

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

**BETWEEN
WORLDS**

SEASON 12
EDUCATOR GUIDE

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FUNDERS

Major underwriting for Season 12 of *Art in the Twenty-First Century* is provided by The Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Agnes Gund, Melony and Adam Lewis, National Endowment for the Arts, Teiger Foundation, Sarah Arison, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Dealer Tire, Arts, Equity, & Education Fund™, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Elyse and Lawrence B. Benenson, Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia, and Tim and Lauren Schrager Family Foundation.

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Tuan Andrew Nguyen directing a film. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Between Worlds.” © Art21, Inc. 2025.

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People seated at a table in a gallery. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Between Worlds.” © Art21, Inc. 2025.

ABOUT ART21

Art21 is a celebrated global leader in presenting thought-provoking and sophisticated content about contemporary art—a preeminent resource for learning first-hand from the artists of our time. Art21’s mission is to educate and expand access to contemporary art through the production of documentary films, resources, and public programs.

As a nonprofit organization, Art21 provides unparalleled access to artists’ voices, using the power of digital media to introduce diverse audiences around the world to contemporary art and artists. For more than two decades, Art21 has changed the paradigm for teaching and learning about the creative process.

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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 group of established and emerging artists working today and to the art they are producing now.

Twelve seasons have been produced for PBS (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2023, 2025).

Each season contains three to four one-hour programs.

Each hour features three to five artists in 12- to 18-minute segments.

To date, Art21 has featured over 300 established and emerging artists.

THE ARTISTS

In the Art21 broadcast series, contemporary artists speak in their own words and reflect on their lives, sources of inspiration, and working processes. The featured artists include painters, sculptors, performance artists, installation artists, video artists, and new media artists.

NOTE: Teachers should preview all series segments before classroom or other screenings to determine whether the content is appropriate for the ages, maturity levels, and learning environments of their students. 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.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Educator Guides are designed as resources for planning lessons, facilitating discussions, introducing Season 12 content, and supporting further research and exploration of contemporary art, artists, and themes. Educators are encouraged to use the broadcast series, Educator Guide, and the Art21 website in tandem to integrate contemporary art into classroom and community-based learning environments.

ARTIST PAGES

Each Artist Page contains biographical information and the following sections:

[ABOUT THE ARTIST]

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

[MEDIA & 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 & IDEAS]

Additional thematic concepts connect the artist's work and processes to those of other artists in the series. This section 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, these activities are open-ended interdisciplinary opportunities for individual interpretations of the creative methods and interests of the featured artists. Suggested activities can be modified for different age levels, learning styles, and media choices.

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. Contemporary art is distinguished by the absence of a uniform organizing principle, ideology, or “-ism.” In a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world, contemporary artists give voice to today's 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. Often, artists say that viewers contribute to or even complete the artwork by adding their 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 individual abilities to consider, react, and respond to visual art.

The artists featured by Art21 serve as creative role models who can inspire people of all ages to consider how ideas are developed, articulated, and realized in the contemporary world, and they offer educators opportunities to support diverse learning styles.

BETWEEN WORLDS

The internationally acclaimed artists in “Between Worlds” work at intersections and crossroads using their artistic practices to make sense of complex histories of colonization and migration, find common ground between cultures, and break down divides that otherwise seem fixed.

Across four artistic practices, myriad cultures and historical contexts, as well as countless expressions of creativity, care, and connection, this episode follows as four artists illustrate the capacity of art to unite a world that often feels divided.

“I’m trying to disrupt, to remind, to cause tension and not quite be able to look as you usually can look.”

— Lubaina Himid



**SOPHIE
CALLE**

BORN 1953; Paris, France

Working across photography, installation, text, performance, and video, Calle playfully explores themes central to the human experience, such as death, desire, love, and loss, often with the assistance of collaborators who may or may not know they are participating in the work. Across this body of work and set of methods that defy neat categorization, the artist investigates the boundaries between the self and the other, realizes universal human truths, and collapses distinctions between art and life.



