

Educators Guide

COMMUNITY CREATED

2023-2024 School Year

Overview

- Summary
- Objectives
- Standards

Materials

- Presentation Materials
- Handouts
- Modifications
- Reference Resources
- Art Supplies

Lesson

- Introduction
- Introduce Artist/Artwork
- Collecting References
- Art Making
- Building the Installation
- Project Reflection

Extension Activities



OVERVIEW

The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts' *Community Created* is an annual project built for educators, educational partners, students, and community, that offers a collaborative studio activity. The program focuses on one theme per year and includes materials and educators' resources to support art and creativity that connects to the Museum's collection, temporary exhibitions, and site-specific installations.

For the 2023-2024 school year, *Community Created* will encourage schools and community groups to create their own collaborative art installations that can become a special setting for further public art engagements.

This project is inspired by Natasha Bowdoin's *Spring Song*, a [site-specific installation on view at AMFA](#).

Natasha Bowdoin (West Kennebunk, Maine, 1981 -), *Spring Song*, 2022 - 2023, acrylic on wood, gatorboard, and drywall supported with molded plastic brackets and aluminum pipe, 186 × 241 × 708 in., Commissioned by the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, 2022 - 2023. © Natasha Bowdoin.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will discuss theme(s) through writing poetry
- Students will explore the work of artist Natasha Bowdoin.
- Students will interpret various sources into individual artworks.
- Students will collaborate to construct an art installation.

STANDARDS

Standards align to the [Arkansas Fine Arts Academic Standards](#) provided by the Arkansas Department of Education.

K-8 and Visual Arts Foundations I-IV Standards

RE.8 - Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

CN.11 - Students will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

CR.2- Students will organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

CR.3 – Students will refine and complete artistic work.

PR.6 - Students will convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.



MATERIALS

PRESENTATION

- [Instructional Slide Show Presentation](#)
 - Interview 1- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPP-z4xnUbU>
 - Interview 2- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sH15DcO_sxc
 - Interview 3- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dstNaM6981A>

HANDOUTS

The introduction activity can be completed with any type of poem structure. Please use what works best for your students. Three types of poetry handouts are provided to cover most grade-levels.

- [Acrostic Nature Poem Handout](#)
- [Cinquan Nature Poem Handout](#)
- [Nature Poem Using Personification Handout](#)

LESSON MODIFICATIONS

This lesson works best for upper elementary through high school. Below are some suggested lesson modifications for younger grades and for scaffolding to support all learners.

Lesson Introduction - Nature Poem

- Please select a type of poem that best suits your students needs.
- Very young students could collaboratively complete an poem with the educator writing down their lines.

Reference Image Research

- Instead of independent research, teachers could print out reference materials for students to select from or curate a selection of books and other reference materials for students to search from.

Art making

- Instead of having students create their own nature shapes, pre-draw various shapes at various sizes for students to select from.
- If including backing materials, have students glue main shapes directly to black backing materials such as painted cardboard or foam core.

Installation

- Allow students to be involved in the construction planning and development of the installation structure as is grade-level appropriate.



REFERENCE IMAGE ONLINE RESOURCES

The following are suggested online resources to help your students begin to find reference images for their individual artworks.

Inspired by the artist's own sources of interest, resources that focus on botanical illustrations, local or native plants, and children's storybook illustrations are great places to begin.

- [Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Foundation Collection](#)
- [Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission](#)
- [Library of Congress, Free to Use: Classic Children's Books](#)
- [Smithsonian: Botany Collections](#)
- [Bloom and Leaf Illustrations from Natasha Bowdoin](#)
- [Natural History Museum: The Modern Botanical Illustration Collection](#)

ADDITIONAL PROJECT RESOURCES

- [Spring Song Cartoon](#)
- [Natasha Bowdoin: Website and Interviews](#)
- *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, 1855
- *Nature* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1836

ART SUPPLIES

For this project you will need:

- Sheets of colored paper
 - As large as is available
 - Black, white, and vivid colors
- Markers and paint
- Scissors or craft knives
- Glue, tape, or spray adhesive
- Cardboard, foam core, or other backing material
- Additional cardboard, paper towel rolls, and other structural materials

Suggestions:

- To create larger pieces, see if your school carries large rolls of colored paper for bulletin boards, etc.
- Many businesses give away cardboard for free.



