

# ARTS AS CIVIC COMMONS

Amplifying the  
Power of Art  
to Spark Civic Inquiry

**A Handbook for Educators**

Shari Tishman, Carrie James, Flossie Chua  
David Perkins, Emily Piper-Vallillo, Alexa Beil

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 Video Resource Available       Picture of Practice Available

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- I Grow Chicago, IL, USA
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- Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, MA, USA
- Newton South High School, MA, USA
- Northside Christian College
- Rhode Island School of Design, RI, USA
- SPACE Program, MCA Chicago, IL, USA
- St Catherine’s School
- The Warehouse Project & Gallery, IL, USA
- Woodleigh School, VIC, Australia
- UChicago Arts + Public Life Design Apprenticeship Program, IL, USA
- URBANO, MA, USA
- Yollocalli Art Reach, IL, USA

# THE ARTS AS CIVIC COMMONS PROJECT

## OUR TEAM AND VALUES

The Arts as Civic Commons (ArtC) project aspires to create resources and tools for learners to explore themes of civic relevance in their communities and the wider world through arts engagement. ArtC is a collaboration between researchers at Project Zero (PZ), Harvard Graduate School of Education in the United States and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) in Australia.

PZ and ISV share a commitment to principles/values of diversity, autonomy, and inclusion. We believe that intentionally working towards these values – on our project as well as inside and outside of classrooms and other learning environments – is important and urgent.

### Who we are | The ArtC team

Our Project Zero-based team of researchers operates out of an elite university in the United States, which grants us privileges including potential reach to a broad audience and a responsibility to approach our work with care. ISV is a not-for-profit organization serving a diverse network of schools in Victoria, Australia. ISV member schools are “diverse in the communities they serve, the approach they take to education, the needs of their students, and their size.” Learn more about ISV here: <https://is.vic.edu.au/about-us/>. Learn more about PZ here: <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/>. Learn more about the individuals who worked on the ArtC team here. [link]

Key audiences for our work include educators in primary and secondary schools, in museums and other arts organizations, in Australia, the U.S., and around the world.

We write this document at a particular historical and cultural moment. This moment is characterized by a global pandemic that has dramatically shifted our ways of working and being together in communities. The U.S., for example, is marked by deep political polarization, challenges to our democratic institutions, and, for many, a strong sense of urgency to attend to racial injustices and inequities. In Australia, civic life is at times animated by broad conversations about national identity, including recognition of First Nations people, our place in the world, and challenges created by climate change.

We recognize that the civic themes of greatest importance to us, speaking from a particular place and a particular moment in time, may not resonate with others in different cultural contexts and in the future. We have designed the ArtC materials so that they can be adapted for different contexts, learners, themes, and historical moments.

### How we work | Our process

In carrying out our work, we have been alert to values of diversity, autonomy, and inclusion in various ways. Our research and development process has involved review and iterative revisions of our materials – including our project framework, thinking routines/arcs, and facilitation guides – based on feedback from pilot testing by educator partners in Australia and the U.S. Despite these efforts, we’ve probably made mistakes for which we apologise.

# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In classrooms and studios all over the world—in museum galleries and public parks, at community events and in conversations among friends—people use art to explore and express civic ideas. Sometimes this happens when people engage with artworks that are explicitly designed to evoke civic themes, such as a public sculpture that celebrates the power of community or a painting that captures the cruelty of political oppression. Sometimes it happens when artworks inspire us to reflect on our own civic lives, even if such reflection may not have been the main intent of the work, for example the way a landscape painting might provoke us to think about our responsibility for climate change, or a family portrait might invite us to reflect on gender roles. Whatever the spark, the materials developed by the Arts as Civic Commons project—familiarily called ArtC—aim to amplify the power of arts experiences to provoke inquiry into the forces that shape civic life. These forces include the values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape how we live together—and how we aspire to live together—at every level of community life, from the local to the global.

This ArtC Handbook offers a flexible set of teaching materials that can be used in a variety of settings and with learners from late primary/middle school through adults. The heart of the handbook is a collection of short- to medium-length activities. Many of them can be done in 20-30 minutes; several of them can be stretched out over several meetings or class periods. Most of the activities involve looking at and discussing an artwork. They are designed with flexibility in mind: they can be used in person or online, and they are suitable for use in school, museums, galleries, or anywhere else people of any age gather to look at or make art. The shorter activities are called thinking routines; the longer ones are called thinking arcs. In addition to these two types of activities the handbook also includes a range of supporting materials, such as links to short instructional videos, guidelines for facilitating the activities, and real-life examples of the activities being used by young people and adults. At the end of this Introduction we offer a fuller overview of the contents of the handbook, along with some suggestions about how to get started. But first we say a few words about some of the big questions educators often ask about ArtC.

## What does ArtC mean by ‘civic commons’?

The word ‘civic’ often calls to mind the responsibilities of citizenship and suggests an understanding of how government works. Accordingly, civic engagement is taken to refer to activities that occur in these realms, like voting, community service, and political activism. These are all important areas of civic activity, but civic engagement can also include less outwardly visible actions that are expressed through reflection, inquiry, and dialogue. So, for example, civic engagement can include activities such as reflecting on one’s role in a community, investigating belief systems that shape how we see and treat other people, dialoguing with others to explore diverse civic experiences and points of view, considering issues of justice and fairness, and interrogating the structures and systems that shape how we interact with other people and how we live within the natural world. Sometimes these inquiries lead to overt civic action, sometimes they lead to thoughtful dialogue with others and shifts in self- understanding. ArtC believes that all of these things count as civic engagement and that art can be a common ground for people to come together to participate in them. Artists themselves occupy this ground when they create art that expresses civic themes, provokes civic inquiry or inspires civic action. Viewing art is also part of this common ground when arts experiences invite us to exchange

diverse perspectives and prompt us to investigate, discuss, challenge and reimagine the forces that shape our civic lives. The phrase ‘Arts as Civic Commons’ refers to this broad and fertile swath of common ground.

### **Are there certain dimensions of civic life that ArtC focuses on specifically?**

As the foregoing section suggests, the civic common ground created by arts experiences is potentially vast. To make the territory more navigable, ArtC uses a framework that focuses on three dimensions of civic life: Identities, systems, and visions. Identities has to do with the way we perceive ourselves and the way the world perceives us, and how these two sources of perception affect our civic behavior. Systems has to do with the obvious and not-so-obvious procedures, structures and policies that shape the way we interact with other people and communities. Visions has to do with imagining how civic life could be different, and in particular, how it could be better—more just, more beautiful, more inclusive. Part One of this handbook describes these three civic dimensions in more detail.

### **Are there certain kinds of art that ArtC focuses on specifically?**

The ArtC project began with a focus on contemporary visual art, recognizing that the term ‘visual’ is a stretch because many artists today are working in multiple media and across disciplines. We chose a focus on the contemporary for a few reasons. One is that it reflects the times in which young people currently live. In other words, contemporary art lives in the ‘now,’ just as students do. Also, many contemporary artists are actively interested in the intersect between art and civic engagement. Specifically—and reflecting the three dimensions of the ArtC framework just mentioned—many works of contemporary art explore artists’ own social identities, the systems that affect their communities, and their visions for the future. In doing so, these artworks also encourage us to examine these civic dimensions in our own lives. While the examples in this handbook are mainly works of contemporary visual art, we wholeheartedly believe that ArtC materials can be used with many different kinds of art—including different art forms and art from different time periods.

### **An overview of the Handbook**

The Handbook consists of four parts. Part One describes the ArtC framework. It includes a short essay on each of the three framework elements—identities, systems, and visions—as well as a link to a brief animated video about the framework.



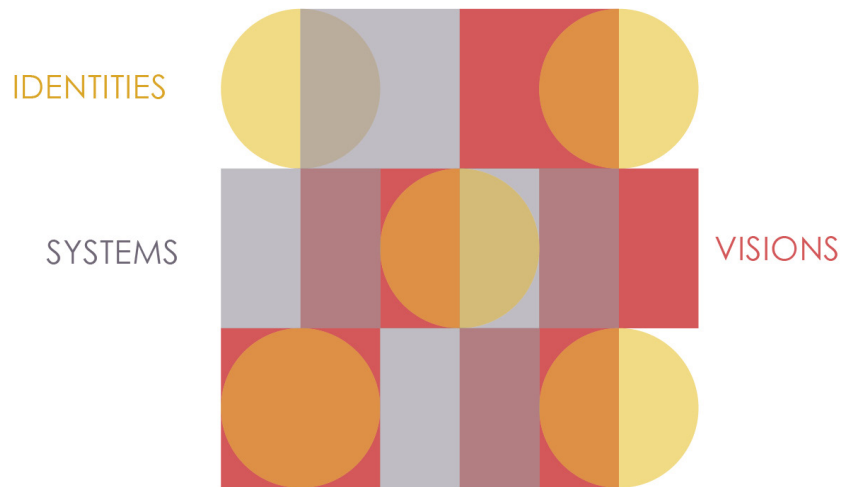
Part Two is the lengthiest section of the handbook and it's where most of the ArtC activities and their related resources can be found. There are nine activities in all. Five of them are called thinking routines. These generally have 3-4 steps and can be done in 20-50 minutes. Three of them are called thinking arcs. These are similar to thinking routines, with the difference that they take a little longer and generally have one or two extra steps. All of the thinking routines and thinking arcs have facilitator guidelines that offer suggestions for how to use them. Several of the activities also have pictures of practice—real-life stories of educators using the routine or arc in various settings. Several also include short videos that explain how the routine or arc works. The last activity is really a set of short artmaking activities that can be done independently or in connection with the other ArtC activities. These mini-activities focus on thinking through civic ideas with one's hands.

Part Three offers additional resources. Most ArtC activities involve looking closely at a work of art. Many also involve some sort of dialogue among participants. Some activities also have an artmaking step. Accordingly, three of the resources in Part three correspond to these areas. Viewing Moves offers a variety of techniques for close looking. Dialogue Moves suggests techniques for supporting thoughtful, respectful dialogue. Making Moves suggests materials and techniques that invite learners to think with their hands. These three resources can augment ArtC activities, and the facilitator guidelines for the various activities point out places where, if desired. But they can also be used independently of ArtC to encourage close looking, thoughtful dialogue, or thinking-through-making in any learning context. A fourth resource in this section is Suggested Digital Tools, which includes ideas and techniques for doing ArtC activities online—synchronously as well as asynchronously.

Finally, Part Four, Art Resources, offers a small set of art images that can be used with ArtC activities. A few of these images are also featured in some of the pictures of practice and videos associated with the activities. But educators are strongly encouraged to use artworks of their own choice, and this section also includes some suggestions for finding artworks on your own.

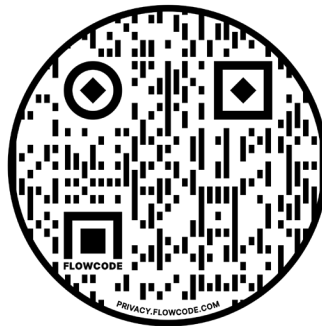
## Getting started

The ArtC materials have been designed to be used flexibly; educators can pick and choose the activities they are interested in, and there's no prescribed way to work through the materials. That said, there are a couple of natural paths. One is to watch the ArtC Framework video, read the essays in Part One in order to familiarize yourself with some of ArtC's core ideas, and then use the Civic in 3D thinking arc to introduce the three dimensions of the ArtC framework to students. Another way to begin is simply to select an activity and dive in. Several educators have successfully started with one of the shorter thinking routines, such as See Think Me We, Lenses for Dialogue, or Values, Identities, Actions. Whatever way you choose to begin, we recommend browsing the Facilitator Guidelines associated with an activity before you start teaching it.



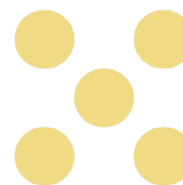
# PART 1: THE ARTC FRAMEWORK

To see a video describing the ArtC Framework,  
click this link or use the following QR code.



# Identities:

## Art as a dynamic space for exploring identity and its relationship to civic life



Both looking at and making art offer powerful opportunities to bring different features of identity to light, including their civic relevance.

### Identity, defined

Let's start with what we mean by identity. Identity refers to the personal qualities or characteristics that make us who we are. In a sense, it's more helpful to use the plural term, identities, which reflects the reality that one person is many things at once. An individual's identities are often connected to 'demographic' characteristics, such as age, sex and gender, race, ethnicity, heritage, and sexual orientation. Identities can also be based on religion, political beliefs, interests, hobbies, and passions. Thus, people may refer to themselves as musicians, gamers, TikTokers, or poets in addition to male, female, or non-binary, middle-aged or twenty-something, Latinx or Indigenous Australian. As some of these examples show, identities can be visible or invisible to others.

The meaning and importance of certain identities is very personal or individual. Also, how a certain identity - like being female - is experienced is affected by other identities. For example, despite having a similar gender identity, a white woman and a black woman often have distinct experiences and perspectives because their racial identities shape their lives as women. This idea is captured by the term, "intersectionality." Coined by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, this means that a person's different identities intersect in very particular ways that affect how they see themselves, how other people see them, and how they experience the world. (For more information and teaching tools for exploring intersectionality, see the Additional Resources provided below).

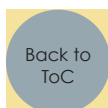
### Identity as a civic topic

Identities are both personally meaningful and shaped by larger social forces; this makes them a rich topic for civic thinking and action and powerful lenses through which to explore civic topics. Social scientists recognize that identities are socially constructed - meaning, our ideas about what it means to be male or Black or gay or young or old are created by people in social contexts. Yet these ideas are powerful social forces that shape people's lives. How people are treated, their access to opportunities, and their experiences of advantage or disadvantage and justice or injustice are powerfully shaped by socially constructed ideas about gender, race, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation, among other identity characteristics. Inequities related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities have unfortunately been a persistent feature of our world and thus a salient theme of civic life and action. Shared identity-based experiences fuel bonding, social support, and collective identities, but may also fuel "us" versus "them" inter-group hostilities.

### Art as a lens for exploring civic features of identity

Artworks express themes that are meaningful to the artist and reflect who they are - their identities, backgrounds, beliefs, and values. In these ways, art is a rich medium for exploring civic identities. Art can stoke the civic imagination by proposing visions of a more just, equitable world for people of all identities. Art can also illuminate hidden dynamics that contribute to identity-based inequities. Looking at and making art offer different ways to explore these themes.

### Close, intentional looking at artworks can invite civic insights about identity



Looking at works of art with identities in mind can reveal who is present or absent and how people with different identities are positioned or framed in the work. Further, when we look at art, our own identities inform what we notice, what ideas or stories we read into the work, and how the work is meaningful and resonates on an emotional level.

Art can also provoke us to think in new or different ways about our own and others peoples' identities. For example, [Nick Cave's Soundsuits \(2004\)](#) are vibrant, colorful costumes that hide the racial and gender identities of the suit wearers and invite new visions of identity. Works such as [Robert Mapplethorpe, Lady, Lisa Lyon \(1983\)](#) and [Hoda Afshar, Under Western Eyes \(2013-14\)](#) challenge assumptions and stereotypes that exist about various identities.

Art looking experiences can be facilitated in ways that intentionally bring these themes to the fore for learners.

Guiding prompts and questions include:

- Who is visible? How are they represented (positively, negatively, otherwise)? Why might they be represented in that way? Who is missing? How are patterns of visibility and invisibility connected with power dynamics, past and present? (See: Values, Identities, Actions)
- Choose one or more of your identities and look at the art work through that lens. How does the identity you chose influence what you notice? How does it influence what you think the work might be saying? (See: Lenses for Dialogue; See, Think, Me, We; 3D Civic)

### **Art making is a generative space for exploring and expressing civic dimensions of identity**

Art making experiences offer powerful opportunities to investigate identity-related themes.

Specifically, art making can be a vehicle for...

- Exploring and expressing an artist's own identities and related experiences in the world.
- Revealing the complexity and multiplicity of identity by showing that we all have multiple, interacting identities that shape how we see the world and how the world sees and treats us.
- Making the invisible visible by representing identities that have been ignored, erased, or misrepresented in dominant narratives and existing artworks
- Proposing visions of how the world might look differently if identity-linked inequities did not exist

Guiding prompts and questions that can support art making related to such themes:

- Make something that shows the complex, multifaceted nature of your identity. (See: Civic Making Activities: Exploring Identities)
- Make something that represents how your identities shape the way you move about and through the world
- Make something that highlights identities connected to you/your life that have been hidden, ignored, devalued, or misunderstood (See: Civic Making Activities: Invisible/Visible)
- Make something that speaks to how shared identities can be sources of strength or support

### **Resources**

Bell, M.K. (2016). Teaching at the Intersections. Teaching Tolerance Magazine, 53.

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/teaching-at-the-intersections>

Hankivsky, O. (2014). Intersectionality 101. The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, Simon Fraser University. [http://vawforum-cwr.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/intersectionality\\_101.pdf](http://vawforum-cwr.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/intersectionality_101.pdf)

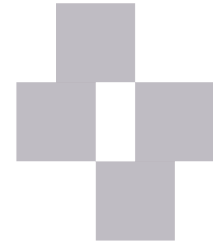
Inclusive Campus Collaborative. Social Identity Wheel (Classroom activity and resources). University of Michigan. <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/sample-activities/social-identity-wheel/>

Museum of Modern Art. (2015). How artists explore identity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NICodKeadp0>

# Systems:

## Art as an invitation to explore systems through a civic lens



### What is a system?

A system is a collection of elements that interact or influence each other to produce certain outcomes or serve certain purposes. The opposite of a system is a random jumble of stuff. Systems are all around us, from systems in the natural world (the solar system, earth ecosystems) to the transportation systems we use to get around (cars, bikes, buses, people, roads), to institutional systems that provide public services (school systems, health care systems, legal systems) to the systems involved in our daily routines (food preparation, household chores). The elements of a system can be physical, or non-physical, or both. For example, a transportation system has physical elements, such as roads and buses and street signs. But it also has non-physical elements, like laws that govern how vehicles are operated, and beliefs about who should have access to public transportation. Sometimes systems are very easy to see on the surface, like food preparation or transportation. But sometimes systems are less easily visible, as with some systems of injustice or unconscious bias or even every day social norms.