**DYANI WHITE
HAWK**

BORN 1976; Madison, Wisconsin

Across varied media, including painting, beadwork, mosaic, video, and performance, White Hawk brings attention to the traditions, techniques, and aesthetics of Lakota art practices, celebrating their beauty and conceptual rigor and placing them in the lineage of Western abstraction.



**LUBAINA
HIMID**

BORN 1954; Zanzibar, Tanzania

Through her paintings, installations, and sculptures, Himid creates platforms for viewers to engage with pressing questions about race, gender, class, and history. Working on traditional canvases, cut-out cardboard portraits, or repurposed domestic furniture, the artist calls attention to forgotten marginalized histories and people and connects them to the present.



**TUAN ANDREW
NGUYEN**

BORN 1976; Saigon, Vietnam

Throughout his work in video and sculpture, Nguyen explores the use of art as a tool for healing the traumas of colonialism, imperialism, and war that reverberate through communities and generations. His works often focus on lost or erased histories and the retrieval of these narratives through community engagement, speculative fiction, and fantastical propositions in order to bridge the gap between official archives and lived experiences.



DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- ☐ When have you existed between worlds? Describe that feeling.
- ☐ What aspects of your life do you make public? What aspects are private?
- ☐ What moments from daily life inspire you?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- ☐ Do the artists in the episode believe society can exist between worlds? What lessons can we learn on how to navigate the future based on their ideas?
- ☐ How do artists maintain a private and public life?
- ☐ How are artists in the episode inspired by the everyday? What materials from daily life do they incorporate into their work?

Dyani White Hawk working in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.

SOPHIE CALLE



BORN
1953; Paris, France

LIVES & WORKS
Malakoff, France

**“I want to live the story.
I want to live inside.”**

— Sophie Calle

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Working within self-imposed routines and rituals, Calle carves out a creative space that lets her explore the limits of what is socially acceptable to investigate the lives of others and reflect upon her own. For Calle, the daily ritual of following and photographing a stranger called Henri B. reveals as much about her as it does Henri, using the stranger as a foil for her explorations into curiosity, desire, and discovery. Pairing photographic documents with written observation, the artist points to the assumptions and deductions we make based on small pieces of information, working between fact and fiction to demonstrate how much our understanding of others comes from assumption and extrapolation without ever truly knowing what goes on in the lives of others.

Sophie Calle waving at the camera. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Between Worlds.” © Art21, Inc. 2025.

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

film, installation, performance, photography, text

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

death	motherhood
family	mundane
home	observation
humor	rules
improvisation	time
memory	

RELATED ARTISTS

Eleanor Antin, Meriem Bennani, Alex Da Corte, Salah Elmur, Miranda July, Christine Sun Kim, Sally Mann, Christian Marclay, Shana Moulton, Song Dong, Stephanie Syjuco

DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- ☐ Why is humor a tool for artists?
- ☐ What are some ways a family can influence an artist?
- ☐ How can rules be used for inspiration?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- ☐ How does Sophie Calle use humor? Are the topics she is discussing typically considered funny?
- ☐ What does Calle reveal about her family through her artwork?
- ☐ List what Calle says about rules.

[AFTER VIEWING]

- ☐ In what ways does Calle's use of humor to touch on difficult subjects—like death, family, and motherhood—complicate how the viewer experiences the work?
- ☐ Why does Calle prefer to use rules in her work? What do they allow her to do?
- ☐ How do rules allow Calle to bring her initial ideas to life?