LESSON

1. INTRODUCTION – EXPLORE THE THEME OF NATURE THROUGH POETRY

- Allow time for students to explore nature through a walk around the school, or encourage them to explore their own backyards. Alternately, have students think of a personal experience they've already had exploring nature.
- Ask students to brainstorm about nature by answering the questions found in the presentation and handout.
- Incorporating ideas from their brainstorming, students can write their own nature poem. (Three poem structures are provided, or choose one that works best for your students.)
- Hold on to these poems for presentation within the final installation.

2. INTRODUCE THE ARTIST AND ARTWORK

Use the slide show presentation to introduce Natasha Bowdoin and her installation *Spring Song*.

Natasha Bowdoin

- Artist and professor
- At a young age, she wandered the woods and waters around her home in Maine
- Worked as a lobster woman before studying art

Discuss Theme

- Connection to nature
- Personal connection vs human impact

Analyze Bowdoin's Style

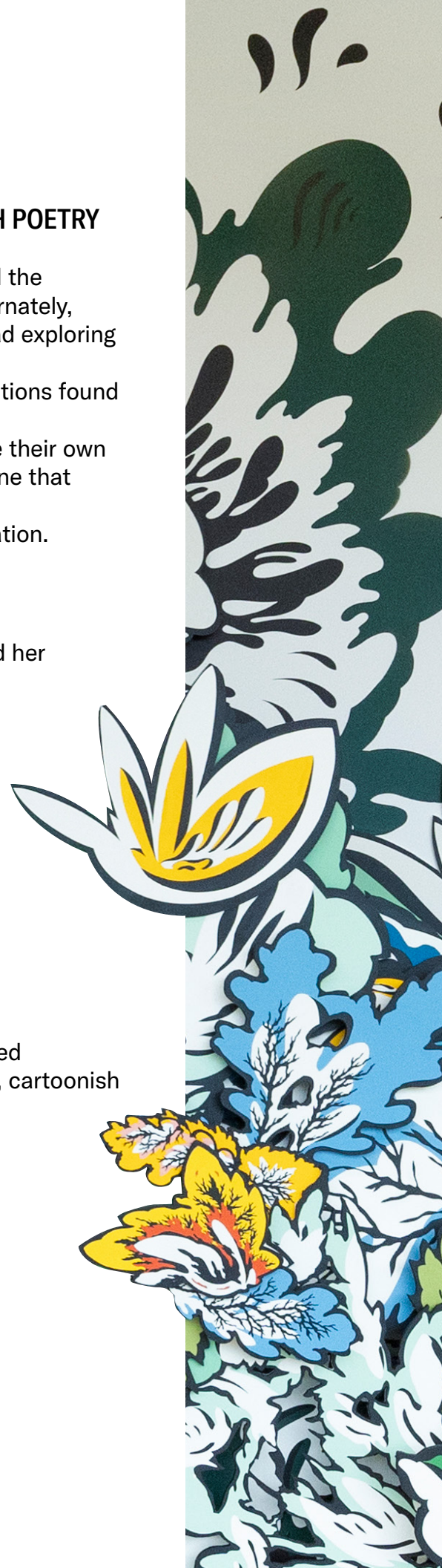
- Organic shapes - Bulbous and smooth vs jagged and rough-edged
- Heavily stylized - Black outlines, flat vibrant colors, not realistic, cartoonish

Identify and Describe Important Elements & Principles

- | | |
|---------|--------------------|
| • Color | • Harmony |
| • Line | • Layering / Depth |
| • Scale | • Repetition |
| • Shape | • Variety |

Artist's Inspiration

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| • 19th Century Botanical Drawings | • Gold Age Children's Books Illustrations |
| • Comic Books | • Stage Sets |
| • Early Science Fiction | |
| • Floral Textile Patterns | |



3. PREPARATION, INSPIRATION, AND REFERENCES

Select one or a few of the following activities to encourage your students to document nature and collect reference images to use in their art making. These activities will help students relate to the artist's process and inspirations, while making new connections of their own. Additionally, the goal is to collect a wide variety of images, drawing, samples, etc. to be used as image references.

