



art:21

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

EDUCATORS' GUIDE TO THE SIXTH SEASON

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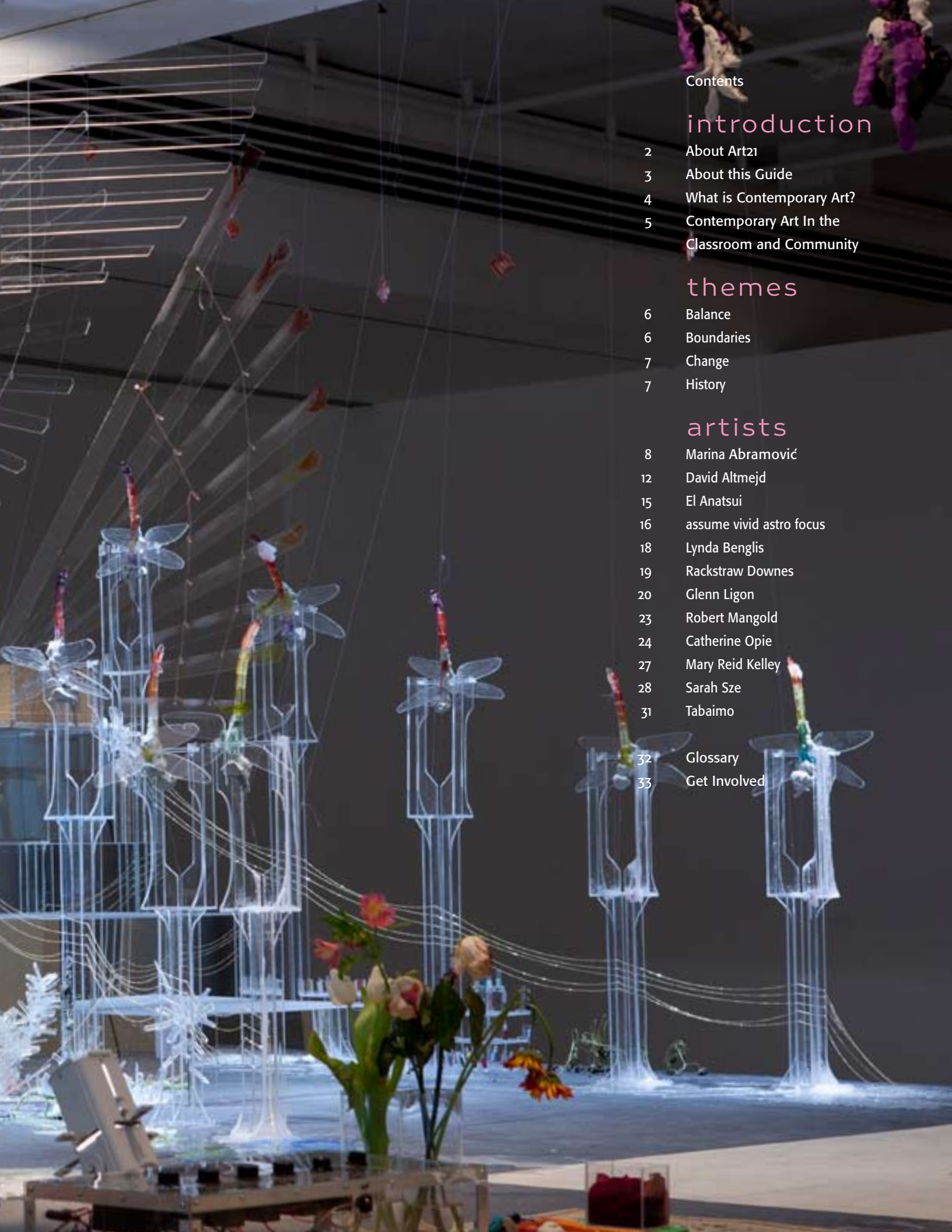
Credits

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© Sarah Sze, courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; **Catherine Opie**,
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Museum of Contemporary Art (MOT), Tokyo. Courtesy MOT Museum, Tokyo, and Hiromi
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This spread: **David Altmejd**, *Conte crépusculaire [Twilight Tale]*, 2011. With composer-
performer Pierre Lapointe. Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal, Canada, May 4–7, 2011. Photo:
David Jacques, © David Altmejd, courtesy Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal



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art21

Art21 is a non-profit organization that illuminates the creative process of today's visual artists through the production of documentary films, interpretive media, and live programs that stimulate critical reflection as well as conversation. Art21 offers an independent, behind-the-scenes point of view on contemporary art and artists. Based in New York City, with a global reach on television and online, Art21's additional projects include workshops for teachers; public screenings and lectures; the Art21 blog; New York Close Up; and social-media initiatives.

Art in the Twenty-First Century, the Series

The first and only nationally broadcast public television series to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists in the United States and around the world, *Art in the Twenty-First Century* introduces audiences to a diverse range of established and emerging artists working today, and to the art they are producing now.

- Six seasons have been produced for PBS (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012).
- Each season contains 4 one-hour programs.
- Each hour features 3 to 5 artists in 12- to 18-minute segments.
- A total of 100 established and emerging artists have been featured.

The Artists

In the Art21 broadcast series, contemporary artists speak directly to the audience in their own words, reflecting on their lives, sources of inspiration, and working processes. Profiled artists include painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers, installation, video, and new media artists. Executive Producer and Curator Susan Sollins and Associate Curator Wesley Miller select artists in collaboration with a national curatorial advisory council of independent critics and museum curators.

Viewing the Series

All six seasons of the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* series are available for viewing online at www.art21.org. The series is also available for download-to-own from the iTunes store, and on DVD from ShopPBS and Davis Publications.

To order from ShopPBS
1-800-PLAY-PBS (1-800-752-9727)
www.shoppbs.org

To order from Davis Publications
1-800-533-2847
www.davis-art.com

Additional Art21 videos are available online through iTunes, Blip.tv, YouTube, ArtBabble, Netflix, and Hulu.

Episodes can also be recorded off the air and used for educational purposes, free for one year from the date of the first national broadcast in April 2012. Check local PBS station listings as broadcast times may vary.

Art21 Books

Art21's richly illustrated companion books mirror program themes and feature interviews with the artists. Art21 books are available through www.art21.org and where books are sold.



www.art21.org

Art21's new Web site presents original Art21 videos, full episodes of the PBS series, artist projects, editorial content, and educational resources. A stand-alone site, it features more than 100 artists, 300 video clips, 2,800 photographs of artwork and production stills, 200 artist interviews, and interactive content for educators, and is a growing archive of multimedia content focused on films, contemporary art, artists, and ideas.

blog.art21.org

Art21's blog is a dynamic site presenting daily artist updates, weekly columns, exclusive videos, in-depth discussion features, a focus on art education, and more. In collaboration with artists, educators, curators, academics, and writers, the blog offers timely information for anyone interested in Art21 artists and the broader scope of contemporary art.

www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup

New York Close Up is Art21's documentary film series devoted to artists living and working in New York City, in the first decade of their professional careers. This innovative project provides an intimate look at the next wave of artists, close-up.

www.pbs.org/art21

Art21 on PBS.org chronicles the television series, *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, presenting the artists and themes featured in the PBS broadcast series, complete episodes, and downloadable Educators' Guides for each season.

Stay up-to-date with Art21 and join our community online. Let us know what you think. Share your ideas, artwork, events, and videos by becoming a fan on Facebook and YouTube, or following us on Twitter.

facebook

YouTube

Twitter

about this guide

This guide is designed as a resource for planning lessons, facilitating discussions, introducing Season 6 content, and supporting further research and exploration of contemporary art, artists, and themes. Educators are encouraged to use the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* series, Educators' Guides, and Art21 Web sites in tandem to integrate contemporary art into classroom and community-based learning environments.

Getting Started

Prior to introducing particular artists or themes, it may be appropriate to initiate a broader discussion about contemporary art, including the expectations, associations, assumptions, and questions individuals may have about art being made today. The discussion questions and activities included in this introduction provide a starting point to address some of these ideas, as well as strategies for presenting video and online resources.

Themes

Each one-hour program is loosely organized around a theme that helps viewers analyze, compare, contrast, and juxtapose the works of the profiled artists. These themes are intended to inspire interpretive possibilities. In many cases the artists' work is relevant to multiple themes.



Artist Pages

Each Artist Page contains:

About the Artist An overview of the artist's work and working methods, including current and past projects.

Media and Materials A synopsis of the artist's principal media and materials, which are documented in the artist's video segment. Featured media and materials can be cross-referenced to those used by other artists in the series.

Key Words and Ideas Additional thematic concepts connect the artist's work and processes to those of other artists in the series and to online curriculum. **Key Words and Ideas** also highlights relevant vocabulary to support discussion and further inquiry.

Discuss Suggested discussion questions explore ideas introduced in the series.

Before Viewing questions establish key ideas in anticipation of viewing the artist segments. **While Viewing** questions support active viewing and encourage facilitators to pause and clarify or illuminate particular ideas or vocabulary. **After Viewing** questions follow up on key ideas and encourage viewers to synthesize prior knowledge and personal opinion with the narratives presented in the segment.

Create To encourage active, hands-on exploration of the ideas and materials presented in the **Discuss** section, **Create** activities are open-ended interdisciplinary opportunities for individual interpretation of the creative methods and interests of featured artists. Suggested activities can be modified for different age levels, learning styles, and media choices.

Glossary

Selected vocabulary words are highlighted in bold print throughout this Guide. Definitions can be found in the glossary on page 32. An online glossary with additional vocabulary can be found at www.art21.org

Audience

The series *Art in the Twenty-First Century* is produced for a wide range of audiences and is intended to empower viewers to articulate their own ideas and interpretations about contemporary art. Series-related education materials support the use of contemporary art in K–12 classrooms, on college and university campuses, and for adult and community audiences. The Educators' Guide and additional online content introduce opportunities for critical thinking and creative problem solving relevant to middle school, high school, and college students. Teachers who work with students of all ages are encouraged to interpret material provided by Art21 to support their individual teaching methods and needs.