### What are systems through a civic lens?

Exploring systems through a civic lens means considering how systems shape human experience in the public sphere. So, for example, looking at a transportation system through a civic lens might involve asking questions like: What are the “rules of the road” where we live and how do they influence how we interact with each other? Who has access to what kind of transportation, and how does the affordability of transportation affect where people work and socialize? How do transportation systems impact the environment?

### Art and civic systems

Many contemporary artists are interested in drawing our attention to civic systems—often in a critical spirit, sometimes in a celebratory spirit, and sometimes both. For example, the artist JR is known for mounting large scale portraits of everyday people in public places. In one of his projects, called *Women Are Heroes*, he pasted mural-size portraits of local women on the sides of buildings, trains, and bridges. The women he photographed live in conflict zones around the world. He explains that his intention was to underline the pivotal role women play in their communities (community systems), and also to draw attention to the political and cultural systems that make women the primary victims of war and conflict.

For another example, consider *Archisuits*, a set of jogging suits that allows wearers to fit into, or onto, spaces in urban architecture designed to keep them away. The suits invite us to consider urban architecture as a kind of system that creates opportunities and obstacles for human bodies. The system has physical parts—buildings, sidewalks, roads, benches. And people are part of the system—pedestrians, office workers, people with and without shelters. Also, though more hidden, beliefs and laws are part of the systems—beliefs about what architecture should do and who should have access to its spaces, and laws about how that access should be controlled. *Archisuits* invites us to see and critique urban architecture through a systems lens; it also invites us to consider how it might be creatively disrupted.

Some artworks, like *Women are Heroes*, and *Archisuits*, seem to be explicitly about civic systems. But a systems perspective on works of art can be revealing even if such a perspective wasn't explicitly intended by the artist. For example, a traditional Western-style painting of a rural village may show quilt-like squares of individual farmland. The image may provoke us to critically consider legal systems of individual land ownership—perhaps in contrast to a land stewardship model—even if the artist didn't intend to spark this line of thought.

Viewing and making art can help us explore a wide variety of civic systems. For just a short list, art can encourage us to explore:

- Belief and value systems
- Identity systems (systems we use to create and assign identity)
- Power systems (systems that give people—and other living creatures—different levels of access to opportunities, goods, rights, and/or privileges, and different levels of influence over their own and others' lives.)
- Climate systems, ecosystems
- Political and governance systems
- Wayfinding and placemaking systems (including mapping systems and geographical representation systems)
- Land ownership systems
- consumer systems, systems of stuff
- Healthcare systems
- Education systems
- Systems of cultural access, cultural privilege, cultural production
- Systems of racism and anti-racism
- Systems of gender identity and conformity
- Systems of oppression, systems of privilege

Here are some questions that can be useful in bringing forward the systems dimension of artworks.

- What social conditions does the work invite us to think about? (Social conditions have to do with the role or state of people in a society or community.) What are the systems that create those conditions? What are their parts and how do they work together?
- Does the work invite us to think about social change? Does it make us want social change, and, if so, what kind? How would systems need to be altered in order to bring about that change?
- How might the work provoke us to think about systems of power (and powerlessness)?
- How might the work provoke us to think about systems of care (and non-care)?
- How might the work provoke us to think about environmental systems?
- How might the work provoke us to think about systems of justice and injustice?
- How might the work invite us to think about political systems?
- What roles do people's beliefs and assumptions play in the systems the work makes us think about?

## Resources

Related ArtC materials:

- Art to systems and Back Thinking Arc
- Art to Systems and Back Again: A Picture of Practice (Adult)
- Art to Systems and Back Again: moCa Cleveland

Related Project Zero frameworks:

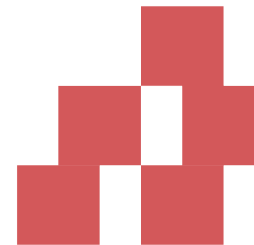
- Agency by Design, especially: Parts, Purposes, Complexities
- JusticexDesign, especially: People, Systems, Power, Participation and Critical Sensitivity to Design Questions

Other resources

- Linda Booth Sweeney ( educator and writer with a focus on systems)
- Linda Booth Sweeney's Systems Resource Room (extensive resources for learning and teaching about systems)

# Visions:

## Art as an invitation to explore & construct visiosn through a civic lens



Looking at and making art can help us explore how we live together and construct visions of how we aspire to live together. Often when systems are unjust or unsatisfactory, they become a powerful motivation for us to envision how our shared public, cultural or community life could be different in the future. These civic visions can be hopeful landscapes or more worrying scenarios. Whichever way they lean, civic visions invite us to see beyond the current condition and think about how else things could be.

### Exploring Civic Visions

Contemporary art can offer hopeful visions about civic issues that look towards a more positive future, or dystopian scenarios of tomorrow that challenge our comfortable assumptions about the world we live in. When we spend time exploring these artworks, we are often moved to uncover our biases and examine our assumptions: What do we see? What do we not see? What does that particular artwork focus on and suggest about how we live together and how we aspire to live together? What makes us see that and say that?

Chinese artist Cao Fei's multi-part video *Utopia* (<https://vimeo.com/412341500> accessed October 27, 2020) challenges how we think about assembly-line workers who spend their days mechanically operating machines in silence by offering us a glimpse into their dreams and hopes for the future. *Utopia* explored the lives of factory workers in the Pearl River Delta in China, where globalization offered good work opportunities in the form of mechanical tasks on assembly lines. Over the course of six months, Cao Fei filmed the workers in the factory and interviewed them about their motivations for working in the factory and their dreams for the future. A group of workers then used dance and music to express their dreams in the factory on a normal work day, surrounded by other workers busy on their machines. The video juxtaposes the dreamlike, lyrical sequences of individuals dancing to music against the anonymity and mechanized nature of factory work, suggesting the possibility of individuals reclaiming personal meaning in their lives in spite of the mechanical work they do and the cramped work spaces they inhabit.

*Utopia* invites us to connect with the lived experiences of people who are both similar and different from us. As the video unfolds, we begin to see how we are all part of a much bigger story of globalization and how there are always missing or untold parts in the bigger story that we should pay attention to. Cao Fei's artwork envisions the workers as much more than parts of an assembly-line, while at the same time alerting us to the reality of economic progress at the cost of personal value.

### Constructing Civic Visions

Constructing visions of the world and how we live together, not as how they are today, but as how they might be otherwise, is a powerful act. That act of imagination frees us from the current situation so that we can fly higher to see more and to see beyond. Instead of our world being shaped by inevitable circumstances, we can create more positive ways of living and being in the future. In constructing civic visions, we feel empowered to ask: What do we want to see more of? Less of? What kind of a world do we want and why?

Civic visioning helps us visualize new possibilities and different ways of representing social realities, so that we build new narratives that need telling and/or retelling. If we cannot imagine alternative futures, we lose the motivation to notice, to anticipate, to hope, to strive, and to thrive.

However, visioning is not always easy or straightforward. It can be hard to imagine a different world, especially when things seem overwhelming or hopeless, and alternatives feel out of reach. Take Cao Fei's *Utopia*, for instance. In a highly-regimented factory that prizes huge economic value, it can be hard to imagine the assembly lines as otherwise. But that is when dreaming of futures that seem impossible becomes especially important; *Utopia* interrupts the production chain with creative expressions of dreams and hopes, and proposes a rethinking of what a factory could look and be like. Such civic visioning helps us envision what we want to become and who we want to be. When civic visioning becomes a natural way to us, we dare to imagine positive social change and a better world.

### **Supporting Civic Visions**

Civic visioning can be daunting because it is not easy to envision something outside of the reality we live in. After all, civic visioning requires that we see what's not yet there, as well as be willing to give up some things that feel familiar.

Difficult as it may be, civic visioning is not impossible! To begin, have a go at two moves that we have found useful:

#### *1. Dialogue to explore.*

Having a dialogue allows us to explore and flesh out hopes for the future that seem impossible or would usually be swept aside as impractical. When we engage in dialogue with others, we exchange ideas and perspectives, and are reminded that our perspectives are not the only ones that matter (See: Lenses for Dialogue thinking routine; Exploring Civic POVs arc; Connect, POVs and Find New POVs in Civic Making Activities). When we look closely at art with others, we can find powerful provocations for our visions that feel important and meaningful to our lives, our communities, and the world (See: Challenge and Push Beyond in Civic Making Activities). When we make art to express our civic vision, we can use dialogue to spark ideas for what we make, to deepen our thinking about what we make, and to share and reflect on our thinking and the making process (See: Name and Reframe in Civic Making Activities).

#### *2. Make to express.*

Often, trying to use words to describe our vision of an alternative future can be challenging. Our vision can feel so powerful or emotional that it's difficult to put into words. Or the right words to capture the full complexity of our vision simply escape us. Or words can feel too defining and too rigid when we are imagining something divergent and intangible.

Making art not only allows us to express our ideas in a different way but also approach our thinking in a more imaginative and abstract way. When we make art to express our thinking, we do not worry about how good or beautiful the product is. Instead, we focus on bringing our abstract ideas into some concrete form. For instance, we may create a sketch for an installation in our schoolyard to express what we imagine an inclusive space will look like. Or we may put up temporary name plates on classroom doors that read "joy in progress" to reframe what a classroom can be. Often, the art thus produced is more a prototype or preliminary symbol or representation of an idea or process. It is not a finished product.

For ideas on making art to express civic visions, take a look at the Making the Future thinking routine and What Comes Next and Foreground/Background in Civic Making Activities.



## Sources

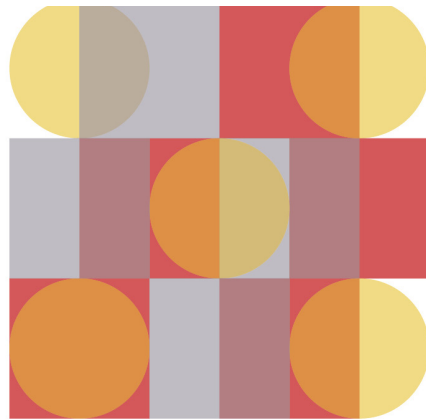
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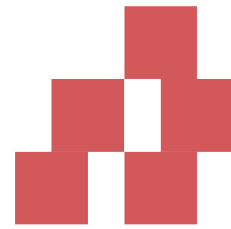
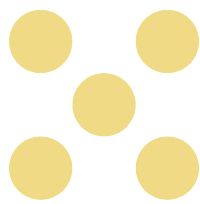
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PART 2:  
**Thinking Routines,  
Thinking Arcs, and  
Related Resources**



# CIVICS IN 3D

An arc for exploring 3 dimensions  
of civic life through art

# CIVICS IN 3D

An arc for exploring 3 dimensions of civic life through art



This thinking arc offers a tour through the Arts as Civic Commons (ArtC) framework. (If possible, watch the ArtC Framework video before using the arc.)

**LOOK** Look closely at the work of art. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.

**THINK** What thoughts do you have about the work?

Now let's think about the work through a civic lens by using the ArtC framework. The framework focuses on three dimensions of civic life that we can explore through art: Identities, systems, and visions. The following steps introduce each of these dimensions in turn.



## IDENTITIES

How might this work connect to the identities of individuals or groups? How might our own identities connect with, or not connect with, the work?

- Identity has to do with the personal qualities or characteristics that make us who we are. We all have multiple interacting identities. Our sense of identity can come from within ourselves—the characteristics we think define us; and it can come from outside ourselves—the characteristics other people think define us. Our identities also shape how we perceive other people and groups. Identity characteristics are often connected to ‘demographic’ characteristics, such as age, sex and gender, race, ethnicity, heritage, religion, and sexual orientation. Identities can also be based on interests, hobbies, and passions. Thus, people may refer to themselves as musicians, gamers, or poets in addition to male or female, middle aged or twenty-something, and Latinx, Asian, Black, or Native/Indigenous Australian. As some of these examples show, identities can be visible or invisible to others.



What civically related systems might this work connect to?

- A **system** is a collection of elements that interact or influence each other to produce certain outcomes or serve certain purposes. Some systems are easily visible, like a public transportation system or a system of trash recycling. Other systems can have parts that are less obviously visible, like systems of justice and injustice, or systems of community support or community neglect.
- **Civically related systems** are systems that affect people's lives as members of a community. These systems can include physical parts, for example in the way a healthcare system might include nurses and hospitals and medicines. They can also include less tangible parts, such as access to health insurance, laws and policies that determine who does and does not get the benefits of certain systems.



What civic visions might this work encourage you to imagine? What does it make you want to see in the future?

- Visions are imagined scenarios of how things could be different.
- Civic visions focus on public or community life. They are imagined scenarios of how we could interact with one another differently, in any kind of group—large or small; local or global. Often when systems are unjust or unsatisfactory, they become a powerful motivation for us to envision how our shared public or community life could be different in the future. Civic visions can be hopeful landscapes or more worrying scenarios. Whichever way they lean, civic visions invite us to see beyond the current condition and think about how else things could be.

## REFLECT

What new thoughts do you have about the artwork?  
What new thoughts do you have about the idea of civic life?

Do you have any new observations or questions?

# Facilitator Notes

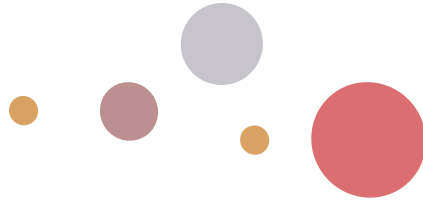
## CIVICS IN 3D

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- If possible, watch the ArtC Framework video before using the arc. You may also want to read the three ArtC mini-essays on the three dimensions of the framework
- Read through the entire thinking arc and envision how you will structure the experience for students. The thinking arc can take a while to teach—perhaps an hour or more, depending on how deeply you dive into each step—so consider breaking the experience into two or more class sessions.
- Choose an artwork that might connect to one or more civic themes - themes related to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. Civic themes may include issues such as climate and environmental change, migration, economic and other inequalities, the effects of colonialism, gender and sexuality issues, race/racism, or any theme that addresses values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape every level of community life, from the local to the global. The civic dimension of the artwork can be explicit, or implicit. Don't worry too much about finding the 'perfect' work; you'll discover that a wide range of works can work. The depth of student discussion at each step is as important as the work itself.
- If possible, mentally run through the thinking arc yourself first before using it with students. Imagine how you would respond to each of the questions. Even if you just do this quickly, it will give you a feel for the demands of the experience, and you might find that your own responses can be a useful model for students. For instance, at the 'Identities' step, you might help students understand what to do by sharing how you respond to the question—that is, by mentioning an identity you think the work is about or is addressing, along with an aspect of your own identity that feels connected.

### FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

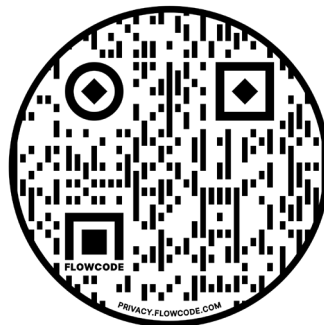
- If possible, begin by showing the ArtC framework video to your students, then explain that the Civic in 3D thinking arc will bring the ideas in the video to life.
- Give students plenty of time to make careful observations of the work, and to discuss their thoughts about it. You might decide that viewing the video and doing the LOOK and THINK steps is enough for one class session. If the artwork you chose invites prolonged close looking, feel free to add structure to the LOOK step by using one or more of the close looking strategies in the Viewing Moves resource.
- Students' responses to some of the questions in the arc might be personal. This is particularly true of the IDENTITIES step, which asks students to consider their own identities. If you typically use explicit classroom norms for safe and respectful discussion, this is a good time to remind students of the norms. If using norms isn't part of your practice, take other appropriate steps to make sure students feel comfortable.
- Be prepared to give examples to students at each step. (Having done this thinking arc yourself beforehand will help.) Feel free to have students do the steps in different configurations: For example, you might do the SEE and THINK steps as a whole class, then break into small groups to do the IDENTITIES step, then reconvene as a whole class to do the SYSTEMS and VISIONS steps. If you want to add more structure to the discussions, see the Dialogue Moves resource for ideas.



# SEE THINK ME WE

A routine for connecting to the bigger picture

To see a video of the routine, click this link or use the following QR code.



# SEE THINK ME WE

A routine for connecting to the bigger picture.

## 1. SEE:

Look closely at the work. What do you notice?  
Make lots of observations.

## 2. THINK:

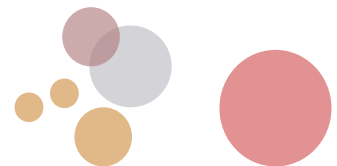
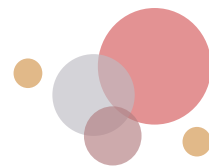
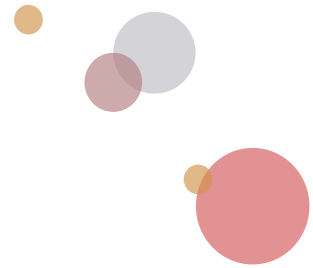
What thoughts do you have about the work?

## 3. ME:

What connections can you make between  
you and the work?

## 4. WE:

How might the work be connected to bigger  
stories—about the world and our place in it?