Take a walk around the school and observe the landscaping and plants.

- Take photos, make rubbings, collect leaves, trace, or sketch plants.
- Take notes about how they feel when in nature.

Encourage students to explore natural areas, such as their yard, local park, community garden, state park, etc.

- Take photos, collect leaves, trace, or sketch plants.
- Take notes about how they feel when they are in nature.

Have students think about previous experiences they've had in nature through journaling.

Conduct research about plants and the ways that nature is depicted through photography, illustrations, etc.

- Refer to the digital resources suggested in the Materials section as a place to begin.
- Take a trip to your school's library to explore other resources.
- Refer to Bowdoin's own inspirations for further reference ideas.

Visit the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts to view *Spring Song* in person and discover other nature-themed artworks. The museum is always free. To inquire about a docent-led School Tour, use this [School Tour form](#).

4. ART MAKING

Students will create individual nature artworks based on their collected reference material and inspired by Bowdoin's style.

Step-by-step directions are provided in the slide show presentation.

- Allow students to make several designs of different sizes, colors, etc. as time and supplies allow.



- If possible, have students create designs at a variety of scales, working together to create larger pieces. Go big!

5. BUILD THE INSTALLATION

As the individual artworks are created, begin to imagine where and how it might be possible to construct the installation. Include students in the installation planning and construction process as is grade-level appropriate. They could draw installation sketches and discuss how they want to display the pieces as a part of the planning process. Older students could help glue backing materials.

It is encouraged to create the installation where it can be shared and enjoyed by the larger school community. Discuss with school or program leadership about options for creating the installation in a public or common area such as a hallway, stage, lobby, library, window, cafeteria, etc.

Once a location has been chosen, consider the installation construction.

- The largest individual pieces should be closest to the wall with increasingly smaller works layered towards the front.
- The individual works can be directly attached to a wall or surface and simply overlapped and collaged to each other to create a flat arrangement.
- Like Bowdoin's installations, structural materials can be used to separate pieces to create depth within the composition. (If space and supplies permit.)
Structural materials such as paper towel rolls, cardboard, foam core, dowel rods, paper cups, etc. can be used to space out the individual artworks.

6. PROJECT REFLECTION

Invite students to view and explore the finalized installation. While viewing, use one of the two discussion guides provided in the presentation to lead a 10 to 15 minute conversation about the project process, the theme, the artist who inspired the project, and what they learned. The first project reflection will work best for younger students while the second project reflection will work best for older students.



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The following are suggestions for how you can incorporate interdisciplinary activities, support community engagements, and connect back to AMFA through your Natasha Bowdoin inspired installation.

- Get inspired! As an introduction or extension of the project, plan a visit to the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts and schedule a docent-led school tour to see Natasha Bowdoin's *Spring Song* installation and the rest of the incredible artworks on view! The museum is always free. To inquire about a docent-led School Tour, use this [School Tour request form](#).
- Have students perform poems or short stories inspired by nature within the installation.
- Connect to other Spring or Earth Day events or programming. The first day of spring is Tuesday March 19, 2024. Earth Day is Monday April 22, 2024.
- Coordinate this project in tandem with life sciences, environmental studies, and nature themed units in science classes.
- When considering the location of the installation and the dates it will be on display, can it be used as a location to hold a public performance and support other school community events such as concerts, school-wide art nights, etc.
- Keep connected and learn about additional Community Created activities on our [website](#) throughout the school year.
- Continue the creativity with Creative Saturdays at AMFA, every Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm. Creative Saturdays include free make-and-take art activities along with other fun engagements.

We want to see your Community Created projects! Share videos and photography of your installation and how your school or program has chosen to activate your creation by including the hashtag #amfacommunitycreated on social media or emailing us images and videos at connect@arkmfa.org for the chance to be showcased on our website or mobile guide next Spring.

