

ART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

HUMAN NATURE

SEASON 12
EDUCATOR GUIDE

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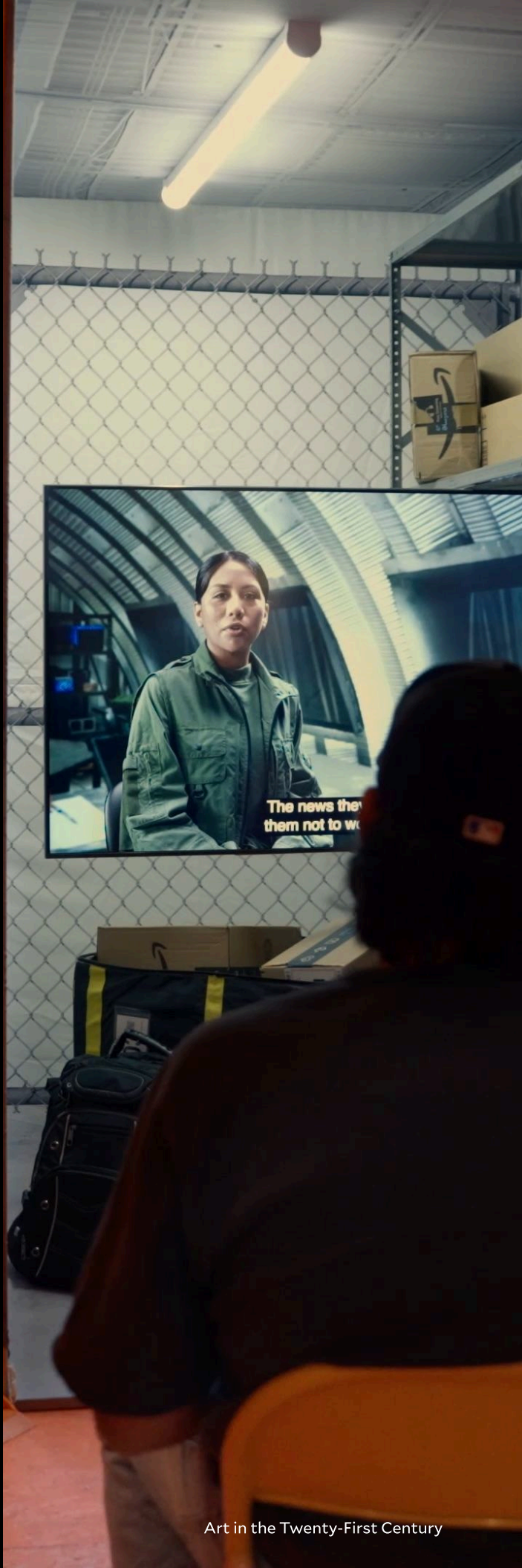
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Sin Wai Kin in their studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.

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Lenka Clayton in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.

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 series presented in partnerships with PBS 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.

HUMAN NATURE

The four celebrated artists featured in “Human Nature” explore the central questions surrounding what it means to be human: investigating our impact on the environment and the world around us, probing the social and economic systems that define our daily lives, and discovering how we relate and connect with one another. Through their critical yet hopeful reflections on the shared project of being human, these four artists emphasize our collective power to shape our communities, current realities, and coming futures.

“All art is inherently tied to the era in which it is made.”

— Josh Kline



**DELCY
MORELOS**

BORN 1967; Tierralta, Colombia

Using materials drawn from the earth, such as pigment minerals, soil, and plant life, Morelos centers our relationship with the natural world, inviting a sense of harmony and dialogue with the environment around us. Across her paintings, sculptures, and multisensory installations, Morelos’s practice weaves together disparate histories and traditions: from Andean and Amazonian Indigenous cosmologies to the histories of violence and extraction in the Americas, using abstract forms and gestures to convey their impact on humanity and the earth.



**JOSH
KLINE**

BORN 1979; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

From sculptures of 3D-printed portraits wrapped in recycling bags to videos advocating for Universal Basic Income to installations of temporary housing in the aftermath of a flood, Kline explores the impact of emergent technologies, widening class divides, and the looming threat of climate disaster on contemporary life. His works often present dystopic visions of the near future, where the consequences of political instability, the automation of human labor, and natural disasters have transformed life as we know it, engaging audiences in the project of imagining something better.



**LENKA
CLAYTON**

BORN 1977; Cornwall, England

Clayton’s practice is rooted in a close observation of the world around her, highlighting the myriad ways we record our lives and relationships, and create moments of magic through simple gestures and mundane materials. Making films by organizing strangers by age, creating sculptural installations of dangerous objects made child-safe, or installing exhibitions in the windows of local businesses, the artist draws inspiration from her community in Pittsburgh, her family, and the world around her. In doing so, Clayton creates a body of work that centers on the beauty of the everyday and the power of human connection.



