

**The Fabric Workshop and Museum**

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**Art from New Materials****Lesson 1: Create a Landscape Installation**

**Source:** <http://www.fabricworkshop.org/education/curriculum/materials2009.php>

Artists-in-residence at The Fabric Workshop and Museum often experiment with unconventional materials for their projects. Drawing from many available sources, they explore both natural and local resources, the industrial world, science, and cutting-edge technology. The following activity can be a stand-alone lesson, or a part of a larger unit of study.

**Objectives**

- Students will look at, think about, and discuss contemporary art.
- Students will think creatively and critically about installation art made with non-traditional materials, and about traditional landscape and still life art.
- Students will work collaboratively to create an installation inspired by nature and by Jim Hodges.

**Materials and Resources**

- Photographs of Jim Hodges
- Video: Jim Hodges Working on *Every Touch*, 1995 (See Source page above)
- Background information on Jim Hodges (See *New Materials as New Media* by Marion Boulton Stroud, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA, page 134.)
- Thin fabrics (silk, cotton, polyester, or rayon)
- Scissors (good quality, for cutting fabrics)
- Markers
- Large needles, thread, yarn
- Pictures of flowers (from magazines, greeting cards, and calendars)
- Flowers (real and/or artificial)

## Activities

1. As a class, view photographs of *You* by Jim Hodges. Encourage careful looking. Ask students to read the following questions and to think about their answers:

- What materials did the artist, Jim Hodges, use to make this artwork?
- What does this artwork remind you of? Which parts of it are from nature?
- Is this artwork a landscape installation? Why or why not?
- How big is *You*? Imagine this artwork hanging in your classroom. How would it change the space? How is it like a wall? A curtain? A screen?
- The title, *You*, suggests that the artist wants to connect with the viewers of his artwork. How does knowing this affect your response to it?

Discuss the questions. Make a list of words that describe what the artwork reminds us of on the blackboard. Encourage students to expand the list with ideas from nature, for example, webs, vines, gardens, etc. Define the term landscape and debate whether or not this artwork is a landscape installation. Provide biographical information about Jim Hodges.

2. Help students work collaboratively to create a contemporary landscape installation inspired by nature and by Jim Hodges.

- Introduce the project and the materials (listed above).
- Decide together how big the "landscape installation" will be and where in your school or classroom it could hang.
- Look at real flowers (if possible), artificial flowers, and photographs of flowers. Discuss their names, when and where they bloom, and what they symbolize in different parts of the world.
- Discuss and decide upon a color theme for the project.
- Divide the students into small groups and assign tasks: drawing flowers on the fabric; cutting out the flower shapes; sewing the tips of the flowers together to form a curtain with the help of a parent or teacher.

## Reflection and Evaluation

- How and where will you display the "landscape installation"? Try hanging it in different places in your school and room and observe how it changes that space
- Brainstorm titles for your "landscape installation."
- Debate whether or not artists should create their work alone or with others. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working individually and collaboratively?
- Compare *You* with still-life paintings of flowers, for example *Still Life with Flowers in a Vase* (1617) by Christoffel van den Berghe and *Sunflowers* (1888 or 1889) by Vincent van Gogh (at the Philadelphia Museum of Art).
- Write a paragraph about what you learned from working collaboratively with other students on an artwork.

## Vocabulary

- *landscape installation*: An environmental work of art that depicts a scene in nature.
- *installation*: An ensemble or environment, sometimes created for a particular gallery or outdoor site that provides the experience of being surrounded by art. Because many installations are temporary, often only photographs or videos remain to document their existence.
- *still life*: A work of art that represents objects, for example, bottles, bowls, books, flowers, and fruit.

## Curriculum Connections

- Language Arts: Read *Xochitl and the Flowers*, *Xóchital*, *la Niña de las Flores* by Jorge Argueta and illustrated by Carl Angel. Discuss the role of flowers in the life of the Flores' family. Write about a time when a flower or flowers were important to you or your family.
- Math: Figure out a way of estimating how many flowers there are in *You*.
- Social Studies: Research what various flowers symbolize in different cultures, for example China, Japan, Mexico, Europe, and the United States. Make an illustrated chart.
- Science: Learn what flowers bloom in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas during each month of the year. Identify the parts of flowers.
- Art: Research the life and work of Maria Sibylla Merian, an adventurous Dutch artist and naturalist born in 1647 who traveled to South America to create detailed drawings and engravings of flowers and insects. Use colored pencils to make a detailed drawing of a single flower.

## National Standards

- Content Standard #1 (Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes)
- Content Standard #2 (Using knowledge of structures and functions)
- Content Standard #3 (Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas)
- Content Standard #4 (Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others)
- Content Standard #5 (Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines)