

Editor's Letter

What do ghost bicycles, the Days of the Dead, and the Lincoln Memorial have in common? In different ways, they all commemorate a person, place, or event. Ghost bicycles are white-painted bicycles placed at a site where a cyclist died. The Days of the Dead are the most important celebration of the year in Mexico, as they honor the memory of loved ones who have died. The Lincoln Memorial honors one of our most revered presidents.

There are many ways for students to explore the theme of commemoration in the artroom.

Ghost bicycle.



Celebrating artist birthdays is one way that can take many forms (the *SchoolArts* calendar in the back of the issue lists many of these). In school, we are expected to observe months dedicated to different cultures or events such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Mother's Day, and the like. Why not have students explore why we honor such observances and then create their own artistic commemorations?

Even young children can understand reasons for remembering a special person, time, or place. My fifth-grade students wrote stories about their favorite memories and then illus-

trated and recorded them for a VoiceThread project. (You can watch them at voicethread.com/#q+Denton,+Texas.)

An additional approach to the subject of commemoration could be to ask your students to consider which present-day people or events might be honored in times to come. The daily news offers much fodder for discussion and debate. For example, the Library of Congress



Nancy at an ofrenda for the Days of the Dead in a public park in San Antonio, Texas.

recently announced that it would acquire the entire Twitter archive since March 2006. Are all tweets worthy of preservation? Are any worthy of commemoration? What do your students think?

Finally, another way to incorporate contemporary ideas is through a wonderful online resource, PBS Art: 21 episode about Ritual and Commemoration, available at www.pbs.org/art21/education/ritual/index.html. This unit offers three lessons on this theme: Remaking Myths, Honoring Heroes and History, and New Rituals. Though primarily written for secondary students, the concepts and ideas may be adapted for younger students as well.

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