

Pre- & Post-Visit Activities
Ben George: *Outside Looking In*
October 3, 2014-January 18th, 2015

Your museum visit and pre- and post-visit activities support learning by addressing National Content Standards for the Visual Arts, Wyoming Education Standards and NCSD Essential Curriculum.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and process to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

Content Standard #2 Using knowledge of structures and functions: students learn the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas.

Content Standard #3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Content Standard #4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Wyoming Education Standards:

Content Standard:

Fine Arts

1. Creative Expression through Production

All Benchmarks, K-8

2. Aesthetic Perception

All Benchmarks, K-8

3. Historical & Cultural Context

Benchmark 1, K-8

Social Studies

5. People, Places & Environments

Benchmark 4, Grades 3 & 4

Benchmark 3, Grades 5 & 6

Language Arts

3. Speaking and Listening

All Benchmarks, K-8

NCSD Essential Curriculum:

Essential Curriculum:

Art

Unit 3: Art Etiquette: Students will learn appropriate behavior for viewing art (Grades K-5)

Unit 4: Art exhibit (Grades K-6)

Unit 2: Modern Art History. Students express personal preferences about the artwork. Students describe the artwork. (Grades K-5)

Unit 1: Introduction to types of Lines, Geometric Shapes (Grades K-2)

Unit 1: Curved, Straight, Angled Lines and Texture (Grades K-2)

Unit 1: Intermediate Colors (Grade 4)

Unit 1: Visual Form (Grade 4)

Unit 1: Complimentary, Analogous and Monochromatic Colors (Grade 5)

Language Arts

Unit 1-4: Speaking and Listening (Grades K-6)

Unit 1: Speaking and listening to be a productive learner (Grades 7-8)

Unit 4, 7, 11: Vocabulary Acquisition (Grades 6-8)

Social Studies

Unit 2: Culture and Cultural Diversity (Grade 3)

2. Students compare and contrast their own cultural background to the cultural background of others in the community.

Unit 1: Physical, Political, and Human Geography of the Western Hemisphere (Grade 6)

Unit 2 - Cultural, Political, and Economic Geography (Grade 7)

2. Students will identify similarities and differences of culture, with regard to language, religion, customs and the impact of cultural diffusion.

Grade 6th, 7th and 8th – no art units are available at this time

Pre-Visit Activities

Before visiting the NIC, we recommend that you and your students explore and discuss some of the concepts and ideas listed below:

1. Introduce the concepts of folk art and outsider art.

Unconventional art by Ben George has been described as contemporary folk art and/or outsider art. While the distinction exists between these art styles, the terms are often used interchangeably.

The term folk art term applies to the visual arts, music, drama, dance or literature originating from the common people of a country. Folk art is not made for museums and in contrast to fine art, it is often created for utilitarian/practical and decorative purposes rather than only aesthetic enjoyment. Folk art is characterized by a naive style in which traditional rules of proportion and perspective are omitted. Folk artists are also known for their inventive use of traditional and unconventional materials in the creation of their art, from textiles and clay to natural and found objects such as bones, branches, and buttons.

The term outsider art was coined by art critic Roger Cardinal in 1972 as an English synonym for art brut (French: [aʁ bʁyt], "raw art" or "rough art"), a label created by French artist Jean Dubuffet to describe art created outside the boundaries of official culture. Originally the term outsider art was applied to art produced by untrained eccentric artists who were typically unconnected to the conventional art world—not by choice but by circumstance—often undereducated, alien to the prevailing dominant culture, and sometimes diagnosed as mentally ill. By the 1980s, however, the term had expanded to define a much greater range of “marginal” arts and is used alongside “modern primitive art,” “self-taught art,” and “contemporary folk art.”

For more information refer to Appendix 1.

2. Inform students about the artist.

Ben George was born in Bulgaria on October 18, 1895. He was one of five children born to a family of farmers. In 1912 Ben and a few of his relatives came to America for the prospects of earning money. At first, George took part in building of railroad. In 1914 he moved to Colorado and started learning mining from his uncle. Gradually, George moved to Wyoming, where he worked in the mining industry. At the age of 74, George decided to retire and dedicate all of his time to the thing he loved the most-- woodcarving. The artist had produced a wide range of carvings including animals, people and household utensils.

