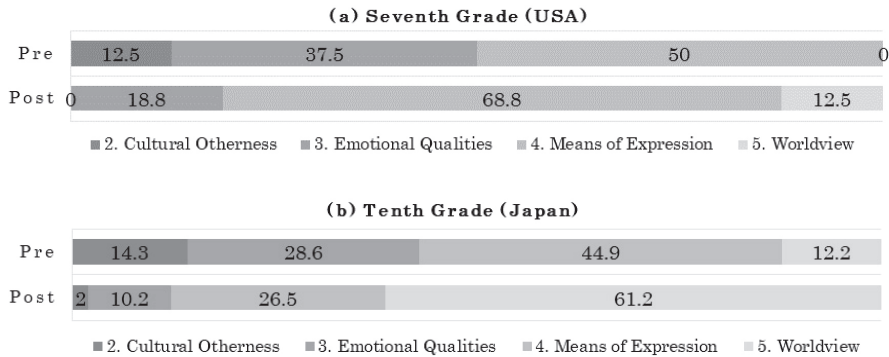


Chart 1. Ratio of Dominant Viewpoints in Intercultural Communication through the Language of Art: (a) Seventh Grade (USA); (b) Tenth Grade (Japan)

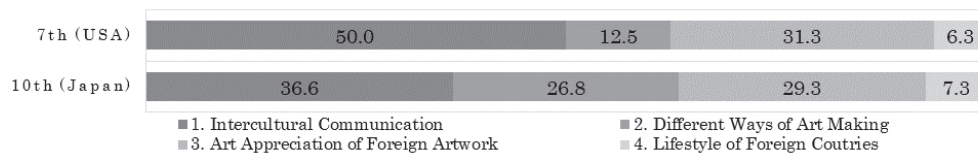


Chart 2. Ratio of Types of Interests Formed through Intercultural Learning through Art

Further analysis was made with respect to the viewpoints of the students who did not show any categorical change. For the American students, 12.5% remained in the emotional qualities category and 37.5% remained in the means of expression category. For the Japanese students, 2.1% stayed in the cultural others category, 2.1% in the emotional qualities, 10.1% in the means of expression, and 12.2% in the worldview.

The additional analysis revealed that even though there were no changes in categorical type, changes in degree occurred within each category. Those in the emotional qualities or worldview viewpoint categories came to perceive more subtlety and types of affective thoughts, and those whose viewpoints were cultural otherness or means of expression discerned a greater subject range and more design elements and principles in relation to pictorial effects. This suggests the possibility for modifying the categories with another study on the viewpoints that are likely to evolve across stages of the individual's advancement in intercultural communication through the language of art.

Chart 2 demonstrates the ratio of new types of interests the two groups of students formed after the learning sessions. The concordance rate for categorizing the descriptive answer texts was 94.4% on one-quarter of the data randomly selected from each group. Overall, 83.7% of the Japanese students and 93.8% of the American students formed new interests. Four types of interest were found through qualitative data analysis: 1) intercultural communication (e.g., "I'm curious about the way they make their artwork"), 2) different ways of art making (e.g., "I would like to try out expression techniques unique to each region including Europe, the United States of America, and Africa"), 3) art appreciation of foreign artwork (e.g., "I would like to compare and look for similarities in painting"), and 4) lifestyle of foreign countries (e.g., "I have become interested in living in a multicultural society"). In both groups, interest in intercultural communication was highest, followed by art appreciation of foreign artwork, different ways of art making, and lifestyle of foreign countries.

Additionally, case studies selected based on the median scores of the post-questionnaire's multiple-choice questions revealed how typical students developed intercultural communication in the classroom. In the 2019 research, which continued into 2020, only case studies of the Japanese students could be conducted; the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the gathering of case studies from the American students. Two groups of Japanese students who interacted with the American students through their self-portraits are presented here to demonstrate their intercultural communication. The students' names were anonymized upon request to guard their privacy.

Figure 2 shows Christopher's self-portrait created in Alicea's class. In the self-portrait unit, the possibilities of the use of indigo-dyed fabric were explored. In his work, Christopher made skillful use of the pattern of a piece of the dyed fabric in combination with various symbols in the background to represent himself. This is part of his statement to the Japanese students:

I used a male symbol to represent my gender, and when you look on the other side of the symbol, it represents a tennis racket because tennis is my favorite sport. The Libra symbol is my zodiac sign. This is a mix between the American and Korean clan representing that I am half Korean, half American.



