

Seeing The Value of Hawai'i

A Critical Imaging Project

Lesson Plan

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Summary

We all believe that we know what we do and don't value in Hawai'i. We all believe that we recognize it when we see it: a homeless person asleep on the street, trash on the beach, a perfect set of waves, the smile worn by your cousin eating shave ice the determination in the eye of a MMA fighter, the grace and nobility of hula, the grim advance of construction in unspoiled parts of the island... These are photographic images, the kind we see in the news. But what about all the images that can be generated in paint, pencil and inks? With cut-out and collage techniques? These techniques add even richer possibilities for generating images of Hawai'i, and with the use of digital tools such as scanners and Photoshop, the sky is indeed the limit.

Such images are not only documents of life in Hawai'i or expressions of an individual artist's vision. They can also *stand for something else*, and here is where their power comes from. We encourage you to use our online submission form [<http://thevalueofhawaii.com/stepup/seethevalue/>] to share your images with us – and participate in the development of a forthcoming game involving these images. Compelling submissions will be displayed during our September 25, 2010 event at Fresh Café, and even after this date we will showcase the work on our website.

The essays in “The Value of Hawai'i” need images to go with them. This lesson plan guides you through a strategy for creating these images. The goal is to generate an archive of imagery, each one assigned a specific positive or negative value, that will be available online to supplement the book. By actually assigning a numeric value to the image, positive or negative, you are encouraged think about the power of the image itself. No doubt, someone looking at your image might believe that they can come up with a better image to illustrate the point. The result is a range, or community of images, that can only make the effort to illustrate the essay's ideas even more powerful.

Here are the essay titles:

“The Economy”

“Tourism”

“Agriculture”

“The Military”

“Race/Ethnicity”

“Labor”

“Transportation”

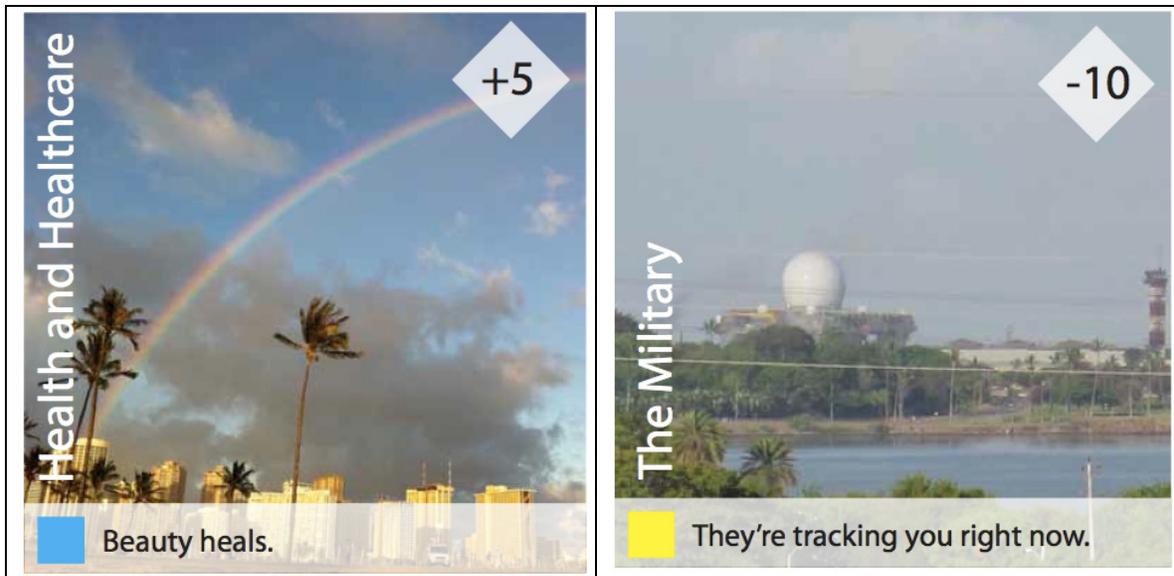
“Government”

“Law and the Courts”
“Public Education”
“University of Hawai‘i”
“Prisons”
“Social Services”
“Homelessness”
“Domestic Violence”
“Health and Healthcare”
“Arts”
“Journalism”
“Terrestrial Ecosystems”
“Climate Change”
“Energy”
“Water”
“Sovereign Ground”
“Historic Preservation”
“Hawaiian Sustainability”

Obviously some of these essay topics are easier to visualize than others, but it is indeed possible in each case. Sometimes a raw statistic – for example land use or graduation rates or prison population changes – needs a concrete image to drive its point home. Other abstract ideas like climate change or sovereignty need a portrait to “bring them down to earth.” Some of the topics are so painful to consider that providing images might even be a risk. In some cases, a symbol might be enough. Handle these ideas with sensitivity and care!

If you are working with a teacher, or *are* a teacher, you may be focusing on just one essay in this list as it is appropriate for your class. Teachers will provide additional contextual information to aid in the selection and/or production of the images.

Here are two sample images that represent the outcomes of the project:



Each image is identified by the essay it illustrates, a positive or negative value meant to “measure” the image, and a short statement that helps describe the image or evoke additional meaning. In the samples the colored squares represent the section of the book that the image and essay come from – in the final version these may become icons or some other graphical element.

What follows are guidelines for completing and sharing the project: **Materials, Key Concepts (General and Artistic), Steps to Completion** and some **Suggested Evaluation** methods.

If, after looking over this lesson plan, you find the requirements beyond your capacities, please consider working with the less-intense “Exquisite Value” video project [<http://thevalueofhawaii.com/stepup/videoquestions/>] This second media project has the same intent as this one, but it can be completed with less technical and conceptual overhead.

Materials Needed

- Analog art materials (paper, pens, pencils, etc., scissors and glue stick for collages) for participating students
- Digital Camera – can be used 1:1 or in a group of students
- Scanner – If you intend to share analog images with community
- Internet Connection – If you intend to share images with community
- Paper and pencil, or notebook, for taking notes and explaining intent
- Medium weight cardstock for making cards out of the image (optional)

Key Concepts

General

- *How do we represent the value of Hawai'i through images?*

Of course, we must each think about what we value in Hawai'i and also think about what the authors of the essays value. From that point, we must find something in common between the author's point of view and our own, and then find or create an image to illustrate that connection.

- *How do we represent the positive and negative aspects of Hawai'i through images?*

At first it might seem easy to represent the positive aspects of Hawai'i: the weather, nature, generally happy people, etc. But ask yourself what is the difference between a truly positive-valued image and a stereotype? Don't mistake the fact that we associate rainbows with "good things" for an image that expresses the value of Hawai'i in and of itself. Remember, the rainbow doesn't care.

Alternately, we are often hesitant to emphasize the negative in a place with so many positive things. It is even more challenging to make an artistic emphasis on the negative without just being mean. To create or capture an image that will have a negative value requires you to think about the response you would hope to create in the person who sees the image.

In both of these cases you are trying to call the viewer to action, to do something about or defend the idea in your image.

Artistic

- *How do we think about framing content in an image?*

Framing content is the act of isolating exactly what you want to draw or photograph among all the possible things you could draw or photograph. In photography it is deciding what we will actually capture in the viewfinder. In drawing it is deciding what will exist in the bounds of the paper. For this lesson, you are looking for things that can symbolize or illustrate the key idea of a given essay in the book.

It is a straightforward act, but some subjects will be easier to illustrate than others and will require you to make certain artistic and ethical decisions. Let's say you are tackling the homelessness essay and you want to create an image that represents a negative value. You might find a homeless person on the street. Do you photograph that person without asking? Do you tell them that you want to use their image to represent something negative? By the same token, could you take an image of a homeless person that might at first seem negative but make it positive?

A tougher example would be domestic violence. This might be a situation where you cannot photograph the act and might need to think about collage or creating your own images. Alternately, you might take a picture of someone who works for one of the organizations mentioned in the essay and use that as a positive value.

Steps to Completion

You will need to prepare or think about the following:

- The image
 - The positive or negative value of the image – this should be a number no smaller than -100 and no greater than 100. It cannot be 0
 - The title of the essay that the image illustrates or symbolizes
 - The group the image belongs to
 - A short sentence describing or explaining the power of the image
- 1) Decide which essay you will be illustrating and read it. Alternately, you may have had the essay assigned.
 - 2) Decide how you will generate the image to illustrate the essay. Will you photograph something? Will you draw or paint something? Will you make a collage out of existing images taken from magazines, newspapers or the internet?
 - 3) Generate the image or take the picture. If you are using a camera, take multiple pictures so that you have several to choose from.
 - 4) Come up with at least three short statements and decide which one is best by presenting them to someone else.
 - 5) Upload the image to the Value of Hawai'i website and complete the form. [<http://thevalueofhawaii.com/stepup/seethevalue/>] The site will register your information and also configure your image for printing.
 - 6) Print out the image via the website. Cut out and paste the image onto cardboard.

Suggested Evaluation

Naturally, the production of an image with an assigned value and a description constitutes a completed example.

The lesson is designed to have a high rate of success, and if students are interacting with each other and the teacher as they make decisions about values, descriptions, and the production of images, they can be evaluated “as they go along” and steered towards success.

Images that are particularly poignant or effective should be given mention, as should examples where an effective description elevates the impact of a less-effective image.

The images should be judged based on their ability to inspire a reaction in the viewer, particularly as illustrations of concepts in the essays. A mark of success would be to be able to associate specific passages of the text with an image that was created.