# Facilitator Notes

## See Think Me We

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Choose an artwork or image. This routine works well with a wide variety of works, so feel free to be experimental or adventurous in your choice. If you typically use classrooms norms for respectful discussion, you may want to refer to them before you begin: The routine invites learners to make personal connections, so it's especially important to establish an atmosphere of trust and care.

### FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

The SEE step encourages close looking. Ask learners to fully describe what they see, and to hold off making interpretations or giving opinions until the THINK step. If you like, deepen the SEE step by using a strategy or two from the Viewing Moves.

The THINK step encourages learners to share thoughts about the work. All thoughts are welcome, but you can give some direction to the step by asking questions such as: What's going on in the work? What might it mean? What makes you say that?

The ME step asks learners to make personal connections, so it's a moment when a safe and trusting atmosphere is especially important. You may want to model this step by sharing your own personal response first. If you're working with a large group, it can be helpful to do this step in pairs or trios. You can also add support to the discussion by using strategies from the Dialogue Moves, such as NAME or STORYTELLING.

By asking for 'bigger stories,' the WE step invites learners to reach for connections beyond themselves. One way to help them do this is to ask them to consider how the personal connections they identified in the ME step might connect to larger themes of human experience. This step can be challenging for students. As with the ME step, it can be helpful for you, the facilitator, to model a response by sharing your own reflections.

# PICTURE OF PRACTICE

## SEE THINK ME WE

Patricial Shiel is the head of the English department at Presbyterian Ladies' College, a K-12 independent school for girls in Melbourne, Australia. In the summer of 2020, she decided to try out ArtC's See-Think-Me-We routine. New to the ArtC materials, she made a plan to use the routine in a class on personal development she teaches for girls ages 15-16. The artwork she chose was American artist Nick Cave's *Soundsuits*. At the time, due to the COVID pandemic, Ms. Shiel was teaching online via Zoom.

Ms. Shiel began the class by showing several images of *Soundsuits*, along with a short video about the artwork. ([Here](#) and [here](#) are some links to Nick Cave's work.) She gave students some quiet time to look, then asked the SEE step: *What do you notice?* Knowing that the girls tended to be quiet with one another in verbal discussion, she invited students to write their responses into the Zoom chat box.

Students' observations flowed. They commented on several visual features of the Soundsuits, such as their colors, textures, and shapes; they observed features of the dancers' movements and interactions, and they noted their own emotional reactions to the work. Ms. Shiel herself participated, writing a couple of observations into the chat, because she felt that her involvement in the process as a fellow participant was an important way to generate trust and risk-taking.

After a while Ms. Shiel posed the second question in the routine: THINK: *What thoughts do you have about the work? she asked.* Again students' thoughts came freely. They mentioned connections between the artwork and other things they know about—other artworks, and other human activities. They imagined what it might be like to be inside a Soundsuit, and they offered interpretations of what they thought the work was about.

When students' ideas began to wane, Ms. Shiel asked the third question: ME: *What connections can you make between you and the work?*

Here, too, students had many ideas. Some students connected to the physical sensations of the artwork. Others made connections between the look of the *Soundsuits* and their own moods and states of mind.

### SEE

- Bright colours
- Lots of sensory details
- A mix of patterns
- Variation in texture
- Use of block colours, smaller less obvious patterns
- All the figures are humanoid to some extent, vibrantly coloured, and have poses similar to dancers.
- Can't tell their identities
- People interacting, almost dancing together
- Melding of the torsos with lower limbs

### THINK

- The person looks athletic – almost like a discus thrower
- The pattern on the tights makes me think of a harlequin or a jester
- The shiny clothing reminds me of mosaic sculptures like the giant ones outside the NGV [National Gallery of Victoria]
- What would it sound like inside--would it sound crunchy?
- It reflects the harmony between different species and nature
- The colourful objects may symbolise our unique identity and the clashing colours may represent our conflicting ideas and morals
- I think the man looks like a sparkling colourful and human-shaped toy
- Liberty, variation but harmony in this group
- The poses the characters are striking could be aggressive or could be cooperative

Several students made connections between the meaning they ascribed to the work and their own lives.

Eventually, Ms. Shiel asked the last question of the thinking routine: WE: *How might the work be connected to bigger stories—about the world and our role(s) in it?* This final question asks students to stretch beyond their individual frame of reference, and stretch they did, making connections between the artwork and various aspects of human nature, and between the work and contemporary events.

Ms. Sheil closed the class by sharing some quotes from the artist, and encouraged students to consider further connections—to the Black Lives Matter movement, and to the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which students had previously read.

Reflecting on the experience, Ms. Shiel was pleased with the students' engagement. Using the Zoom Chat function did indeed help more students to participate, and Ms. Shiel was impressed with students' observations and insights. Initially, when she first planned the class, she thought she might do the routine twice during the class period, using a different artwork the second time around. But, as it turned out, students had a lot to say about *Soundsuits*, and she felt good about the choice to let the discussion carry on for the entire session. Indeed, she herself found the discussion exhilarating—both as facilitator and participant.

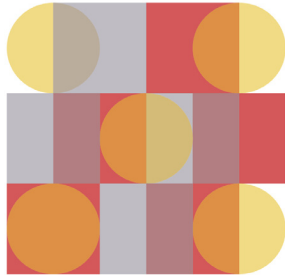
How does the *See Think Me We* thinking routine connect to the ArtC framework? Like most ArtC activities, the routine centers around one or two of the framework's dimensions, rather than all of them. In this case, it focuses mainly on the *Identities* dimension, with a bit of attention to the *Visions* dimension as well. The ME step straightforwardly speaks to identity, because it directly asks students to make a connection between their individual selves—their “me”—and the artwork.

### ME

- I look like this when I'm stretching
- The covered head and awkward position can represent how sometimes we feel suffocated and disoriented
- I want to be held by one of these figures – like a child running into their embrace ... but I am also frightened by some of these figures
- Reminds me of giant figures at Disneyland or the giant elephant that is Big Bird's friend in Sesame Street
- This person wearing a colourful costume makes me think of maybe he has two identities
- Character is made up with many different colors, just like my daily life is made up with many interesting parts
- Reminds me of decisions and different paths you can take

### WE

- Everyone is different, no one can fully understand others
- It reminds me of how in public places we sometimes strike different poses or try to project a powerful or distinctive identity but how there are also similarities between us
- Perhaps [the Soundsuit figures represent] lost identity. The use of colours may represent them trying to fit into society and by constantly changing themselves, they lost themselves in the process. Hence them having no faces and just bodies.
- This makes me think about how we are contorting ourselves at the moment to find a way in the time of COVID
- Maybe [the soundsuits show] your different personalities all fighting for control and showing how no matter what anyone sees there is more to you



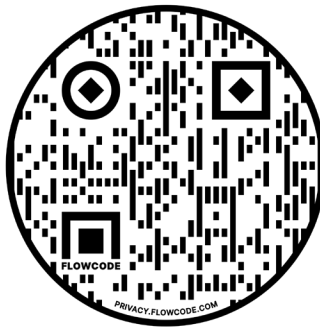
As an example, one student connects her identity with the work by observing that *Soundsuits* is made up with many different colors, just like my daily life is made up with many interesting parts. The WE step connects to identities too, by inviting students to broaden their scope and consider their identities in the context of larger world stories. For instance, a student comments that *Soundsuits* reminds me of how in public places we sometimes strike different poses or try to project a powerful or distinctive identity but how there are also similarities between us. And the WE step also connects to Visions: As one student observes: *We have to take on different roles in our community; sometimes you have to depend on stronger people, sometimes you have to stand up for the right thing.*



# LENSES FOR DIALOGUE

A routine for looking through lenses  
and exchanging perspectives

To see a video of the routine, click this  
link or use the following QR code.



# Lenses for Dialogue

A routine for looking through lenses and exchanging perspectives



## SEE

Look closely at the work. What do you notice?

## CHOOSE A LENS AND LOOK AGAIN

Think about how you see the world: your lenses. These could be related to your role in your family, your race, your ethnicity, your gender identity, your sexual orientation, your interests, hobbies, passions, or anything else about you. Choose a lens that feels relevant to the artwork and that you feel comfortable discussing with others. Look again at the artwork with that lens in mind. How do you see the work now?

## EXCHANGE AND EXPLORE PERSPECTIVES

With a partner or small group, take turns talking about how you see or think about the work. You might see the work similarly, differently, or both. Try to see what your partner(s) notice and ask questions to understand more about their perspective.

Possible question starters:

Say more about what you mean by....

Tell me more about why you see/think/feel...

## REFLECT

Take a minute or two to reflect. What did you learn through your conversation? Did your thinking change, shift, broaden, or zero-in on something? If so, how? What new thoughts or questions do you have?

# Facilitator Notes

## Lenses for Dialogue



### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Choose an artwork that might speak to one or more civic themes – themes related to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. Civic topics may include issues such as climate and environmental change, migration, economic and other inequalities, gender and sexuality issues, race/racism, or any theme that addresses values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape every level of community life, from the local to the global.

A word about Lenses: The purpose of this routine is to look at an artwork with a distinct lens in mind. A lens is something you look through. Our lenses are affected by our identities or backgrounds. For example: gender, race, ethnicity, age, culture, place, occupation, family role, interests, hobbies, and more. These identities affect how we see and engage with the larger world. They also shape what we notice and think about when looking at an artwork. Two important related points: 1. It is crucial that students voluntarily choose the lens through which they explore the work so that they do not feel pressured to speak from a particular identity perspective. 2. Lenses are powerful but also dynamic and intersectional - meaning, what we see through them is shaped by other identities and lenses. Two women looking at an artwork with their gender front of mind do not necessarily see the same things. They may notice very different features of the work and have their own distinct interpretations. This is a nuanced point that may come up organically as students discuss shared lenses but it may be worth calling out.

A word about Dialogue: Another important element of the Lenses routine is exchanging perspectives through dialogue. Because discussions of identities can lead to feelings of vulnerability, it is important that students are aware ahead of time that they will be asked to have a discussion with a partner or small group about the lens they chose and how it shapes what they see in the artwork. Remind students that they don't have to share anything they don't feel comfortable sharing, even if it is something they wrote down. They can choose to partially share something. If you still have concerns about students feeling vulnerable, another option is to remove the dialogue element by skipping step 3: Exchange and Explore Perspectives. You can facilitate the routine with students carrying out most steps independently in writing and, as appropriate, inviting voluntary sharing of insights and perspectives.

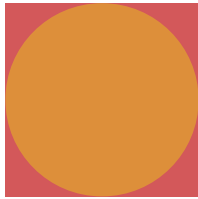
### FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

Class time needed for this routine can range from 10-20 minutes or longer, depending on your facilitation choices. The routine is designed to support individual looking, thinking, dialogue with others, and then reflection.

\*See *Viewing Moves* for ideas to slow down and deepen looking at the artwork.

The discussion-oriented steps in the routine (Exchange and Explore Perspectives) can be done in pairs or small groups.

\*See *Dialogue Moves* for further ideas for deepening discussion. As noted, the dialogue element can be removed by skipping Step 3: Exchange and Explore Perspectives and facilitating lenses as a routine for individual reflection.



# VIA

## VALUES, IDENTITIES, ACTIONS

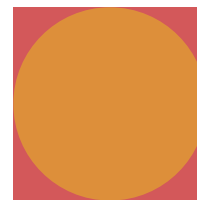


A routine that prompts learners to examine values and identities in conversation with a work of art.



# VALUES, IDENTITIES ACTIONS

A routine that prompts learners to examine values and identities in conversation with a work of art.



Take some time to look closely at the work.  
What do you notice? Make lots of observations.

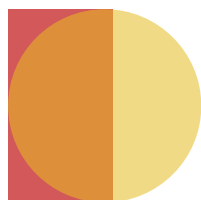


VALUES

## What values does this work invite us to think about?

(Values are kinds of things that people value – fairness, justice, safety, respect, traditions, a nation or group a person belongs to, creativity, anything like that.)

**Dig a little deeper with any of these questions:** Are they your values? Others' values? Whose? Does the work affirm or challenge or raise puzzles about these values?

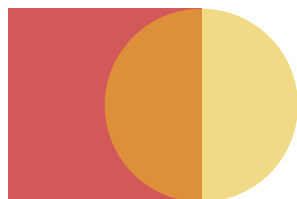


IDENTITIES

## Who is this work speaking about? And who is this work trying to speak to? (Not necessarily the same people!)

### Dig a little deeper with any of these questions:

Is anyone left out of the story that should be in it? Do you fit in or not so much for this story? Why?



ACTIONS

## What actions might this work encourage?

(Actions could include doing something concrete, refraining from doing something, just learning more, etc.)

### Dig a little deeper with any of these questions:

Who's actions – yours, others, what others? Why?

Look back at the work now. Spend a little time.  
Do you get any ideas that might add to Values, Identities, or Actions?

# Facilitator Notes

## Values, Identities, and Actions

VIA is a relatively straightforward routine for exploring some rich civic aspects of works of art. It is quite easy to facilitate in most settings. Here are a few tips to make the experience a success.

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A key aspect of a good VIA session concerns choice of the work or works. A fertile work for VIA has one or more fairly easily discernible civic themes, where matters of Values, Identities, and Actions invite comment.

Often, such works feature a deliberate civic statement of some sort...but not always. The work might have been fashioned for other reasons altogether and still happen to invite civic connections. In other words, VIA is not necessarily an attempt to interpret the work as intended by an artist but an attempt to see the work through a civic lens.

You might select works in advance that you feel would support a good conversation. But also, it often plays well simply to say a few words about what makes for a good VIA conversation and turn participants loose in a gallery, or with a book of art, etc., to make their own choices. If students are having difficulty saying something about the art, you might use any of the Viewing Moves or Dialogue Moves to support their discussion.

### FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

Often no direct facilitation is necessary. You can distribute the routine on paper and ask participants individually or in small groups to go through the steps. For a large group talking together, or perhaps for people trying VIA for the first time, it may make sense to lead the participants through the process. This can be done with a handout or orally.

The top question under each of V, I, and A is the key question. Be sure participants get to that one. As to the ‘dig a little deeper’ questions, there is no need to cover every single one. That’s a lot of conversation! You can pick and choose according to what explorations look most promising for the work of art in question and the participants.

You can make choices with the age of the participants in mind. For younger participants, feel free to focus on particular questions and rephrase them if needed. However, be positive minded about what younger participants can tackle. They often have more to say than one might imagine about digging-deeper questions. Participants using VIA individually or in small groups often explore VIA more richly if they expect a general conversation involving all participants at the end, where people briefly and informally report in headlines. You can facilitate that conversation.

# PICTURE OF PRACTICE

## VALUES, IDENTITIES, AND ACTIONS

“It’s difficult because we are sort of thinking what it’s like to be them while being us, right?”

This picture of practice illustrates how a thinking routine called VIA (Values | Identities | Actions) can be used with an artwork to help people explore themes related to values, identities, and civic action. It is based on a gallery experience facilitated by artist-educator Andrew Atchison for a small group of 15-year-old students visiting the On Vulnerability and Doubt exhibition at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA). The exhibition brought together artists whose works engaged with questions of vulnerability and doubt, intimacy and desire, shame, love and awkwardness, through mediums including painting, printmaking, sculpture, performative photography and video.

In this Picture of Practice, students engaged with Archie Moore’s artworks, *My Skin* and *Under My Skin*, both works 2019, using the VIA thinking routine, a routine that invites viewers to consider the values and identities implied in a work of art and to explore civic actions they could take in response. Here is the full VIA thinking

When you reach the end of the Picture of Practice, use the reflection questions provided to think about how using VIA in your context might support us to consider the values and identities implied in a work of art and to explore civic actions we could take in response.

The six students had been looking closely at Archie Moore’s *My Skin* and *Under my skin*, both works 2019, for the last few minutes. Andrew encouraged them to continue looking closely at the two works: “What do you notice? Make lots of observations.” When they were ready, the students began to share the things they noticed.

A t-shirt hanging on the left. It looks like a picture of someone’s chest.

A poster on the right, with three people in it.

It’s a really big poster. Life size.

The bottom of the poster is on the floor, so it looks like the people in the poster are standing on the floor.

There are two people on each side of the man in the middle. They are looking at his body.

They are wearing t-shirts like the one on the hanger. But not him. He’s bare-chested.

The three people are smiling. They seem friendly to each other.

There are three words on the poster – UNDER MY SKIN. In caps and very big on the poster.

The people in the poster aren’t wearing shoes.

The color of the t-shirt looks like it’s skin. And the whole poster is very muted in color.

When there was a lull in the students’ sharing, Andrew moved to the next prompt in the VIA thinking routine:

“What values does this work make us think about?” (VALUES) He explained that “values” referred to the kinds of things that are important to us, like being fair, being safe, getting respect from other people and respecting them

The students were silent for a minute or so before Crista shared that understanding and empathy came to mind for her, because on the one hand, it seemed rude that the two people on each side of the man were staring at the man's chest, yet she felt that they were doing it out of genuine curiosity. Bindi piped in to add that the three people looked comfortable with each other and guessed that they could be friends. Greg noted that the three people were of different ethnicities and wondered if they were making a point about how people who were different could still come together as friends. Lin chimed in to say that the three people might be each other and so were trying to find common ground: "Maybe that's why they are wearing the same t-shirt! It's why we wear the same uniform, right? Because we go to the same school and so we belong together!" Talia thought about the exchange for a while before raising a puzzle: "But I think the man in the middle is not wearing a t-shirt. I think he's bare-chested, right?" The students looked at the artwork for a while before Bo shared that he thought the bare-chested man seemed to be the center of attention in the artwork.