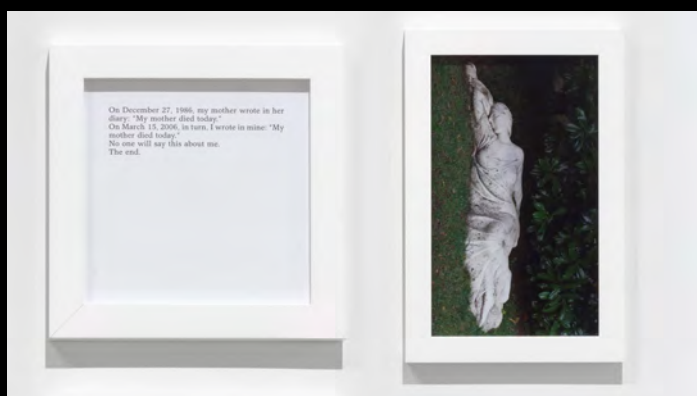
CREATE

- ☐ Calle describes embracing the humidity, leaks, and growing mold in her exhibition with *Rencontres d'Arles*, which served as a public funeral for artwork ruined in her private storage area. Create a work that embraces weather elements (for example the sun, rain, wind, snow, or ice) either by subject or process.
- ☐ Playfulness is a hallmark of Calle's work. Consider a game or toy from your childhood that brought you joy. Write a short story about it. Then trade stories with a classmate. Each student should create a work depicting a scene in the story they received from a peer. Create an exhibition where the stories and final artworks are shown together.
- ☐ Calle often uses her personal life or body as a subject. Create a portrait of yourself in any medium. The work can be abstract or conceptual; no human figure is necessary.

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(Clockwise from top left) © 2025 Sophie Calle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Courtesy of Sophie Calle and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo: Steven Probert. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Image of a red shoe. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Suite Venitienne. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.



DYANI WHITE HAWK



BORN

1976; Madison, Wisconsin

LIVES & WORKS

Minneapolis, Minnesota

EDUCATION

AA, Haskell Indian Nations University
BFA, Institute of American Indian Arts
MFA, University of Wisconsin-Madison

“It’s not two worlds. We may have multiple cultural influences, but we all are sharing one common world, and hopefully we’re making efforts to learn how to collectively do that better.”

— Dyani White Hawk

ABOUT THE ARTIST

White Hawk’s work is deeply rooted in painting and beadwork, drawing upon the practices of both Lakota and Western Modernist abstraction. In works like *Wopila|Lineage* (2022), the artist directly employs the visual languages of Lakota beadwork, creating a 14-foot-long painting with more than 500,000 glass beads that are woven together to form seven hourglass figures or Kapemni, a symbol for the mirroring between earth and sky. In other works, like the painting series *Quiet Strength*, White Hawk interweaves multiple histories of abstraction, referencing the parallel bands of porcupine quillwork and the grid paintings of Agnes Martin. “Our artistic practices are reflections of our existences; our artistic practices are reflections of our society,” says the artist. “If we’re only speaking to that history from a singular perspective, we are leaving out so much of the story.”

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

beadwork, painting

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

abstraction	history
art market	identity
classification	protection
collaboration	reflection
community	representation
culture	symbols

RELATED ARTISTS

El Anatsui, Nick Cave, Linda Goode Bryant, Nicholas Hbolo, Christine Sun Kim, Cannupa Hanksa Luger, Howardena Pindell, Michael Rakowitz, Amy Sherald, Amy Sillman, Rose B. Simpson, Stephanie Syjuco, Jack Whitten

Dyani White Hawk at work in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Between Worlds.” © Art21, Inc. 2025.

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- ☐ What does commitment mean to you?
- ☐ What symbols represent your values?
- ☐ Why might an artist want to keep parts of their practice private?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- ☐ What is White Hawk committed to?
- ☐ What do abstraction and symbolism mean to White Hawk?
- ☐ How does White Hawk describe the relationship between her work and the art market?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- ☐ How do White Hawk's commitments inform her artwork and process?
- ☐ How can simplicity be deceiving?
- ☐ Does our visual culture value privacy? Why or why not?

