


art21.org/AdamMilner

Adam Milner

ABOUT

Born

1988 (Denver, Colorado)

Education

University of Colorado, BFA
Carnegie Mellon University, MFA

Lives and Works

Brooklyn, NY

About the Artist

Fascinated by our complicated relationships to objects, Adam Milner’s practice involves collecting, arranging, and combining various mementos and detritus from domestic life. The resulting sculptures and installations can include everything from flower petals to the artist’s eyelashes, vials of blood, hair, conch shells, deer figurines, or the wax coating on Babybel cheese. “In my work, almost everything is a fragment of something else,” says the artist. Wary of tidying philosophies, Milner reconsiders our inclination toward accumulation, creating works that are both intimate reflections of the artist’s private life and excavations of how cultural value is assigned and upheld through objects.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

installation
sculpture

Key Words and Ideas

accumulate
arrange
collect
decor
detritus

found object
fragment
memento
memory
value

Related Artists

El Anatsui
Janine Antoni
Lucas Blalock
Mark Bradford
Nick Cave
Vija Celmins
Mark Dion
Guan Xiao
Elliot Hundley

Brian Jungen
Mike Kelley
Daniel Lind-Ramos
Liz Magor
Azikiwe Mohammed
Aki Sasamoto
Judith Scott
Bryan Zanisnik

“I’m realizing that arranging is kind of my primary discipline.” —Adam Milner

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 Adam Milner into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

NOTE: Please view all films before sharing them with your students.

Before Viewing

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

- ① What kinds of things do you collect? Why do you collect them?
- ② How does chance play a role in your life? What kinds of things do you leave to chance? When do you find yourself embracing chance occurrences or surprises?
- ③ Describe careers or professions that involve the act of arranging objects. What kind of planning goes into the arrangement of different kinds of objects, such as clothing, kitchen utensils, or sports equipment?

While Viewing

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

- ① What kinds of things does Milner collect?
- ② How does chance come to play in Milner's work? Why is chance an important element of the artist's practice?
- ③ Take note of the way Milner arranges objects and brings them together in installations and sculptures. How is unity created in these works?

After Viewing

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

- ① What kinds of commonalities exist among the items Milner chooses to collect?
- ② Milner states, "A spilled bag of Cheetos on the sidewalk is like a stunning composition that I have to take a photo of, and then I come home and use something I learned from those Cheetos in the work." What kinds of things do you think the artist learns in these instances? How does it fuel the work created?
- ③ Compare the way Milner arranges his sculptures and installations to Nick Cave, featured in the "Chicago" episode of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. From your perspective, how are these two artists uniquely working with the act of arrangement?

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.

- ✓ Arrange items from a "junk drawer" in your home or the home of a family member. Photograph three different arrangements of the same objects to perhaps tell different stories. Share these stories with your classmates.
- ✓ Using a collection of your own, or a collection from someone you know, create a sculpture or small installation with the items without damaging anything individually. No glue or tape necessary. How can you make this collection special and emphasize the memory or history of these objects?