

Flying Zahn



Lesson Plan by Jeni Maly, Art Teacher, School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies (SAGES), Waupun Area School District

Time to Complete: Four to Five 45-Minute Sessions

Big Idea: **Interpersonal Relationships and Skills**

Suggested Grade Level: 3-6

Overview

In this lesson, students will study the work of Albert and Louise Zahn and explore the connection between art and nature. They will begin looking at the birds the Zahns created and identifying different species and their associations to Wisconsin. Further research and exploration will be conducted by investigating the Zahn's titles of work and asking: *what influenced Zahn to carve birds and why did Albert become known as the "Birdman of Door County"?*

Looking closely at the form and figures of the bird sculptures, students will analyze how the Zahns created simple yet striking forms and found inspiration in their daily life. Using these ideas,

students will create their own bird form and sculpture. Throughout this lesson, students will explore interpersonal relationships and skills with artists, art, and nature.



SAGES Sixth Grade Students (Teacher Fellowship Program, School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies (SAGES), Waupun Area School District), *Birds*, 2022; clay and wood.

Objectives

- Students will study and design by sketching.
- Students will explore simple bird forms.
- Students will create a bird sculpture with clay.

National Standard Connection

Anchor Standard #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #3. Refine and complete artistic work.

Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Discussion Question(s)

- What inspires artists to make their art?
- How does nature influence art?
- When looking at a title to a work of art, what information does it give to an audience?
- How can artists influence communities and audiences with public display?
- Why do communities associate the subject matter of art with the identity of an artist?

**John Michael
Kohler Arts Center**

jmkac.org/educator-resources

Create

Day 1

Introduce Albert and Louise Zahn with a slideshow of their work and focus on three specific works: Blue Bird, Orioles, and White Owl. Discuss: What inspires artists to make their art? How does nature influence art? Students sketch three bird forms. Students will choose a partner or group to work with; they will then develop a plan and sketch.

Day 2

Use the titles of the Zahn's work to research birds of Wisconsin. Discuss: When looking at a title to a work of art, what information does it give to an audience? Students write three simple facts about one title and answer persuasively, "Why is Albert Zahn known as the 'Birdman of Door County?'" To further extend personal research and connection, invite an animal sanctuary or nature center to educate students about animal and the environment. Jeni Maly invited Marsh Haven Nature Center to talk with students and bring a snowy owl to the school.

Day 3

Students select one of the three sketched bird forms for bird sculpture and hand build their bird from clay. Discuss clay techniques and provide visual instruction. Introduce a variety of texture tools when applicable. Dry and fire in the kiln before Day 4.

Day 4

Glaze birds. Discuss the aesthetics with use of one glaze selection and the influence of Albert Zahn's bird sculptures. Fire in the kiln.

Day 5

Mount birds with wood dowels, skewers, and rounds. Consider painting wood with black acrylic paint.

Extension: Display an image of Albert Zahn's Birds Park House. Discuss: How can artists influence communities and audiences with public display? Why do communities associate the subject matter of art with the identity of an artist?

Materials

- 1 lb of clay per student
- Glaze (Mayco Elements Stormy Blue, Oyster Shell, Sahara Sand, Yadro Print, or others)
- Clay canvas mat
- Clay tools
- Wood dowels, skewers, rounds
- Black acrylic paint

Key Vocabulary

- Form
- Pinch Method
- Sculpture
- Glaze
- Kiln



Albert Zahn, untitled, c. 1924–c. 1934; wood, paint, and metal; 42 x 36 x 13 1/2 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.