Contemporary art often explores controversial subject matter, and some of the artists featured in the Art21 series present provocative images and ideas in their work. While this Guide and the resources provided online offer suggestions and strategies for framing and introducing challenging material, some content may not be appropriate for all audiences and learning environments. Teachers should preview all series' segments before classroom or other screening to determine whether the content is appropriate for their students' ages, maturity levels, and learning environments.

what is contemporary art?

Art21 defines contemporary art as the work of artists who are living in the twenty-first century. Contemporary art mirrors contemporary culture and society, offering teachers, students, and general audiences a rich resource through which to consider current ideas and rethink the familiar. The work of contemporary artists is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenges traditional boundaries and defies easy definition. Diverse and eclectic, contemporary art is distinguished by the very lack of a uniform organizing principle, ideology, or *ism*. In a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world, contemporary artists give voice to the varied and changing cultural landscape of identity, values, and beliefs.

Contemporary audiences play an active role in the process of constructing meaning about works of art. Some artists often say that the viewer contributes to or even completes the artwork by contributing his or her personal reflections, experiences, opinions, and interpretations. One of the cornerstones of the Art21 philosophy is to allow artists to present their work in their own words and to encourage viewers to access their own abilities to consider, react, and respond to visual art.

Curiosity, openness, and dialogue are important tools for engaging with the work of contemporary artists. Instead of questioning whether a work of art is 'good' or 'bad', the study of contemporary art requires a more open-ended methodology and an inquiry-based approach. Asking questions that ignite discussion and stimulate debate is an important first step in the process towards appreciating and interpreting works of art that can defy expectation, may provoke strong responses, or even contradict personal beliefs or societal values.

■ Bringing contemporary art into schools and communities enables educators to promote curiosity, encourage dialogue, and initiate debate about the world and the issues that affect our lives.

■ Art21 artists serve as creative role models who can inspire young people (and even adults) to consider how ideas are developed, articulated, and realized in the contemporary world, and offer educators opportunities to support diverse learning styles.

■ Contemporary artists address both current events and historical ideas. These references help educators and students make connections across their curriculum and support interdisciplinary thinking.

■ As artists continue to explore new technologies and media, the work they create encourages critical thinking and visual literacy in an increasingly media-saturated society.

■ Art21 enables students to understand that contemporary art is part of a cultural dialogue that concerns larger contextual frameworks such as ideas about beauty, personal and cultural identity, family, community, and nationality.



DISCUSS

Use the following questions and activities as a way to initiate a broad-based dialogue about contemporary art and specific ideas related to where art is seen, how it is made, and who makes it.

- Why is art important? What role does art play in our society? What value is placed upon artists and their art, and why?
- What makes something a work of art? Is art defined by particular boundaries? If so, what are they and how have they changed over the course of history?
- What is the role of the artist? How has this role changed over time?
- What distinguishes visual art from other forms of visual communication like advertising, design, or photojournalism?
- Who decides what a work of art means—the artist, the critic, the viewer? How do history and the passage of time affect the meaning of an artwork?
- What are the most important skills an artist can have?
- What materials and tools do artists use to create art today? Have the tools for making art changed over time?
- Where do artists find inspiration?
- What is the difference between working alone and collaborating on an artwork with fabricators, audiences, or others?
- In addition to museums and galleries, where else can art be shown? How does the location or context of a work of art affect its meaning?
- What are the subjects, issues, and themes important to artists working today?
- What role does beauty play in contemporary art? Does a work of art need to be beautiful? Why, or why not? Who decides what is beautiful?

CREATE

- Encourage students to write regularly in a journal or sketchbook to record questions, ideas, or pictures related to their art-viewing experiences. Use any of the **Before, During, or After Viewing** questions as journal assignments to be completed in anticipation of a group discussion.
- Initiate a debate based on any of the previous discussion questions. Turn the question into a statement and have students develop arguments for and against that statement to present to the class.
- Use the Art21 series and Web sites to prepare students to view art in museums, galleries, and other exhibition venues. Discuss the different ways audiences can see and experience contemporary art (on film, on the Internet, in person, etc.) and reflect on how those contexts influence the way we look at and interpret the work.
- View a range of different artist segments to inspire students to write their own artist statement or to create a video segment reflecting their own profile as an artist.
- Use Art21 as a springboard to connect with your local arts community. Invite a local artist, curator, collector, or educator to discuss particular artists, issues, or concepts relevant to your students or local community.

PRESENTING VIDEO

- Preview all video content before presenting it in a classroom or community context. Consider viewing a single artist profile or specific portions of different artist profiles to address particular discussion questions or to anticipate a hands-on activity.
- Prepare viewers for what they will see. Initiate a discussion or writing exercise using the **Before Viewing** questions. These questions are designed to establish expectations about the content in the video and solicit personal experiences and opinion in relation to a particular topic or idea.

- Ask viewers to discuss key vocabulary words before viewing and identify how the terms are being applied while watching the video. Use the Art21 Glossary to discuss and clarify relevant terms.
- Introduce additional resources such as copies of artist interviews, images of specific works of art, or key words or topics found on the Art21 Web site (www.art21.org). These resources introduce specific ideas or themes addressed in the video segments and can support post-viewing discussion.
- Encourage active viewing by identifying appropriate points for pausing, clarifying, or expanding on what participants are seeing and hearing. Use the **While Viewing** questions provided in this Guide or revisit **Before Viewing** questions or ideas when relevant. Encourage participants to take notes, sketch, or consider additional questions while they watch.
- Facilitate **After Viewing** discussion by analyzing and responding to the video segment with relevant discussion and follow-up activities. Consider ways for participants to process their ideas independently before sharing them with the group, either by writing, sketching, or utilizing graphic organizers.
- Use the Art21 themes to initiate conversation about multiple artists and their work. Compare and contrast different artists, working methods, or interpretations of specific themes or topics.
- Screen a range of films about different artists (past and present, documentary, and from popular culture) and compare how each film approaches its subject matter and conveys a narrative about the artist and his or her work and ideas.

For more information and resources related to integrating Art21 content and contemporary art into classrooms, museums, and public events visit www.art21.org and download the Learning with Art21 toolkit.

theme balance

I'm thinking about the edge between life and art, and trying to have the viewer move in and out of that all the time. Sarah Sze

Rackstraw Downes born 1939, Kent, England

Robert Mangold born 1937, North Tonawanda, New York

Sarah Sze born 1969, Boston, Massachusetts

In what ways can art convey equilibrium or disequilibrium? What is reality? This episode features artists whose works explore balance and imbalance, and demonstrate that the smallest change in a line, formal element, or structure can be a radical proposition.

Often described as a realist, **Rackstraw Downes** prefers not to use that term. He views the act of seeing and the art of representation as culturally taught, with different cultures accepting different delineations of the world as realistic. As a painter of his *surroundings* (he does not think of himself as a *landscape* painter), he attends to the perils and pleasures of perception, and the dialogue between **abstraction** and figuration. With minimal means and classical restraint, **Robert Mangold** translates the most basic of formal elements—shape, line, and color—into paintings, prints, and drawings whose simplicity of form expresses complex ideas. While his focus on formal considerations may seem paramount, he delights in setting up problems for the viewer. **Sarah Sze** builds her installations and intricate sculptures from the minutiae of everyday life, imbuing mundane materials with surprising significance.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Unity, a principle of design, occurs when the elements in an artwork come together in a cohesive whole. How do you achieve unity in your own work? Is unity necessary in an artwork?
- What are the differences between looking, seeing, and knowing?
- Explain the distinction between complication and complexity.

After Viewing

- Describe the materials these artists use. How does each artist achieve balance in his or her work?
- Rackstraw Downes says, "You don't see an image all at once. You see it part by part. It unfolds." Describe how viewers might think about and examine these artists' works to better understand them.
- What role does complexity play for the artists in this episode? How is this evident in their work?

theme boundaries

I'm interested in science, the same way I'm interested in art, with a sort of childlike fascination with objects that grow, transform, and reshape themselves. David Altmejd

David Altmejd born 1974, Montréal, Canada

assume vivid astro focus formed 2001, New York, New York

Lynda Benglis born 1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Tabaimo born 1975, Hyogo, Japan

Who and what limit our freedom of expression? In what ways do cultural differences affect our understanding of art and other forms of communication? How do an artist's process and choice of medium affect our perception of his or her work? This episode features artists who synthesize disparate **aesthetic** traditions, present **taboo** subject matter, discover innovative uses of media, and explore the shape-shifting potential of the human figure.

David Altmejd's sculptures, suffused with ornament, blur distinctions between interior and exterior, surface and structure, representation and abstraction. The collective **assume vivid astro focus** fuses sculpture, video, drawing, and performance into carnivalesque installations in which gender, politics, and cultural codes float freely. Sculptor **Lynda Benglis**'s radical and pioneering invention of new forms with unorthodox techniques contains within it a reverence for cultural references that trace back to antiquity. **Tabaimo**'s drawings and video installations probe unsettling themes of isolation, contagion, and instability that seem to lurk beneath daily existence in contemporary Japan.

