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The Portland Observer

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Rap on Multiculturalism

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Shumann etches a portrait of herself in black and white, detailing the countours of her face and hair with eye-popping patterns that reflect her travels; flowery motifs from Barcelona, little llamas from Peru, and piles of seaweed from the Oregon Coast.

"I always find myself slightly under whelmed with the culture that has surrounded me growing up, creating a deep curiosity for other culsaid in an artists' statement.

A triangular display of blank flags hoisted on the wall was Brennan Broome and Chloe Womack's interpretation of what it meant to belong to a place, culture, and country, and then have that identity removed, "Who does such a flag represent?" read their artist statement, "What does it stand for?"

In another project about identity, Liam O'Conner displayed a series of portraits of subjects from a everyday life. wide range of backgrounds-France, etc.—all wearing the same latex mask.

Disturbing to the ignorant eye, each face appeared deformed. Covered by a second-skin plastering

with mouths agape, the personal and cultural identity of the individual is obscured.

"This distortion plays with the idea that identity is something that is only skin deep," said O'Conner in his artist statement.

Unlike other displays, in Male Identified, male-performer Takahiro Yakamoto used facial and bodily gestures in a sequence of movements to deconstruct the nuances of maleness.

In 15 minutes, Yakamoto tests tures throughout the world," she the unease of the sitting crowd's perception towards artistic self expression. Silently and slowly, with only a white square mat and a white chair as props, he moves frame by frame, from fully clothed to naked three times.

> Often, his work explores the dynamic communication among the work itself, the viewer, the location, the time, and the performer. Performance and sculpture allow him to explore the intricacies and simplicities of human communication in

"This approach allows the per-Malaysia, Poland, South Korea, former to become a mirror, in a postmodern sense," said Yakamoto. Inviting the viewers to reflect upon their own self-perception and contemplate the idea of gender and criteria for 'normal'".

Girls Empowered

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instruction is geared to help kids steer themselves away from abusive relationships, choose healthier partners, and form more open and safe relationships as adults.

Eighth grader Arabella Zook frequently walks by herself to and from school, but says she feels safer after having learned self-defense.

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"You can use your intuition if something feels wrong," she said.

Myeesha Morris chimes in with some of the options she learned about safety.

"If you're outside walking by yourself--your instincts pop in," she said, "You can defend, call 911, or run to the closest house."

Courtney Ford said that she not only learned how to defend herself, but gained confidence and self-esteem.

"Don't let boys get you all messed up," she warns.

Meeting up with her instructor and female classmates helped Ford through her 7th grade year when a lot of bullying was going around.

"It helped me then, and it will help me in high school and the rest of my life," she said.

"[GirlStrength]encourages yourself to be a better person," said Chinwendu Ughamba. "And learn for yourself how to higher your selfesteem."

Not everybody has it so good at home says one of the girls, so it is important for them to be able to talk to people at school and use the resources available to them there.

Faubion counselor Kristina Lasher said last year a female student survived an attack by someone she knew. She used her GirlStrength skills to yell and fight back and broke the code of silence.

"It's important to talk after the event," said Lasher.

Healing is another subject on the class curriculum.

When asked if they would recommend GirlStrength to other girls, Morris, Ford, and Chinwendu shout Yes!" in unison.

Carolyne Haycraft gages the success of the program by how many girls are lining up to talk about their experience a year after the fact with willingness and enthusiasm.

She hopes resources may permit a similar class for boys.