

Nonsuicidal Self-Injury Themes in Art

John Derby

Olathe East High School

This talk addresses nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI) as a theme in visual art. Until very recently, self-injurious behaviors (e.g., cutting, hitting, biting) were widely misunderstood and condemned. NSSI is common across cultures and is prevalent among children. Beginning with Van Gogh's self-portraits that document his severed ear, and concluding with teens' self-representations, I discuss a range of NSSI representations that evoke curiosity, repulsion, shock, pity, fear, shame, personal expression, and empathy. I conclude with suggestions for teachers of art.

Bio:

John Derby is an independent scholar and a visual arts teacher at Olathe East High School. He earned his PhD in Art Education from The Ohio State University, and holds MA, BS, and BFA degrees. Derby has taught secondary art and post-secondary art education, and worked as a professional goldsmith. Derby's research intersects the fields of art education and critical disability studies and has been published widely in academic journals and books.