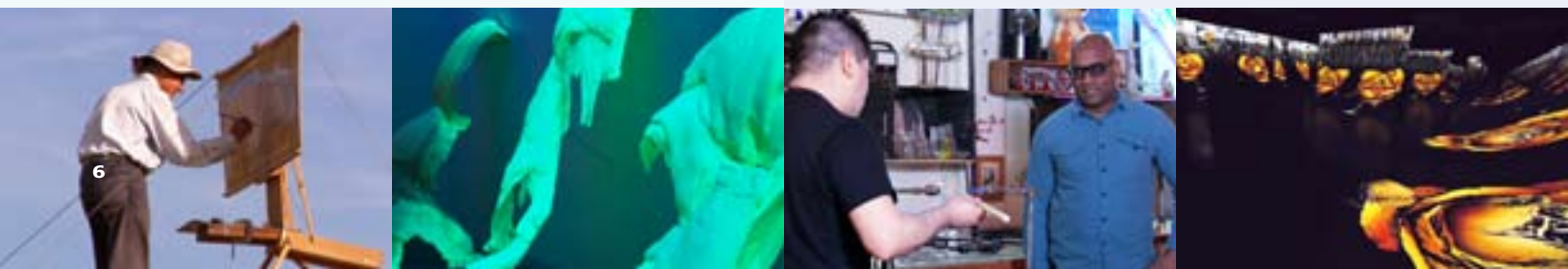
DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Why do artists choose to work with the human figure? What ideas can an artist convey through the human figure? How?
- What are the benefits of not having a 'signature' medium? Describe the work of one or more artists who incorporate a range of media. Describe the work of one or more writers who use a variety of styles.
- Why are some subjects taboo? What reactions do they provoke? Why do artists and writers want to work with taboo subjects?

After Viewing

- In what different ways do the artists in this segment use the human figure? What do they communicate by incorporating the human figure in their works?
- Describe some of the benefits these artists may experience through working with multiple approaches and media.
- With what kinds of boundaries do these artists engage? How?



theme change

It was important for me to no longer empty out the landscape, but to fulfill this notion of creating documents of our time . . . creating another way of looking at the American landscape. Catherine Opie

Ai Weiwei born 1957, Beijing, China

El Anatsui born 1944, Anyako, Ghana

Catherine Opie born 1961, Sandusky, Ohio

How do artists respond to a world in flux? In what ways do artists act as agents of change, and what kinds of aesthetic choices do they make to express it? This episode features artists who bear witness to transformation—cultural, material, and aesthetic—and actively engage communities as collaborators and subjects.

Ai Weiwei infuses his sculptures, photographs, and public artworks with personal poetry and political conviction, often making use of historic Chinese art forms in critical examinations of a host of contemporary Chinese social and political issues. In sculptures of clay, wood, and metal **El Anatsui** uses and explores materials and formal elements that relate to his aesthetic and cultural environment, exemplifying change and revealing the eternal cycle of destruction, transformation, and regeneration.

Catherine Opie investigates the ways in which photographs document and give voice to social phenomena in America today. Working between **conceptual** and **documentary** approaches, she examines the familiar genres of portraiture, landscape, and studio photography.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Can artists, works of art, or writers, and works of literature provoke change or transform our way of thinking? How?
- Why would artists, writers, and others choose to collaborate? What are the benefits and drawbacks of collaboration?
- How are transformations of people, places, and things documented?

After Viewing

- Describe your thoughts, questions, and reactions to the work of the artists in this segment. What action, if any, would you like to take after seeing this work?
- Why has each of these artists chosen his or her particular subject? What do these subjects communicate to the viewer?
- How does **collaboration** with others affect each artist in this episode? How might working alone change an artist's work?
- What kinds of transformation are being depicted in this episode? How do these transformations occur?

theme history

People are possessive about history and they want conflicting things from it. They want it to be true, reliable, and literal. But it's also important that history be used to make metaphors. Mary Reid Kelley

Marina Abramović born 1946, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Glenn Ligon born 1960, the Bronx, New York

Mary Reid Kelley born 1979, Greenville, South Carolina

How do artists mine the past to explore the present? Why do some historical events shape the way we think today, and why have some been forgotten? In this episode, artists play with historical events, explore and expose commonly held assumptions about historic 'truth', and create narratives based on personal experiences.

A pioneer of performance art, **Marina Abramović** has used her body as subject and medium of her performances, testing her physical, mental, and emotional limits in a quest for heightened consciousness, **transcendence**, and self-transformation. While the sources of some works lie in her personal history, others lie in more recent and contemporary events. Painter and sculptor **Glenn Ligon** examines American **identity** through found sources to reveal the ways in which the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, and sexual politics inform our understanding of contemporary society. In drawings and videos filled with punning wordplay, **Mary Reid Kelley** presents her take on the clash between utopian ideologies and the realities of women's lives in the struggle for liberation and through political strife, wars, and other historical events.

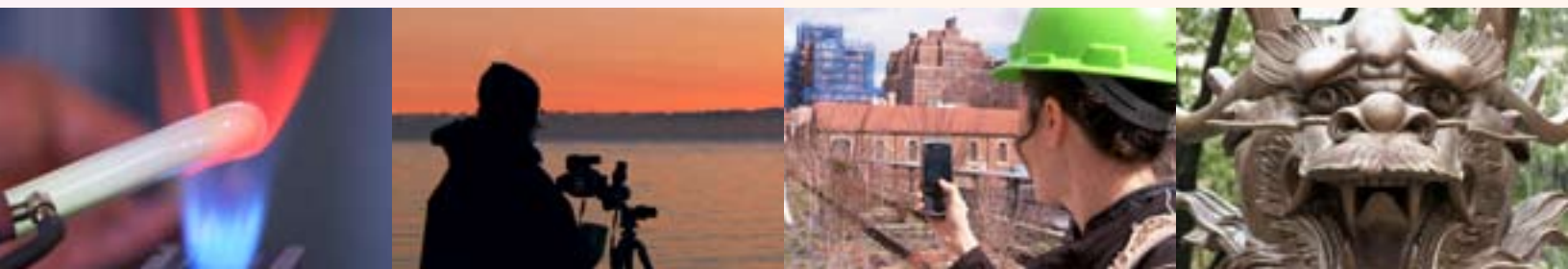
DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Why do some artists choose history as a starting point for their work? How have artists shaped history itself?
- How can words become art? What examples can you provide?
- How does your own biography affect the work you make and the things you think about most often?

After Viewing

- How does each artist use history in order to make his or her work? Whose history do these artists explore, and why?
- Discuss how words, text, and language contribute to each segment in this episode. How do they shape each artist's work?
- What role does autobiography play for the three artists featured in this episode?



Marina Abramović (a-BROM-oh-vik)

www.art21.org/artists/marina-abramovic



Born

1946, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Education

Academy of Fine Arts, Belgrade and Zagreb, Yugoslavia
Honorary doctorate, Art Institute of Chicago

Lives and Works

New York City

About the Artist

A pioneer of **performance art**, Abramović has used her body as subject and medium to test her physical, mental, and emotional limits in a quest for heightened consciousness, **transcendence**, and self-transformation. Characterized by endurance and pain—and by repetitive behavior, actions of long duration, and intense public interactions and energy dialogues—her work has engaged, fascinated, and sometimes repelled live audiences. The universal themes of life and death are recurring motifs, often enhanced by the use of symbolic visual elements or props such as crystals, bones, knives, tables, and pentagrams. While the sources of some works lie in her personal history (the circumstances of her childhood and family life under Communist rule in the former Yugoslavia), others lie in more recent and contemporary events, such as the wars in her homeland and other parts of the world.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials
performance, sound

Key Words and Ideas

contradiction, duration, performance, silence, solitude, sound, time, transcendence

Related Artists

Laurie Anderson, Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Oliver Herring, Kimsooja, Paul McCarthy, Bruce Nauman, Catherine Sullivan, Andrea Zittel

If you deal with painting you just have to have a nail on the wall. You hang the painting, and that's it. But performance is such an immaterial form of art. If you're not there to see it, you will miss it. Commentary or a video can never replace the live experience.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- How do artists use silence and solitude to influence their work? Why incorporate silence and periods of solitude? How do they affect your own art making?
- In this segment Abramović describes a family background that was full of contradictions. What relevance does contradiction have for you? How has it affected you?
- Abramović refers to performance as a tool. Describe other tools contemporary artists have at their disposal that perhaps didn't exist 10, 20, or even 50 years ago.

While Viewing

- Do Abramović's actions, or inaction, in this segment constitute a performance or text? Why, or why not? Describe the relationship between word and image. How does it affect viewer response?
- What kinds of circumstances and contradictions led Abramović to realize that performance was her medium and a way of making art?
- Describe the transitions that take place during segment. How do they affect your experience listening to and seeing Abramović?

After Viewing

- Why does Abramović believe that being an artist is a huge responsibility? Do you agree? Why, or why not?
- Abramović says that "art should go longer and longer as life becomes shorter and shorter." What role(s) does time play in Abramović's work? Why would some of her works require long periods of time in order to become transcendental?



The Kitchen I, 2009. From the series, *The Kitchen—Homage to Saint Therese*. Color Lambda print.
© Marina Abramović, courtesy the Marina Abramović Archives and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York



Seven Easy Pieces: Gina Pane's The Conditioning, First Action of Self Portrait(s) (1973), 2005. Performance, 7 hours. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo: Kathryn Carr, © Marina Abramović, courtesy the Marina Abramović Archives and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

CREATE

- Compare Abramović's segment with the work of Season 5 artist, Kimsooja (www.art21.org/artists/kimsooja). Consider how both artists work with the idea of transcendence, and then create a story or work of art that alters a viewer's consciousness or perception.
- Research and write a critical review of one of Abramović's works. What was she trying to communicate through the performance? Did she communicate this effectively? Why, or why not?
- Use one of Abramović's performances to inspire the creation of a poem or song. Film or record the piece and share it with others.

OPPOSITE: *The Artist Is Present*, 2010. Performance, 3 months. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: Marco Anelli (for the Museum of Modern Art, New York), © Marina Abramović, courtesy the Marina Abramović Archives





I think I'm interested in art because it's always dealing with new possibilities and always questioning the given condition, trying to find a new way or give a new definition to what we think is already fixed.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- How does one become an artist? How does one choose a profession? Are professions always the choice of the individual?
- In what ways can art be political? What does political art look and sound like?
- What is the role of an artist? What are the most important skills an artist can have?



Surveillance Camera, 2006. Marble, 15 1/2 x 15 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches. © Ai Weiwei, courtesy the artist

While Viewing

- Describe the types of imagery and symbols with which Ai works. Why do you think he chooses these images and symbols?
- How does Ai view his role as an artist? How do his assistants view his role?
- Which works in this segment would you describe as political? Discuss your reasons.

