

Title: 122 Conversations for Children and Youth: Art as a Catalyst for Social Change

Grade Level/Age: all ages

Time Needed: 2-3 class periods

Focus: Children will create abstract paintings inspired by 122 Conversations using colors, gestural marks, to build cultural understanding through art

Objectives: Students will:

(K-3) Strand II: Artistic Process: Create or Make

Standard 1: Create or Make in a variety of contexts in the arts area using the artistic foundations.

0.2.1.5.1

Create original two- and three-dimensional artworks to express ideas, experiences, or stories

(4-5) Standard 3: Demonstrate understanding of the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts that influence the art areas.

4.1.3.5.2

Describe how visual art communicates meaning

Motivational Resources: PowerPoint of 122 Conversations, postcards and posters of 122 Conversation Sister City inspired paintings, flags of each 5 Sister City, a map, music from each sister city.

Art Materials: scrap paper, pencils, silver wrapping paper, acrylic paint, paper plates, smocks, newspaper, water containers, brushes, metallic Sharpie markers (non-toxic paint markers).

Introduction to Lesson:

Since the early 20th century artists have explored the possibilities of abstraction and expressive mark making. By directly responding to ideas, impressions, and emotions artists can create innovative and meaningful compositions. Anne Labovitz is a contemporary Minnesota artist who has extended and explored the possibilities of visual abstraction for community building and cross cultural understanding. Labovitz's "122 Conversations" is an exploration of how a political, social and cultural platform can be turned into a personal act of care." – *Omayra Alvarado, Artist and Curator, 2017*. Labovitz socially aware and process-driven practice culminated in a five year project 122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders. This international exhibition includes large-scale work that explores cross-cultural connections through interviews, paintings, and performative participatory art.

"This work reflects conversations about generosity, friendship, reciprocity, community building, emotional exchange, and how these ideas are experienced through art. By utilizing text as an

intuitive interpretation of human connection, I archive my experiences, visually chronicling them to find a universal language. The human form or the written word are visible at varying degrees. The pieces draw the viewer inward to experience an encounter with the subject and the collective consciousness. Her painting process is a focused act of mark making and record keeping, my form of note-taking. I approach creation with the same rigor and mindfulness that I employ while conducting interviews. Revisiting my experiences with each participant, I focus on embedding the painting with the essence of the subject's beauty, resilience, and spirit and their connection to other interviewees through overlapping layers. Color is a central tool for creating my work; washes of light and transparent color skate across the Tyvek®, adhering in locations they have been allowed to rest longest. I choose colors and methods of application to visually portray the connection and abundance of the interview moments. Colors are chosen as a result of my emotional or intuitive response to the interview and with consideration of formal elements of composition and contrasting tone. In this way, each piece acquires its uniqueness and reflects my experience of the conversation (<http://www.mnartists.org/anne-labovitz>). ”

Instructional Procedure for Art Making:

Day 1: Students will be introduced to visual abstraction and the art of Anne Labovitz through a powerpoint. The teacher will encourage students to observe her use of layering, color harmonies, and dynamic mark making using a variety of text (large, small, angular, geometric, curvilinear, thin and thick marks etc.) The class will gather around the teacher for a demonstration of layering paint on a long classroom banner. A silver wrapping banner is placed on each table. Students will explore how colors interact, how colors can suggest moods, and how colors can resonate and create visual unity in the composition. Students will think about each 5 Duluth Sister City as they add color to the classroom banner. Students will be asked to observe her color harmonies for inspiration and instructive layering techniques. If there is time left: While the banner is drying students can find partners to interview: begin with questions of favorite activities, and favorite colors and what peace means to them. As the children interview each other they should be encouraged to make marks (without looking) on a piece of paper to practice abstract mark making, line gestures, and layering techniques. This note taking technique will be expanded upon during the next class.

Day 2: The teacher will reinforce the objectives of art as a way to build cultural bridges, engagement, and community. The dried colorful banners will be placed so that each child has a place around it. Using metallic Sharpie markers, the teacher will demonstrate techniques that the children can explore as they begin to interview each other, making marks of names, favorite things, what peace means to them and what they know about children's lives in the 5 different Duluth Sister Cities. Every 10 minutes the teacher will have students move to the next table so that they can continue layering their mark making on a new surface and respond to the marks and colors that are there. This will become a community building exercise as children see new marks and colors. At the end of the class, the banners will be hung up for an informal critique. Students

will be asked about the marks and colors, and how the banner experience helped them understand and appreciate the paintings by Anne Labovitz and to gain an appreciation for abstraction in art. The children will write small artist statements to reflect on their experience with the 122 Conversations International project and how art can be a universal way to foster global understanding and promote peace.

Day 3: The teacher will hang the banners in the library and the children will prepare for a school sharing. The teacher will display flags from the 5 Duluth Sister Cities and display the artist statements by children with documentation about the process of creating the banners and the how the class participated in Anne Labovitz's project. The students will be asked to invite their families to the library to view the class banners. Later, the art teacher will divide the banners into squares so each child can take one square home after the teacher takes digital photos. Each photo will emailed to the 122 Conversation website to be exhibited in the Tweed Museum of Art grand finale exhibition September 25-December 31, 2018.

Inclusive Discipline Based Art Education:

Art production: Students created colorful layered abstract paintings of peace and cross-cultural awareness

Art history: Students learned about abstraction and contemporary artist Anne Labovitz

Art Criticism: Students discussed the expressive possibilities of abstraction, mark marking, layering, and dynamic overlapping of marks and colors to create bridges to cultural understanding

Aesthetic: The students gained an appreciation for the beauty of abstraction color field paintings, calligraphic mark making, and messages of international peace

Bibliography:

labovitz.com

<https://artfulliving.com/inside-the-artists-studio-anne-labovitz/>

<http://www.mnartists.org/anne-labovitz>

<http://122conversations.com/>

Iloveyouinstitute.com

Key concepts:

Listening

Peace

Friendship
Archiving
Visual language
Language of friendship
Color field
Expression

inclusion
Acceptance
Respect
Note taking
Acknowledging
Palimpsest

122 Conversations: Person to Person, Art Beyond Borders is an artist led project based on engagement — art derived from the process of interconnection and cross-cultural dialogue. This project celebrates humanity, human connection, and the *radical* and *political* act of caring.

Essential Founding Principle of 122 Conversations

“Language of Friendship”
“Finding joy”

122 Conversations is an inclusive endeavor. Inherent in *122 Conversations* is embracing diversity and a sense of belonging.

A person who embraces diversity:

“respect[s], value[s] and celebrate[s] the unique attributes, characteristics and perspectives that make each person who they are. [They] also believe that bringing diverse individuals together allows us to collectively and more effectively address the issues that face our communities.”

122 Conversations accepts the following definition of diversity:

“the quality of being different or unique at the individual or group level. This includes age; ethnicity; gender; gender identity; language differences; nationality; parental status; physical, mental and developmental abilities; race; religion; sexual orientation; skin color; socioeconomic status; work and behavioral styles; the perspectives of each individual shaped by their nation, experiences and culture—and more. Even when people appear the same on the outside, they are different!”¹

¹ Way, United. "United Way About Diversity and Inclusion." United Way 2017. Web.