

# BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM

## Lesson: A Space for Dialogue



*The Freedom Wall*, 2017. Photo: Tom Loonan

Title: *The Freedom Wall*, 2017 | 1525 Michigan Ave, Buffalo, NY 14209

Artists: John Baker, Julia Bottoms, Chuck Tingley, and Edreys Wajed

Period/Movement: Public Art, Mural, Contemporary Portraiture

Grade Level: 9-12

Enduring Understanding 11.1:

Works of art and design embody and influence the needs, desires, beliefs, traditions, and values of people within a culture.

Essential Questions:

How do art and design enhance people's lives and influence culture?

# LESSON

## Conceptual Basis:

In this lesson, students will explore the historical and contemporary civil rights activists depicted in the mural *The Freedom Wall*. They will research the [leaders who are portrayed](#), connect with a local activist in their own community, and learn about the creation of the mural. Students will collaborate to create a mural for their school that will depict activists from their own community using a unique portrait technique that will simulate the texture of the wall on which *The Freedom Wall* was created. They will also explore the difference between temporary and permanent installations.

## ACTIVITY

### Day 1:

Begin by introducing [public art](#). What is it? What is its purpose? Ask the students to think about why involving the community might help make a public work of art successful. Next, introduce *The Freedom Wall* mural and have students view the documentary about its creation.

After the viewing, begin discussions around three points: texture, community-based art, and activism.

- Begin by discussing the wall texture from *The Freedom Wall* mural and ask the students to share how each artist dealt with the challenge it presented. Explain that this texture will tie into their future mural project.
- Next, discuss the word *community* and what it means to them. Have the students come up with their own definition. What does it mean to have art as part of a community?
- Ask the students to create a list of issues that they think current activists might be thinking about.

Next, give the students a research project. They should begin by researching local contemporary activists in the library. They should find as much information and as many images as possible. Make sure to connect with the librarian ahead of time to prepare materials for their research.

**(Optional Expansion:** Ask students which activists represented in the mural they recognize. Create a list of names they are not so familiar with and ask your students to perform research about those figures. They could present about these activists, along with the local ones.)

### Day 2:

As a class, group students into pairs or small groups to present about their chosen activists. Have them share at least one interesting fact about who they chose, and why they decided to focus on that person. **(Optional Expansion:** The students can develop a set of questions and, if possible, interview their chosen activist. Make sure they take a photo if they do not have one readily available.)

If your students have not been introduced to basic portrait proportions, then begin the artmaking part of the lesson with this technique. Otherwise, have them practice drawing a portrait of one of the activists depicted on *The Freedom Wall*.

## Days 3–5

Each student is to receive a large piece of cardboard. Instruct the students to begin by drawing in pencil an outline of their local activist. After they have outlined the portrait, they can rip the cardboard in the background or keep it whole. This will simulate the texture of the wall that *The Freedom Wall* mural was created on. The students are to draw directly onto the cardboard using whatever drawing materials are available.

When the portraits are completed, the class will discuss how and where they want to display their portraits. Explain that this will be a temporary installation. Talk about why some murals are temporary and some are permanent. This could lead into discussion about materials, location, and purpose.

Lead a discussion about titling their work. Why do they think *The Freedom Wall* was given that title? What title would work best for their piece? Does it represent their community? Why or why not?

Additionally, students can write an article inspired by the process of researching and interviewing (if applicable) a local activist.

- What did you find most challenging about the artmaking? Research?
- Is your activist well known? Why did you choose their story to share?
- How does it feel to have your work included as part of a larger project?

## Objectives

- Explore the idea of art as an opportunity to make new connections, or to connect directly within one's community
- Research contemporary activists from the students' community
- Learn a unique portrait technique
- Understand and experience collaborative processes through group work and learn how to create a mural for the public
- Create a public display of portraits

## Vocabulary

**mural:** a painting or other work of art executed directly on a wall

**activist:** a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change

**composition:** the placement or arrangement of visual elements in a work of art

Materials: [Documentary of the Making of The Freedom Wall](#)

Library time for research

Cardboard

Scissors

Mark-making materials

- Acrylic paint
- Charcoal
- Graphite
- Markers
- Conte crayons

New York State Standards:

The New York State Visual Arts Standards for High School Students are divided into 3 categories, Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced rather than by grade level. Please feel free to choose the standard that best applies to the needs of your students and class curriculum.

Grade Level 9–12	Code	Standard
<b>Proficient</b>	VA:Cn11.1.HSI	Investigate ways that art and design from one culture or time period can influence artists and designers from a different culture or time period.
<b>Accomplished</b>	VA:Cn11.2.HSII	Explore past and current examples of artists working together with other professionals to generate solutions to ecological, social, and/or economic problems.
<b>Advanced</b>	VA:Cn11.1.HSIII	Assess the effect of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Students are to create a chat label about their work of art. This can include information about the activist, why that person was chosen to be represented, and how their work belongs to the overall theme of the mural.