**SIN
WAI KIN**

BORN 1991; Toronto, Canada

Drawing on diverse performance styles, such as drag, boy bands, newscasting, and sitcoms, Sin plays with genre conventions, narrative structures, and character tropes to reveal the cultural constructions at the heart of everyday experience. In an ongoing series of interconnected works, the artist has developed a cast of archetypal characters, each reflecting distinct relationships to fundamental concepts such as truth, identity, and change. Sin develops fictional worlds that explore the stories we tell about ourselves and our society, presenting more fluid possibilities for both.



DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- Where can art live?
- How can art be sensorial?
- What does it mean to be human?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- Why is it valuable for artists to make work with and about the public?
- What can art teach us about our environment?
- What does it mean to be human according to the artists in the episode?

Lenka Clayton in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.



DELICY MORELOS



BORN
1967; Tierralta, Colombia

LIVES & WORKS
Bogotá, Colombia

EDUCATION

BFA, La Escuela de Bellas Artes de Cartagena

“We are seeing the Earth as a living and sacred being. I don’t create sculptures, I design an experience.”

— Delcy Morelos

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Reflecting on her life and work, Morelos recalls her childhood connection to nature in her hometown of Tierralta, Colombia, her early paintings that respond to Colombia’s history of violence, and the large-scale installations she is known for today. Creating intimate and tactile encounters with the natural world, the artist opens a unique possibility for discovery, healing, and harmony through a dialogue with the earth and with each other.

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

drawing, installation, painting

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

connection	New World
harmonious	Old World
levitate	sacred
nature	

RELATED ARTISTS

El Anatsui, Olafur Eliasson, Mark Dion, Charles Gaines, Luchita Hurtado, Josh Kline, Wolfgang Laib, Maya Lin, Richard Mosse, Lucy Raven, Pedro Reyes, Rose B. Simpson, Diana Thater, Anicka Yi, Andrea Zittel

Delcy Morelos in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Human Nature.”

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DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- How would you describe your relationship with nature?
- Why might an artist use natural materials in their work?
- How do plants grow? What are the life stages of plants?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- How does Morelos describe her relationship with nature?
- What materials does Morelos use?
- Note what Morelos says about the human and plant life cycles. Are they connected? How so?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- Why is nature important to Morelos?
- How could Morelos's use of earthen materials influence the viewer of her work? How might it smell, feel, sound, and look over time?
- How are growth and decay present in her work?

CREATE

- Research and choose a plant native to where you live now. What animals use the plant? How does it interact with other plants? Create a two-dimensional work (drawing, painting, etc.) illustrating what you find fascinating about the plant.
- Consider the five senses. Create a work that goes beyond sight and uses sound, touch, smell, or taste as the primary way of interacting with it.
- Spend some time in nature. A local park, farm, or any green space. Go into this time without a set plan and see where inspiration comes from.

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JOSH KLINE



BORN

1979; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

LIVES & WORKS

New York, New York

EDUCATION

BA, Temple University

“Precarious conditions are at the heart of what it means to be an American artist today.”

— Josh Kline

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kline frequently works with the very forms and technologies he critically examines, whether through tools like 3D scanning and printing or by repurposing the aesthetics of advertisements and consumer goods. In *Skittles* (2014), he adopts the sleek, sterile packaging of wellness commodities to present an installation of a commercial refrigerator containing 15 different blended smoothies. With concoctions like “condo” containing coconut water, turmeric, an HDMI cable, and glass or “big data” containing Google Glass, omega-3 fish oil, and Purell, Kline reflects on the fraught relationship between the consumption of goods and the construction of identity. In other works, Kline utilizes emergent technological tools that further the alienation and replacement of human labor.

Image of Josh Kline. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Human Nature.” © Art21, Inc. 2026.

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

installation, video

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

art market	individual
capitalism	labor
class	money
consumption	power
family	society
futurity	speculation
identity	species

RELATED ARTISTS

Tanya Aguiñiga, American Artist, Tania Bruguera, Mark Dion, Tim Hawkinson, Anicka Yi, Kimsooja, Mary Mattingly, Richard Mosse, Trevor Paglen, Rose Salane, Mika Tajima, Ai Weiwei, Caroline Woolard

DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- What experiences can influence one's identity?
- What materials make up your daily life?
- What does it mean to have a stable life?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- How does Kline describe the relationship between identity and work?
- What materials does Kline use?
- Make note of the ways Kline mentions stability and instability.

[AFTER VIEWING]

- What challenges arise when one's identity is tied to their work or job?
- How do the materials Kline uses reflect his subjects' lives?
- How does American capitalism perpetuate instability?

CREATE

- In the film, we see Kline predict what life in the climate crisis might look like. Consider what the sensory experience might be like in a climate apocalypse. What would the world smell, feel, taste, or even sound like? Write a poem about these sensations.
- Kline talks about American capitalism and how destructive it is to the middle and working class. What other economic structures have existed or could exist? In a group of five, make a film of American life before or after capitalism.



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Josh Kline and collaborator in the studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.



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LENKA CLAYTON



BORN

1977; Cornwall, England

LIVES & WORKS

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

EDUCATION

BA, Central Saint Martins College of Art
MA, National Film and Television School

“Looking at things that are supposed to behave a certain way and purposefully misunderstanding how they should be used is really important to me.”