After Viewing

- At the beginning of the segment, New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg refers to Ai as a public citizen. Is there a difference between being an artist and being a public citizen? Do you agree with Mayor Bloomberg's comment? Why, or why not?
- Compare Ai's approach to making art with that of other artists, such as Alfredo Jaar (www.art21.org/artists/alfredo-jaar); Nancy Spero (www.art21.org/artists/nancy-spero); and Doris Salcedo (www.art21.org/artists/doris-salcedo). How do their processes compare to Ai's?
- How does Ai serve as a teacher and a political activist through his artistic practice? In what way does Ai's artistic practice serve as a platform for activism and education?

CREATE

- Create a work of art, a piece of writing, or a scientific experiment that serves as a way of reflecting on or responding to a political or social issue.
- Compare Ai Weiwei's work to Season 4 artists Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla (www.art21.org/artists/allora-calzadilla). Design a public work that requires the public to interact with it or to transform it over time. Create a plan for documenting the work over time.



Born

1957, Beijing, China

Education

Beijing Film Academy; Parsons School of Design, New York
Honorary Doctorate, Faculty of Politics and Social Science, University of Ghent, Belgium

Lives and Works

Beijing, China

About the Artist

An outspoken human rights activist, Ai was arrested by Chinese authorities in April 2011 and held incommunicado for three months. Upon release, he was prohibited from traveling abroad, engaging in public speech, and was subjected to continued surveillance. Ai's position as a dissident artist informs the tenor of much of his recent work. He infuses his sculptures, photographs, and public artworks with political conviction, using historic Chinese art forms in critical examinations of contemporary Chinese political and social issues. In his sculptures he often uses reclaimed materials—ancient pottery and wood from destroyed temples—in a conceptual **gesture** that links tradition and contemporary social concerns. Employing sarcasm, juxtaposition, and repetition, he reinvigorates the **symbolism** of traditional images and reframes the familiar with minimal means. A writer and curator, Ai extends his practice across multiple disciplines and through social media.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

installation, photography, sculpture

Key Words and Ideas

political **activism**, public citizen, symbolism

Related Artists

Allora and Calzadilla, Jenny Holzer, Alfredo Jaar, William Kentridge, Barbara Kruger, Doris Salcedo, Yinka Shonibare MBE, Nancy Spero, Do-Ho Suh, Kara Walker, Krzysztof Wodiczko



Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn, 1995. Three black-and-white photographs, 58 x 48 inches each. © Ai Weiwei, courtesy the artist

David Altmejd (alt-MADE)

www.art21.org/artists/david-altmejd



Born

1974, Montreal, Canada

Education

BFA, Université du Québec à Montréal;
MFA, Columbia University

Lives and Works

New York City

About the Artist

With an almost childlike fascination for objects that grow, transform, and reshape themselves, Altmejd creates sculptures, suffused with ornament, that blur distinctions between interior and exterior, surface and structure, representation and **abstraction**. Meaning, for Altmejd, does not exist in advance of the work in process. His interest lies in the making—the building of an object that will generate meaning. He abandons standard narrative conventions in favor of an exploration of materials, processes, and structures. In diorama-like tableaux, Altmejd pairs objects laden with **symbolism**—crystals, gold chain, bondage gear, and taxidermy birds and animals—with virtuosic applications of materials such as plaster, glitter, thread, minerals, mirrors, and Plexiglas. In dazzling displays of sculpture, Altmejd's work expresses the intense flow of energy traveling through space and teeters between investigations of sexuality, decay, spirituality, death, and—always—life.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials
installation, sculpture

Key Words and Ideas
abstraction, energy, language, **process**

Related Artists

Louise Bourgeois, Cai Guo-Qiang, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Mary Heilmann, Paul McCarthy, Gabriel Orozco, Judy Pfaff, Susan Rothenberg, Nancy Spero

Ninety-five percent of the relationship I have to my work is through process. When I make art I try to make every step of the process as rich and meaningful as possible.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Is it possible to think with your hands? What are the differences between making a work of art with a specific goal or product in mind, versus creating something that evolves as a result of the process? How and where do artists get ideas?
- What are the similarities and/or differences between the processes of learning and inventing something, such as a new skill or language?

While Viewing

- Describe Altmejd's working process. How does it compare to your own working process or that of other visual artists?
- Altmejd states, "I realized very early in my studies in science that I wasn't interested in learning a language. I was really interested in inventing languages." How does Altmejd's work reflect this idea? In addition to visual language, what else is Altmejd inventing through his work?
- How does Altmejd's visual imagery—body parts and insects, for instance—influence how his sculpture is experienced and interpreted? In what ways are these images symbolic?

After Viewing

- Discuss Altmejd's statement, "I don't want the sculpture to be a mere illustration. I try to build an object that's going to have enough layers—references and energy—to start feeling like it's alive." What distinctions is Altmejd making between illustration and his art?
- How does Altmejd inject energy into his sculptures? How do other artists and writers do this? Share examples of visual art or literature that, in your opinion, convey a sense of energy.
- Compare and contrast Altmejd's work with that of Season 3 artist Jessica Stockholder (www.art21.org/artists/jessica-stockholder). In what ways are their working methods and results similar and different?

CREATE

- With a partner, research and then **juxtapose** two sculptures, poems, or performances that communicate energy or feel particularly *alive*. In what ways do these works convey energy or life?
- Choose two or three materials (such as clay, paper, plastic bottles, wire, string, wood, cloth) and create a work of art without a specific plan. What are the benefits and drawbacks of working without a preconceived idea or outcome?



The Architect 2, 2011. Plaster, wood, foam, burlap, latex paint, dimensions variable. Photo: Jessica Eckert, © David Altmejd, courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York



The Shepherd, 2008. Wood, foam, epoxy clay, epoxy resin, mirror, glue, horse hair, paint, metal wire, glass beads, quartz, synthetic pine branches, pine cones, 147 x 72 x 48 inches. Photo: Ellen Page Wilson, © David Altmejd, courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York



The Vessel, 2011. Plexiglas, chain, plaster, wood, thread, wire, acrylic paint, epoxy resin, epoxy clay, acrylic gel, granular medium, quartz, pyrite, assorted minerals, adhesive, wire, pins, needles, 102½ x 244 x 86½ inches.
Photo: Ellen Page Wilson, © David Altmejd, courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York



If there is something that I think art does, I think it awakens the spiritual. Standing before a really effective piece of work, you feel there's a spirit presence. And I think that is the value that I see art bringing about—not just bringing out a statement.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- How can a sculpture tell a story?
- List different types of work that allow for the occurrence of chance during planning and execution. In what ways might chance affect these processes?
- How is sculpture, as an art form, malleable? In what ways might a work of sculpture take variable forms?



Three Continents, 2009. Found aluminum and copper wire, 96 x 192 inches. Private collection. © El Anatsui, courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

While Viewing

- Describe some of the things Anatsui and his assistants do in order to transform the materials they work with.
- How does Anatsui allow chance to occur in his work? What impact do you think it has?
- Anatsui describes giving utilitarian objects such as bottle caps new life as objects of contemplation. What did you contemplate when looking at Anatsui's work?

After Viewing

- In this segment, Anatsui describes his found metal sculptures as malleable—they take a different shape each time they are installed. What might Anatsui be saying through this particular approach to sculpture?
- In what ways is Anatsui's work similar to and different from the work of Season 4 artist Mark Bradford? Consider the types of materials, working processes, and motivations that inform both artists's work. www.art21.org/artists/mark-bradford
- How does Anatsui's work convey a sense of narrative or storytelling? What stories can you read from the work?

CREATE

- Design a sculpture that can be installed in a number of different ways. Have someone else install it and document three different configurations to share with classmates.
- Use one or more of Anatsui's works to inspire a poem or song about conflict, chance, transformation, or malleability.
- Anatsui talks about his sculptures "giving form new life, or bringing about new hope." Design a work of art from something that is broken or discarded.



Peak Project, 1999. Tin, copper, wire, installation dimensions variable, each sheet approximately 24 x 48 inches. Installation view, the artist's studio, Nsukka, Nigeria. Collection of the artist. Photo: Martin Barlow, © El Anatsui, courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Born

1944, Anyanko, Ghana

Education

BA, University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

Lives and Works

Nsukka, Nigeria

About the Artist

Many of Anatsui's sculptures are mutable in form, conceived to be so free and flexible that they can be shaped in any way and altered in appearance for each installation. Working with wood, clay, metal, and—most recently—the discarded metal caps of liquor bottles, Anatsui breaks with sculpture's traditional adherence to forms of fixed shape while visually referencing the history of abstraction in African and European art. The colorful and densely patterned fields of the works assembled from discarded liquor-bottle caps also trace a broader story of colonial and post-colonial economic and cultural exchange in Africa, told in the history of cast-off materials. The sculptures in wood and ceramics introduce ideas about the function of objects (their destruction, transformation, and regeneration) in everyday life, and the role of language in deciphering visual symbols.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

installation, sculpture

Key Words and Ideas

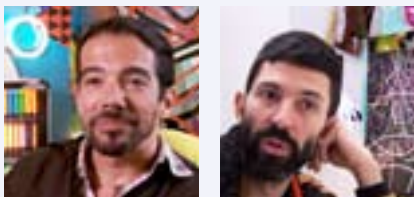
craft, **collaboration**, found materials, installation, **narrative**

Related Artists

Janine Antoni, Mark Bradford, Allan McCollum, Barry McGee, Gabriel Orozco, Do-Ho Suh

assume vivid astro focus

www.art21.org/artists/assume-vivid-astro-focus



Born

Eli Sudbrack: 1968, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Christophe Hamaide-Pierson: 1973, Paris, France

Live and Work

Eli Sudbrack, New York City and São Paulo
Christophe Hamaide-Pierson, Paris

About the Artists

The collective assume vivid astro focus (also known as avaf) was formed in New York City in 2001. Its principal members are Eli Sudbrack and Christophe Hamaide-Pierson. Avaf fuses drawing, sculpture, video, and **performance** into carnivalesque installations in which gender, politics, and cultural codes float freely. A study in visual adaptation and modification, avaf's work recycles and transforms imagery from one project to the next—often in the form of densely patterned wallpapers and graphic signage. Personal expression and a lust for life feature prominently in projects simultaneously rooted in the politics of free speech, civil rights, and the dissolution of rigid classifications of class, gender, and national **identity**. In frequent collaborations with musicians, designers, dancers, and other artists, avaf challenges conventional assumptions about authorship and the role of the artist's persona in contemporary society and the art world.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

collage, drawing, illustration, **installation**, mixed-media

Key Words and Ideas

collaboration, energy, history, **homage**, performance, **process**, **taboo**

Related Artists

Mark Bradford, Ellen Gallagher, Mike Kelley, Margaret Kilgallen, Paul McCarthy, Barry McGee, Pepon Osorio, Lari Pittman, Yinka Shonibare MBE

There is a performative aspect in the way we try to interact with the audience. The total work of art—that's what we aim for. We aim for hitting you in every single possible sensorial capability you have.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

■ Describe the various ways artists or authors might collaborate to make works of art or write books. What kinds of things do they consider together?

