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Step 1 Look closely

1. What do you notice about this artwork?
2. How do you think this artwork was made?
3. What do you notice about the pose and gesture of the figures?

Step 2 Learn more

Building self-awareness includes developing an understanding of one's personal and social identities, which includes race, gender, national origin, religious affiliation, etc. It is one of the core competencies in the [CASEL framework](#).

Njideka Akunyili Crosby was born in Nigeria and now lives in the US, having moved when she was sixteen years old. Her cultural identity combines strong attachments to the country of her birth and to her adopted home. She often uses photos from her family photo albums in her work. This is a portrait of the artist and her husband. The collaged elements in the floor are references to Nigerian pop culture from when the artist was growing up. She also painted plants in the background, including palm trees and plumeria, both of which are found in the East LA neighborhood where the artist lives. By including elements from her life in America and Nigeria, she shares information about the identities that are important to her.

Hear from Njideka Akunyili Crosby in [this short interview](#).



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Image: Njideka Akunyili Crosby. *And We Begin to Let Go* 2013. Acrylic, pastel, charcoal, collage, Xerox transfers, and marble dust on paper. Credit: Promised gift of Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine Farley. © 2022 Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Step 3 Activity: Identity collage

Suggested materials: large piece of paper, collage materials such as colored and patterned papers, magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue, etc. Optional: photographs of family and friends, crayons, colored pencils, or markers.

1. Think about the aspects of your personal and social identities that resonate with you. What people, places, and experiences come to mind when you think about these different aspects of your identity?
2. Select a couple of elements from your brainstorm to focus on and represent in your collage.
3. Gather images, make sketches, and select materials that reflect the story you would like to tell.
4. Experiment with different ways of combining images and materials until you arrive at a composition that feels right to you.
5. Reflection: What thoughts or feelings arose for you as you were exploring these images and materials? Did you discover anything new about your personal and social identities in this process?

Step 4 Share!

Share your collage with a friend or family member. Or you can email it to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org.