Identity: Some/One (Grades 6–8)

Some/One, 2001, Do Ho Suh

Find online at: https://tinyurl.com/ybalnlcu

LOOKING QUESTIONS
Take a minute to look at the artwork and take in everything that you see. Then think about, write down, or discuss these questions with other people.

〇 What’s going on in this artwork? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can you find?
〇 How would you describe Some/One to a person who has not seen it? Does it remind you of anything?
〇 Do you wear something or carry anything with you regularly that communicates a part of your identity? If so, what is it? What does it say about you?

INFORMATION
In South Korea, like many other countries around the world, young men are required to carry out military service. The artist of this sculpture, Do Ho Suh, cited his two years spent in the South Korean military when discussing the artwork. Reflecting on his military experience and Some/One in a 2001 interview with Art21 (https://tinyurl.com/y7swr87j), he stated, “Everybody has to go. And so, that’s a great deal of the Korean man’s identity. … It was a very difficult time, but at the same time, I’m glad that I did it. Every man talks about it, their own experience in the military.” Some/One is composed of around 100,000 dog tags of the same military-issue type used to identify fallen soldiers on a battlefield. Each dog tag on the sculpture bears a random and unique sequence of letters and numbers, symbolizing that no two lived experiences are exactly the same. However, they also serve as a marker of belonging to the military, which encompasses hundreds of thousands of people in South Korea, the United States, and other places in the world.
LEARN MORE
〇 Learn more about how Do Ho Suh creates more inventive sculptures that express ideas about home, displacement, and belonging on this Art21 page: https://art21.org/artist/do-ho-suh/
〇 On a smartphone, hear Seattle-based musician Deems Tsutakawa share his thoughts on Some/One: https://tinyurl.com/y86yptde

VISUALIZE
Think of an object that you wear or carry with you that has a connection to your identity, similar to Do Ho Suh and the dog tags that make up Some/One. Once you have selected your object, place it in front of you and reflect on the following questions:
〇 What does this object say about you, your family, or your culture? From who or what did you learn about the meaning of this object?
〇 Do you know someone who has a similar object? How many people do you think have something similar in your neighborhood or city? What about all over the world?

ART ACTIVITY
Create a paper mosaic inspired by an object that has a special connection to your identity.

Materials
Colored paper, scratch paper, scissors, glue or tape, and the object you selected in the section above.

Steps
1. Look closely at the object you selected in the section above. Trace the object, or draw a simple sketch of it on a piece of scratch paper.
2. Simplify what you sketched or traced into shapes that you can cut out easily.
3. Take a piece of colored paper and fold it in half 3–4 times. Draw or trace the shapes on the remaining space. Then, use scissors to cut them out of the folded paper. Repeat this with different paper colors or shapes of different sizes.
4. Once you have a couple dozen shapes cut out, experiment with placing them on a larger piece of paper. Try layering the shapes, like the layers of dog tags on Some/One.
   ○ You can use these shapes to create a larger image, like how Some/One is in the shape of a robe.
   ○ Or, you can make a mosaic inspired by your feelings or memories related to this object that doesn’t have a defined shape.
5. After you have settled on an arrangement that resonates with you, use the glue or tape to adhere the shapes to the paper.

   ○ What were you thinking about when arranging the shapes on the paper? If you chose to create a larger image with the shapes, what is the meaning of that image? If you chose to create a more abstract mosaic, what was your thinking behind that arrangement?
   ○ What connection do you have to other people who have an object similar to the one you chose? Do you think they would create something similar to your artwork? Why or why not?