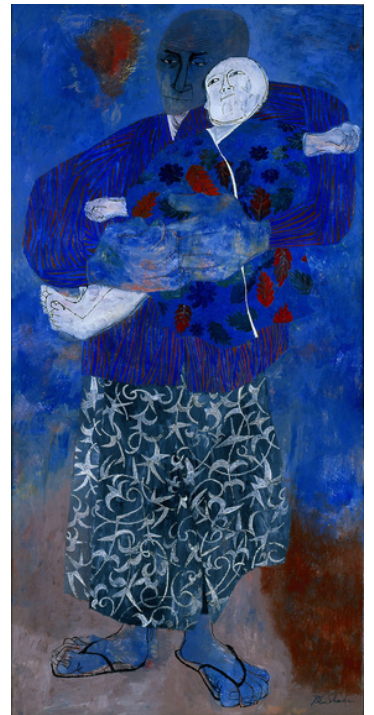
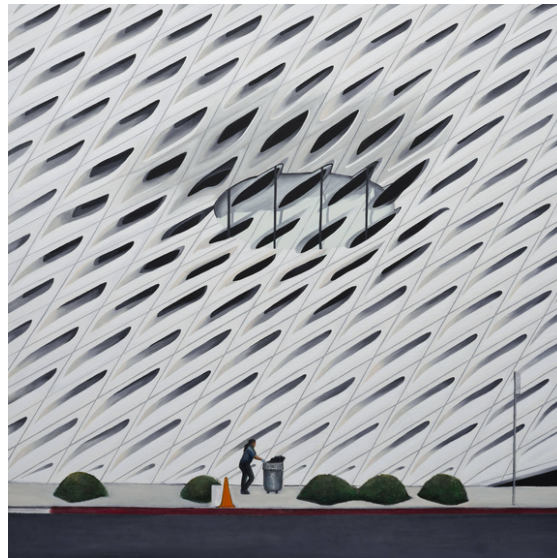


Social Issues in Art

Building Community

A guide for looking, talking, and taking action



Our hope

We strongly believe that an in-person visit to the museum benefits students in myriad ways. Being in the galleries, seeing art up close, and being guided by a gallery teacher all foster a sense of wonder and an openness to consider and discuss difficult concepts. Perhaps you've already brought your students for a visit, or maybe scheduling a visit is not possible. In any case, we hope that this guide may serve you and your students in exploring issues of identity, community, and society through looking at, discussing, writing about, and making art.

The Blanton Museum of Art is pleased to offer Social Issues in Art. This series presents objects from the Blanton's collection that provide opportunities for students to discuss issues relevant to individuals, schools, communities, our nation, and our world.

About this guide

The Theme: "Building Community" offers educators the opportunity to explore themes related to belonging, interdependence, and respect for others. Each work prompts students to discuss what it means to be part of a community, how to support others in times of crisis, and the importance of recognizing the value and dignity of all members of a community.

The Plan:

- Select a work to share with students. The title of each work is linked to the Blanton collections website that provides more information AND an image that can be expanded onscreen for projection in the classroom. Zoom in and out to allow students to look closely at the work as you lead students in discussion. (1-2 min.)
- Use the thinking routine (See, Think, Wonder) on the next page to help students make personal connections to the artwork and to each other. (5-10 min.)
- Select some (or all) of the suggested questions and prompts for follow-up activities of artmaking or research. (5-10 min.)

The Resources:

- A thumbnail image
- Link to object label information (click on the title of the artwork to access curatorial comments about the artist and the art)
- Suggested discussion questions and follow-up activities
- A high resolution image (for providing photocopied images for classes)

[Relevant TEKS, by grade level](#)

In addition, each page in this resource may include a gray box that highlights TEKS specifically addressed by the artwork.

Our donors

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A Thinking Routine

See, Think, Wonder*

1. What do you see?
2. What do you think about that? What does it remind you of?
3. What does it make you wonder? What questions do you have?

This routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry.

