



Gateways and Signs

Many people connect or identify with places. Artist-built environments are often an ordinary place that is transformed by an artist to add personally significant meaning and narratives. In this lesson, students will question: *How can personalizing a space create a stronger connection between that place and my identity?*

Essential Question

How can personalizing a space create a stronger connection between that place and my identity?

K-3 Adaptation

- How can I show that a space is special to me?

Objectives

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of how art can transform a space to show personally significant meaning and narratives.
- Students will analyze and discuss the inspiration artists who create gateways and signs in their art environments.
- Students will design a sign or a gateway in response to their chosen site.
- Students will present their individual designs and articulate the personal significance of their design and the impact or transformation to the site.

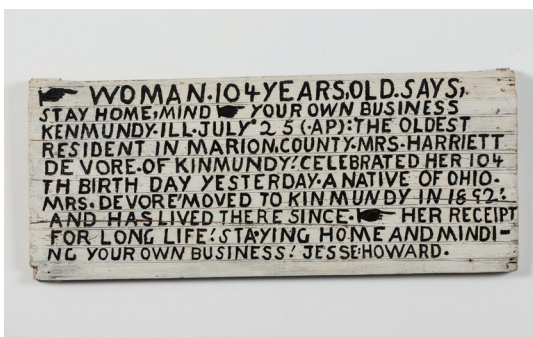
National Core Art Standard Connection: Visual Arts/Connecting#VA:Cn11.1

Anchor Standard: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

Essential Questions: How does art help us understand the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the views of a society? How does art preserve aspects of life?

This lesson was developed with feedback from Wisconsin art educators Ben Jerry and Kate Arvold.



1 L. F. Ames (center) with his traveling L. F. Ames Museum of Art, c. 1900; gelatin silver print; 11 1/8 x 14 1/8 x 1/2 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.
2 Jesse Howard, untitled, c. 1945-83; oil on fiberboard; 14 1/2 x 35 1/4 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of the Raymond K. Yoshida Living Trust and Kohler Foundation Inc.

Overview

Discuss

Present information about one or more of the inspiration artists. Then, have your students individually reflect, discuss in pairs or groups, or discuss as a class:

- What can you tell about a place from its entryway? While discussing, view images of different entryways, such as schools, amusement parks, zoos, homes, gardens, cemeteries, and/or grocery stores.
- What do artists and architects need to consider when designing a gate or a door? (e.g., environmental impact on material, historical and cultural traditions, logistical and functional needs)
- What do you notice about the gateways and fences that the inspiration artist(s) designed and built?
- What is the purpose of the gateway?

Create

- Choose one or more art media, based on your curricular goals, to have students complete the objectives: Students will design a sign or a gateway in response to their chosen site.
- Students will present their individual designs and articulate the personal significance of their design and the impact or transformation to the site.

See suggested ideas below for possible projects or starting points for a project.

Suggested Projects

- Students create a sign for a space they go to every day or week.
- Students design a concept for a gateway for a place that is important to them.
Extension: Create a maquette of the gate or fence.

Artists

- Levi Fisher Ames
- Nick Engelbert
- Tom Every
- Jesse Howard
- Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM)
- Mary Nohl
- Carl Peterson
- Herman Rusch
- Dr. Charles Smith
- James Tellen
- Albert Zahn

Vocabulary

- Identity
- Personalization
- Vernacular
- Architecture
- Gateway



1 Dr. Charles Smith, African-American Heritage Museum + Black Veterans Archive (site view, Aurora, IL), c. 1985–99. Photo: David Kargl, 1993.

2 *The Making of a Dream: Loy Bowlin + Jennifer Joy Jameson* installation view, part of *The Road Less Traveled* exhibition series at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2017.