Andrew decided that it was a good moment to share some information about the artworks with the group. He explained that the artist was Archie Moore, a Kamilaroi man from Toowoomba, Queensland, and now lived and worked in Brisbane. He pointed out that Moore is the bare-chested man in the poster.



Archie Moore, *My Skin* 2019, digitally printed polyester T-shirt, size large; *Under my skin* 2019, 180.0 x 150.0 cm, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne 2019. Courtesy the artist and The Commercial, Sydney. Photograph: Andrew Curtis.

**Lin** If he is the artist, then is the t-shirt a picture of his chest? [The other students nodded.] So the other two people are wearing his "skin"?

**Bo** That's why the title is *Under My Skin*?

**Talia** I think it's connected to the idea of learning about other people who are different from us. About trying to understand what it's like to be the artist.

**Crista** But can you really know what it's like to be another person? It's just a t-shirt! I feel it's very superficial.

**Talia** Shouldn't we at least try? Superficial feels like a starting point to me.

**Andrew** Let's dig a little deeper into this. Who is this work speaking about? And who is this work trying to speak to? That's not necessarily the same people!

Lin raised her hand to say that it made her uncomfortable that the two people were staring at the artist's chest: "I think staring is already so rude, and they're staring at his chest! How can that be respectful?" The other students fell silent for quite a while. Andrew wondered if he should say something to break the silence, but decided to give the students time to stay with Lin's question. Finally, Greg responded, "I think that is definitely uncomfortable, Lin." Andrew saw the other students nodding their heads, and decided that it was time to bring back the prompt he had used earlier.

[The students agreed.] So, let's do that by turning to the question of identities. (IDENTITIES) Who do you think the work is speaking about? Who is it trying to speak to?

**Crista** I'm starting to think that it's about the artist and trying to understand who he is and his experiences. And doing so in a respectful way.

**Greg** Yes, like not deciding what kind of person he is without really trying to be in his skin. I think it's about how we look at other people without really looking at them.

**Andrew** Say more, Greg.

**Greg** I mean, we look at how people are like on the outside, but not what's on the inside.

**Bindi** It makes me think about how people view us Indigenous people. The artist is an Indigenous person and I think he's trying to get people to think about how they perceive Indigenous people.

**Talia** Right! Being an Indigenous person, I can relate to that. Like people think I'm like this and that because I'm an Indigenous person, like they already know who and what I am without even really trying to know me.

**Bo** And it's also that way for everyone, I guess. We look at people and think that's who they are. But there's a person under that skin or clothes.

**Lin** Yes, and even though Crista has a point about how wearing the t-shirt or skin of the person doesn't make you that person, so it's superficial, but I think it starts to make you think about what it would be like to be someone else.

**Bo** And to empathize with them, to experience what it's like to be them. It's difficult because we are sort of thinking what it's like to be them while being us, right?

**Crista** The other two people are wearing his "skin." Do you think it helps them understand him better or see him more clearly?

**Bindi** Well, they can always take off the t-shirt. But not him!

The students went quiet. Andrew again made the decision to give time for a few minutes of silence before asking if they'd like to take a few minutes to free-write their thoughts. Two students nodded while the rest seemed uncertain. Andrew then offered more options: they could write or just think about the ideas that were raised in their discussion. When he saw that they were ready to once again dive into conversation, Andrew used the next prompt in VIA to engage them in ideas for action they could take.

**Andrew** So we talked about the importance of values like understanding of and empathy for others, as well as the difficulty of really being in someone else's skin. We also raised the point that we tend to judge others by their exterior, such as skin color, and assume we know everything about them from just that one physical feature. These feel like important questions that we should do something about. Take a minute to think about whether there's anything you can do to bring attention to these questions? What actions do you think these artworks encourage? (ACTIONS)

*[A minute of quiet thinking ensued. After that, Greg raised his hand.]*

**Greg** I'm not sure. I mean, this superficial way of looking at other people feels like a really big problem and I don't think I can realistically do anything about changing things. I don't have much power or influence.

**Bo** And it's been going on for so long. Look at the demonstrations for Indigenous people's rights at the City Square all the time. Nothing's really changed, right?

**Andrew** Yes, it is a difficult thing to change, and it's been a problem for a long time.

**Talia** That doesn't mean we don't do anything, right?

**Bindi** And at least, because of the demonstrations, we know that people care about our rights.

**Andrew** Yes, small steps can often lead to bigger steps that we can take.

**Crista** I don't know. I'm not sure.

**Andrew** Say more about that. What are you not sure about?

**Crista** I mean, what do we really want to get out of it? Like do we want to change things? If we do, we have to get the politicians involved, right?

**Bo** So we write some letter or petition, right? We can do that!

**Crista** But who's the "we"?

**Talia** I think it has to involve all kinds of people so that we are all saying, "Hey, we are all different but we all want to be respected."

**Bindi** Hasn't that been done already? Like in those demonstrations? I've been to some of them and all kinds of people were there supporting the protest.

**Andrew** How about some small steps you can take, such as having a conversation with someone you know about it?

**Crista** That feels ok to do, I think. I mean, it's not like starting a movement or something, which will be much, much bigger.

**Talia** And I feel that I always learn something when someone talks to me about a problem or issue. So it feels like a natural thing to do as a next step.

**Crista** But will it work? Will it make a difference?

## Reflection Questions

What are some key takeaways from this Picture of Practice?

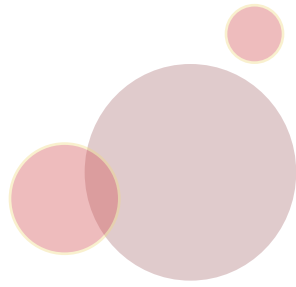
How might the VIA thinking routine be used with other artworks or topics?

In the Picture of Practice, Andrew chose to follow a particular line of thought that the students had for a deep dive into one issue. What are other lines of thought that the students had that might have been followed instead?

Conversations involving values and identities are often challenging for people because they shine an uncomfortable spotlight on who they are and what they believe in. What are some ways that Andrew used to make such conversations safe and supportive without the students feeling that they are being judged or compelled toward particular perspectives that they are unwilling to adopt or simply not ready for? What are some other ways to make such conversations safe and supportive?

The final exchange in the Picture of Practice ends with a provocative question that Crista raised. Many people may feel the same way about issues in their community. How might the discussion be continued to better empower people to take positive action on issues they care about?

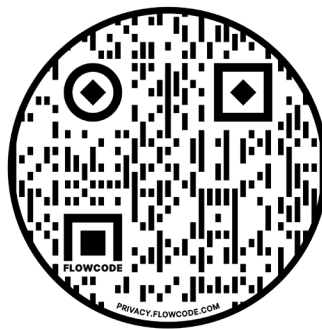
*Please note that while this is an accurate account in gist, the exact phrasing in the dialogue has been tweaked for accessibility.*



# MAKING THE FUTURE

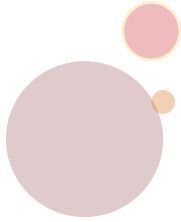
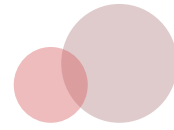
A routine for constructing and reflecting on civic perspectives

To see a video of the routine, click this link or use the following QR code.



# MAKING THE FUTURE

A routine for constructing and reflecting on civic perspectives



## PREPARE

*Before you begin the routine, take a minute or so to recall your thoughts and ideas about the civic topic chosen for this activity. You may want to jot them down on paper or type them into your device to remind yourself about your thoughts and ideas before starting the routine.*

**Civic Topics** can include broad themes such as justice and fairness, equality/inequality, power dynamics, and more specific themes like race and racism, gender identity, poverty, human impact on the environment, etc

## 1. IMAGINE

Suppose what is happening today with the civic topic continues to be the way it is. What do you think you would see more of? What less of?

What do you **want** to see more and less of in the future? Who might that future benefit? Who might it not benefit? Does it matter?

## 2. MAKE

Make something that symbolizes or represents the future you want to see. You don't need to be clear about exactly what you think before you start. Feel free to plunge in, experiment with your materials, and let the process of making help you think of ideas.

## 3. SHARE

How does what you made express the future you want to see? In what ways did the process of making help you to think about the future? What were some key decisions you made in the process of making? How is thinking through making different from the usual ways that you express ideas in the classroom?



# Facilitator Notes

## MAKING THE FUTURE

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Choose a civic topic that relates to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. **Civic topics** may include broad themes such as justice and fairness, equality/inequality, power dynamics, and more specific themes like race and racism, gender identity, poverty, human impact on the environment, etc

- The civic topic could be one that you had used in one of your lessons, or one that you want to bring to your students' attention. It could also be a question or puzzle that your students raised in class discussions that you think would be important to spend time on.
- If this civic topic is something that your students have not had time to think about in your class, create opportunities for them to think about and discuss it before using the routine. When students have had some time to think about the civic topic, their engagement with the routine will be richer. Consider using 1 or 2 Dialogue Moves for this.
- Some civic topics may challenge students' worldviews, disrupt how they relate to others in their community, or heighten emotional stress for them, so it's important that students have time to sit with and discuss the complexity of the civic topic they are going to work with.

Gather some materials for students to use for the MAKE step of the routine. This step is not about creating works of art; it is about providing an opportunity for students to express their ideas through making. Process matters more than product here!

- You do not have to provide tons of different materials, or even art materials for this. Instead, reach for materials that are readily available: paper, pen, string, etc. Other materials that work well are tinfoil, tape, magazines, and found objects like twigs, bottles, cardboard, etc.
- Go for fewer rather than more materials. With ample materials, students tend to try to use a lot more than they need in order to make something visually dramatic. This step is about their ideas, so we do want to focus them on those.

### FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

**IMAGINE.** This step invites students to imagine possible scenarios about the future (which could be utopian or dystopian) as well as their preferred future. In both cases, they need to be able to explain the thinking. If your students have already discussed this, a quick reminder might be enough. If not, spend a few minutes of orientation to the topic and then students can progress through the questions under Imagine.

If the civic topic feels too big (e.g. imagining the consequences of global climate change), feel free to make it more manageable, e.g. "What might you see more and less of in your community if things continue the way they are?" Or, "What do you want to see more and less of for young people in the future?"

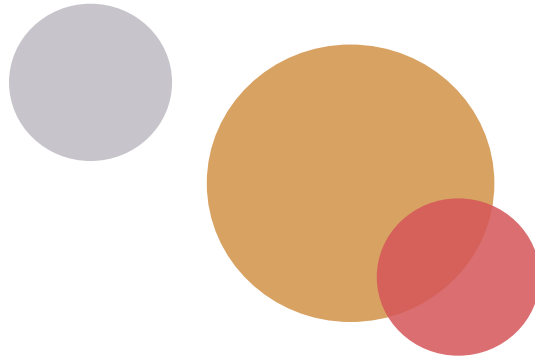
**MAKE.** The purpose of this step is to offer students an alternative way to express their ideas. It's about how what they make expresses their thinking, not how good or beautiful the product is. Consider giving students a limited amount of time for making. A limited amount of time (e.g. 10-15 minutes) can push students to bring abstract ideas into what they are making. It would also avoid students focusing on bells and whistles that detract

rather than add to their ideas. If it helps, explain that what they are making is a prototype or preliminary symbol or representation of an idea or process. It is not a finished product.

Offer students the option of making collaborative visual pieces, but keep an eye on potential disagreements that may arise, and diffuse any destructive conflicts. Not all disagreements are destructive though; conflicts can prevent groupthink, encourage open-mindedness, catalyze problem-solving, and spark insight. So be sure to watch carefully to draw out the positive aspects of disagreements.

Offer students ideas for what the thing that they are making could look like: a collage / montage; a sculpture; a set of photographs; a drawing or sketch; a painting; digital Instagram; a proposal for an artwork; etc.

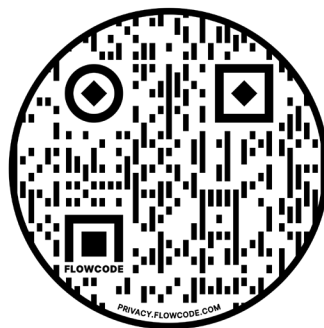
**SHARE.** Organize students into small groups to share what they've made and the process of making them, or you could bring the class together and have them share some insights that they have about making as a way of expressing ideas. To close the session, ask students for 1-2 headlines that they will take away from the session. Make sure to share your own headlines too.



# SEE THINK MAKE DISCUSS

A routine for thinking about civic art  
through making.

To see a video of the routine, click this  
link or use the following QR code.



# SEE THINK MAKE DISCUSS

A routine for thinking about civic art through making.

## PREPARE

*Before you begin this routine, you will need to gather some materials to make something. Paper and pencil are more than enough, but you might also want to consider other materials, perhaps even things that don't seem like art materials. What about that piece of junk mail you were going to recycle or that can of seltzer whose contents you just emptied into a cup? Feel free to use whatever you have available, even if it seems unconventional.*

## SEE

Look closely at the work. What do you notice? Make lots of observations

## THINK

How might this artwork connect to ideas or questions about civic life? Brainstorm several thoughts.

*Civic life = how we live together as a community, from the local to the global.*

## MAKE

Choose an idea or question about civic life that came to mind during the THINK step, and explore your thoughts about it by making or drawing something.

## DISCUSS

Talk about what you made and the civic idea or question you explored.

# Facilitator Notes

## See Think Make Discuss

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

*Choosing an Artwork:* Before beginning the routine, you will want to select a work of art. Any artwork that can be read through a civic lens works well, whether that reading is aligned with the artist's intention or is an interpretation you bring to the work. Artworks that could be read through multiple civic lenses, rather than explicitly focusing on one topic, leave a bit more room for interpretation, which may be more generative for student discussions.

*Preparing Materials:* You will also need to gather some artmaking materials before starting the routine. These materials can truly be whatever is at hand. Simple drawing materials are more than enough. You can also consider more unconventional making materials, like aluminum foil, string, tape, recycled materials, or anything else that is lying around. The process of making is more important than the product that is created, so expensive or high quality art materials are not essential. Furthermore, we recommend limiting students to using only one to three types of materials, as creativity is often sparked through limitations.

### FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

The purpose of this routine is to help students think critically through making. Art making allows for a multiplicity of meanings to be shared and explored at once, evoking rather than defining interpretations. Making also offers many opportunities to think and express oneself in ways that are often difficult or impossible to articulate in words. You might consider using this routine when you want students to explore emotions around a civic topic or when engaging with a topic that can be difficult to discuss or put into words. If your students need more support during the See step, consider implementing a Viewing Move; extra support for the Think and Discuss steps can be found in the use of a Dialogue Move.

*Supporting Making:* Keep in mind that making can look many different ways, be done individually or collaboratively, and take vastly different amounts of time. Feel free to leave the making prompt as open ended or as specific as fits your needs. We recommend limiting the time spent on making— you might be surprised with what can be created in only 5 minutes! In fact, limiting the amount of time and materials spent on making can lower the stakes and help students to be more free and take more risks with their expression. To further help lower the anxiety that can often come with sharing artworks, students need not share what they've made (although, of course, they are welcome to). Students can focus on sharing their making process and any new thoughts or insights they came to through making rather than the product of their making.

Here are just a few ideas of what making could look like: a drawing, a collage, a small sculpture made of recycled materials, a plan for a larger artwork, a remix of the original artwork, a poem or song lyrics, a short play/skit/dance.



# EXPLORING CIVIC POVS

An arc that surfaces civic points of view with works of art.

# EXPLORING CIVIC POINTS OF VIEW WITH ART

An arc that surfaces civic points of view with works of art.

Long Version

## NOTICE

Take a few minutes to silently explore the work.  
What do you notice? (“I see...”)  
Make lots of observations.

## MAKE A CIVIC CONNECTION

Choose a civic topic that this artwork might connect with or speak to.  
Don’t worry about figuring out what the artist wanted the work to be about.  
Just choose a civic topic that you think the work *could* connect with.

*[Civic topics can include broad themes such as justice and fairness, equality/inequality, power dynamics, and more specific themes like race and racism, gender identity, poverty, human impact on the environment, etc.]*

(“This artwork might say something about the topic of...”)

What do you think this work might be saying about this topic?  
(“This artwork might be saying that...”)

## EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW

**A civic point of view** *is a position or opinion about a civic topic or issue.*

What are some possible points of view or positions on this civic topic?  
("Someone could have the opinion or viewpoint that...  
Another person could believe that...")

Where do points of view come from?

Brainstorm a list of the possible aspects of someone's life, identities, or background that might shape their point of view or opinion on this topic.  
("A person's point of view can be affected by their age, where they grew up, etc..")

Do YOU have a point of view, or more than one point of view, on this topic?  
If you do, what is it?  
("I think/believe that...")  
"I'm not sure what my point of view on this topic is because...")

## REFLECT & REVISIT

What ideas did this activity surface that you had not considered before?  
("I had not considered...")

What points of view on this topic would you like to continue to think more about?

Take a minute or two to look again at the artwork.  
Do you have any new observations or questions?



# EXPLORING CIVIC POINTS OF VIEW WITH ART

An arc that surfaces civic points of view with works of art.

Short Version

## NOTICE

Take a few minutes to silently explore the work. What do you notice?  
("I see...")

Make lots of observations.

## MAKE A CIVIC CONNECTION

Choose a civic topic that this artwork might connect with or speak to.  
Don't worry about figuring out what the artist wanted the work to be about.  
Just choose a civic topic that you think the work *could* connect with.

*[Civic topics can include broad themes such as justice and fairness, equality/inequality, power dynamics, and more specific themes like race and racism, gender identity, poverty, human impact on the environment, etc.]*

("This artwork might say something about the topic of...")

