



Coded Structures, Decoded Identities

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12th Grade English, Mathematics, Art and Technology

High Tech High Media Arts

HTHMA 12th grade students in Digital Arts, English, and Mathematics investigated the complexities of man-made structures found in urban/rural design and architecture. As part of this investigation, students explored the formal aspects of visual representation as well as the psychology and symbolism communicated by these visual compositions. As importantly, students learned to analyze critically how man-made environments affect the way we interact with each other and how this impacts our social world. All buildings, no matter how neutral or insignificant they appear to be, are designed to establish particular power relations between the people who use, work in, live in, or pass through them. Thus, students considered how our structures, cultural norms, and even our very identities are formed by design. The students' inquiries and research culminated into a final exhibition using projections and paper sculpture to simulate a large-scale paper city lit up by interactive and provocative projected art. In this city, the audience explored unexpected and disturbing intersections between mathematics, computer programming, social constructs, cultural identities, and architecture.

Teacher Reflection

We asked students to do very sophisticated and complicated intellectual and artistic work. This process was messy before it was beautiful. But the final culmination was intricate, elegant and thoughtful. We are very proud of our students' work.

Student Reflection

For me the most challenging and rewarding aspect of the project was having to make decisions about our physical art piece that insured our research was visible. We needed to be aware throughout the process that the aesthetic choices we made on our physical structure needed to have meaning and purpose.

—Ilias

To learn more about this project and others, visit <http://margaret-noble.net/educator/codedstructures>