Figure 2. © 2020 Christopher Ackerman **Figure 3.** © 2020 Mayuko Oki **Figure 4.** © 2020 Ruriko Murakami

Mayuko and Ruriko from Morinaga’s class, responding to Christopher’s work, were most impressed with his inventive ideas for combining different items into one symbolic icon, including the American flag in combination with the Korean flag and the male symbol with a tennis racket. They were also impressed with his willingness to take on a new challenge and use a new material, the indigo-dyed fabric, which prompted their empathetic appreciation of his work and skills in realizing the harmonious integration of the whole to achieve a successful composition. They stated, “We think that it is hard to achieve a sense of unity by using indigo-dying, but this work has done so, and this is a great achievement.”

Compared to Christopher’s work, Mayuko and Ruriko created more realistic representations. Mayuko’s main subjects were a silent snowy night with the moon and stars. To express her feelings toward such a night, she made an effort to create a rhythmical pattern of snowflakes by constructing the background of multiple graded cool colors (see Figure 3). Likewise, Ruriko’s concern was centered on realistic illustrations of her subjects including the transparency of tea and skin color. Choosing tea, sweets, and the Aquarius zodiac sign as her main subjects, Ruriko focused special attention on the use of color to express flowing water and the three-dimensionality of her face (see Figure 4).

Through the sessions, both Mayuko and Ruriko came to recognize differences in the style of pictorial representation between the Japanese and American students. The former tended to use realistic colors, while the latter preferred unrealistic colors. Mayuko speculated that this divergence was due to cultural differences, and Ruriko felt that the American students’ artwork was more adventurous than that of the Japanese students. With this new awareness, Mayuko gained a new interest in looking at foreign artwork in a museum as it related to the artist’s homeland. Ruriko’s curiosity increased because she became more aware of artistic sensibilities unique to each country. Likewise, Christopher became more curious about other countries’ art through learning; that is, what is important and valued in another country through the Japanese students’ comments when comparing his self-portrait with theirs.



Figure 5. © 2020 Naoya Obayashi **Figure 6.** © 2020 Yuri Toshima

Another student, Leah, also used indigo-dyed materials inventively in her self-portrait. In her piece, the butterfly is the most critical symbol among those depicted, as it is the symbol of the Butterfly Project, which educates schoolchildren about the Holocaust. She made three different forms of the butterfly out of a piece of indigo-dyed fabric placed in the background. She explained her work to the Japanese students:

I used butterflies to symbolize the Holocaust, and they also represent growth and life. I used the star and constellation to represent parts of my identity, such as the female symbol and my zodiac sign. The stars are in the upper right-hand corner, and I drew my camp cabin logo. In the bottom right-hand corner, I drew a Jewish star because I am Jewish.

Naoya and Yuri together responded to the quality and meaning of Leah's work:

Her work uses the butterfly to symbolize the Holocaust, and it represents growth and life. The female symbols and constellations are blended into the picture plane, where the white stars are scattered, and this represents her identity. She also used blue to keep the overall balance. The most important point about this picture is that deep meaning is hidden in the butterflies. The Butterfly Project has as many butterflies as the number of children killed in the Holocaust, and we thought that the three butterflies made of the indigo dyed fabric were related to this project.

While Leah chose the cultural symbol to represent her identity as a Jew, Naoya and Yuri both chose the everyday items that interested them most. Naoya's main symbol was a musical instrument, as he belonged to the Light Music Club and played the bass guitar (see Figure 5). Yuri chose her favorite idol as her main symbol and expressed her loving feelings toward her with a red rose (see Figure 6). Both directed their attention to the creative use of color; Naoya gradated various cool colors to express the fresh air of his favorite summer season, while Yuri attempted to express her multifaceted feelings and optimistic nature with yellow, yellow-green, and purple colors.

Through her interaction with Leah, Yuri became aware of the inventiveness of pictorial representation in the American students' works, and this increased her motivation to create artwork infused with deep meaning. Naoya found possibilities for various kinds of interpretations and interesting points to be explored even from one painting. His curiosity regarding why an artist paints in a particular way and his motivation for exploring reasons for the style differences between Japanese and foreign paintings increased. Leah also developed a new interest in comparing paintings from the two countries.

3. Conclusion

The 2019 action research reached the same conclusion as the 2018 action research, supporting the hypothesis that "when students are engaged in communication through art with cultural others in a different country, they develop intercultural empathy." It also demonstrated that the designed intercultural art curriculum was effective in fostering students' development of new interests that prompted further learning and broadened and deepened their viewpoints for establishing intercultural communication through the language of art. The cultivation of intercultural empathy, interest, and intercultural communication are all essential for nurturing children's and the youth's intercultural mind's eye for art.

