

InsideArt, Fall 2017 — *David Claerbout*

**Title**

*Life in the City of Darkness: Exploring the Kowloon Walled City through the Artwork of David Claerbout*

**Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson**

1 class period

**Concept/Main Idea of Lesson**

In this lesson students will be introduced to David Claerbout's 2015 work, *Radio Piece (Hong Kong)*. Students will consider the use of physical space presented by the artist, in addition to getting to know the people that lived in the physical space that is the subject of the work, the Kowloon walled city.

**Intended Grade Levels**

Grades 6-12

**Infusion/Subject Areas**

Visual Arts

Social Studies

**Curriculum Standards***Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*

- Visual Arts:

**VA.912.H.1** Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live(d).

- Social Studies:

**SS.912.G.4** Understand the characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations.

**SS.912.G.6** Understand how to apply geography to interpret the past and present and plan for the future

*National Standards for Arts Education*

**Anchor Standard #7** Perceive and analyze artistic work.

**Anchor Standard # 8** Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

**Anchor Standard #11** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

*National Council for the Social Studies*

Culture

Time, Continuity, and Change

People, Places, and Environments

Power, Authority, and Governance

Global Connections

Common Core

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C:** Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C:** Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D:** Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

**Instructional Objective**

The student will be able to:

- visually analyze David Claerbout's *Radio Piece (Hong Kong)* during think-write-pair-share discussion activities;
- describe facts related to the walled city of Kowloon and its inhabitants through class discussion;
- examine population movement to the walled city of Kowloon through the identification of push and pull factors for migration during a gallery walk exploring personal accounts of residents;
- discuss the influence of historical and political events on population migration through a class discussion of push and pull factors.

**Learning Activities Sequence****Attention-Getter:**

Visual Analysis and Group Discussion (slides 2, 3 and 4)

Have students view and consider the image of the Zen garden on slide 2 and engage in a Think-Write-Pair-Share:

- What do you see in this image?
- Where do you think this image was taken?
- What inferences could you make about the population in the surrounding space?
  - How large is the population?
  - What is the population density?

Advance to slide 3 and engage in another Think-Write-Pair-Share using the same questions above.

Advance to slide 4. Come together in a whole class discussion and ask students to compare and contrast the two images side-by-side.

## Learning Activities:

Art Appreciation and Analysis: Review artist information on Slide 5. This information is the same information presented in the introductory lesson, and can be reviewed or removed as needed.

Introduce students to David Claerbout's work, *Radio Piece (Hong Kong)* created in 2015 on Slides 6 through 11. As presented in the Notes View, this work is an audiovisual installation that includes an uninterrupted backtracking camera, smoothly moving from one type of space into another, moving from a Zen garden, to a cramped apartment, to the walled city of Kowloon. If desired, a clip of the installation is available to show the continuous motion, although the first scene focused on the Zen garden is cut out: <https://vimeo.com/129774604>

As they view the work, invite students to write down and/or share any immediate reactions to the work.

### PPT Presentation:

Tell students that the setting of this work is the Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong. However, the final shot in Claerbout's work is a digital creation, as the city was demolished in 1994.

Advance to slide 12. Inform students that they will now be learning about how this walled city came to be. Display the map of Asia on slide 13, highlighting the locations of Hong Kong and Kowloon.

Advance to slide 14. Tell students the settlement may have been even larger if the nearby airport did not limit the height to 14 stories. Pause for a moment to allow students to view the totality of the city.

Click the animation to display the facts listed below. Additionally, read the following facts aloud to students. The walled city at its peak, contained:

- 14 stories
- 33,000+ people
- 8,000 homes
- 1,000 businesses
- All in under 7 acres, or 2.8 hectares (about 3 American football fields or approximately one city block), the Kowloon walled city was the densest place on earth up until its demolition.

Advance to slide 15. Ask students the title question: Would you move here? Allow a few volunteers to share their responses.

### Gallery Walk:

Tell students: While it may not look like an ideal environment, the city was unique in that it was a Chinese territory located within the borders of then British colony, Hong Kong. The Chinese and the British governments both tended to leave this particular area alone when it came to law enforcement. While this made the region notorious for criminal activities, it was also much easier for families to start businesses, especially refugees escaping the leadership Mao Zedong's Communist Party in nearby China.

Advance to slides 16 and 17. Review the definitions and distinctions between push and pull factors in migration. The following five slides contain stories of five different residents of Kowloon Walled City. Using a gallery walk approach, print out copies of slides 18 through 22 and display them on the walls around the room (depending on the size of your class 2 or 3 copies of each slide may be printed out so that all students can view and read the text easily). Tell students that for each slide, they should consider the push and pull factors that led each individual or family to come to the city. Students will record responses on the People of Kowloon Gallery Walk worksheet.

Instruct students to move about the room in groups of 2-3, completing the appropriate area of the worksheet for each resident of Kowloon. Once all groups have considered each slide, reconvene as a class and go through slides 18 through 22 together, sharing group responses and engaging in a class discussion the push pull factors contributing to population migration.

### **Closure:**

Advance to slide 23. Prompt a class discussion using the questions provided. While the Kowloon Walled City (demolished in 1994) lacked room to the point of being inhumane, many residents did not want to leave their homes.

- Is it possible to have a similar quality of life in such different physical spaces?
- What role did physical space play as a push/pull factor for residents in Kowloon?

### **Evaluation**

Evaluate student performance on the objectives through responses to the People of Kowloon Gallery Walk Worksheet and Final Thoughts questions.

### **Optional Extension Activities**

Have students explore the *Wall Street Journal's* interactive website highlighting the lives of the people that lived within the walled city of Kowloon as well as the rise and fall of the walled city: <http://projects.wsj.com/kwc/#chapter=people>

Have students create a timeline charting the rise and fall of Kowloon.

Have students consider what the next frame would be if David Claerbout were to continue zooming out in his work, *Radio Piece (Hong Kong)*.

**Materials and Resources**

PowerPoint Presentation: "Life in the City of Darkness"  
Paper/ Student Notebook and Writing Instrument  
Computer  
Projector  
Screen  
Printed copies of Slides 16 through 20  
Class set of People of Kowloon Gallery Walk worksheet

**References**

- British Broadcasting Company. (2014). Geography: Migration trends. *Bitesize*. Retrieved from: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/migration/migration\\_trends\\_rev1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/migration/migration_trends_rev1.shtml)
- Carney, J. (2013). Kowloon city: Life in the city of darkness. *South China Morning Post*. Retrieved from: <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1191748/kowloon-walled-city-life-city-darkness>
- Chan, W. (2015). Kowloon walled city: In Hong Kong, it was the densest place on earth. *CNN Travel*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/travel/article/kowloon-walled-city/index.html>
- Claerbout, D. (2015). Radio Piece (Hong Kong). Retrieved from: <http://davidclaerbout.com/Radio-Piece-Hong-Kong-2015>
- Jou, D. (2014). City of imagination: Kowloon walled city 20 years later. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dj\\_8ucS3IMY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dj_8ucS3IMY)