



art21.org/estebancabezadebaca

Esteban Cabeza de Baca

ABOUT

Born

1985 (San Ysidro, CA)

Education

Cooper Union, BA
 Columbia University, MFA

Lives and Works

Queens, NY

About the Artist

Richly layered with color, texture, and pictographic references, Esteban Cabeza de Baca’s paintings combine plein-air observation with historical representation and material experimentation. Born to Chicano parents and growing up along the US-Mexico border, the artist’s signature landscapes of the American Southwest mix past, present, and future—mirroring the myriad histories and cultures of the land they depict. The artist approaches landscape painting as both a time-honored tradition and an art historical phenomenon to be challenged.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials

painting

Key Words and Ideas

family
 history
 landscape
 layering
 plein air

postcolonialism
 solstice
 tesseraet
 time

Related Artists

Tanya Aguiñiga
 Firelei Báez
 Vija Celmins
 Mark Dion
 Rackstraw Downes
 Salah Elmur
 Josephine Halvorson

Luchita Hurtado
 Sally Mann
 Guadalupe Maravilla
 Postcommodity
 Amy Sillman

“The way that my paintings develop is in a very intuitive approach of what I feel, but also searching for who I am.” —Esteban Cabeza de Baca

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 Esteban Cabeza de Baca 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 is your connection to land? Consider where you're from, where you live now, or where you'd like to live one day.
- ② How do you mark the passage of time?
- ③ Through what ways do you express yourself?

While Viewing

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

- ① How does Cabeza de Baca characterize his connection to land?
- ② What details about time are embedded in the paintings?
- ③ Note how Cabeza de Baca expresses himself and his feelings

After Viewing

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

- ① What places does Cabeza de Baca feel connected to? What details from those places do you see in the work?
- ② List the ways time is captured in Cabeza de Baca's work.
- ③ How did Cabeza de Baca's childhood and family history influence his artistic expression?

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.

- ✓ Watch artist Amy Sillman's Art21 film "To Abstract." Compare how she and Cabeza de Baca approach layering. Then create an artwork that includes layering (dying, cutting, wiping, scraping, etc.) over several days. The final piece does not need to be a painting.
- ✓ Choose a place that you find inspirational. Take a family member or friend to this place and spend time there. You can relax, chat, read, listen to music, or create art. Focus on enjoying the space.
- ✓ What does freedom mean to you? What does it mean to your classmates, your neighbors, your family? Conduct interviews with people both within and outside your community about what freedom means to them. Create a collage or freedom map of their answers using mixed media.