■ In this segment, Eli Sudbrack says, "The core of what we make is not object. It's energy." How would you go about making works about energy?

■ How do artists and authors honor the past? What forms does the work take?

While Viewing

■ During this segment, list the different kinds of art avaf makes.

■ How does avaf collaborate to make its work? Describe its collaborative dynamic. What does collaboration bring to the work? What is energetic about it? Describe the kinds of energy you see.

After Viewing

■ Describe and compare the similarities and/or differences between the way avaf makes its work and the way viewers experience it.

■ Eli Sudbrack says, "A lot of what we make starts by writing, or ideas or words or lists of things I need to do. It's like creating a universe." How do you begin projects, and what is the process of creation like for you?

■ Describe some important qualities of avaf's collaboration that makes it particularly successful or effective. If you had to collaborate with someone else in order to create an artwork or a piece of writing, who would you choose and why?

CREATE

■ Create a work of art with someone from another state or country. Plan the work via e-mail or a social-media network, and then develop an online exhibition.

■ Select one of avaf's artworks and use it to inspire work in a different medium. What was it about avaf's work that inspired this transformation?

■ Hamaide-Pierson says, "There's a strategy in what we make . . . for everything to become one. The viewer becomes one with the installation." Plan a strategy for an artwork. Write a simple manifesto as an artist/writer/historian.



Trava Ciclope, 2011. Color pigment on paper, 16 x 13 inches. Photo: Edouard Fraipont, © assume vivid astro focus, courtesy Casa Triângulo



assume vivid astro focus IX, 2004. Floor sticker on dance skate rink; DJ booth designed by Rama Chorpash. In The Public Realm, Skate Circle, Central Park, New York. Public Art Fund in conjunction with the 2004 Whitney Biennial. Photos: Eric Weiss, © assume vivid astro focus, courtesy Public Art Fund



**Born**

1941, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Education

BFA, Newcomb College
Honorary doctorate, Kansas City Art Institute

Lives and Works

New York City; Santa Fe; Kastelorizo, Greece; Ahmedabad, India

About the Artist

A pioneer of a form of **abstraction** in which each work is the result of materials in action—poured latex and foam, cinched metal, dripped wax—Benglis has created sculptures that eschew minimalist reserve in favor of bold colors, sensual lines, and lyrical references to the human body. But her invention of new forms with unorthodox techniques also displays a reverence for cultural references that trace back to antiquity. Often working in series of knots, fans, lumps, and fountains, Benglis chooses unexpected materials, such as glitter, gold leaf, lead, and polyurethane. In more recent works, she explores diverse cultural heritages (Indian architecture, Greek statuary, Chinese ceramics), translating ancient techniques and symbols for use in contemporary contexts. In her early adoption of video, Benglis introduced feminist, biographical, and burlesque content to structuralist narratives.

Teaching Connections**Media and Materials**

installation, painting, **performance**, sculpture, video

Key Words and Ideas

abstraction, autobiography, form, **gesture**, movement, painterly, **process**

Related Artists

Ida Applebroog, Mary Heilmann, Josiah McElheny, Elizabeth Murray, Judy Pfaff, Martin Puryear, Cindy Sherman

I think of myself as a painter, probably because I don't use glue.

DISCUSS**Before Viewing**

- Describe ways that drawing and painting relate to the process of making sculpture. How can a sculpture be 'painterly'?
- How do artists and writers go about creating works that are autobiographical? What are the steps they take? Describe some of the forms such autobiographical works take.
- Besides traditional media, what are some things an artist can use to draw, paint, or sculpt with?

While Viewing

- Using Benglis's statement cited above, discuss what Benglis does as an artist and why. Describe the 'signature' or unique qualities of her artworks.
- Compare and contrast Benglis's processes of making sculpture and video. What similarities do they share?

After Viewing

- Select two of Benglis's artworks that appeal to you, confuse, or repel you, and explain why you feel that way. Specifically, what is it about the artworks (e.g., form, material, theme, medium, etc.) that evokes such a response?
- In what ways is Benglis's work autobiographical? How did Benglis's personal history influence her early sculptures and videos? How does it connect to her later work in India?
- What do you think Benglis means when she describes a knot as an implosion or explosion of energy? How and why are knot forms important in her work?
- Compare Benglis's work and processes to those of Season 2 artist, Elizabeth Murray (www.art21.org/artists/elizabeth-murray).

CREATE

- Survey the range of Benglis's artworks (from the segment or personal research). Curate a digital exhibition that speaks to a compelling theme in her work. Include a written or video introduction.
- Consider one of Benglis's works through the lens of another discipline. For example, how might the sculpture *Eat Meat* be translated into an essay on vegetarianism? How might



Sparkle Knot IV, 1972. Acrylic paint and sparkles on plaster, cotton bunting, and aluminum screen, 29 x 20¾ x 9 inches.
© Lynda Benglis / Licensed by VAGA, New York, courtesy Cheim & Read, New York



Phantom, 1971. Polyurethane foam with phosphorescent pigments, 102 x 420 x 96 inches.
Union Art Gallery, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. © Lynda Benglis / Licensed by VAGA, New York, courtesy Cheim & Read, New York

The Graces connect to a scientific explanation of states of matter, or the theme of appearance versus reality in a literature text?

- Select an everyday material and transform it using your body. Document the transformation and the resulting object through photographs or video.

Rackstraw Downes

www.art21.org/artists/rackstraw-downes

There is no solution to the representation of the world. There can't be a solution. As soon as you take a three-dimensional world, in which there is movement, and place it on a two-dimensional surface, you move into the world of metaphor.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- How and why do artists choose certain subject matter and places for inspiration? What kinds of places inspire you? Why are they inspiring?
- If you were to draw, paint, or re-create a specific place, would you choose to work on location, from a photograph, from sketches, or from memory? Explain your choice.
- Downes says he likes to paint his surroundings. If you were to create a work of art or write about your environment, what would you depict and why?



Chinati, East Concrete Building Interior, 1998. Oil on canvas, 27 x 45¼ inches. Collection of I.B. Wilson, Houston. Photo: Nicholas Walster, © Rackstraw Downes, courtesy Betty Cuninghame Gallery

While Viewing

- This segment features paintings of big, open, empty spaces. What interests and inspires Downes in these apparently abandoned places? Choose two paintings from the segment that capture your reactions to these questions, and explain why.
- What criteria does Downes use in choosing a place to work?
- Downes states, "I see fullness there, and I'd like you to see that fullness, too, in my paintings." Choose a painting from the segment and describe this "fullness" in your own words.

After Viewing

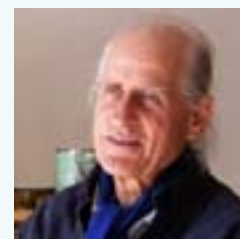
- What is important about representation to Downes? How is this related to the way he sees his surroundings?
- How do Downes and Season 2 artist Gabriel Orozco approach working with the landscape? Compare their approaches (www.art21.org/artists/gabriel-orozco).
- What motivates Downes to decide that a work is complete? How do you decide when to move on in your own work?



Beehive Yard at the Rim of a Canyon on the Rio Grande, Presidio, TX, 2005. Oil on canvas, 6¾ x 34¾ inches. Photo: Christopher Burke, © Rackstraw Downes, courtesy Betty Cuninghame Gallery

CREATE

- Create a representation of your surroundings in any medium and share a particular point of view that you have. You may choose to write a poem, create a poster, or write a historical **narrative** about your experience in these surroundings.
- Design a painting or write a story that focuses on a particular perspective or point of view in order to highlight something overlooked. Discuss what you learned in the process of creating the work.
- Use something that has a specific history or previous 'life' as the starting point for a work of art or a poem. With classmates, exhibit the items with the works you have created.



Born

1939, Kent, England.