What do you think this work might be saying about this topic?  
("This artwork might be saying that...")

## EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW

*A civic point of view is a position or opinion about a civic topic or issue.*

Do YOU have a point of view, or more than one point of view, on this topic?

If you do, what is it?

(“I think/believe that...”)

(“I’m not sure what my point of view on this topic is because...”)

Look back at your thoughts on what the artwork might be saying about the topic. Does the artwork affect your thinking on this topic at all? If so, how? (“Now, I’m thinking about ...”)

## REFLECT & REVISIT

Take a minute or two to look again at the artwork.

Do you have any new observations or questions?

# Facilitator Notes

## Exploring Civic POVs

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- **Choose an art work** that might speak to one or more civic themes - themes related to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. Civic topics may include issues such as climate and environmental change, migration, economic and other inequalities, gender and sexuality issues, race/racism, or any theme that addresses values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape every level of community life, from the local to the global.
- **Consider candidate civic topics** that the artwork you chose *might* connect with, directly or indirectly. In step 2, Make a Civic Connection, students/participants are asked to find a civic connection and choose a civic topic to explore. As the instructions to students say, don't worry about figuring out what the artist wanted the work to be about. Still, this step might pose challenges. As the facilitator, you may want to choose the topic for students to explore, considering civic themes that are timely, connected to your class content, and/or especially relevant to your students. Both broad and specific themes are named as examples (e.g., equality/inequality, justice, race and racism, human impact on the environment). You may want to choose a theme and then zoom in on a targeted issue with distinct pro/con points of view.

### FACILITATING THE ARC

- **A few points about points of view (POVs).** This learning arc uses art as a springboard for exploring different points of view or positions on a civic topic. The point(s) of view suggested by the artwork itself need not be clear-cut; the work can be ambiguous or open to multiple interpretations. The Explore Points of View section of the arc invites students to brainstorm possible POVs and where they come from (i.e., aspects of individuals' identities and biographies that may shape their POVs). Students may need prompting to consider a range of perspectives as well as additional information or background knowledge about those perspectives. As the facilitator, be prepared to raise perspectives that don't come up. Encourage students to name questions they have about perspectives that are unfamiliar or difficult to understand. You may want to share background information (for example, a news article about a civic topic that includes different, even opposing, views. Or two opinion pieces that argue for different sides of a civic issue).
- Students are also invited to consider whether they have a POV on the civic topic being discussed. Additional questions for reflection or discussion include: Where does your POV on this civic topic (or other civic topics) come from? What might

cause your perspective to change? Have you ever changed your perspective on a topic? How or why did you POV change?

- Facilitation. Class time needed for this arc can range from 20-40 minutes or even longer, depending on your facilitation choices. The steps in this arc can be done individually, in pairs or small groups, and/or as a whole class. Incorporating dialogue with others into some or all of the steps can surface different points of view, which is a key aim of the routine. \*See Dialogue Moves for further ideas for deepening discussion. \*See Viewing Moves for ideas to slow down and deepen looking at the artwork.
- Create, name, or revisit group norms. If your facilitation will involve discussion in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, be sure to attend to group norms. Dialogue about civic topics can surface disagreements, which provide important opportunities for learning but can also trigger discomfort. While acknowledging that no set of norms will keep the conversation safe for everyone, naming and inviting suggestions for norms can support productive dialogue across difference. For example: “Listen for understanding. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.” “Make comments using “I” statements.” <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/contracting>
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# PICTURE OF PRACTICE

## EXPLORING CIVIC POVS

Educator Michael Kozuch routinely brings his passion for the environment and human rights into his teaching at Newton South High School in Newton, Massachusetts, US. He also recognizes that works of art offer uniquely powerful ways to stimulate discussions of these themes, both in his classroom and in the wider society. This picture of practice offers a glimpse of how Michael used an artwork and an ArtC thinking arc to engage his high school students in a discussion of how human actions impact our planet.

The context for this discussion was a 12th grade elective course on Sustainability, which explores critical questions such as: Can economic development and environmental protection co-exist? What culturally sensitive actions are necessary to create a more sustainable planet? The artwork was [\*Tamara Dean's Wormwood \(Artemisia absinthium\) in Spring, 2017\*](#). This work is part of Dean's *In Our Nature* series, which explores the relationship between humans and our natural world. The learning experience was based on the ArtC thinking arc, Exploring Civic Points of View with Art. The routine has four steps.

### Exploring Civic Points of View with Art

- Notice the artwork: What do you see?
- Make a Civic Connection: What might this work be saying about a specific civic topic?
- Explore Points of View: What are different points of view on this topic?
- Reflect and Revisit: What ideas had you not considered before? What new observations or questions do you have?



Tamara Dean, *Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium) in Spring, 2017*  
Courtesy of Tamara Dean and Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney + Berlin

Michael opened up his class with their usual routines – a mindful moment and sharing of personal updates. He then turned to what would be the focus of their time together today: a close look at a work of art. Why look together at art? Because “art is a way to spur important discussions not just in the classroom but throughout society.” He clicked on the projector and an image of Tamara Dean’s *Wormwood* appeared on the screen at the front of the room.

## Notice

Without sharing any background information about the work or artist, Michael invited students just to look: **Notice the work. Look silently at it for a few minutes and record your observations.** He advised, “Resist the temptation to interpret what you’re seeing. Just record what you see.” The image quality and lighting weren’t optimal but students in the class could see well enough and Michael invited students to get out of their seats and approach the screen for a closer look if they wished.

After a few minutes of silent looking, Michael asked students to share some of their observations. The first comments focused on the natural setting: *“It’s very, very green.” “I see trees, shrubs, not a lot of sky.” “The sky is blue but kind of dark.”* Students then began to share what they noticed about how human beings appeared in the work:

*“I see children or young people with hands over their eyes, looking up.”*

*“Some people have their hands over their eyes like they are looking through them but others don’t.”*

*“It doesn’t look like people are wearing clothes.”*

*“People spaced out. Some are standing. Some are squatting.”*

Their comments then turned to observable features of people’s identities. One student noted, “All the kids are white.” Another chimed in, “Some are boys, others are girls.” In response, a third student wondered, “Is saying boys or girls an assumption or an interpretation?” Michael chimed in to acknowledge the good question and suggested it as a point for further discussion in subsequent steps of the arc.

## Make a Civic Connection

Leading the class into the next step, Michael paused to share a bit more information about the artwork. *Wormwood* is a 2017 piece by Tamara Dean, an artist whose work explores the relationship between humans and the natural world. What might this work be saying about humans and the natural world? Michael asked his students to think-pair-share as they explore this question. Students self-organized into pairs and began to talk. A buzz of conversation filled the room.

After 7-8 minutes, Michael brought the class back together to share their ideas. One student pointed to the date of the artwork, 2017. Noting how digital technologies are so central to our lives today, she offered an interpretation that the work was about *“Young people who can’t see or appreciate nature.”* Several other students jumped in to agree: *“They are blind to nature.” “Children’s eyes are covered. They are blind to how we are impacting the planet.”* One elaborated, pointing to a contradiction: *“Young people tend to be supportive of environmental issues but don’t want to spend time outside.”*

Michael encouraged the students: “Keep going.” One offered a further perspective: *“The people are not fully representative of humans because these are eight white humans.”* Another student speculated that the work was referencing the Garden of Eden: *“After Adam ate the apple, they hid their bodies like the people are hiding their bodies here.”*

The discussion then turned back to the topic of human culpability for the environment. *“This reminds me of an apocalyptic scene. Something’s coming but you’re blind to what it is.” “It’s speaking to climate anxiety. The younger generation will bear the brunt of climate issues. They look like they’re afraid and taking shelter in the environment.”* In agreement, another student shared, *“The composition and body language is tense. Like they’re bracing for it.”*

### Explore Points of View

Turning to the next step, Michael asked the students to step away from the image itself in order to discuss the broader theme of human impacts on the natural world. Sending students back to their pair-share conversation, he asked them to consider: **What different worldviews or attitudes might people have about this topic? What causes someone to have a particular worldview on humans and the natural world?**

After a few minutes of pair-share conversation, Michael invited students to share ideas as a whole group. Picking up on the keywords, “blind” or “blindness,” from their last share-out students first described worldviews that were about denial: *“Not seeing what’s in front of you.”* *“People don’t want to accept that they’re part of the problem.”* Then they speculated about where these worldviews might come from and what factors might contribute to them: *“Different cultures influence what you value.”* *“Religion.”* *“Monetary success.”* *“Social status and income.”* One student offered: *“Your profession. What if your job is tied to the problem? Say you work for an oil company. You have a vested interest there.”* A lively exchange ensued about human accountability and its challenges: *“People don’t want to take culpability.”* *“They ignore how they’re part of the problem.”* One student pushed back a bit: *“But it’s hard to see how you are involved.”* Another echoed, *“It can be a lot to take in. It’s easier to ignore than to take on.”*

Michael then inserted a provocative question: “You’re all saying it’s about human actions. But how would a climate change denier view this and enter into this picture. You may not know but try to imagine.” After reflecting for a moment, students shared some ideas: *“Climate deniers say, I’m just one person. How can I be impacting [the planet]?”* *“[They might also think that] this is meant to be – humans influencing nature. This is natural.”*

### Reflect and Revisit

In the final phase of the arc, Michael first invited students to reflect independently on the discussion. **What ideas and points of view came up that you hadn’t considered before? Was there something that came up that you want to think more about, or dive into for deeper discussion?** Students quietly wrote out their reflections.

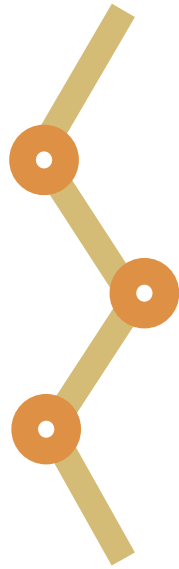
*“I had not considered the perspective of a climate change denier.”*

*“I hadn’t considered the idea of blindness. Cultural blindness. Individual blindness. Also complacency. And the purpose of human’s relationship to the environment.”*

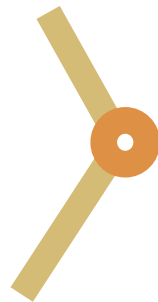
*“The next generation is on the hook and will have to deal with problems that current leaders are causing and not doing enough to fix.”*

Finally, Michael invited students to turn their attention back to *Wormwood* for another look. **Do you have any new observations or questions? Is there anything in the work that you are seeing that you didn’t see before?**

A few students stood up and approached the screen to give the work one last look. As the bell rang signaling the end of class, an exchange unfolded between two students about the dichotomy between human and nature. *“Who decided that humans aren’t a part of the natural world? If everything comes from the earth, aren’t we actually part of nature? Aren’t we from nature?”* The discussion continued as they headed into the hallway and on to their next class.



# ART TO SYSTEMS AND BACK



An arc for identifying a civically-related system and exploring its different parts and how they work together.



# ART TO SYSTEMS AND BACK

1. Look closely at the work of art. Notice as much as you can.

2. What civically related systems does this work invite you to think about? Brainstorm a few ideas.

3. Set aside the artwork for a moment and choose one system you'd like to explore.

.....  
A **system** is a collection of elements that interact or influence each other to produce certain outcomes or serve certain purposes.

A. Identify parts of the system: make a list and feel free to draw lines between parts that connect.

**Civically related systems** are systems that affect people's lives as members of a community.

B. Circle or highlight any parts that seem especially important.

.....  
4. Optional: In what ways might you be connected to the system - now, in the past, or in the future? Think about your everyday activities: the places you go, the people you interact with, the things you make, buy, see, or consume.

.....  
**PARTS OF A SYSTEM** can be physical and non-physical and can include things like rules, laws, beliefs, customs, people, events, nature, human-made stuff, and other things.

## PAUSE AND REFRESH YOUR SENSES

.....  
Do something small to refresh your body and mind, such as stand up and stretch, take some deep breaths, or close your eyes for a moment. 1 - 2 minutes

5. Look back at the work of art. Take a few moments to look closely at it again. What stands out to you—related to systems, or just generally? What more do you notice? What new thoughts or feelings do you have about it now?

# Facilitator Notes

## Art to Systems and Back

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This thinking arc can take anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour, depending on how the experience is structured. Because the arc is a little longer than a regular thinking routine, you might consider dividing up the experience across a few class periods. However, it can also be powerful to complete the arc during one session. Envision how the lesson will unfold and do what makes the most sense based on your students and your curriculum.

Thinking about civic systems provides students with an opportunity to wrestle with complex ideas about civic life. Below are some notes to help you think about how to best support students through this process.

#### The idea of civically-related systems

The idea of civically-related systems is a big concept with fuzzy boundaries and it can be challenging to grasp. The idea behind the idea is that there are forces that shape the way people think and act as members of a community. These forces can include rules, beliefs, customs, and conventions. Governmental procedures at all levels are systems, but so are holiday customs, and school lunch lines. Even the process of you reading this text as a way of getting information can be considered a civic system, because it's part of the way you share knowledge with a community—in this case, your community of student learners. Students don't need to have a precise understanding of civically related systems. Instead, what's important is that they begin to see how systems are part of how people perceive and interact with one another.

To get a sense of how different learners and facilitators do this step of the thinking arc, take a look at the pictures of practice associated with the arc. These two contrasting examples – one [a conversation between adult colleagues over Zoom](#), the other [an experience with high school students in a museum](#) – illustrate how this arc can work in a variety of settings. It also works with different types of artwork – from the very abstract to the very realistic.

### FACILITATING THE ARC

#### Identifying parts of a system

This step can be approached in a variety of ways. You can begin with a whole group discussion or give participants a few minutes to work independently and/or in pairs before sharing their ideas. Identifying parts isn't an exact science: Sometimes parts can be easy to identify—like the different steps involved in waiting in a school lunch line. Sometimes they can be more difficult to see—like the beliefs about human behavior and values that underlie a set of rules. Encourage students to consider obvious and not-so-obvious parts, and not to worry if the parts seem to overlap. The purpose of this step is to help students expand their 'systems lens' by exploring the parts that make systems work. Again, take a look at the pictures of practice associated with this thinking arc to get a sense of how different learners and facilitators handle it.

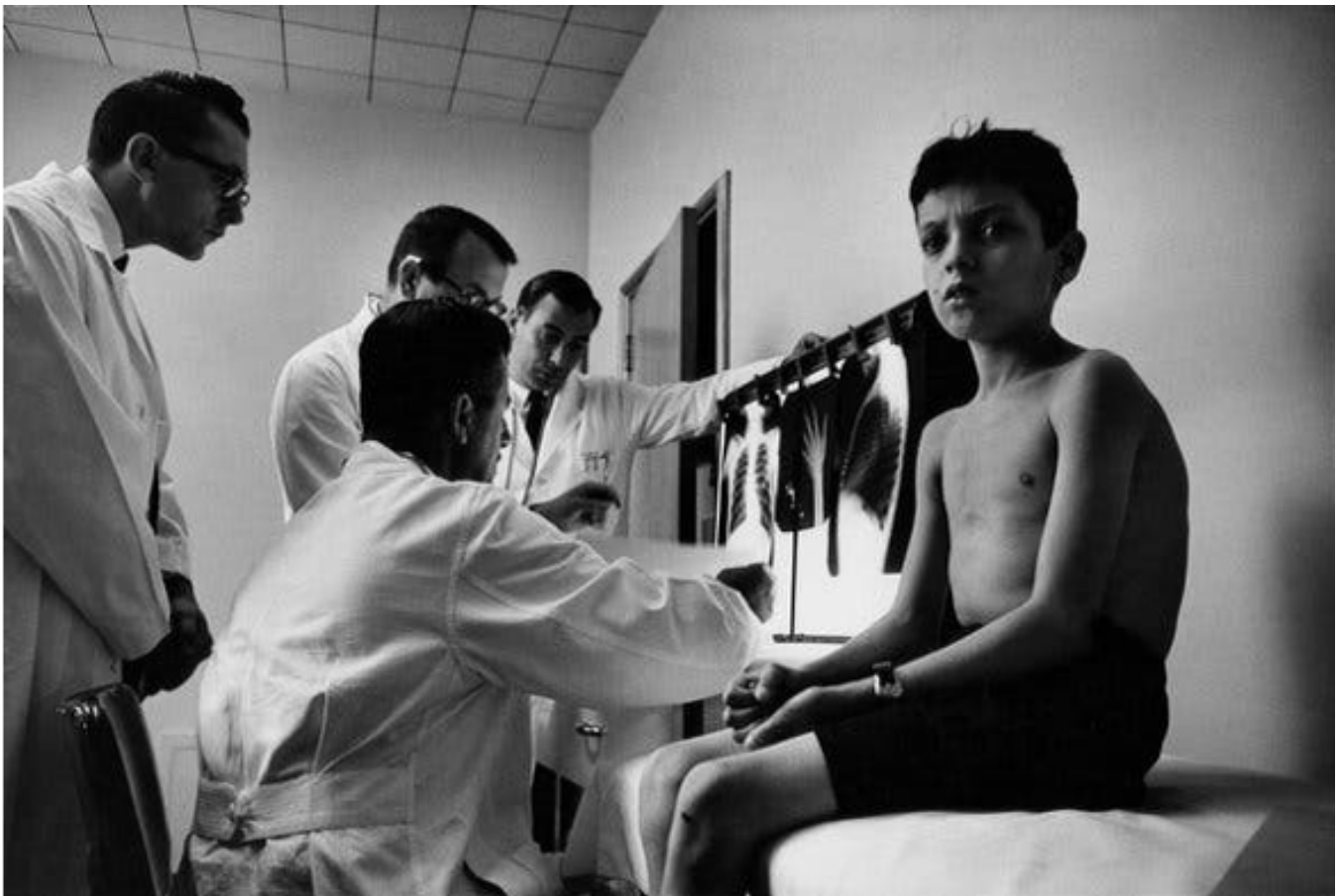
## **Discussing personal connections to a system (an optional step of the thinking arc)**

Personal connection-making can lead to powerful and memorable learning. However, this step takes some time to do it thoughtfully, and, depending on the system under discussion, students' responses can be quite personal. If you do this step, be sure to give the step the time it needs and do what's necessary to make students feel safe and comfortable. For instance, consider allowing people to take a minute or two to silently reflect on what they might feel comfortable sharing. It may also be useful to create or revisit norms for respectful dialogue. See the ArtC Dialogues Moves resource for suggestions.