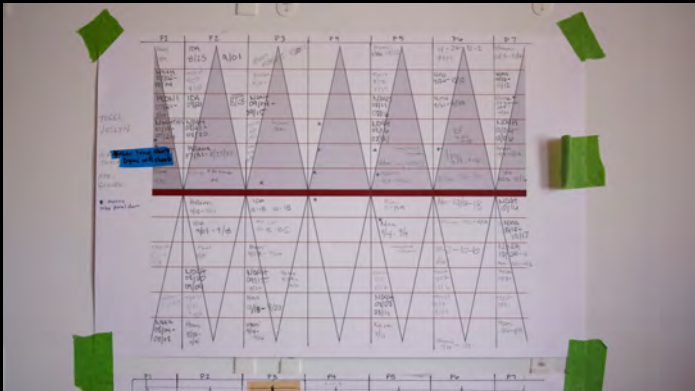
- ☐ White Hawk describes her work as abstract representations of how to walk through the world and be with one another; ultimately, they are a visual representation of a set of values. What values are most important to you (for example, honesty, generosity, justice, etc)? Make an abstract work of art representing three values most important to you.
- ☐ What is the relationship between contemporary art and craft? What other craft traditions, like beadwork, require collaboration? Work in a group of 5 to make a collective craft project inspired by White Hawk's process. Try to ensure that each member of the group has a distinct style in the collective project while also maintaining a sense of cohesion. Consider projects like quilting, weaving, ceramics, or woodworking.
- ☐ In the film, White Hawk visits the Brooklyn Museum to view Indigenous art. White Hawk explains that the lack of provenance is due to colonialism. Go to your local museum and make a list of all the works with the artists/maker labeled "unknown" or "unidentified." Why might that information be missing? What role should museums play in finding that information?



Dyani White Hawk's artwork.
Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.



Dyani White Hawk's artwork. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.



(Clockwise from top left) Dyani White Hawk. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Dyani White Hawk's artwork. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Dyani White Hawk touching her artwork. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.



LUBAINA HIMID



BORN
1954; Zanzibar, Tanzania

LIVES & WORKS
Preston, United Kingdom

EDUCATION

BA, Wimbledon College of Art
MFA, Royal College of Art

“In that kind of familiarity, I want people to connect.”

— Lubaina Himid

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Trained in theater design, Himid creates works that often contain interactive and immersive dimensions, whether through her free-standing cut-out paintings, installation choices, or compositional strategies that invite viewers’ participation in the action of a painting. In her series *Strategy Paintings* (2022–2023), the artist paints fictional characters sitting and standing around tables, often leaving an empty chair in the painting for viewers to imagine themselves sitting in and taking part. In other works, such as *Naming the Money* (2004), the artist creates life-size painted cut-out figures arranged in a tableau that viewers walk through and around. After decades of pioneering work in painting and sculpture, alongside curating groundbreaking exhibitions for Black women artists, Himid in recent years has received long-deserved recognition for a career that challenges dominant histories of art and society through uniquely democratizing approaches.

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

drawing, installation, painting

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

color	listening
everyday	pattern
familiarity	portraiture

RELATED ARTISTS

Jordan Casteel, Salah Elmur, Joan Jonas, Christine Sun Kim, Shaun Leonardo, Daniel Lind-Ramos, Azikiwe Mohammed, Aliza Nisenbaum, Michael Rakowitz, Amy Sherald, Salman Toor

Lubaina Himid in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Between Worlds.” © Art21, Inc. 2025.

DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- ☐ How can color influence your mood? What colors invoke certain emotions for you?
- ☐ Why might an artist want to use a familiar or everyday object in their work?
- ☐ When is recognition from museums, galleries, or collectors important? Is a certain stage of an artist's career more important for such recognition?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- ☐ Describe Himid's use of color, with as many words as you can think of.
- ☐ What familiar or everyday objects does Himid depict? Why is she interested in showcasing these scenes?
- ☐ How does Himid characterize her experience with the art world and its recognition?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- ☐ Why might Himid choose to use such a variety of color in her work?
- ☐ Himid notes that in one painting she wants the viewer "engaging with a streetseller as a human being." Why does she depict everyday scenes in her work?
- ☐ After learning about Himid's experience over forty years with the art world, what change do you think is still necessary?