Education

BA, Cambridge University
BFA, MFA, Yale University

Lives and Works

New York City and Presidio, Texas

About the Artist

Often described as a realist painter, Downes prefers not to use that term. He views the act of seeing and the art of representation as culturally taught, with different cultures accepting different delineations of the world as realistic. He does not think of himself as a landscape painter, but as a painter his environment. Created plein air in locations as diverse as metropolitan New York, rural Maine, and coastal and inland Texas, and without resorting to the use of photography, his **compositions** feature horizons that bend according to the way the eye naturally perceives. Downes often works in series, examining single scenes from multiple angles, over time, and in the process reveals changing qualities of light and shadow as well as changes in his own point of view.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

drawing, painting

Key Words and Ideas

composition, inspiration, landscape, **metaphor**, perspective, **process**

Related Artists

Robert Adams, Vija Celmins, Florian Maier-Aichen, Julie Mehretu, Gabriel Orozco, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Do-Ho Suh, James Turrell

Glenn Ligon (LIE-gone)

www.art21.org/artists/glenn-ligon



Born

1960, Bronx, New York

Education

BA, Wesleyan University

Lives and Works

New York City

About the Artist

Glenn Ligon's paintings and sculptures examine cultural and social **identity** through found sources—literature, Afrocentric coloring books, photographs—to reveal the ways in which the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, and sexual politics inform our understanding of American society. Ligon appropriates texts from a variety of literary writers including Walt Whitman, Zora Neal Hurston, Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison, as well from more popular sources such as the comedian Richard Pryor. In Ligon's paintings, the instability of his medium—oil crayon used with letter stencils—transforms the texts he quotes, making them abstract, difficult to read, and layered in meaning, much like the subject matter that he appropriates. In other works that feature silkscreen, neon, and photography, Ligon threads his own image and autobiography into symbols that speak to collective experiences. "It's not about me," he says. "It's about we."

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

drawing, **installation**, neon, painting

Key Words and Ideas

abstraction, American history, **conceptual art**, language, legibility, reading, text

Related Artists

Mark Bradford, Michael Ray Charles, Ellen Gallagher, Jenny Holzer, Margaret Kilgallen, Kerry James Marshall, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems

Paint is a very sensual material. It's lovely to work with and lovely to look at. There's a kind of slowness and inefficiency about rendering text in paint. It slows your reading down. . . . I think we're in a world that's very fast, so things that slow you for a minute, I think, are good.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- How does reading inform your opinion about particular issues? How can reading inform making art?
- Think about and describe examples of artworks that incorporate text, as well as text that can be considered art. How do art and text intersect in these works?
- How has American history been taught?

While Viewing

- How does Ligon's choice of media and material contribute to your 'reading' of his work? Describe Ligon's influences. In what ways are these influences present in his work?
- Ligon says that the inefficiency of rendering text in paint slows your reading down, and slows the viewer down. How does Ligon achieve this? Compare and contrast his works in neon with his text paintings.

After Viewing

- According to Ligon, his mother thought art should be part of the education of a well-rounded citizen. Does an understanding of art contribute to citizenship? Explain.
- Ligon says, "I guess what I'm committed to is . . . love of the idea of making ideas." What fundamental ideas does Ligon express in his work? What ideas drive your work?
- What do Ligon's coloring book paintings, such as *Boys with Basketball*, *Harriet Tubman*, *Salimu*, *Letter B #3*, suggest about American history?
- Compare Ligon's text works to Season 4 artist Jenny Holzer's (www.art21.org/artists/jenny-holzer).

CREATE

- Create a graphic organizer that represents your personal history or a specific part of it. Share it with two or more classmates and highlight the similarities between aspects of your personal history and those of your classmates. Use these similarities to inspire a text-based, **collaborative** work of art.
- Choose a pivotal work of literature that has affected you in some way. Use this text, and the reasons you chose it, as the basis for writing a critical response, an extension of the story, or for comparing it to a work of visual art.
- Choose an historical event that is important to you. Represent it in a work of art. Track your decisions about techniques and materials, and reflect on how those decisions helped or hindered you along the way.



Untitled (America), 2008. Neon and paint, 24 x 168 inches. Rubell Family Collection. © Glenn Ligon, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Boys with Basketball, Harriet Tubman, Salimu, Letter B #3, 2001. Oil crayon and silkscreen on paper, 23 x 16½ inches. Collection of Gregory R. Miller, New York. Photo: Ronald Amstutz, © Glenn Ligon, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Figure #21, 2009. Acrylic, silkscreen, and coal dust on canvas, 60 x 48 inches. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen, © Glenn Ligon, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



The idea of a painting with a big emptiness in the center is a subject that I like. The center as void is really interesting. And I like setting up problems for the viewer.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Describe the similarities and differences between reading a book and reading a painting.
- Why do artists or writers set limits for themselves? What kinds of limits or rules do you create for yourself, or do others create for you, in relation to making art?
- What inspires artists to make abstract or non-representational works?

While Viewing

- Describe Mangold's process of working from a sketch to a finished piece. How does his process differ for a painting and a public **installation**?
- What happens when Mangold takes away the center of a painting? How does this change the way we see and experience it?
- How do Mangold's limited color palette and limited use of forms influence the way you read his work?

After Viewing

- What does Mangold mean when he says, "Painting doesn't deal with time the same way other media do?" How do other media, such as video or photography, deal with time?
- Describe the parallels between Mangold's working process and those of writers, storytellers, historians, or scientists.
- Compare Mangold's motivations and concerns with those of Season 6 artists Ai Weiwei and Catherine Opie. How do the processes of each of these artists inform their work and engage the public?

CREATE

- Design a series of related works or writings that use a geometric shape as a starting point.
- Describe one or more of Mangold's works in writing, or create a description in the form of a mathematical equation.
- Establish three rules or limitations for yourself, and create as many works of art as you can based on variations determined by your rules.



Ring Image M, 2010. Acrylic, graphite, and black pencil on canvas, 80 inches diameter. Photo: Kerry Ryan McFate, © 2012 Robert Mangold, member Artist Rights Society (ARS), courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York



Four Color Frame Painting #4, 1984. Acrylic and black pencil on canvas, 10 x 7 feet. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. Purchase acquired through the generosity of the William T. Kemper Foundation—Commerce Bank, Trustee, 2001.14.A-D. © 2012 Robert Mangold, member Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York, courtesy The Pace Gallery, New York



Born

1937, North Tonawanda, New York

Education

BFA and MFA, Yale University

Lives and Works

Washingtonville, New York.

About the Artist

With classical restraint, Mangold translates the most basic of formal elements—shape, line, and color—into paintings, prints, and drawings whose simplicity of form expresses complex ideas. He renders the surface of each canvas with subtle color modulations and sinewy, hand-drawn graphite lines. While his focus on formal considerations may seem paramount, he also delights in thwarting those considerations—setting up problems for the viewer. Over the course of years and in multiple series of shaped canvases that explore variations on rings, columns, trapezoids, arches, and crosses, he has also provoked viewers to consider the idea of paintings without centers. In addition to works on paper, and canvases whose physicality relates to the scale of the human body, Mangold has also worked in stained glass for architectural projects.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

drawing, painting, stained glass

Key Words and Ideas

abstraction, distortion, formalism, geometry, reading painting, **site-specific**

Related Artists

Mary Heilmann, Robert Ryman, Elizabeth Murray, Martin Puryear

Catherine Opie

www.art21.org/artists/catherine-opie



Born

1961, Sandusky, Ohio

Education

BFA, San Francisco Art Institute; MFA, CalArts

Lives and Works

Los Angeles, California

About the Artist

Catherine Opie investigates the ways in which photographs document and give voice to social phenomena in America today, registering people's attitudes and relationships and the ways in which they occupy the landscape. At the core of her investigations are perplexing questions about relationships to community, which she explores on multiple levels across all her bodies of work. Working between **conceptual** and **documentary** approaches to image making, Opie examines familiar genres—portraiture, landscape, and studio photography. Many of her works capture the expression of individual **identity** through groups (couples, teams, crowds) and reveal an undercurrent of her own biography vis-à-vis her subjects. Whether documenting political movements, queer subcultures, or urban transformation, Opie's images of contemporary life comprise a portrait of our time in America, which she often considers in relation to a discourse of opposition. Her work resonates with formal ideas that convey the importance of "the way things should look," evidence of the influence of her early exposure to the history of art and painting.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

photography, **installation**

Key Words and Ideas

conceptual, documentary, ethereal, identity, installation, landscape, **narrative**, portraiture, series

Related Artists

Vija Celmins, Ann Hamilton, Roni Horn, An-My Lê, Cindy Sherman, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Carrie Mae Weems

*I have always said that, even though my work often is very personal, there's never **not** politics within that. The two are completely merged with my identity. Even though I might be able to do the sublime or the quiet moment, there are also moments within that that are extremely political.*

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- What are the qualities of a successful or interesting portrait? Where can you see or find such portraits, and whom do they depict? Why are they exhibited?
- What are the differences and similarities between making a portrait and a landscape?
- In what ways do artists, writers, and scientists work with or make collections? Describe the kinds of things they collect, and why.

While Viewing

- Describe Opie's style of portraiture. What is important to her?
- What motivates Opie to make photographs about people and the landscape? What themes can you identify in her photographs?

- In this segment Opie shares her process of looking at and deciding on photographs for an installation at the Cleveland Clinic's Hillcrest Hospital. How would you describe this process and the most important parts of her decision-making? What does Opie mean by saying she can be held by an image?

After Viewing

- Which of Opie's portraits resonate with you? Why? What makes you choose one portrait over another?
- Describe some of the qualities that connect Opie's portraits and landscape photographs. How do her photographic series inform each other? How does one series relate to or diverge from the next?
- What are the qualities that hold your attention in Opie's photographs? Explain why.

CREATE

- Compare Opie's work with that of an influential writer or musician. How are their approaches and work related?
- Create an artwork depicting something of importance that people often avoid talking about. Choose a partner, compare your work, and discuss the subjects that each of you chose to depict. Photograph a place or an event that represents your country. Write a short narrative. Exhibit it with the photograph(s) to explain why this place or event is represented.



Untitled #1 (Icehouses), 2001. C-print, 50 x 40 inches. Edition of 5, 2 AP. © Catherine Opie, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Divinity Fudge, from *Portraits*, 1997. C-print, 60 x 30 inches. Edition of 8, 2 AP. © Catherine Opie, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



Untitled #3, from *Somewhere in the Middle*, 2010. Inkjet print, 50 x 37½ inches. Edition of 5, 2 AP. © Catherine Opie, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles



I was always aware of history as almost a professionalized realm, something dignified that you learned from. It was not till later that I started thinking that you could play with it.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- What are the various ways we learn about history? Which films, written accounts, or other sources provide the most reliable and compelling information about history?
- How do artists work with history? Can artists contribute to the historical record? Why or why not?
- Reid Kelley collaborates with members of her family to make her videos. Describe different ways you have collaborated with family or friends to realize different kinds of projects.

