art21.org/azikiwemohammed

Azikiwe Mohammed

> "The word 'artist' is a little funky … I would self-describe as a 'guy who makes stuff.'" —Azikiwe Mohammed

ABOUT

Born
1982

Education
Bard College, BFA

Lives and Works
New York, NY

About the Artist
Mohammed is a self-described "guy who makes stuff," producing a playfully humble array of objects and spaces specifically intended to welcome and serve communities that the fine arts world often overlooks.

Especially attracted to wood and neon for their emotional warmth, the artist often assembles his objects into immersive, room-like installations, making spaces in which viewers can feel instinctively safe and reflected in. Fluently moving between traditional art objects, retail style experiences, and outright social service, the artist pushes through creative and institutional boundaries in pursuit of a larger aim of real world usefulness.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

painting	tapestry
jewelry	sculpture
furniture	
puppetry	
photography	

Key Words and Ideas

collaboration	place
community	public art
humor	service
installation	souvenir
material	
memory	
neon	

Related Artists

Allora and Calzadilla	Guadalupe Maravilla
Matthew Barney	Zanele Muholi
Tania Brugera	Elizabeth Murray
Jordan Casteel	Raymond Pettibon
Nick Cave	Postcommodity
Creative Growth Art Center	Martin Puryear
Alex Da Corte	Robin Rhode
Oliver Herring	Do Ho Suh
Thomas Hirschhorn	Stephanie Syjuco
Alfredo Jaar	Jamie Warren
Mike Kelley	Bryan Zanisnik
Jeff Koons	

Mohammed

How to Use This Guide

Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Azikiwe Mohammed into classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

NOTE: Please view all films before sharing them with your students. In this film, there is an instance of strong language.

Before Viewing

Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

1. How do you define 'service'? In what contexts do we see and experience it?

2. What does the term 'artist' mean today? What do artists do in addition to making works of art?

3. Why might an artist be funny? How is humor helpful in the art world, in everyday exchanges, and throughout life?

While Viewing

Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify or illuminate particular ideas:

1. In what ways does Mohammed serve his community?

2. What does the term 'artist' mean to Mohammed? What types of art does he create?

3. How does Mohammed use play and humor in his work? Make a list of instances where you laughed.

After Viewing

Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

1. Why does Mohammed prioritize helping his community? What does he hope to achieve in his work?

2. Why do labels, like 'artist' or 'maker,' matter? Why might someone resist either term?

3. How is humor subversive? Are there moments in this film where laughter is used to engage a more complicated or systemic topic? Can you give an example?

Related Activities

Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

✓ Organize a community service project, either as a class, small group, or individually. How can students make the world a little kinder through an act of service to others? What groups need help in your community?

✓ Consider the items in Big Apple Gifts and Souvenirs. Ask students to create a souvenir for their area that nods to a group or neighborhood typically overlooked in tourism marketing. What makes this overlooked part of your world special?

✓ Use humor to make an art work in any medium. Endeavor to make the audience laugh either through the original idea, final piece, or label text. Remind students to ask others to give feedback throughout the process — what might be funny to an individual doesn't always translate to a wider group.

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Did you use this guide, Art21 films, or Art21-featured artists in your classroom? If so, tag Art21 on social media or email us at education@art21.org.