— Lenka Clayton

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Clayton blurs the lines between the domestic and the public, inviting viewers into the intimate rhythms of everyday life and motherhood. The artist transforms unexpected objects and experiences into art, whether it is creating new works using the experience of motherhood as a material or building a lighthouse hundreds of miles from the nearest ocean. Collaborating with her husband, artist Phillip Andrew Lewis, her children, and the members of her community in Pittsburgh’s Troy Hill neighborhood, Clayton uses art to highlight the beauty of human connection and the everyday.

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

drawing, film, installation, sculpture

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

collaboration	motherhood
family	neighborhood
humor	play
inspiration	trust
maternity leave	

RELATED ARTISTS

Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Meriem Bennani, Sophie Calle, Alex Da Corte, Ann Hamilton, Oliver Herring, Sally Mann, Azikiwe Mohammed, Aliza Nisenbaum, Aki Sasamoto, Andrea Zittel

Image of Lenka Clayton. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Human Nature.” © Art21, Inc. 2026.

DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- What does “maternity leave” mean? Why might an artist want maternity or parental leave?
- Where do artists draw inspiration from?
- Why might an artist make work that is playful, funny, or surprising?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- What words does Clayton use to talk about motherhood?
- Where does Clayton draw inspiration from?
- How does Clayton use play in her work?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- How is motherhood a source of inspiration for Clayton?
- Why is it important for some artists to talk about their everyday lives?
- How did Clayton’s use of play, humor, or surprise influence your understanding of her work?

CREATE

- Clayton says she uses objects, like a typewriter, by “purposefully misunderstanding how they should be used.” Find a tool that is used for a particular purpose (paint roller, coin counter, clothespins, etc.). Go to a thrift or antique store if you need inspiration. Create a sculpture that misunderstands how it should be used.
- In the film, we see Clayton collaborate with her husband, her children, and her neighbors. Choose someone to collaborate with. It can be a classmate, family member, or acquaintance. Write a short story together.



Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Human Nature.” © Art21, Inc. 2026.





Lenka Clayton in her studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.; Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.; Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.; Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.

SIN WAI KIN



BORN

1991; Toronto, Canada

LIVES & WORKS

London, England

EDUCATION

BA, Camberwell College of Arts;
MA, Royal College of Art, London

“Your relationship to other people, and of course yourself, become solidified by how other people react to you.”

— Sin Wai Kin

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sin creates performance, video, text, and installation works that open a fluid space between seemingly rigid binaries such as dreaming and waking, life and death, and performance and authenticity. Drawing on varied histories and styles of performance and storytelling, including Cantonese opera, K-pop, and sitcoms, their works reveal how the stories we tell ourselves shape our identities and our shared world. Before formally studying art in school, Sin designed flyers for queer events and painted murals in clubs, which eventually led to their drag performance practice as V Sin. Initially keeping their artistic practice distinct from their drag performance, the artist eventually merged the two through works of video. By using and misusing narrative storytelling, the artist reimagines our relationship to truth, reality, and normativity, inviting a more expansive understanding of ourselves and identities.

Sin Wai Kin at a costume fitting. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, “Human Nature.” © Art21, Inc. 2026.

✦ TEACHING CONNECTIONS

MEDIA & MATERIALS

installation, video, performance, sculpture

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

art history	rules
archetypes	solitary
fantasy	storytelling
memories	systems
performance	time
permissions	transformation
queerness	universe
reality	

RELATED ARTISTS

Alex Da Corte, Ilana Harris-Babou, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Tommy Kha, Tuan Andrew Nguyen, Naudline Pierre, Jacolby Satterwhite, Cindy Sherman

DISCUSS

[BEFORE VIEWING]

- What is pop culture?
- What is performance art?
- When do artists work collaboratively? When do they work alone?

[WHILE VIEWING]

- How does Sin use pop culture in their work?
- What type of performances does Sin enact?
- When does Sin work in solitude versus in community?

[AFTER VIEWING]

- How are we shaped by pop culture?
- How do we perform in our daily lives?
- What purpose does an audience serve to an artist?

CREATE

- Spend a week keeping a dream journal. Every morning, as soon as you wake up, write down everything you remember from your dream. At the end of the week, read the journal and make a drawing combining all of your dreams from the week. Share the drawing with a close friend and have them interpret what they see.
- Sin used to keep their drag performance distinct from their artistic life. What aspects of your personal life can you bring into your art practice? Consider a secret you've never told before, a memory you've never shared, or your favorite place. Make a sculpture of that moment.



Sin Wai Kin in their studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.



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GET INVOLVED

SCREENINGS

ART21 SCREENING SOCIETY

Host a free screening of one episode from the twelfth 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 twelve 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 twelve 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.



Lenka Clayton and Phillip Andrew Lewis in their studio. Production still from the *Art in the Twenty-First Century* Season 12 episode, "Human Nature." © Art21, Inc. 2026.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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.