BIG IDEA: NATURE

Nature is central to human existence. Humans rely on nature for survival and sustainability, recreation, well-being, exploration, and inspiration. The art-environment builders are often deeply connected to their natural surroundings, utilize local natural materials in their making, or draw upon nature for inspiration. Through these ideas, learners may explore important connections between humans and nature through art.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

• What is nature?
• Why is nature important?
• How does nature influence human values, actions, and ways of life?

LESSON OVERVIEW:

Inspired by the work of Mary Nohl, students will create an individual or collaborative hanging or freestanding driftwood or found wood structure.

OBJECTIVES:

(Organized by National Core Arts Standards Artistic Processes)

Connecting: Students will understand how nature can be incorporated into art processes and techniques.

Responding: Students will view, explore, and share their ideas about the work of Mary Nohl’s art that incorporates natural materials.

Creating: Students will use counting, balancing, and fine motor skills to create driftwood sculptures.

Presenting: Students may reflect on their collaborative work or their individual process.

ARTIST CONNECTIONS:

Mary Nohl
1914–2001

Wisconsin artist Mary Nohl loved making art from nature and made art every day. She turned her house and yard into her own gallery filled with sculptures inspired by her surroundings. Nohl explored many different ideas and ways of making things and looked at art and culture from all around the world. What influenced her the most, however, was the immense lake lying just outside her door. Mary Nohl used driftwood and other things from the beach of Lake Michigan in her art work.
DISCUSS:

- What do we already know about nature?
- Can you name some things in nature?
- What can you do to protect nature?
- Share your stories and experiences about nature:
  - What do you like to do in nature?
  - What is good for nature? What is bad for nature?
- Did you know that artists are often inspired by nature?
  - Have you made anything using something from nature?
- Read *In Mary’s Garden* by Tina Kügler and Carson Kügler (refer to resource link below).
- Introduce Mary Nohl’s work and how she collected driftwood on the beach near her home to use in her work.
  - Why do you think Mary Nohl chose driftwood?
  - Why is it called driftwood?
  - What items in nature could you collect near your home?

CREATE:

1. Go on a nature adventure with your students to collect driftwood or other sticks.
2. Allow the children to observe or participate in drilling the driftwood. Consider drilling one or more holes in each piece and explore the concepts of balance.
3. Pile and sort the driftwood on the floor.
4. Tie a knot at the end of the rope.
5. Children select pieces of wood and thread them on the rope.
6. Consider adding a written component where children write or draw on the driftwood with permanent marker or paint to personalize.

REFLECT:

Document the experience through photos and comments from the children throughout the process to display near the finished sculpture(s).

VOCABULARY:

- balance, driftwood, mobile, pattern, sculpture

ART MATERIALS:

- Driftwood (or other sticks), rope (tape end to prevent fraying), paint, and permanent marker (optional)
- Tools: Drill with large drill bit

RESOURCES:


CONNECTIONS:

- Math: Counting, balance, measuring, weighing (weigh driftwood and weigh children or length...how many driftwoods tall are you?)
- Science: Textures and color in nature
- Ecology
- Movement: Fine and gross motor skills

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