COMING TO AMERICA:
LACHAISE, LAURENT, NADELMAN, AND ZORACH, 1914-1945
ON VIEW OCTOBER 14, 2017 - JANUARY 7, 2018
ORGANIZED BY THE PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART, MAINE, AND THE AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Lesson Plan | Grades 1 - 12

Memphis Brooks Museum of Art in Overton Park
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About The Exhibition

Coming to America explores the integral relationships among modernism, classicism, and popular imagery in the sculpture of four European immigrant sculptors: Gaston Lachaise, Robert Laurent, Elie Nadelman, and William Zorach. By the beginning of World War I, all four artists had settled in the United States, each responding differently to his new home and laying the seeds for what would become their shared, lifelong preoccupation: exploring the communicative power of the human form. Prior to their arrival in America, Lachaise, Laurent, Nadelman, and Zorach each enjoyed formative experiences in Paris during an exhilarating era of artistic experimentation. They witnessed the development of modernism and its growing effects on science, industry, academic practice, and the arts. Their shared simplicity in form and smooth surfaces distinguish their style from that of preceding sculptors in the 19th century. Assembled from public and private collections, this exhibition includes approximately 60 sculptures and a number of preparatory drawings.

For thousands of years, an important part of training to be an artist has included the study of the human figure. Some sculptures in this exhibition include images of bodies that have not been covered by clothing. The artists used this technique on purpose to highlight the beautiful details of the figures’ muscles, bones, and limbs. There will be no discussion or engagement with these artworks in your students’ tour, though it is important to remember that students may pass by images of unclothed bodies in the galleries.

Learning Standards

Suggested TN State Standards in Visual Art

Standard 1.0 Media, Techniques, and Processes:
Students will understand and apply media, techniques, and processes.

Standard 3.0 Evaluation:
Students will choose and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Standard 4.0 Historical and Cultural Relationships:
Students will understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Standard 6.0 Interdisciplinary Connections:
Students will make connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Suggested TN State Standards in English Language Arts

Speaking & Listening
Grades 1-12: CC.1, CC.3, PKI.4, PKI.6
Goals of the Tour Experience

During your museum visit, students have the opportunity to learn about the materials and techniques used to create different types of sculpture. By examining the human forms in the exhibition, students discuss the concept that posture and gesture can communicate ideas and emotions. Conversations about the immigrant experience of the four artists in the exhibition inspires students to contemplate their personal views and knowledge about immigration, while highlighting the value of multiculturalism in American popular culture.

Tour Objectives

Students will:

• Explain how line, form, and texture influence the appearance of sculptural artwork.

• Explore materials and techniques used in creating different kinds of sculpture, such as: wood carving, bronze casting, stone carving, and clay firing.

• Make connections between the artist’s experience as an immigrant and how that’s reflected in their artwork.

• Recognize ways that posture and gesture can communicate ideas and emotions.

Objectives Established with Bloom’s Taxonomy

The learner will:

Remember  
Recall existing knowledge to discuss how the elements of art, specifically line, form, and texture, work together to create sculpture.

Understand  
Expand their knowledge of various techniques and materials used in creating sculpture.

Apply  
View, identify, and describe different emotions, ideas, or attitudes conveyed through posture and gesture.

Analyze  
Differentiate between various materials and techniques used to make different sculptures.

Evaluate  
Determine which emotion, idea, or attitude a figure’s posture and gesture convey by using visual evidence.


Compare and contrast two examples of sculpture while discussing the similarities and differences between the two.

Create  
Design a work of art which utilizes the elements of art and depicts the human figure.
Teacher Resources

Suggested websites:


Encyclopedia Britannica: Sculpture Methods & Techniques [https://www.britannica.com/art/sculpture/Methods-and-techniques]


Teacher Resources

Suggested Reading:

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<td><strong>Sculptor</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sculpture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Additive</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Subtractive</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Bronze</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Bust</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Casting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Chisel</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Firing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Form</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Free-standing sculpture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gesture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Immigrant</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Modernism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shape</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Terracotta</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Texture</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Three-Dimensional</strong></td>
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Elementary Classroom Activities

Activity 1 | Lower Elementary Mathematics Connection

Materials: construction paper, scissors, glue stick

Sculptures are basic shapes that have been transformed by the artist to create more complex shapes. In some sculptures, the artist has intentionally kept some of the basic shapes apparent. Instruct students to cut out a square, oval, circle, diamond, trapezoid, hexagon, pentagon, triangle, and rectangle and have them try to create a 2-dimensional sculpture using all nine of the shapes. They can cut down the shapes to make them more complex, as long as they maintain the shape’s essence. During the activity, have a discussion about which shapes are polygons.

TN State Standards in Mathematics
Grade 1: 1.G.A.1, 1.G.A.2
Grade 2: 2.G.A.1
Grade 3: 3.G.A.1, 3.G.A.3

Activity 2 | Lower Elementary Social Studies Connection

Materials: World Map, I’m New Here by Anne Sibley O’Brien

The four artists included in the Coming to America exhibition came to the United States as immigrants. Gaston Lachaise and Robert Laurent were natives of France, Elie Nadelman was raised in present day Poland, and William Zorach was born in Lithuania. Ask students to locate these countries on a world map. Read aloud I’m New Here by Anne Sibley O’Brien. Discuss as a class what it might feel like to be in a new place where you don’t know anyone. Did your family move to the United States before or after you were born? Do you have a friend that was born in another country? When you meet a new friend who just moved to your town, what is something you can do to help them feel at home?