3. Research.

Have students research folk /outsider artists in their own community/state. To find the artist roster visit: <http://wyoarts.state.wy.us/artist-category/folk-arts-2/>

During Your Visit to the NIC

1. Observe.

Observe and discuss one of the sculptures by Ben George. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ◆ How would you describe this sculpture?
- ◆ Is this figure realistic? Why or why not? (Consider traditional rules of proportion, stylized representation, etc.)
- ◆ What are some realistic elements? What are some mythical/imaginary elements?
- ◆ What might this person's occupation be? How can you tell? (if analyzing a carving of a person)
- ◆ What could the personality of this human/animal be like? What makes you say that?
- ◆ How would you describe the texture of this sculpture? How can you tell without feeling it?
- ◆ What materials do you think it is made of? (The sculptures are made from a variety of wood. Like many folk artists, Ben George often used the materials that he had on hand or could find nearby. Many of his sculptures are carved from chunks of wood that he could gather around his community.)
- ◆ How do you think the artist made this sculpture? (Ben George made his sculptures by carving them out of wood.)

2. Observe. Inquire. Investigate.

Revisit the concepts of folk art and outsider art. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ◆ What is folk art? Who are folks?
- ◆ What is outsider art? Who are outsider artists?
- ◆ When you hear the term folk art, what kind of art do you expect to see?
- ◆ When you hear the term outsider art, what kind of art do you expect to see?
- ◆ Do you think the art in this gallery belongs to the folk art or the outsider art category?
- ◆ How is folk/outsider art different or similar to other art styles that we have studied?

Have students validate their interpretations and ideas with evidence from the work(s) of art.

3. Write.

Have students write a short story about one of Ben George's sculptures. Students may choose to describe the animal's or person's character, narrate their life story or come up with the history behind the making of the sculpture.

4. Create.

Have students design and sketch a figurine in the style of the Ben George.

Post-Visit Activities

1. Research.

Have students interact with a folk artist who lives in your community/state or who represents a certain tradition. Have students interview a local folk artist.

2. Compare and Contrast.

Have students compare and contrast George's sculptures with sculptures by another folk/outsider artist, for example Possum Trot's figurines. For images and information refer to Appendix 3.

3. Create.

a) Have younger students create a simple sculpture of a person they know using model magic or clay. Have secondary students carve the figurine from soap block or balsa foam. Remind students that the clothing, pose and accessories are important elements that communicate information about the person.

b) Have students create an object that is inspired by their everyday lives, their family traditions and their heritage. Encourage them to be inventive in their choice of materials. Have students discuss their design and materials choices as well as the purpose of the created object.

4. Make connections.

a) Have students implement community-based investigation focused on folk traditions of the past and present. Have students practice using the tools of social scientists: conducting interviews, looking at artifacts, observing people and places, documenting information and taking photos for their records.

b) Select a topic from a social studies or science curriculum (Native American dwellings, indigenous civilizations of Latin America, Underground Railroad, insects, etc.). Have students come up with ideas and sketch designs the way a folk/outsider artist might represent the chosen themes.

Appendix 1.

FOLK ART is the art of the everyday. Folk artists use aspects from the environment and everyday life in their art, which almost anyone can relate to.

FOLK ART is often created for decorative, memorial, or utilitarian goals.

FOLK ARTISTS are traditionally self-taught or learn skills and techniques through apprenticeships in informal community settings, though they may also be formally educated.

FOLK ARTISTS use a range of utilitarian and decorative media including cloth, wood, paper, clay, metal and more. If traditional materials are inaccessible, new materials are often substituted, resulting in contemporary expressions of traditional folk art forms.

FOLK ART is rooted in traditions that come from community and cultural groups- tribal, religious, occupational, geographical, age- or gender-based. Folk art is made by individuals whose creative skills express their community's cultural identity, rather than an individual artistic identity.

FOLK ART helps humans to make connections between people, objects and ideas and understand the world around us.

OUTSIDER ART is art from outside the art world. It's raw quality untouched by academic rules or current trends.

OUTSIDER ART is not made for practical/utilitarian purposes. Outsider artists are compelled to make things to validate their own comprehension of the world and their existence.

OUTSIDER ARTISTS are self-taught and create art without regard to the mainstream art world's recognition and marketplace.

OUTSIDER ART is often defined by freedom from formal conventions, its visionary quality, eccentric use of materials and raw subject matter. While some combinations of these qualities are not exclusive to outsider art, they are to some extent typical of it.

Appendix 2.



Ben George, *Untitled*, wood, c. 1960-1980



Ben George, *Untitled*, wood, c. 1960-1980

Appendix 3.

For information about Possum Trot visit the website:

<http://folkartmuseum.org/?t=images&id=3524>



Possum Trot Doll, Cowgirl,
painted wood and fabric, ca. 1954-1969



Possum Trot Dolls, painted wood and fabric c. 1953