# PICTURE OF PRACTICE 1

## Art to Systems and Back

One afternoon about six months into the time of COVID, a museum educator named Corinne Zimmerman decided to try using an ArtC activity online. She was curious to experiment with the thinking arc, Art to Systems and Back Again, which uses art as an entryway into exploring civic systems. As participants, she chose a small group of colleagues with whom she had been meeting regularly on Zoom throughout the pandemic. The group’s meetings were partly social, and partly a means to share ideas about teaching online, and Corinne knew the group would be game. Here’s how the experience went.



### LOOK CLOSELY

To introduce the activity, Corinne explained that for the next 30 minutes or so, the group would be exploring connections between a photograph and civically related systems. “I’ll say more about what civically-related systems means in a moment,” she assured them, “but first let’s just take a look at the work.”

Corinne pulled up the image onscreen and began by sharing a bit of information. “This is a photograph taken by the American photographer Gordon Parks”, she said. “It is one of several images in a photo essay that Life Magazine commissioned him to do in 1961. The image shows a young boy named Flavio who was from Rio de Janeiro and who suffered from asthma.” \* \* \*

She gave the group a moment to look quietly, then asked, “What do you notice?”

Everyone jumped right in. “The boy’s gaze is so striking,” one person said, “He seems to be looking right at us, while all the men are looking at what appear to be X-rays.”

“Yes,” someone else rejoined, “his brow is furrowed. He seems to be alarmed or worried.”

“And he’s naked from the waist up,” another person added, “while the four men clustered together—doctors, presumably—are fully dressed and in white coats.” Using the boy’s name for the first time, someone else observed: “Flavio is wearing something on his wrist, and he seems to have a skinned knee.”

The observations continued to flow. People commented on the position of Flavio’s hands, the images in the X-rays, the architecture of the room, the men’s crisply ironed white coats, and more. One person commented on who isn’t shown in the picture. “The photographer is in the room, of course,” he observed, “but what about a family member? Is a parent in the room with the boy?” The group discussed this for a moment, then continued to make more observations.

#### What do you notice?

- The boy’s gaze; alarmed?
- 2 groups: one with four men; one just the boy
- The four men seem to be doctors
- White coats, crisply ironed
- Boy seated, partially naked
- A slightly open door
- Scabbed knee
- Who’s NOT in the picture but in the room?
- X-ray of a hand
- other X-rays—maybe lungs?
- Boy’s torso
- The boy’s hands—one fist seems to be holding the other hand

### CONNECT TO CIVICALLY-RELATED SYSTEMS

Eventually, Corinne asked the group to consider another question. “What civically-related systems does this work invite you to think about?” she asked. “By civically-related I mean systems that affect people’s lives as members of a community.”

“Well, an obvious one is healthcare systems,” someone said. “It’s not clear the boy is feeling cared for, but he is certainly involved in—you could even say entrapped in—a system of health care.”

#### Civically related systems

- Healthcare system
- Medical education system
- System of representing human body in medicine
- Family system
- Childhood as a system
- Economic system
- Documentary photography as a system (especially the system of deciding what’s worth documenting)

“Another system is medical education,” someone else added. “The doctors seem to be part of a learning group, studying the X-rays. Yes, medical education is part of the health care system, but you can also think of it as its own system.”

The group went on to explore a number of ideas. One person commented that the way the human body is represented in medicine is a kind of system, pointing to both the X-rays and the boy’s partially naked body as parts of that system. Someone else suggested that childhood itself can be thought of as a system because it involves interacting procedures and

beliefs about childrens’ role in society and about their capabilities and rights.

### EXPLORE PARTS OF A SYSTEM

Eventually, Corinne asked the group to select one system they’d be interested in thinking about further. “We’ll explore it by brainstorming its various parts,” she said. The group pondered for a moment,

then someone spoke up. “I’d be curious to explore the system of how bodies are represented in medicine,” she said. “The photograph is interestingly complex in this regard: the X-ray images show one way human bodies are represented in medicine, and Gordon Parks’ photograph—which shows a group of human bodies in a medical scenario—is another way.” The group liked this choice, so Corinne pulled up a blank comment onscreen and wrote at the top: **System: How human bodies are represented in medicine.**

“What are the different parts of this system— all the different elements that are involved in it?” Corinne asked the group. “I’ll write down your ideas. And don’t worry if the parts we list overlap or seem to be different kinds of parts,” she continued. “Our goal is just to brainstorm lots of ideas so we get a better picture of the complexity of the system.

Peoples’ ideas came fast. The group mentioned tangible parts, like X-rays and medical imaging machines and brochures depicting medical procedures. They also talked about the people involved in the system, such as patients, doctors, nurses, and technicians. And they spent quite a bit of time discussing less tangible but equally important parts of the system, such as emotions, issues of privacy, and power dynamics. Indeed, the group seemed especially interested in these intangible elements, talking at length about who has decision-making power in representing bodies in medicine, and who is made vulnerable by it. Throughout the conversation, people frequently commented on how much the parts were interconnected.

Eventually, Corinne asked the group to identify the two or three parts that felt especially important or central. “If you wanted to understand this system even more deeply—maybe even try to change the system—what parts might you focus on?”

The group discussed for a moment, and quickly came to consensus. They identified power as an important component, along with a few other related components. Corinne highlighted their choices onscreen and invited the group to talk a bit more about why they made the choices they did. An animated discussion ensued. They identified power as an important component, along with a few other related components. Corinne highlighted their choices onscreen and invited the group to talk a bit more about why they made the choices they did. An animated discussion ensued.

### LOOK AGAIN

Corinne let the conversation flow for a few minutes, but the meeting was due to end soon, and she still had one more thing to do: Corinne wanted to close the experience by having the group look back at the image with fresh eyes. Participants had been staring at their screens for a while now, so she invited people to stand up, move away from their computers, and take a big stretch and a couple of deep breaths. Which everyone did with audible gusto. After a moment she called them back. “Take a look at the image again,” she said, “and see it with fresh eyes. Maybe you’re thinking about the system we discussed; but maybe not. What stands out to you?”

Interestingly, everyone’s attention went immediately to the boy, and the mood was strongly empathic. One person noticed the curl of Flavio’s hair sticking up; two other participants returned to the positioning of his

System: How human bodies are represented in medicine

- PARTS
- Medical equipment/paraphernalia
- Privacy and intrusion
- Physical space
- Choreography of bodies-- arrangement of bodies
- Written texts
- Who gets to judge/die--medical decision-making
- Staging versus “truthful”
- Patients, doctors, nurses, technicians
- Emotions
- Families
- Representations of who is allowed to look (groups of doctors observing)
- POWER--who has it, who doesn’t, etc.
- Values--what’s priority?
- CONNECTION/EMPATHY
- Intention in representation--what’s purpose of the representation

hands. Someone else was drawn to the curve of Flavio's back, and another to the scab on his knee, wondering aloud how it got there. And then, the time was up. Corinne drew the experience to a close, thanking the group and acknowledged the deep looking and thinking everyone had done. Later that day, she emailed everyone a link to the image, along with a link to a recent article about Gordon Parks' 1961 photo-essay, in case anyone was interested in learning more.

\* Special thanks to Corinne Zimmerman, Francesca Bewer, Siobhan McCusker, Ruth Slavin, Ronald Stark, and Ray Williams

\*\* A few days after this conversation, one of the group members made an interesting discovery: The photograph, which is owned by the Gordon Parks Foundation and appeared as part of an exhibit called Gordon Parks: *The Flavio Story*, was actually taken by photographer Carl Iwasaki, who photographed Flávio for *Life Magazine* after Flavio had been flown to Denver, USA, for treatment at the Children's Asthma Research Institute and Hospital. Here is an excerpt from a Washington Post article that tells the story; here is an exhibit at the Ryerson Image Center in Toronto, Canada, that has the correct attribution (see figure 3).

# PICTURE OF PRACTICE 2

## Art to Systems and Back

Teenagers scatter through a gallery at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (moCa). It's a wide open space, practically empty except for the occasional painting or sculpture - some blocky, some colorful, some expanding to touch the ceiling. These teenagers are students in a three-week course called *The Creative Process* designed and taught by Jodie Ricci and Jessica Ross. Equipped with a set of prompts, students decide amongst themselves which work of art they are going to discuss. As they walk through *Invisible Cities*, an exhibit by the artist Liu Wei, they look as if they are explorers in some strange, otherworldly galaxy.

Eventually, everyone chooses a work of art and settles into groups. One group of four sits in front of *Survival No. 2*, an abstract, brightly-colored painting. There is no wall text next to this work - or any of the others for that matter - so the students begin by making observations.

"I notice a landscape," says one student.

"I see mountains."

"A sunset."

"Grass and a river."

"There is a lot of contrast."

"Three panels."

"It reminds me of New Mexico."

A member of the group records these observations on loose-leaf, while another keeps track of the time. Notably, the teachers stand on the other side of the room. From their vantage point they can see their students, perhaps hear bits of the conversation, but they maintain a distance as if to stay out of the way and encourage the teens to direct themselves.



Installation view: Liu Wei, *Invisible Cities*, moCa Cleveland, 2019

Sometimes, giving students less information about a work of art can lead to deeper discussion. It can be helpful to be selective and intentional about the information you share with students.

The timekeeper suggests that the group move on and the facilitator - a third student - reads aloud the next prompt.

"What civically-related systems does this work invite you to think about?"

For the first time, students are silent.

"What exactly is a civically-related system?" someone asks.

The two teachers are not surprised that this term feels a little new. They had not introduced the idea of civically-related systems, or systems in general, before inviting students to try out the Art to Systems and Back experience.

"We could have primed them for systems," Jess reflects after class, "but they came up with things that were interesting that they might not have come

up with if we had primed them."

"Kids prefer to figure stuff out rather than receive all the instructions or directions," Jodie adds.

They are right. Despite some initial hesitation, the students brainstorm a lengthy list of civic systems



– systems of immigration, sustainability, the environment, man vs. machine, economic systems, systems of technology – all inspired by this single abstract painting. The notetaker writes furiously, trying to catch them all.

A museum Engagement Guide walks by.

“What are you doing with these kids?” he asks Jodie and Jess.

What the man really wants to know is how the teachers managed to get kids to discuss a single work of art for over 40 minutes. Having seen so many other groups of students – and adults for that matter – walk through this same gallery in less than ten minutes, he found it refreshing to see people taking so much time to engage with a single work of art.

Jodie and Jess are somewhat surprised as well. It was the second half of a full museum day and, as experienced teachers, they knew how exhausting long days of sustained looking can be. However, the students “hung with it” even though many of them had never visited a contemporary art museum before.

Reflecting on the session later, the teachers identified a few strategies that they thought were particularly helpful in supporting this deep discussion. First, they let students choose which Liu Wei work they discussed.

“The students had choice; that was a big part of it,” explained Jess. “They chose a piece that they felt connected to and that gave them investment.”

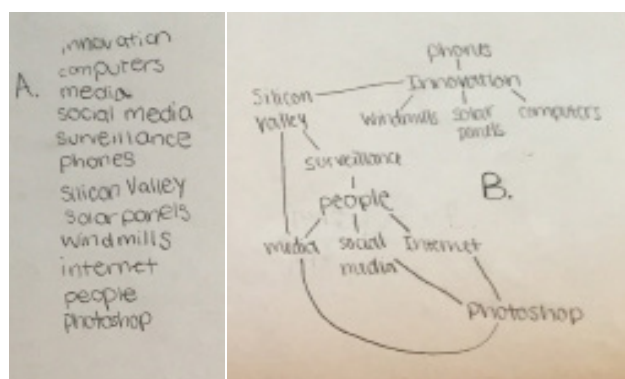
Second, each student in the group took on a role – note-taker, time-keeper, facilitator, etc. As Jodie explained, each student “had something to do and they felt it was important.”

“And, as we are helping students develop dispositions and capacities,” Jess adds. “A lot of the world is working on teams and in groups. Using roles and naming those roles when students are in groups can be valuable for this purpose.”

“However, this type of independent work needs a lot of scaffolding to help make it successful for students. I might have chosen a different tactic if I were working with younger children.”

Jodie and Jess suggest reflecting with the students after the activity about the role they played and how successful they felt their collaboration was.

Back at *Survival No. 2*, the students move on to the next prompt. They notice that the work of art is pixelated and decide to focus the remainder of their discussion on the system of technology. They spend a few minutes identifying parts of the system, making a rough map of how all these parts might be connected.



Student notes listing and connecting some parts of the system of technology.

When their discussion comes to a close, the group looks back at the work of art one last time.

“What more do you notice? What new thoughts or feelings do you have about it now?” The facilitator asks.

“Maybe the work of art is saying how digitalization is masking the beauty present in real life?”

“Or, perhaps it’s saying that the media is distorting the murky reality of our world?”

“Or, it’s saying that the world is full of insecure people and they rely too heavily on tools like photoshop.”

The students don’t land on a single interpretation. Rather, they end by raising questions and leave seeing the work just a little differently than they had when they started.

*\*Special thanks to Jodie Ricci and Jessica Ross.*



# CIVIC THINKING THROUGH MAKING

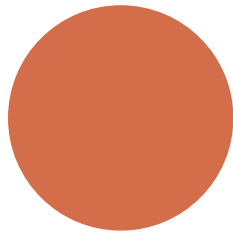
# CIVIC THINKING THROUGH MAKING

The following Civic Making Activities invite students to make something in order to explore a civic topic. Each of the following activities is explicitly civically related and can either stand alone or be used alongside an ArtC thinking routine or arc.

On the whole, these civic making activities tend to invite a great deal of reflection and thinking. Therefore, students might need a little more time to complete them. If you are looking for a shorter activity that involves civic making, see *Making Moves*.

Each activity below can be completed by an individual student; however, students can also make something in pairs or groups. Depending on the instructional goals, students can think of a civic issue themselves, or be assigned one. What is important to remember is that the point of these activities is the process, not the product.

The works of art listed below each activity serve as examples for the type of work one might make in response to the prompt (although, likely, at a much smaller scale). They can be used for planning or as part of the activity itself in order to spark ideas or clarify the purpose.

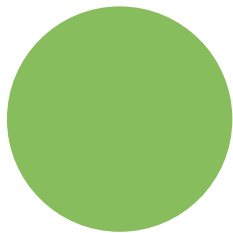


## INVISIBLE/VISIBLE

**Think of a civic issue or system. What is something invisible about that issue or system? Create something that makes the invisible visible.**

**Example Works of Art:** Eve Mosher, *High Water Line*  
Olafur Eliasson, *Ice Watch*

**For Instance:** A student creates a map of their morning routine. They annotate it in ways that show how their small, daily activities impact the environment.

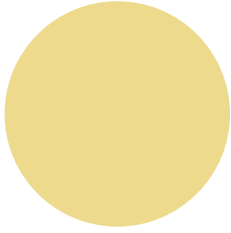


## FOREGROUND/BACKGROUND

**Think of a civic issue or system. What is something about that issue or system that it is foregrounded so much that it is difficult to ignore? Perhaps it is something we take for granted. Create something that brings what is in the background into clearer view.**

**Example Works of Art:** Titus Kafur, *Shifting the Gaze*  
Nick Cave, *Soundsuits*

**For Instance:** A student records the sounds heard on the streets of their neighborhood during a few minutes of a regular day. That same student records the sounds heard on the streets of their neighborhood during a day when residents are sheltering in place due to the coronavirus. The sounds of birds, water, and the breeze become more visible in the silence.

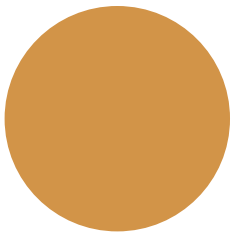


## STORYTELLING WITH DATA

**Pick a civic issue. Research the topic if need be - not extensively, just enough to help you find some relevant, important numeric data. Make something using the data that tells a story about or deepens our understanding of the civic issue.**

**Example Works of Art:** Stan's Cafe, *Of All the People in the World*  
Nathalie Miebach, *The Burden of Every Drop*

**For Instance:** A student collects the disposable cups thrown away in the cafeteria over the course of a single day. That student creates a work of art using those cups and displays it at the entrance to the cafeteria, showing the scale of the waste that occurs over the course of a single day.

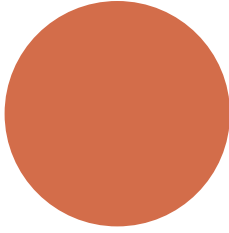


## EXPLORING IDENTITIES

**Make something that shows the complex, multifaceted nature of your identity.**

**Example Works of Art:** Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*  
Hoda Afshar, *The In-Between Spaces*

**For Instance:** A student creates a map that shows their many identities and how they show up in the world. Locations on the map may represent different elements of their identity, with some more prominent than others. Roads or other systems might show the intersectional relationship between different aspects of their identities. Another student might create a map of their town to track where different parts of their identity show up physically in their life while another might create an imagined map that investigates their emotional identities.