A further implication is that the competency of intercultural communication through the language of art is likely to evolve in coordination with affective and cognitive responses. The affective responses are associated with inner aspects including emotions, feelings, and the imagination. The cognitive responses arise from the perception of outer aspects including design elements and principles. This research showed that students' viewpoints, even when they remained in the same category, grew in degree with regard to the cognitive and affective responses. Further studies should be conducted

in this regard to gain a deeper understanding of the developmental stages of the competency of intercultural communication through the language of art.

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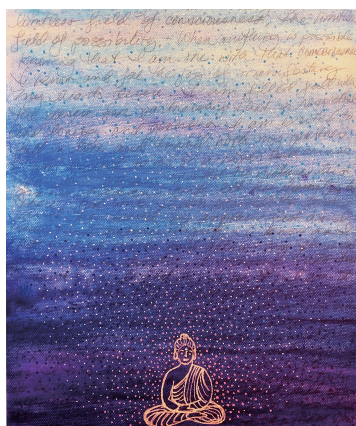
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Appendix 1. Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Items

Question: The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out how you feel about art from other countries before you take part in the art exchange program. There are eleven items and four choices for each item: "4. strongly agree," "3. agree," "2. disagree," and "1. strongly disagree." For each item, please check (✓) the box that is most applicable to you.

Item #	Items	4 strongly agree	3 agree	2 disagree	1 strongly disagree
1	When I look at art from other countries, I sometimes imagine how people live in those countries.				
2	I think that art can tell me about the ways people in other countries live differently.				
3	I think it's good to learn about art from other countries.				
4	I think that the art of every country is unique and valuable.				
5	When I look at art from other countries, I enjoy guessing what particular colors and shapes mean to the people of those countries.				
6	When I look at art from other countries, I enjoy thinking about how the people of those countries develop ideas and techniques when making their art.				
7	When I look at art from other countries, I enjoy thinking about the way people feel in those countries, and I connect with them emotionally.				
8	When I look at art from other countries, I enjoy thinking about how the people of those countries view the world differently, and this helps me deepen my own view of the world.				
9	I feel that it's good to work with people of other countries through art, sharing ideas and feelings with them.				
10	I enjoy finding or constructing strategies to understand art from other countries in relation to social, cultural, and historical contexts.				
11	I enjoy deciphering meanings of art from other countries in relation to social, cultural, and historical contexts, and this helps me gain new ways of viewing the world.				

Appendix 2. Image Used for Pre- and Post-Questionnaires



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Appendix 3. Viewpoints in Intercultural Communication Through the Language of Art

Viewpoints	Condition	Examples of Descriptions
Cultural Otherness	One is aware of the otherness of lifestyles and art from other countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It makes me think about space when I see this (and how large the world is compared to humans). I see words in the background and different colors. I see that one person in the middle is transparent and I see dots in the background. I think the dots represent everything else in the world. (USA, 7th grade) • Harmony of Buddhism and English words. The background represents the moonlit night. (Japan, 10th grade)
Emotional Qualities	One is aware of differences and/or similarities in emotional qualities in art between one's own and other countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It looks like the person in the middle represents the person's mindset, and all the dots are the man's thinking thoughts. I feel like it is a calm mindset. (USA, 7th grade) • I wonder if the artist is a Buddhist. I see a constellation of dots like snow, and this evokes an image of living in a snowy region. I think this shows dark and light sides of the mind. (Japan, 10th grade)
Ideas and Means of Expression	One is aware of differences and/or similarities in ideas and means of expression in art between one's own and other countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like how in this painting the artist has the words in the background. I like how the artist created a pattern using dots. I like how the artist emphasized the Buddha, but when you look really closely you can see all the layers and elements of the painting. I think that it is cool how the artist used contrast by using a lot of different colors. (USA, 7th grade) • English sentences are written on the canvas. The contour of the Buddha image in the middle lower portion is drawn in gold and stands out against the darker background. A variety of dots including light red and gold dots coming out from the Buddha image seems like light shining out softly from it. It has a mysterious atmosphere. Overall, tender and soft kinds of feelings are expressed with the gradation of the background and the curved lines. (Japan, 10th grade)
Worldview	One is aware of a worldview expressed in art from other countries in relation to one's own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like the writing in the background and how it gets darker and darker, and there is the person at the bottom, who I think symbolizes hope. I think it symbolizes this because light normally symbolizes hope, and it gets darker and darker and gets lighter. (USA, 7th grade) • I see the Buddha sunk into the sea. I think that the artist worries about the current condition that gives him or her a hard time, although some possibilities might be hidden. The upper portion is lighter with clear color, while the lower portion is darker; this color gradation expresses the state of mind of the artist. The clear color removing the darkness represents hope to the artist, and it emphasizes solitude and a calm atmosphere. (Japan, 10th grade)