



Celebrate Black Art and History 2023–2024 School Year Workshop Grades: 9–12

Lesson Overview

Students will celebrate the innovation and influence of Gee’s Bend quilters represented in the High’s collection. Using their own work in addition to the work of Atlanta-based contemporary quilters as inspiration and as a visual exploration of US history, students will create their own mini quilts and experiment with using principles of art and design to create a unique composition.

Learning Objectives

Essential Questions:

- What is the history of Gee’s Bend, and why is it significant to textile arts?
- What is the difference between a traditional quilt and an art quilt?
- How are the elements of art and the principles of design used in quilt making?

Students will be able to...

- Use elements of art and principles of design to develop a quilt-inspired work of art

Performance Tasks

- Students will practice abstraction by developing a unique composition with personal meaning

Mini Glossary

- Abstract: a style of art that doesn’t try to accurately represent reality

- Balance: distribution of visual “weight” in an image
- Color: an element of art with three properties—hue or tint (the color name), intensity (the strength of a color), and value (the lightness/darkness of a color)
- Contrast: when opposite elements are arranged together
- Emphasis: when an element is given more dominance or interest over others
- Gee’s Bend: An isolated community in south Alabama known for its rich quilt-making tradition, which was passed down from many of the residents’ ancestors, who were enslaved at the plantation that originated in the town
- Geometric: a style of design that is based in the use of shapes and straight lines
- Movement: how elements create dynamic motion or action in an image
- Organic: a style of design that is based in curvy, less linear shapes, similar to those found in nature
- Pattern: a repeated design
- Rhythm: a way of combining elements of art to produce the look and feel of movement, especially with a visual tempo or beat
- Unity: how elements come together in an image and relate to each other

Materials

- Permanent archival stamp pads
- Washable stamp pads
- Re-inkers
- Custom stamps (carved from ArtGum erasers)
- Tagboard
- Tissue paper
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Textured rubbing plates
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

Additional Needs per Classroom

- Large images of works from the High's collection
- Sample quilts
- Art samples
- Visual timer
- Visual schedule

Advanced Prep

- Prep bins for each table (geometric stamps carved from ArtGum erasers, tissue paper, etc.)
- Hang up visual aids

Procedures

Introduction (10 mins)

Teaching artist will use Marquetta Johnson's quilt *Hope Blossoms*, on display in the museum's Folk and Self-Taught Art collection, as a starting point to discuss the history of quilts and particularly of Gee's Bend quilters. Teaching artist will share printed images of quilts in the museum's collection at the front of the classroom and in small groups. In their groups, students will compare and contrast various quilts in the museum's collection and note and discuss elements of art (line, shape, color) and principles of design (balance, rhythm, pattern, emphasis, contrast, unity, and movement).

Collection Connections:

- *Untitled (Strip Quilt with Bars)*, 1930s–1940s, Unidentified Texas Artist
- *Untitled*, 1910s–1920s, Unidentified Artist
- *Hope Blossoms*, 2009, Marquetta Johnson
- *Small Steps*, 2016–2017, Marquetta Johnson
- *Shadows of the People*, 2021, Lonnie Holley
- (not on display—*"Lazy Gal" Work-clothes Quilt*, Annie Mae Young) *Gee's Bend
- (not on display—*Housetop Variation*, Annie Mae Young) *Gee's Bend
- (not on display—*"Bricklayer" Variation*, Louisiana Bendolph) *Gee's Bend
- (not on display—*Lazy Gals (Bars) Quilt*, Arcola Pettway) *Gee's Bend
- (not on display—*Birds in the Air*, Lucy T. Pettway) *Gee's Bend
- (not on display—*Medallion Variation*, Jennie Pettway) *Gee's Bend
- (not on display—*Blocks and Strips*, Mary Lee Bendolph) *Gee's Bend

1. Demonstration (10 mins)

Teaching artist will transition from introduction to art making by showing workshop example to students—a mini paper-based quilt with clear composition, primarily exemplifying printmaking via custom carved stamps. Students will create a similar work using the supplies and stamps at their table while thinking intentionally about composition and design.

2. Designing and Embellishing (25 mins)

The improvisational, abstract style that we see exemplified in Gee's Bend quilts is unique to the quilter; the artist finds ways to incorporate their own interests and history into their art. How can you do the same with your mini quilt design?

Students will first plan and then stamp their desired design on their strip of tagboard. They can use markers to create additional marks and designs. How are they thinking about the elements of design? What aesthetic choices are they making? What theme are they building?

3. Conclusion (7 mins)

In their small groups, students will share their mini quilts with each other and explain their design choices. If time allows, the entire class will come together over one table and assemble their quilt strips into one large quilt. What do they notice?

4. Clean-up (8 mins)

Students will return embellishment materials to the bins at their table and will clear away any remaining fabric scraps or glue left on their tables.