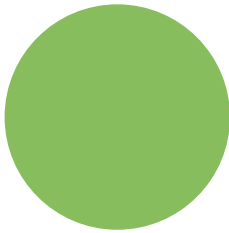


## REMIX

**Start with an image of a work of art. Who or what is missing from this artwork? What is not being shown? What is the other side of this story? Change the work of art in some way. Add something to or subtract something from it in order to tell a different story about the same civic topic.**

**Example Works of Art:** Joyce Kozloff, *Large Europe*  
Austin Kleon, *Domination*

**For Instance:** A student takes an artwork and adds themselves to the image to investigate how they fit into the story.

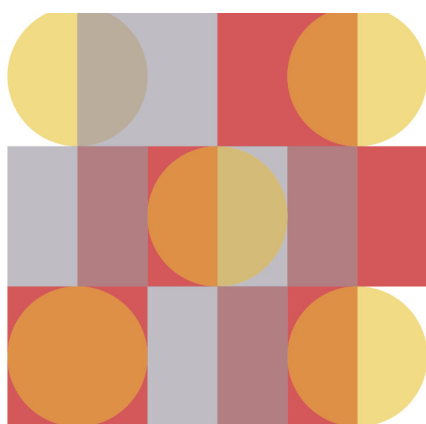


## WHAT COMES NEXT?

**Start with an image or story from a newspaper that explores an event connected to a civic issue. Make something that shows a possible outcome of that event. Consider what will happen immediately afterwards. Consider what could happen five, ten, or twenty years from now.**

**Example Works of Art:** AC One, *Bad Dream*  
Marcos Chin, *#weareorlando #keepkissing*

**For Instance:** After an election, a student creates a vision of what the future will look like at the end of the politician's term. The student might surface positive changes or raise concerns about negative outcomes. The student might even do both.



## PART 3: **Additional Resources**

# VIEWING MOVES

## Strategies for looking closely

Looking closely can spark curiosity, create engagement, and reveal complexity. Viewing Moves is a collection of strategies for sustaining and deepening the process of close looking. Use one or more of these strategies to add structure to the SEE step of an ArtC thinking routine or arc, or any other time you want to encourage sustained close observation.

### MAKE A LIST

Make a list of everything you observe. Notice as much as you can.

Variations:

- As a large group or whole class: make a long list of observations that everyone contributes to.
- List-Pair-Share. Work solo and write down several things you notice. Then share your list with a partner and see what more you can notice together.

### CHANGE PHYSICAL PERSPECTIVE

Variations:

- Look from high, low, far away, close up.

### NOTICE YOURSELF

Notice your noticing.

Notice the environment the work is in. For example, lighting, background (or foreground) noises, temperature, ambience, etc.

Notice your own impressions, feelings, and reactions: Notice your feelings, your sensations, your impulses, your thoughts.

### DIG INTO DETAIL

Dig into detail by carefully describing the smallest details of what you see.

Variations:

- Use a viewfinder or a frame made by your hands to isolate one part of the work and describe that part in detail.
- Use the [Elaboration Game](#) thinking routine.



## CHANGE IMAGINATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Variations:

- Consider how the artwork might look to different people.
- Consider the perspective of other living or non-living elements, e.g., animals, plants, waterways.
- Consider how the artwork might look from the perspective of a different time period—the past or the future.

## LOOK AGAIN

See what you notice first. Then look again and see what else you can find.

Variations:

- Use the [Looking 10 x 2](#) thinking routine.



## NOTICE WHAT'S NOT THERE

What's missing from the work that you might expect to see, or the absence of which seems significant? (E.g., maybe the work is missing human figures, or a frame, or certain colors.)

## USE DIFFERENT MODALITIES OR SENSES

Use different modalities or sense to make observations. (a modality is a mode in which something is experienced or expressed).

Variations:

- Sketch what you see.
- Use your body to describe what you see. E.g., move your body into a position of an element in the artwork; make a gesture that expresses your sense of the work.
- Work with a partner or small group to create a physical tableau or moving sculpture that represents the artwork.
- If the artwork makes sound, describe what it sounds like. If it doesn't make sound, describe what it might sound like.

## USE CATEGORIES

Look for different kinds of features or components.

Variations:

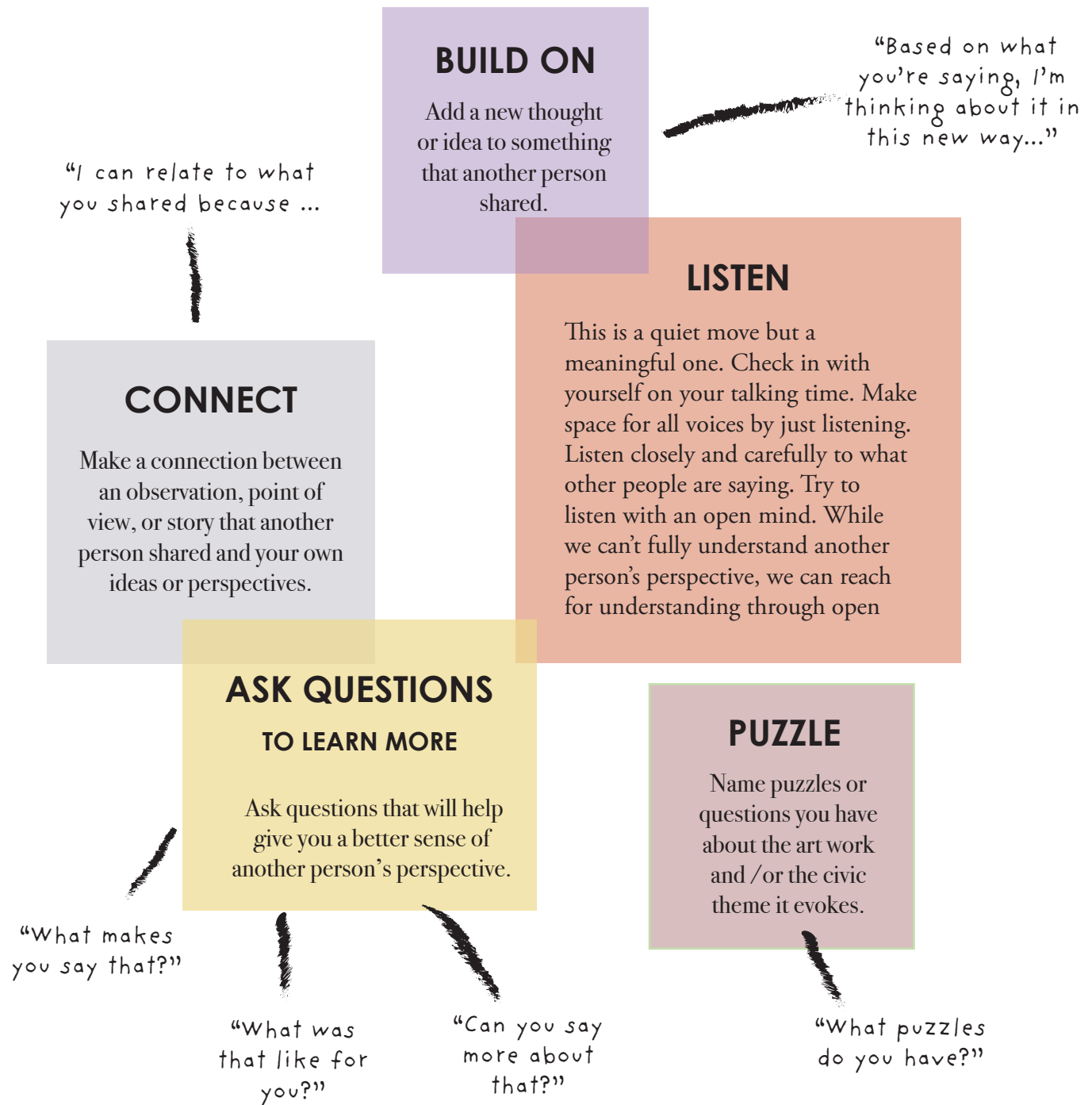
- Identify different kinds of material the work is made of
- Use the [Color | Shape | Line](#) thinking routine.





# DIALOGUE MOVES

Dialogue is an exchange of ideas and perspectives between two or more people. Looking closely at art, and making art, can be powerful provocations or sparks for dialogue about issues that are consequential to our lives, communities, and world. Use one or more of these strategies to add or deepen dialogue in the context of any ArtC thinking routine or arc.



## SHARE A STORY

Share a personal story that relates to the perspectives or beliefs that you have about a civic issue relevant to the work of art.

*“Although I see where you are coming from, I see it differently. I think that...”*

## FIND NEW POVs

Find one or more points of view (POVs) that are different from your own. What do others believe? Why do they hold that POV?

## CHALLENGE

Question or challenge a point of view (POV) or idea someone else has shared.

*“Another way of looking at it is...”*

## NAME

How does your background, identity, experiences or place you live shape your point of view (POV) on a civic issue related to the artwork you are viewing or making? In other words, where does your POV come from?

## PUSH BEYOND

How do the perspectives shared by other people push your thinking and perhaps your stance in new directions? What other POVs might or do exist?

*“What you shared makes me see this artwork/issue in a new way. I used to think... Now I think...”*

## POVs

State your point of view (POV), position, or opinion on a civic issue that is relevant to the work of art you are viewing or making.

*“Another way to think about this is...”*

*“My point of view on this issue relates to my identity /background as...”*

## REFRAME

Suggest a different or additional way to think about the artwork and/or civic topic being discussed.

*“What is your POV or position on this issue?”*

*“Why do you hold that POV?”*

*“What other POVs might or do exist?”*

# MAKING MOVES

Making something is a way of thinking with your hands. Through the process of making, students develop ideas and perspectives that they might not otherwise have explored.

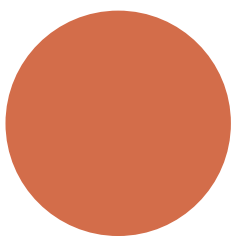
Making Moves is a collection of simple moves that can encourage students to make something in response to a civic topic within a short time frame. Several of the routines and arcs include a making step – for example, **See Think Make Discuss** and **Making the Future**. Below are some ideas for short making activities, and the materials you might use to complete them.

This is a compilation of lean moves – most take between five and fifteen minutes - that you could use to introduce a making component into any learning experience. If you are looking for a deeper making activity that has a built-in civic emphasis, check out our **Civic Making Activities**.

Pair one or more of these Making Moves with an ArtC thinking routine or arc, or use it another time you would like to help students briefly explore a civic topic through making. Each move can be completed by an individual student; however, students can also make something in pairs or groups. The goal here is to focus on the process (thinking through making) rather than the product.

Begin by presenting students with a civic topic or theme. Then, you can invite students to explore or respond to that civic topic by using one of the following making activities.

## Respond to a Discussion of a Civic Theme ...

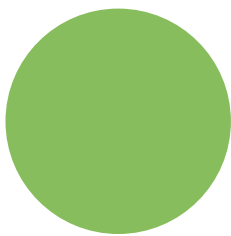


### by creating something 3D out of something 2D.

**The Challenge:** Take a 2D object and turn it into a 3D sculpture.

**Suggested Material:** A piece of paper.

**Suggested Actions:** Fold, rip, bend, twist, or otherwise distort the materials as you see fit.



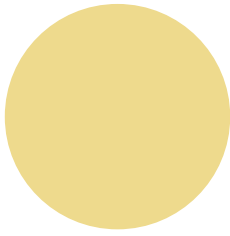
### in color.

**The Challenge:** Create an artwork using only a few different colors.

**Suggested Material:** A piece of paper and a limited pallet – perhaps three to six different colored markers, pencils, or crayons.

**Suggested Actions:** Play with overlapping colors, as well as how lightly or heavily you press down into the paper.

## Respond to a Discussion of a Civic Theme ...

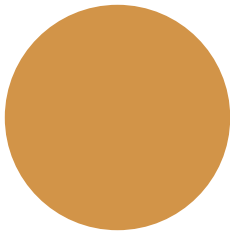


### in dots.

**The Challenge:** Create a visual image that only uses dots.

**Suggested Material:** A piece of paper and a marker or crayon.

**Suggested Actions:** Play with the spacing between dots, as well as the size and the density of the dots.

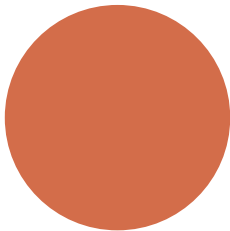


### in movement.

**The Challenge:** Choreograph and execute a movement.

**Suggested Material:** Nothing needed.

**Suggested Actions:** See what happens if you use your whole body. See what happens if you use only a specific body part. Try a long, fluid, or slow movement. Try a short, choppy, or repetitive movement.

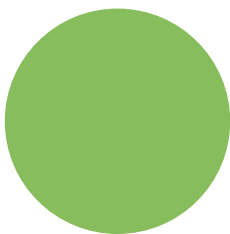


### in high contrast.

**The Challenge:** Create a visual image out of only two colors - one dark, one light.

**Suggested Material:** Glue, white paper, and black construction paper cut into different shapes.

**Suggested Actions:** Arrange the shapes on the white paper, playing around with the positive and negative space. Try a few configurations before gluing the shapes onto the piece of paper.



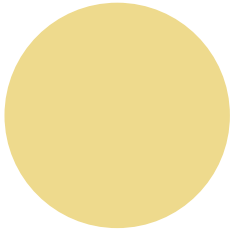
### in texture.

**The Challenge:** Create a sculpture using different textures.

**Suggested Material:** Three materials with distinct textures (ex: felt, sandpaper, and yarn).

**Suggested Actions:** Arrange the materials on a desk. Consider, how much of each texture is visible or able to be touched. Overlap the textures. How does that change the feeling?

# Respond to a Discussion of a Civic Theme ...

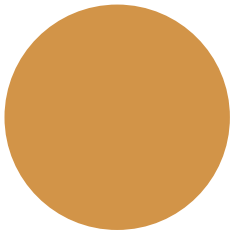


## in collage.

**The Challenge:** Create a collage with a limited set of materials.

**Suggested Material:** Images and/or words cut out of a magazine.

**Suggested Actions:** Play with the order and overlapping of the materials. Consider the composition and density of images and words.

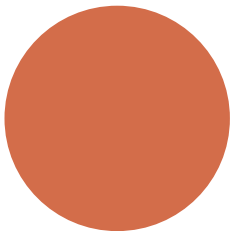


## in lines.

**The Challenge:** Create a work of art made entirely of lines.

**Suggested Material:** Different sized lines cut out of construction paper.

**Suggested Actions:** Arrange the lines on a desk or glue them to a piece of paper. Play with density, placement, patterns, and composition. If you want to “save” your work, you can take a picture of it.

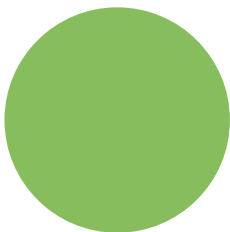


## in gesture.

**The Challenge:** Create a gesture - a movement that expresses an idea or an emotion - or a combination of a few gestures.

**Suggested Material:** None.

**Suggested Actions:** Play with different movements, what does each express?



## in sound.

**The Challenge:** Create a sound, melody, or tune.

**Suggested Material:** Pencils, paper clips, string, the human voice, pennies, a jar, or anything else that can make a sound.

**Suggested Actions:** Play with the length of the sound - is it quick and choppy, is it fluid, is it slow or fast? Play with the layering of sounds.

# SUGGESTED DIGITAL TOOLS

Arts as Civic Commons (ArtC) includes thinking routines and arcs that work in person or remotely. The current situation requires online tools for approaching many topics, however, even in non-pandemic times, students participate in online learning pretty regularly. Facilitators of ArtC routines can work with whatever technology is available, but we have included a list of a few technologies that may be helpful. The suggestions below target steps common to many of the thinking routines that are part of the ArtC repertoire, e.g. the ‘see step’ and the ‘think step’.

## The See Step

Post an image of a work of art on Padlet. Ask students to write what they see by adding digital post-its (i.e. “I see a red hat” or “I see three people sitting by a lake”). If the Padlet is created as a Canvas, students can connect their posts to the original image and they can respond to each other’s comments using connections.

Post an image of a work of art on PollEverywhere. Use the Open-Ended Response feature and ask students to share what they see. Learners’ answers will be compiled together, allowing everyone to see each other’s thinking. Learners can respond anonymously if you like. Share the responses with learners by showing them the screen.

Share an image of the artwork with learners by using the Share Your Screen feature on Zoom. Invite students to use the Annotate feature to make comments about what they see in the work of art.

Use Google Slides to share an image of the artwork. Split learners into groups and invite each group to write what they see on a Google Slide that corresponds to their group number. When the whole class is together again, ask participants to share out what they noticed.

## The Think Step

Send students to short, timed breakout rooms in Zoom to discuss the think step around a work of art. Breakout rooms often work best in smaller groups of two to three students and when the facilitator “hops” from one breakout room to another to listen in on student conversations. After breakout rooms, facilitators can invite each group to share something from their discussion with the whole class.

Post a question, prompt, or civic topic on Popplet. Invite learners to add their thinking to the Popplet, creating a group concept map.

Create and share Google Slides with the group. Number the slides, but otherwise leave them blank. Each numbered slide can correspond to a group number and breakout groups can take notes in their assigned slide.

## Identifying and Choosing Civic Topics

Use the Word Collage feature in PollEverywhere. Share the poll with students, asking them to suggest a one-word civic topic that a work of art addresses. Show the completed Word Collage to your students. The most-suggested civic topics will appear as the biggest words. Alternatively, use the Voting feature. Create a list of civic topics suggested by students or teachers and invite the class to vote using the link to the poll. Share the results with your students.