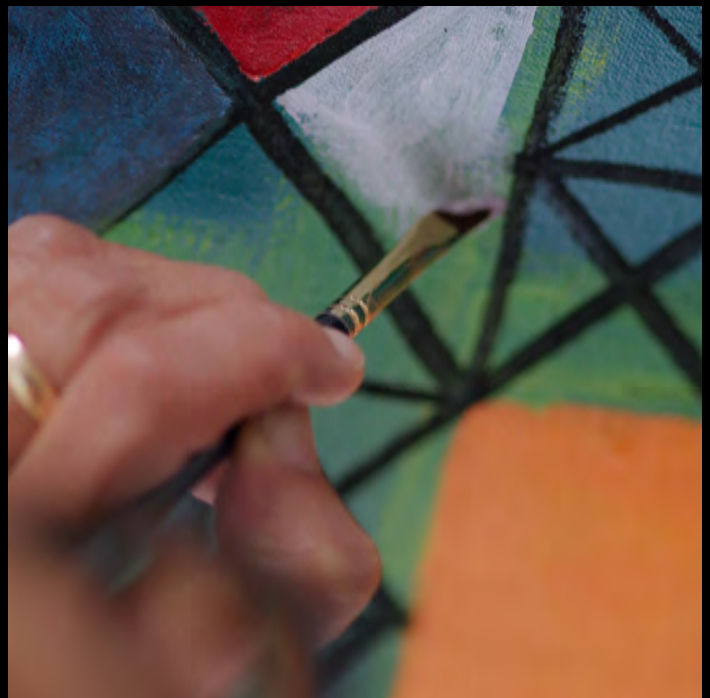
Lubaina Himid painting in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds."
© Art21, Inc. 2025.

CREATE

- ☐ Himid states she "gets excited about transforming objects." Choose an object that might otherwise be discarded (such as a broken remote, doorknob, light bulb, etc.) and give it new life. Think about how your additions may change how a viewer experiences the work.
- ☐ Research the life of an artist with a long career (at least thirty years). When did they achieve public recognition? Did that recognition last throughout their career or change over time? Create a one-page sketch with notes about their life. Share with the class and discuss what you learned about artistic careers over time.
- ☐ Think about the encounters you experience with people regularly (like riding public transportation, interacting with a store clerk, getting a haircut, etc.). Choose one and take a photograph to honor that interaction. Either ask that individual if you can photograph them in the moment or recreate the scene with classmates.



Lubaina Himid, *Chair Seller*, 2023. Courtesy the artist; Hollybush Gardens, London; and Greene Naftali, New York.



(Clockwise from top left) Lubaina Himid's artwork. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Lubaina Himid and friend. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.



TUAN ANDREW NGUYEN



BORN

1976; Saigon, Vietnam

LIVES & WORKS

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

EDUCATION

BA, University of California, Irvine
MFA, California Institute of the Arts

“Collaboration requires constant negotiating in the most constructive way. We’re figuring out, together, the best ways to tell the story or the best stories to tell.”

— Tuan Andrew Nguyen

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Working alongside Vietnamese communities from Quảng Trị, Vietnam, to Dakar, Senegal, to Louisiana, USA, artist Tuan Andrew Nguyen creates visually rich and narratively captivating films that unearth the untold stories of war, colonization, and migration. Weaving together fact, fiction, archive, and anecdote, his films envision different ways that the wounds of the past can be healed and even become something beautiful. Working in his studio, Nguyen gives new life to the unexploded ordnance that have been buried across the Vietnamese countryside, transforming them into carefully crafted sculptures.

Production still from Tuan Andrew Nguyen’s film *Amongst the Disquiet* (2024).

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

installation, sculpture, video

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

colonialism	liminality
displacement	loss
fiction	memory
futurity	solidarity
healing	stories
history	war
journey	

RELATED ARTISTS

Tanya Aguiñiga, John Akomfrah, Natalia Almada, Stan Douglas, Salah Elmur, Omer Fast, Arthur Jafa, Tommy Kha, An-My Lê, Guadalupe Maravilla, Susan Philipsz, The Propeller Group, Pedro Reyes, Rose B. Simpson

DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- ☐ What is your family's history? How did you learn about it?
- ☐ What are some of your favorite stories?
- ☐ What is your relationship to film?