While Viewing

- In Reid Kelley's videos, 18th- and 19th-century figures and events are presented in both nonfictional and fantastical vignettes. Describe the qualities of these videos. How do the images and spoken words relate to each other?
- How does Reid Kelley investigate history? Where does her inspiration come from?
- Consider the choices that Reid Kelley makes for her performances. What motivates those choices? Is her work more individualistic or collaborative? Why?

After Viewing

- Why do you think Reid Kelley works with family members instead of hired actors? What are the advantages or disadvantages of working with people you know?
- When Reid Kelley talks about growing up in the South she describes the Civil War as a "historical burden" and says that people are "tugging" at the historical record, "trying to manipulate it." How do you think this memory affects her work? How does her comment affect your ideas about history and the way it is represented?
- Whose responsibility is it to portray history, and why?



Untitled (Sadie), 2009. Watercolor on paper, 8½ x 11 inches.
© Mary Reid Kelley, courtesy the artist and Fredericks & Freiser, New York



Born

1979, Greenville, South Carolina

Education

BA, St. Olaf College; MFA, Yale University

Lives and Works

Saratoga Springs, New York

About the Artist

In videos and drawings filled with punning wordplay, Mary Reid Kelley presents her take on the clash between utopian ideologies and the realities of women's lives in the struggle for liberation and through political strife, wars, and other historical events. Performing scripted narratives in rhyming verse, Reid Kelley—with her husband Patrick Kelley and various family members—explores historical periods through fictitious characters such as nurses, soldiers, prostitutes, and saltimbanques. Adopting a stark black-and-white palette while synthesizing art-historical styles such as Cubism and German Expressionism, Reid Kelley playfully jumbles historical periods such as World War I and France's Second Empire to trace the ways in which present concerns are rooted in the past.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

drawing, **performance**, video

Key Words and Ideas

collaboration, history, performance, rhyming verse, tableaux, **vignette**

Related Artists

Eleanor Antin, Yinka Shonibare MBE, Carrie Mae Weems



You Make Me Iliad, video still, 2010. HD video with sound, 14 min 49 sec. © Mary Reid Kelley, courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

CREATE

- Use Reid Kelley as inspiration to create a series of rhyming verses that teaches about a historical event.
- Collaborate with a small group to teach about a moment in the history of your community or school that is perhaps misunderstood. Create an **installation** or performance about that moment and film or photograph it.

**Born**

1969, Boston, Massachusetts

Education

BA, Yale University; MFA, School of Visual Arts

Lives and Works

New York City

About the Artist

Sarah Sze builds her installations and intricate sculptures from the minutiae of everyday life, imbuing mundane materials, marks, and processes with surprising significance. Combining domestic detritus and office supplies into fantastical miniatures, she builds her works, fractal-like, on an architectural scale. Often incorporating electric lights and fans, water systems, and houseplants, Sze's installations balance whimsy with ecological themes of interconnectivity and sustainability. Whether adapting to a venue or altering the urban fabric, Sze's patchwork **compositions** seem to mirror the improvisational quality of cities, labor, and everyday life. On the edge between life and art, her work is alive with a mutable quality—as if anything could happen, or not.

Teaching Connections**Media and Materials**

drawing, **installation**, photography, sculpture

Key Words and Ideas

architecture, perspective, **public art**, space

Related Artists

Mel Chin, Mark Dion, Ann Hamilton, Judy Pfaff, Andrea Zittel

What I'm really thinking about is how to make a piece feel like it has a life so that, when you experience it, you think about its making, its demise, and you feel when you come to it that it's actually a moment in time and that you experience it 'live'.

DISCUSS**Before Viewing**

- Can art be functional? If so, what functions can art serve?
- Describe the types of things that hold your attention for an extended period of time. How and why do they hold your attention?
- What kinds of planning and considerations must an artist think about when creating a work for exhibition outdoors? What additional planning must an artist do when creating a work of public art?

While Viewing

- Describe how Sze's *Still Life With Landscape (Model for a Habitat)* is both similar to and different from her *360 (Portable Planetarium)*.
- What questions and issues does Sze confront as she plans the Highline installation?
- How does Sze attempt to hold your attention? Describe the methods and strategies she uses in her sculpture.
- How are different disciplines (e.g., biology, architecture, art/**aesthetics**) integrated in the design of Sze's *Still Life With Landscape (Model for a Habitat)*?

After Viewing

- Describe how Sze went about creating the Highline work from start to finish. List the steps she took. What other disciplines or specialists had to be involved in order to complete the work?
- How is Sze's work different from other public artworks you have seen? How do visitors experience this work?
- View and discuss Mark Dion's segment from Season 4 (www.art21.org/artists/mark-dion). Compare and contrast the working methods and subject matter of Sze and Dion.

CREATE

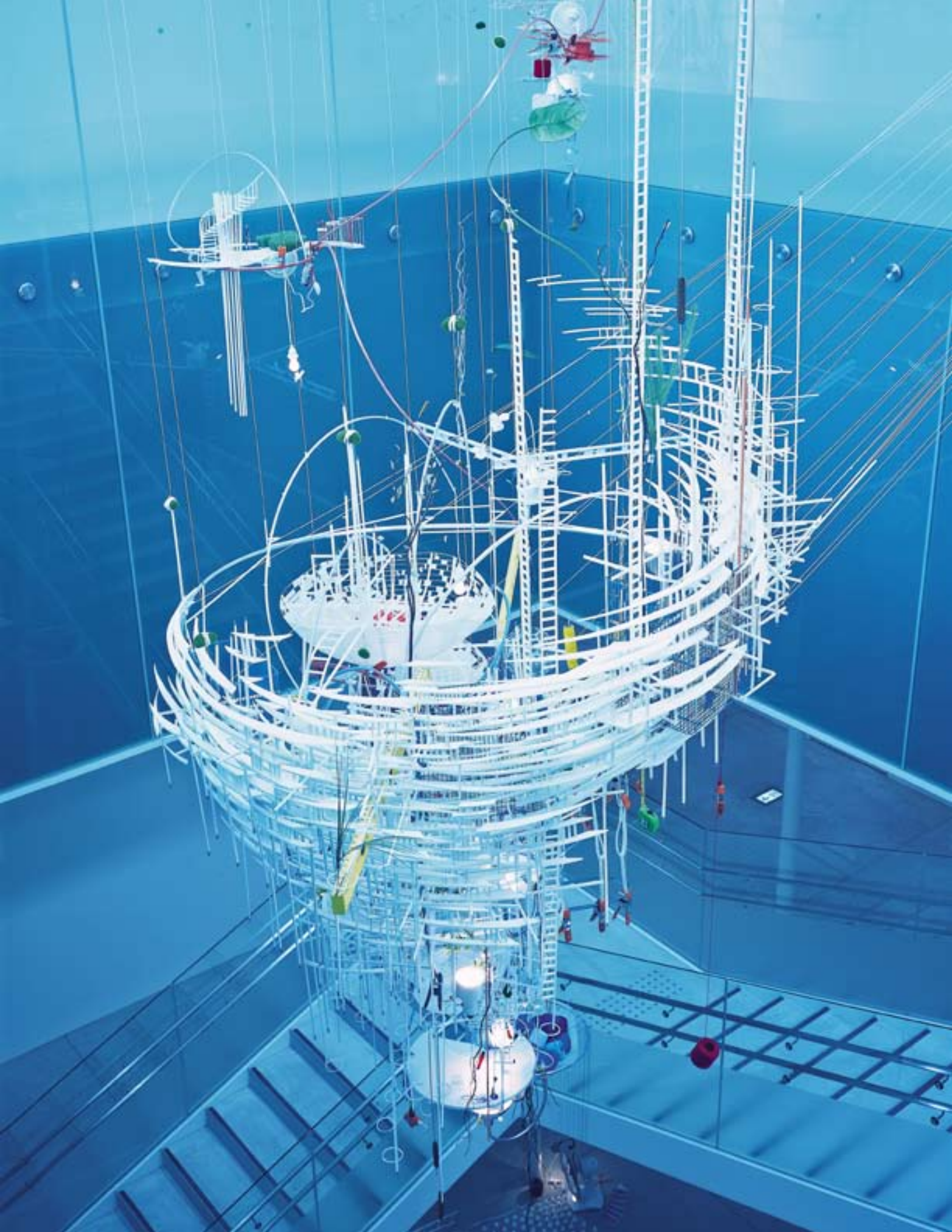
- Design a work of art for an existing park or school campus. How will the work you design benefit visitors (or inhabitants, such as animals) in this space?
- With classmates design a series of posters that would lead up to *Still Life With Landscape (Model for a Habitat)*. What kinds of text would you consider incorporating in order to help viewers better understand and experience the work?
- Sze discusses using unnoticed or unoccupied spaces. Describe some spaces of that kind. Why is it important to bring such spaces to people's attention? How can you do so?



360 (Portable Planetarium), 2010. Mixed media, wood, paper, string, jeans, rocks, 162 x 136 x 185 inches. Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Collection National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo: Tom Powel. © Sarah Sze, courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York



Still Life with Landscape (Model for a Habitat), 2011. Stainless steel and wood, 9 x 22 x 21 feet overall. Commissioned by the High Line. © Sarah Sze, courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York





My task is to imbue the space, or the work, with the possibility of being made into something by the viewer. I see the work succeeding when the viewer engages with it actively. So I don't much endorse the idea of viewing things to try to discover the artist's message.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- What is the role of the viewer of an artwork, or the reader of literature? How are these roles similar and/or different?
- Where do people find privacy? Why is privacy important?
- In what ways do artists, writers, and performers convey sensory experience? What kinds of sensations might inspire an artwork or an essay?

