

Production still from the
Art in the Twenty-First Century
Season 1 episode, "Identity."
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art21.org/brucenauman



Bruce Nauman

ABOUT

Born
1941 (Fort Wayne, Indiana)

Education
University of Wisconsin, Madison, BFA
University of California, Davis, MFA

Lives and Works
near Galisteo, New Mexico

About the Artist
In his work, Nauman uses videos, sculptures, holograms, neon lights, and installations to create scenarios that disrupt viewers' habits of perception. By investigating themes of time, control, and language, the artist creates an open-ended body of work that prioritizes process over product and expands the possibilities of what art may be.

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

Media and Materials
film
installation
sculpture

Key Words and Ideas
attention
control
daily life
experimentation
horses
language
perception
place
process
repetition
time

Related Artists
John Baldessari
Leonardo Drew
Mike Kelley
Hannah Levy
Liz Magor
Christian Marclay
Paul McCarthy
Martin Puryear
James Turrell

"I needed a different way to approach the idea of being an artist." —Bruce Nauman

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 Bruce Nauman 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. Does something have to look like "art" to be considered art? Why or why not?
2. What jobs are similar to being an artist? Why?
3. How do videos capture attention?

While Viewing

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

1. Make note of the different things Nauman does, makes, and experiments with.
2. Who does Nauman learn from and what does he learn from them?
3. How does Nauman use film or video?

After Viewing

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

1. Nauman says, "Whatever I was doing in the studio must be art." What do you think he means by this? How does his work challenge traditional ideas about what an artist does?
2. What does Nauman's approach to ranching reveal about his approach to being an artist?
3. What happens when an ordinary action is filmed, repeated, or slowed down? How does it change our perception of that action?

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.

- ✓ Nauman says, "You have to kind of not watch anything, so you can be aware of everything," which he calls meditation. To achieve this state, focus on the scene out a window for a period of five minutes (have someone else do the timing). Then write down everything you saw or experienced during your meditation. Pay attention to your senses as well as the scene. Write about your experience.
- ✓ Select a process you do every day, like brushing your teeth or getting ready to go to school. Design the most efficient way of doing the task and write down each step. Exchange your work with a partner and try out one another's plans. Discuss the results.
- ✓ Spend a week experimenting with a new material each day. At the end of the week merge all of the artwork you made into one sculpture. Reflect on what you learned throughout the process.

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.