[WHILE VIEWING]

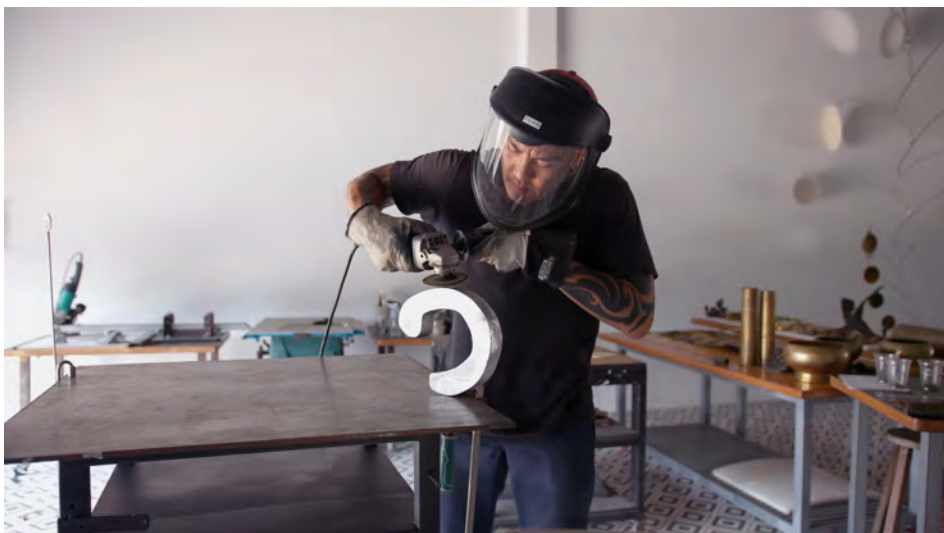
- ☐ How does Nguyen explore history?
- ☐ What types of stories are important to Nguyen?
- ☐ How does Nguyen describe his process of working with film?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- ☐ How can history—including family and community histories—be precarious?
- ☐ How does Nguyen transform the story of an object?
- ☐ Why is collaboration and negotiation important in artmaking?

CREATE

- ☐ Nguyen describes his film as weaving fiction with stories that have been told to his community. What role does fiction play in your family history? What role does fiction play in constructing your identity?
- ☐ In the film, Nguyen remarks, “Ghosts to me are unresolved memories that need to be resolved.” Is there a memory in your life that feels unresolved? An awkward moment with someone, a challenge from your past? Depict that memory as a ghost.
- ☐ In one of Nguyen’s projects, he repurposes shell casings from the Vietnam War into objects of healing. What objects in your daily life can you transform? Find 3 objects from your home, school, or neighborhood and transform them into objects of healing.



Tuan Andrew Nguyen working in his studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Between Worlds.” © Art21, Inc. 2025.



Tuan Andrew Nguyen and his film crew. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.



(Clockwise from top left) Tuan Andrew Nguyen looking through family photos. Production still from Tuan Andrew Nguyen's film *The Unburied Sounds of a Troubled Horizon* (2022); Image from Tuan Andrew Nguyen's film. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Tuan Andrew Nguyen's family photos. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025; Tuan Andrew Nguyen in his studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Between Worlds." © Art21, Inc. 2025.

GET INVOLVED

SCREENINGS

ART21 SCREENING SOCIETY

Host a free screening of one episode from the eleventh broadcast season of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*. As part of the Screening Society, Art21 offers high-definition downloads, a screening guide, an education guide, and press images and logos. Museums, schools, community-based organizations, libraries, and individuals are encouraged to host screenings that are free and open to the public, which aim to inspire new audiences with contemporary art and alert local communities about the PBS broadcast. More information at art21.org/screening-society.

INDEPENDENT SCREENINGS

Should you or your organization be interested in screening an episode or segment from seasons one through eleven of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, please contact us at art21.org/licensing.

ART21 EDUCATION

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 AMBASSADORS

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.

ART21 GUIDES

Both Educator Guides and Screening Guides are available online for all seasons of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, including a growing list of Educator Guides on artists featured in Art21's digital series. Find all the Art21 Guides at art21.org/guides.



Production still from Tuan Andrew Nguyen's film *Because No One Living Will Listen* / *Người Sống Chẳng Ai Nghe* (2023).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ART21 VIDEO

art21.video

art21.org

All of Art21's films, including digital series and all seasons of *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, are available to watch for free online.

SEASON 12 SCREENING GUIDE

art21.org/guides

The Season 12 Screening Guide contains event ideas, discussion questions, and helpful information for your free screening event.