While Viewing

- What strategies does Tabaimo use to engage the viewer?
- How does Tabaimo describe the relationship between *public conVENience* and the Internet? How do you feel about privacy in relation to the **metaphors** she uses?
- How does Tabaimo convey the sensation she feels in her hands in the work, *guignorama*?

After Viewing

- Tabaimo says that she takes half of the responsibility for completing her work. The other half is the viewer's responsibility. What is the viewer's role? What role does the viewer, reader, or audience play in your own work?
- What might Tabaimo be trying to convey in her video installation, *Japanese Kitchen*? How does a work like this utilize various approaches to artmaking?
- Which one of Tabaimo's works resonates with you, and why? Focus your response on the ideas that inspired the work, as well as the techniques used to convey them.

CREATE

- Combine three or more media, such as music, drawing, and video, in order to make a single work of art.
- In a haiku poem convey a sensation, such as the sense of smell. Create an illustration to describe the sensation. With classmates combine the poems and illustrations to create a performance or video installation.



public conVENience, 2006. Video installation, 6 min 5 sec. YOROYORON: Tabaimo, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. Photo: Hirotaka Yonekura, © Tabaimo



Japanese Kitchen, 1999. Video installation, 5 min 10 sec. Tabaimo: Boundary Layer, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London. © Tabaimo



Born

1975, Hyogo, Japan

Education

Kyoto University of Art and Design

Lives and Works

Nagano, Japan

About the Artist

Tabaimo's drawings and video installations probe the unsettling themes of isolation, contagion, and instability that seem to lurk beneath daily existence in contemporary Japan. She draws **aesthetic** inspiration for her animated videos from a combination of Japanese art forms—ukiyo-e woodcuts, manga, and anime—while she often sets her layered, surrealistic narratives in domestic interiors and communal spaces such as public restrooms, commuter trains, and bathhouses. Tabaimo populates her work with uncanny characters that, either through mutation or as victims of inexplicable violence, become fragmented in their relationships to the environment and their own **identity**. Installed in theatrical, stage-like settings, her work is attuned to the architecture of the exhibition space and the viewers within it.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

drawing, video installation

Key Words and Ideas

animation, **culture**, privacy, sensory, **taboo**

Related Artists

Ann Hamilton, Eleanor Antin, Michael Ray Charles, Cao Fei, Paul McCarthy

glossary

This glossary includes both art and non-art terms. Many of these words have been defined in the context of art but also have nuanced meanings and additional significance. Additional vocabulary can be found on the web site: www.art21.org

abstraction

In visual art, the use of shape, color, and line as elements in and for themselves. The term also refers to artwork in which the artist has reduced natural appearances to simplified or nonrepresentational forms.

activism

Direct, vigorous action in support of or opposition to one side of a controversy, particularly with respect to social, political, or environmental issues.

aesthetic

Beautiful or pleasing in appearance. Aesthetics is the philosophy or academic study of beauty and taste in art. The term was first used by philosophers in the 18th century.

animation

The process of making moving cartoons or films from a series of drawings, photos, computer graphics, or other images of inanimate objects, in which slight changes to each frame create the illusion of movement.

appropriation

The act of borrowing imagery or forms to create something new.

collaboration

A working arrangement between an artist and another person, group, or institution. Artists often work in collaboration with a variety of specialists, assistants, colleagues, and audiences.

composition

The way in which an entire work is designed and organized. Composition also refers to a work of art, music, or literature.

conceptual art

A movement that emerged in the 1960s, which proposed that an artist's idea or concept of an artwork should take precedence over the aesthetic or material aspects of traditional works of art. Conceptual art can take many forms (such as photographs, texts, videos), and sometimes there is no object at all. Emphasizing ideas and the way things are made more than how they look, conceptual art often raises questions about what a work of art can be.

craft

The family of artistic practices within the decorative arts that traditionally are defined by their relationship to functional or utilitarian products. Craft can also refer to the labor or skill of an artist or artisan.

culture

A system of beliefs, values, and practices that shape one's life; the customary beliefs shared by people in a time and place.

documentary

A work of art that provides a factual record or report about people, places, or events.

fabrication

The act of forming something into a whole by constructing, framing, or uniting its parts. The fabrication of a work of art often involves specialists and collaborators who work with artists to realize their work.

gesture

A movement of a part of the body to express an idea or meaning.

homage

An expression of respect or honor, which may be conveyed through a work of art, sometimes shown publicly.

icon

A symbol or image that represents an idea or object and has a particular meaning.

identity

The distinguishing characteristics that define how one views oneself, how others perceive you, and how society as a whole categorizes groups of people.

installation

A work of art created for a specific architectural situation; installations often engage multiple senses such as sight, smell, and hearing.

juxtaposition

The placement of two or more objects, ideas, or images close together or side by side, especially for comparison and contrast. This combination of elements may reveal new meaning and lead to the creation of a new object, idea, or image.

metaphor

A relationship between disparate visual or verbal sources in which one kind of object, idea, or image is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

narrative

A written or artistic representation of a story, commentary, or series of events.

parody

A work created to mock or spoof an original work, its subject, or author, or some other target, by means of humorous, satiric or ironic imitation. Parody is a frequent ingredient in satire and is often used to make social or political points.

performance art

An art form, which may be public, private, or documented, that features an activity performed and/or directed by an artist

popular culture

Literature, music, dance, theater, sports, and other cultural forms, usually disseminated through mass media and distinguished by their widespread popularity across ethnic, social, and regional groups.

process

The activities, procedures, and investigations engaged in by an artist in the course of making an artwork.

public art

Artwork designed specifically for, or placed in, public areas.

satire

Usually intended to be humorous or witty, satire typically attacks, critiques, or ridicules human vices and follies.

site-specific art

Artwork created especially for a particular place or location. Site-specific art can be permanent or impermanent.

social history

An area of study that approaches history from the point of view of developing social trends. Often described as history from below because it deals with the masses and how they, as opposed to their leaders, shape history.

symbolism

The practice of representing something by an image, sign, symbol, convention, or association.

taboo

A strong social prohibition or ban against words, objects, actions, or discussions considered undesirable or offensive to a group, culture, society, or community.

textiles

Artworks that are created from fibers or fabrics. Weaving, basketry, stitchery, fabric design, and knitting are just a few of the processes involved in textile design.

transcendence

The state of being beyond the range of normal perception, or of being free from the constraints of the material world.

vignette

A brief, evocative description or episode. A short descriptive literary sketch; an incident or scene in a play or movie.



get involved

www.art21.org
blog.art21.org

Educator Workshops

Art21 Educators A year-long professional development initiative designed to cultivate and support K–12 educators interested in bringing contemporary art, artists, and themes into their classrooms.

Art21 Workshops Art21 presents workshops for teachers in partnership with schools, school districts, and museums. Workshops introduce multimedia resources and related strategies for bringing contemporary art, artists, and themes into classroom and community learning.

For more information about Art21 Educators or Art21 Workshops contact education@art21.org

Screenings

Art21 Access '12 Host a preview event for Art21's sixth broadcast season. Art21 offers preview DVDs and a project toolkit containing event suggestions and publicity materials. Museums, schools, community-based organizations, libraries, and individuals are encouraged to host events, inspire new audiences for contemporary art, and alert local communities about the Spring 2012 PBS broadcast.

Independent Screenings Art21 provides screening toolkits for every thematic episode presented in its six broadcast seasons. Toolkits support individual and institutional screening and discussion forums.

For more information about hosting a screening contact outreach@art21.org



286 Spring Street
Suite 405
NY, NY 10013

season 1 to 6 artists and themes

2001 season 1

Place

Laurie Anderson
Margaret Kilgallen
Sally Mann
Barry McGee
Pepón Osorio
Richard Serra

Identity

Louise Bourgeois
Maya Lin
Kerry James Marshall
Bruce Nauman
William Wegman

Spirituality

John Feodorov
Ann Hamilton
Beryl Korot
Shahzia Sikander
James Turrell

Consumption

Matthew Barney
Michael Ray Charles
Mel Chin
Barbara Kruger
Andrea Zittel

2003 season 2

Stories

Trenton Doyle Hancock
Kiki Smith
Do-Ho Suh
Kara Walker

Loss & Desire

Janine Antoni
Gabriel Orozco
Collier Schorr

Humor

Eleanor Antin
Walton Ford
Elizabeth Murray
Raymond Pettibon

Time

Vija Celmins
Tim Hawkinson
Paul Pfeiffer
Martin Puryear

2005 season 3

Memory

Mike Kelley
Josiah McElheny
Susan Rothenberg
Hiroshi Sugimoto

Power

Laylah Ali
Ida Applebroog
Cai Guo-Qiang
Krzysztof Wodiczko

Play

Ellen Gallagher
Arturo Herrera
Oliver Herring
Jessica Stockholder

Structures

Roni Horn
Matthew Ritchie
Richard Tuttle
Fred Wilson

Commissioned Video Art

Teresa Hubbard &
Alexander Birchler

2007 season 4

Romance

Pierre Huyghe
Judy Pfaff
Lari Pittman
Laurie Simmons

Protest

Jenny Holzer
Alfredo Jaar
An-My Lê
Nancy Spero

Paradox

Jennifer Allora &
Guillermo Calzadilla
Mark Bradford
Robert Ryman
Catherine Sullivan

Ecology

Robert Adams
Mark Dion
Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle
Ursula von Rydingsvard

2009 season 5

Compassion

William Kentridge
Doris Salcedo
Carrie Mae Weems

Fantasy

Cao Fei
Mary Heilmann
Jeff Koons
Florian Maier-Aichen

Systems

John Baldessari
Kimsooja
Allan McCollum
Julie Mehretu

Transformation

Paul McCarthy
Cindy Sherman
Yinka Shonibare MBE

2012 season 6

Balance

Rackstraw Downes
Robert Mangold
Sarah Sze

Boundaries

David Altmejd
assume vivid
astro focus
Lynda Benglis
Tabaimo

Change

Ai Weiwei
El Anatsui
Catherine Opie

History

Marina Abramović
Glenn Ligon
Mary Reid Kelley