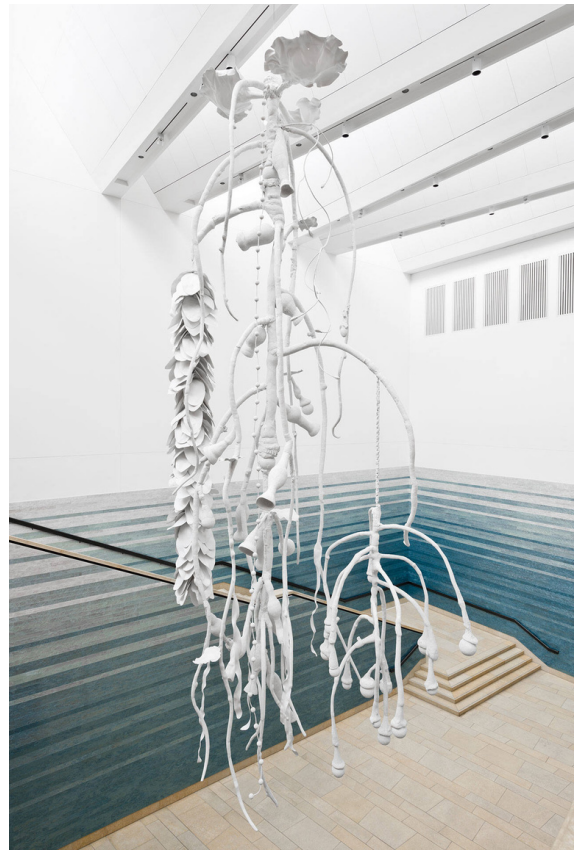
Use this routine when you want students to think carefully about why something looks the way it does or is the way it is. Give sufficient time for students to write or discuss their responses. Use the routine at the beginning of a new unit to motivate student interest or try it with an object that connects to a topic during the unit of study. Consider using the routine with an interesting object near the end of a unit to encourage students to further apply their knowledge and ideas.

*Thinking Routine from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Siphonophora

Thomas Glassford, 2016

Thomas Glassford's sculptures, large-scale installations, and public projects explore the intersections of art, design, architecture, community, and the natural world. *Siphonophora* is inspired by the giant ocean creatures of the same name that appear to be single organisms, but are actually interdependent communities of different animals, each with different functions that allow the organism to flourish. For this work, individual concrete and plaster sculptures based on forms found in nature have been painted white and strung together, merging into one enormous floating colony. The work serves as a metaphor for our interdependence with the natural world and with each other.



LOOK

Take a few moments to look closely.

- What do you notice first when you look at this work?
- What do you think this could represent? What makes you say that?
- What material do you imagine this sculpture is made from?

LEARN MORE... and TALK

Share the object label information with students. Remind them that a siphonophora is made up of many organisms that function together as a single creature.

- What kinds of communities do you belong to? (perhaps family, school, clubs, etc.)
- How do you function together? What is your role?
- Why is community important?
- What does it mean to “belong” to a community?
- What does it feel like to belong (or NOT to belong)?

MAKE

Consider the following options:

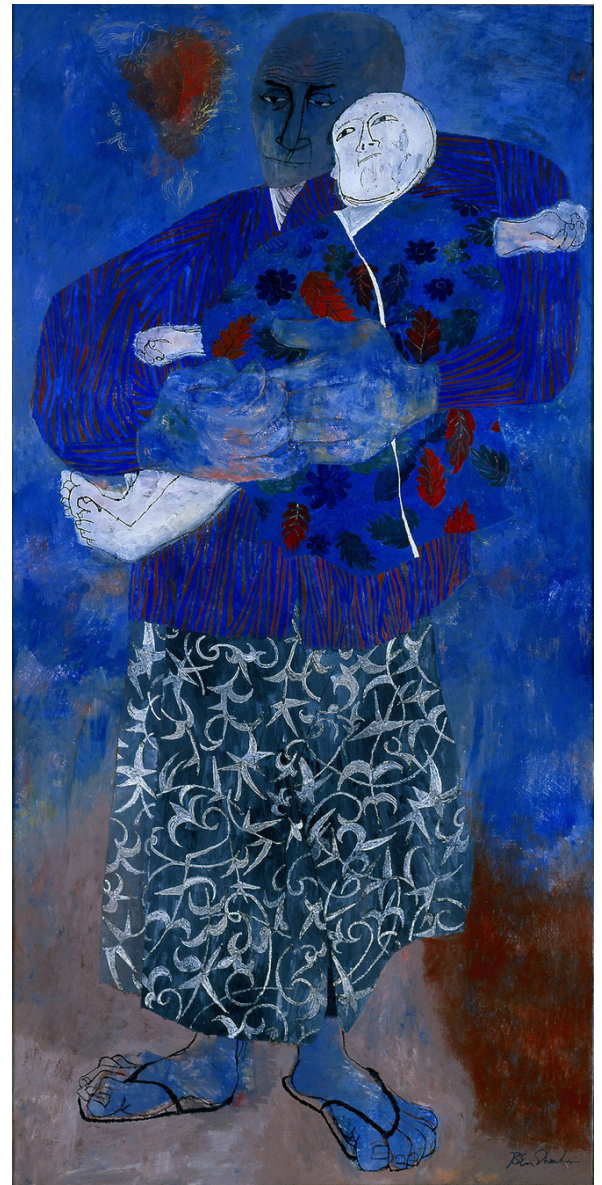
- Draw (or sculpt) a representation of a community that you belong to.
- Draw or make an imagined habitat for this siphonophora.