Ask students to suggest a civic topic that a work of art addresses by typing it into the chat box on Zoom. Alternatively, create a Zoom Poll of possible civic topics for discussing during a thinking routine or arc. Share the poll with students during a Zoom meeting and invite them to vote for the topic they would prefer to discuss.

Create a list of civic topics with students through an open discussion during a Zoom Meeting. Ask students to use the Raise Hand feature to vote for the civic topic of their choice.

Create a Google Form with different civic topics. Share the link with learners, inviting them to vote for their favorite option.

### **Digital Art Making**

Invite learners to make something using discarded materials they have lying around their homes such as empty cans, paper, pencils, etc. Once they have completed the making process, have them share their work by holding it up to their camera on Zoom and talking about it. Facilitators can take screenshots of student work and create a shared document of all the images.

Invite students to use Sketch Together to create a collaborative drawing in small groups. If you do not have an account, learners' collaborative whiteboards will be saved for 1 hour, after which time they will be deleted. However, learners can take a screenshot of their completed work. Draw Chat is another tool that would work for this purpose.

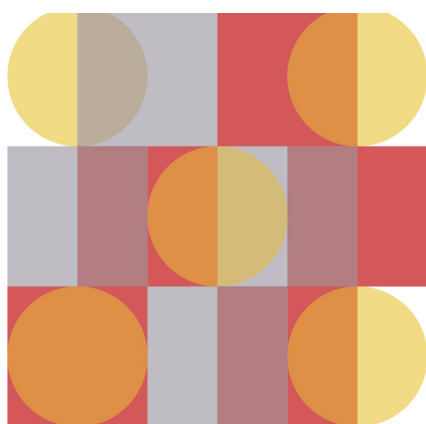
Invite students to create a poster or infographic using Canva.

If the technology is available, invite students to create a short stop-motion film using Stop Motion Studio.

### **Asynchronous Thinking Routines**

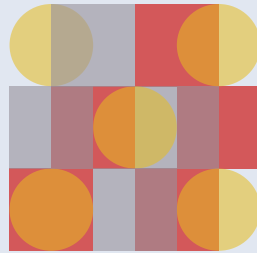
Share one of the thinking routine videos with learners using EdPuzzle. Embed questions throughout the video at each step of the routine. Learners can use the same work of art that is featured in the video or a completely different one. Facilitators can also create a completely new video modeling the thinking routine using an app like Explain Edu.

Provide students with a PDF of a thinking routine or arc. Invite learners to work through the thinking routine individually or in a small group. Learners can record themselves doing the thinking routine either on Zoom or using their computers or phones. To amplify this experience, students can annotate their videos using iMovie to add commentary to their thinking routine experience. Learners can share their videos with another classmate who can respond to the ideas raised in the video with a video, voice recording, or in writing.



PART 4:  
**Art**  
**Resources**





Arts as Civic Commons

# IMAGE BANK

# USING THE IMAGE BANK

## CHOOSING A WORK OF ART

The following pages include a few artworks that we believe will work well with any ArtC routine or arc. However, the art you choose for a particular ArtC experience is completely up to you. Choose any work of art that seems civically-informed and relevant to your participants, even if it is not included in this Image Bank.

## A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE ART

Some of the artworks are in a **series** that include multiple, related pieces (i.e. *Danger of a Single Story*). If a work of art featured here is part of a series, we have written "(series)" after the title. For a series, you might consider using multiple images of different pieces in the series with your students. You might also choose a piece in the series that is not pictured in the Image Bank.

Some of these artworks are quite large. When you share the work of art with participants, it is a good idea to give them a sense of the scale. For example, is the work of art an 8 x 10 photograph or would it likely take up the entire wall of your classroom?

Make sure students are able to easily see the work of art, even the seemingly less important details. It might be a good idea to project one or more images of the artwork on a screen for your participants or to provide a printed image of the artwork to groups.

## CIVIC THEMES

Several of the routines and arcs invite you and your students to identify a civic theme related to the work of art you are considering. Themes can range from something very general - like "human impact on the environment" - to something more specific - like "voting rights in the United States in 2020." Included in the Image Bank you will find information about the artist and the artwork, as well as a few links that provide more information. However, don't feel restricted by the information included. There is no "right" civic theme for any work of art and the theme you choose does not necessarily need to be something that the artist intentionally explored in their work.

# CONTENTS

This page is meant for reference. It contains only small thumbnails of the works of art included in this image bank. For a better, more complete images of the work go to the page number indicated. If you click on the image of an artwork, you will be taken to its corresponding page.



HODA AFSHAR  
*Westoxicated #1*



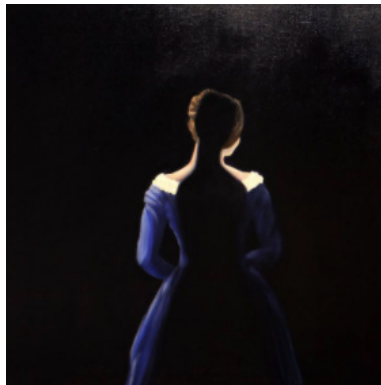
TAMARA DEAN  
*Wormwood (Artemisia Absinthium) in Spring*



TOMMY FUNG  
*Meanwhile in Hong Kong*



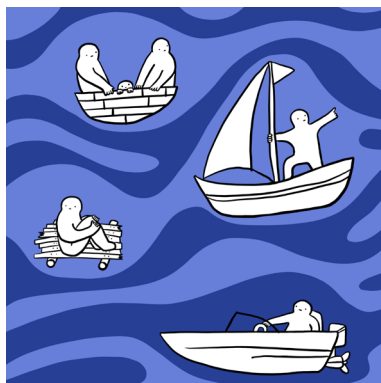
SARAH ROSS  
*Archisuits*



MEGAN SERES  
*Danger of a Single Story (series)*



GUAN WEI  
*The Journey to Australia*



WORRY LINES  
*Untitled*

# WESTOXICATED #1

## HODA AFSHAR



Hoda Afshar, *Westoxicated #1*, from the series *Under Western Eyes* (2014). Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Australia.

Hoda Afshar is an Iranian artist based in Melbourne, Australia. Her artworks explore how gender, marginality and displacement are represented, and employ how the processes of documentary image-making can disrupt traditional image-making practices. The series *Under Western Eyes* is Hoda's response to how stereotypes operate within the contemporary art market, calling attention to how the complexity of the struggle of Iranian women caught between tradition and modernity, their sexual lives and identity, is typically communicated using a single trope: the veil.

**To find out more about the artist and the artwork:**

[The Artist's Website](#)  
[The Guardian](#)  
[Artist Profile](#)

# WORMWOOD (ARTEMISIA ABSINTHIUM) IN SPRING

TAMARA DEAN



*Wormwood (Artemisia Absinthium) in Spring* from the series *In Our Nature* by Tamara Dean, 2017. Courtesy of Tamara Dean and Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney + Berlin.

**To find out more about the artist and the artwork:**

[The Artist's Website](#)

[The Guardian](#)

Tamara Dean is an Australian artist who works with photography, video, and installation. Her art explores the relationship between humans and nature. *Wormwood (Artemisia Absinthium) in Spring* is from the series *In Our Nature*. In this series, Dean photographed over 35 people from the age of two to 80 in order to illustrate the symbolic connection between the earth's seasons – winter, spring, summer and fall – and the stages of a human's life. Through this work and her others, Dean asks us to consider our relationship to nature and our changing environment.

# MEANWHILE IN HONG KONG

## TOMMY FUNG



*Meanwhile in Hong Kong*, by Tommy Fung / IG @ surrealhk, 2020.

**To find out more about the artist and the artwork:**

[The Artist's Ted Talk](#)  
[Forbes Article](#)  
[SCMP Article](#)

Hong Kong photographer Tommy Fung uses Adobe Photoshop to imaginatively express his views on metropolitan Hong Kong. His images can be found on his Instagram account – @surrealhk – and they heavily feature the landscape of Hong Kong in unexpected and often humorous ways. Even though his photographs can be humorous, Fung's work is so detailed that it often looks shockingly real. *Meanwhile in Hong Kong* was created in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. It documents people's reactions to the pandemic, which the artist viewed as, at times, more surreal than his own art.

# ARCHISUITS

## SARAH ROSS



*Archisuit*, 2005-2006. Courtesy of Sarah Ross. <https://www.insecuritiespaces.net/archisuits.html#>

Artist and researcher Sarah Ross works in sculpture, video and photo. Her projects use narrative and the body to address how space relates to access, class, anxiety and activism. *Archisuit* consists of an edition of four leisure jogging suits made for specific architectural structures in Los Angeles. The suits include the negative space of the structures and allow a wearer to fit into, or onto, structures designed to deny

them. The project points at architecture as an arm of the law, a form that uses the built environment to police and control raced, classed and gendered bodies. *Archisuits* suggest a wearer might resist by not only being present but being present comfortably, leisurely.

**To find out more about the artist and the artwork:**

[Insecure Spaces](#)  
[Graphite Journal](#)  
[SAIC](#)



*Archisuit*, 2005-2006. Courtesy of Sarah Ross. <https://www.insecuritiespaces.net/archisuits.html#>

# DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY (SERIES)

## MEGAN SERES



Megan Seres, *Danger of a Single Story (series)*, oil on linen, H152.2cm x W76.2cm, 2017.

Australian artist Megan Seres is a figurative painter who uses a mix of media – oil paint, photography, charcoal, and video – to conceive of and create her work. Her art explores the human condition and tests the boundaries of our perceptions of reality. *Danger of a Single Story* is an expression of how historical events cannot be truthfully recounted through a single perspective, and the importance of inviting a vast array of interpretations so that we do not lose the “truth.” By rendering sections of her subjects invisible, Seres asks us to consider what stories have been omitted from our histories.

**To find out more about the artist and the artwork:**

[Artist's Website](#)  
[Talking with Painter's Podcast](#)  
[Youtube Video](#)



# THE JOURNEY TO AUSTRALIA

## GUAN WEI



Guan Wei, *The Journey to Australia*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2013. Synthetic polymer paint on wall. Commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art, 2013. Image courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne.

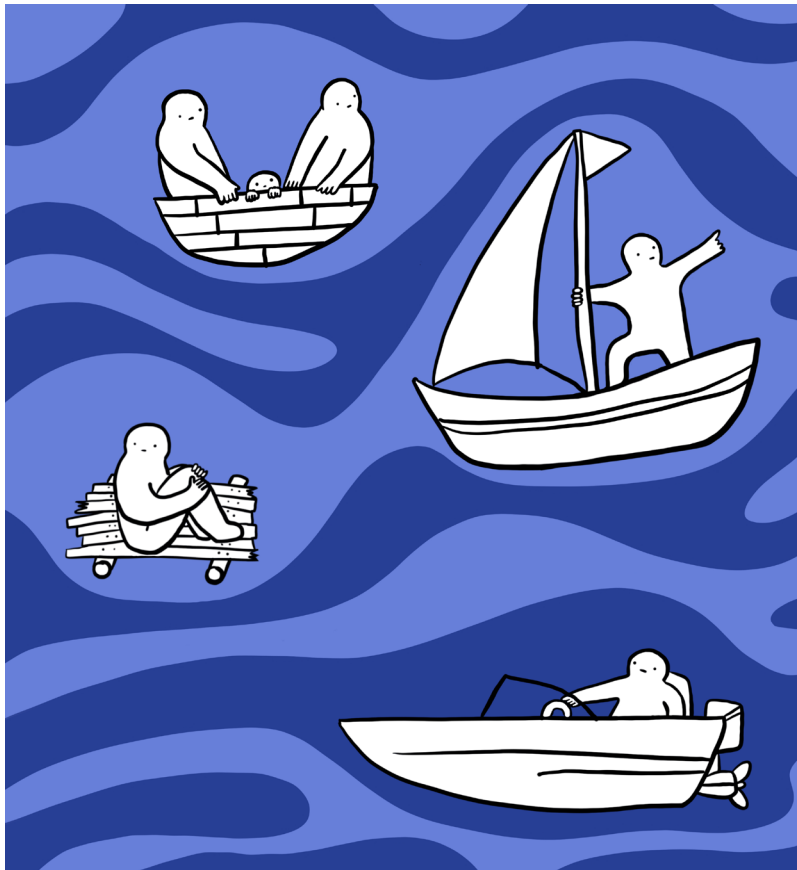
**To find out more about  
the artist and the  
artwork:**

[MCA](#)  
[SMH](#)

The work of Chinese-Australian artist Guan Wei reflects on pressing contemporary issues, such as climate change, questions of identity, migration and exile. His wall painting, *The Journey to Australia* (2013), was inspired by the heated debate and commentary about immigration and refugees in Australia. It combines imagery from mythology, fantasy, history and the present day to depict a fleet of refugee boats heading towards Australian shores.

# UNTITLED

## WORRY LINES



*Untitled* by Worry Lines, 2020. @worry\_\_lines

Worry Lines is an artist whose work capitalizes on the relatability of comic art. Through her drawings, which feature visual puns, idioms and comic metaphors, she documents the many worries – climate crisis, relationships, mental health – that humans might be dealing with today. *Untitled* (2020) features simple blank figures that invites us to consider how even though we might all be living through the same difficult circumstances, each of us has different tools for dealing with the challenges we face.

# Finding Civically Themed Contemporary Art

Searching for artworks can be exciting, but it can also be intimidating and time consuming. With so much artwork out there, it is often hard to know where to start. We have provided a small image bank for you to use, but there is also a lot of other amazing art out there that may speak more directly to the topics that you would like to explore with your students. This document serves as a resource for places you can start your search when looking for artworks.

We recommend focusing your search on contemporary art. Contemporary art is the art of our time and tends to address contemporary issues, making it a valuable resource for discussing civic topics. Of course, you can also choose a historical work of art if it better suits your context. Many of today's civic topics have their roots in historical policies and practices, so earlier works of art can give students a porthole to that history and provide rich grounds for discussion.

*(A note on terms: contemporary and modern art are two different things! Contemporary art is the art made from around the 1960s to today. Modern art is the time period preceding contemporary art, and encompasses works made from around 1880-1960.)*

If you are searching for art on a specific civic theme, a good starting point is often a simple google search (try something like “Contemporary art about X”). A work of art that is able to be interpreted or understood without too much additional information is often a good choice. However, it is okay if that interpretation is not the same interpretation an art critic might have. It can be fun to use a work of art that is open to many interpretations, as long as you remind students to connect it to civic themes.

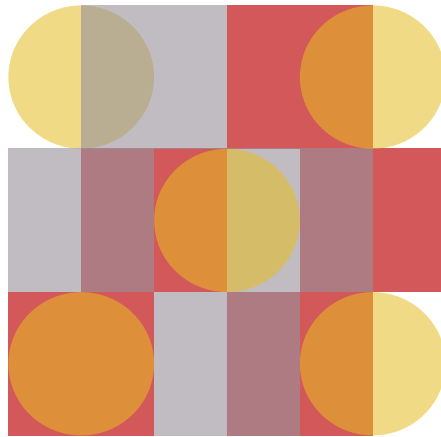
Below is a list of reliable places to start finding contemporary artworks. There are a lot of resources here, pick two or three that seem intriguing and shop around!

- [Art21](#) has excellent videos of interviews with contemporary artists that showcase the artist's work and process. They also have a 'For Educators' section of their site that has helpful resources, including lists of artists who address specific themes with their work.
- [Art Forum](#) is an art news source that has an international lens. It also has information on art shows in major cities across the world.
- [Artsy](#) is a site for buying and selling art, but it also has a wealth of artworks and educational resources. Be sure to check out their Contemporary Art category!
- [Hyperallergic](#) is another great art news source with an emphasis on art in the US.
- *Museum Websites:* When visiting museum sites, it is often helpful to navigate to tabs like “What's On”, “Exhibitions” and “Collection”. Most large museums have their collections available online, and some even allow you to search the collection by theme. You can also browse through the museum's website and check out recent exhibitions whose titles seem to address civic themes. While famous art museums ([MASS MoCA](#), [MoMA PS1](#), [Museum of Contemporary Art](#)
- [Tokyo](#), [Tate Modern](#)) have great resources, your local museums also contain exciting art. Plus, your students could potentially see artworks sourced from local museums in person! You might also want to specifically look for museums with specific themes (in the US, for example: the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the National Museum of African Art).

## Australia Specific Resources

Below is a list of websites that specifically include and highlight artworks and artists from Australia. These links might be a good place to start if you are looking for artworks that speak directly to this context.

- [ACCA](#) is a great source for contemporary art in Melbourne and their website also has helpful educational resources for teaching with contemporary art.
- [Adelaide Biennial](#) is a biennial show of contemporary Australian art. The theme of the 2018 biennial was ‘Divided Times,’ so naturally a lot of artworks with civic themes are included.
- [Art Gallery of New South Wales](#) has an extensive collection of contemporary art as well as a large collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Their site has a lot of helpful information about the artworks as well as other educational resources.
- [Buxton Contemporary](#) is a museum at the University of Melbourne. Their website holds the histories of past exhibitions with helpful information and wall text available to download.
- [Carriageworks](#) is a multi-disciplinary art center in Sydney that has an emphasis on showing large-scale visual artworks.
- [Museum of Contemporary Art Australia](#) has an amazing collection of contemporary art and features a lot of civically engaged exhibitions. They also have an exhibition every year called ‘Primavera’ which features Australian artists under the age of 35.
- [National Gallery of Victoria](#) has a massive collection of Australian and contemporary art, almost all of it available online.
- [The National](#) is a biennial show of contemporary Australian art, first taking place in 2017. The site has a wealth of artworks with excellent informative text and audio recordings about the works.



Arts as Civic Commons



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