Thomas Glassford, *Siphonophora*, 2016, 501 x 192 x 130 in., rebar, polyurethane foam, base coat cement, and paint. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, purchase through the generosity of the Moody Foundation, 2017.3

From That Day On Ben Shahn, 1960

Ben Shahn was a persuasive artist whose bold works convey enormous compassion for human suffering. *From That Day On* belongs to the Lucky Dragon series of paintings that Shahn created to commemorate the deaths of the crew of the Lucky Dragon, a Japanese fishing boat caught in the radioactive cloud of a 1954 US hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific. Shahn, who believed he could best draw attention to universal tragedy by focusing on specifics, here has honored the fisherman Aikichi Kuboyama, who died seven months after the bomb blast. Kuboyama's burned and darkened flesh contrasts with the tender new skin of his baby daughter. A dragon emerging from a red cloud at the upper left reminds the viewer of the event itself, the role of fate (the dragon is often a symbol of destiny), and what Shahn called "the unspeakable tragedy" of atomic power, whose threat to civilization weighed heavily on his thoughts in the last years of his life.



LOOK

Take a few moments to look closely.

- What detail of the painting draws your immediate attention?
- What colors do you see? What feelings do the colors evoke for you?
- What might be the relationship of the two figures?
- Where might these people be? How can you tell?
- Why might the man's hands be so large?

*TEKS connections
(US History Studies
since 1877)

LEARN MORE... and TALK

Share the object label information with students.

- How and why has the artist used his art to raise awareness?
- How is Ben Shahn supporting his community?
- How can we help our own communities in times of crisis?

MAKE

Guide students in making their personal "Universe of Obligation."



Ben Shahn, *From That Day On*, 1960, 71 1/2 x 35 3/8 in., oil and tempera on canvas on board. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, gift of Mari and James A. Michener, 1991.332

Jay Lynn Gomez, 2016

Jay Lynn Gomez paints from personal experience. Growing up in East Los Angeles, her mother worked as a school janitor and her father as a trucker— both were undocumented Mexican immigrants. In 2009, while working as a live-in nanny in Beverly Hills, Gomez noticed that luxury magazines featuring homes similar to the one she worked in never included the housekeepers, gardeners, or other workers who were essential to their care: "Acutely aware of this omission, I began to rip the pages of the magazine out and add these people to them."

The people in her paintings are always faceless "in part to suggest the way they were taken for granted or overlooked, but in part also because somehow the viewer read more into them that way; they were less threatening, more inward looking and as such they more readily called forth the viewer's empathy." Here we see a woman pushing a large trash can down an empty block outside The Broad Museum in Los Angeles.



*TEKS connections
(US History Studies since 1877; Mexican American Studies; Economics with Emphasis on the Free Enterprise System and Its Benefits)

LOOK

Take a few moments to look closely.

- What do you see? What details or elements stand out to you?
- What's going on in this painting? What makes you think that?
- Where might this be?
- What is this person doing? Why has her face been blurred?
- What can we say about the scale of the woman in comparison to the building?

LEARN MORE... and TALK

Share the object label information with students.

- What message might Gomez be communicating?
- Who in your communities is often unnoticed? What kinds of work do they do? Why do you think they go unnoticed?
- What can YOU do to be more aware of people in your community spaces?

MAKE

Have your students write a thank you note to someone who is often overlooked in their school community.



Jay Lynn Gomez, *The Broad*, 2016, 72 x 72 in., acrylic on canvas. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Ellen Susman Collection, 2016.147