TN State Standards in Social Studies
Grade 1: 1, 2, 4, 15, 18
Grade 2: 1, 16
Grade 3: 39, 41
Activity 3 | Lower and Upper Elementary Language Arts Connection

Explore nonverbal ways of communicating emotion in this fun classroom game. As a class, brainstorm a list of 10-15 different emotions and write them on the board or have students take notes (examples: fear, joy, disgust, anticipation, anger, sadness, surprise, pity, love, jealousy, etc.). Divide your class in half to create two teams. One student from team “A” will select an emotion of their choice and assume a pose that communicates that emotion at the front of the classroom. Team “B” will have one minute to guess the emotion based only on the pose and facial expressions. If the team guesses correctly, they receive one point. Switch teams and play again. BONUS: Play this same game, but only allow students to use their hands in communicating the emotion.

TN State Standards in Social Studies
Grade 1: 1, 2, 4, 15, 18
Grade 2: 1, 16
Grade 3: 39, 41

Activity 4 | Upper Elementary Mathematics Connection

Materials: protractor, paper, pencil

The sculptures you saw at the museum depict varying angles and attitudes. Discuss how the intensity of angles (or lack thereof) causes there to be more of an active or passive expression in a figure. Angles are made from lines, and lines express different emotions; for example horizontal lines typically seem calm, while vertical lines alert your attention, and perhaps horizontal and vertical lines together might show strength and permanence. Do obtuse angles spark activity or leisure? Do acute angles cause there to be more of a relaxed or excited aura? Is this definitive or are there exceptions to the rule? What makes angles seem more active or passive? Use a protractor to create examples of different types of angles and assign them an adjective based on the emotion students feel it expresses.

TN State Standards in Mathematics
Grade 4: G.A.1, G.A.2

Activity 5 | Lower and Upper Elementary Science Connection

Materials: toothpicks, stale marshmallows

When creating a sculpture, artists must take into account the balance of the materials they are using. Sculptors take on the role of an engineer in order to understand the concepts of gravity and weight sharing. Provide students with toothpicks and stale marshmallows (stale Peeps are also fun) and have the students create sculptures by sticking toothpicks in the marshmallows. Continue this process until it can stand alone. BONUS: Decrease the amount of toothpicks that the students are allowed to use for the sculptures.

TN State Standards in Science
Motion
Grade 1: GLE 0107.11.1
Grade 2: GLE 0207.9.1, GLE 0207.12.2
Grade 3: GLE 0307.11.1
Grade 5: GLE 0507.12.1, GLE 0507.12.2
Activity 1 | High School Language Arts Connection

Further immerse your students in the history and culture of the early 20th century by reading excerpts from E.L. Doctorow’s work of historical fiction, *Ragtime*. The novel tells a story of three families – a middle/upper class family from New Rochelle, a family of Jewish immigrants, and a young African American family. Through this text, students will encounter prominent historical figures of the early 20th century, like J.P. Morgan, Emma Goldman, Henry Ford, Harry Houdini, and Evelyn Nesbit. Discuss the themes, motifs, and symbols in the reading. Compare and contrast passages from *Ragtime* to sculptures seen in the exhibition. Have students write about the text meeting grade level expectations for word count, grammar, and content.

TN State Standards in English Language Arts

**Reading**
Grades 9-12: RL.KID.1, RL.KID.2, RL.KID.3, .RL.CS.4, RL.CS.6, RL.RRTC.10

**Speaking & Listening**
Grades 9-12: SL.CC.1, SL.CC.3, SL.PKI.6

**Writing**
Grades 9-12: W.TTP.2, W.PDW.4

Activity 2 | Middle and High School Social Studies Connection

All four artists included in the *Coming to America* exhibition came to the United States as immigrants. Gaston Lachaise and Robert Laurent were natives of France, Elie Nadelman was raised in present day Poland, and William Zorach was born in Lithuania. Conduct research and write a hypothesis with credible evidence as to what cultural changes and historical events in the early 20th century may have spurred the increase of European immigration to the United States.

TN State Standards in United States History & Geography

**The Progressive Era**
Grade 9-12: 14, 18, 19, 24, 30

**The 1920s**
Grade 9-12: 31, 32, 34, 42

TN State Standards in English Language Arts

**Writing**
Activity 3 | Middle School Math Connection

(Please note that the prices of the materials in this activity are not accurate in real life.)

Most of the time, making a piece of art requires some kind of a purchase. This usually happens when the artist is buying materials for their piece. In *Mother and Child* by William Zorach, he used mahogany (wood) to sculpt this piece. Its dimensions are 31\times12\times12.5 inches and mahogany is priced at $5 per inch. In Elie Nadelman's sculpture *Acrobat*, he used bronze and its dimensions are 17.5\times6\times9.25 inches and bronze is priced at $10 per inch. In Robert Laurent’s sculpture *Plant Form* he used fruitwood and its dimensions are 32\times5.75\times5.75 inches. Fruitwood is priced at $6 per inch. In Gaston Lachaise’s sculpture *Head of Edward M.M. Warburg*, he used alabaster (a kind of rock) and its dimensions are 14.5\times8\times9 inches. Alabaster is priced at $12 per inch. How much did it cost for the artists to purchase the materials for each sculpture? Have students rank sculptures in order from least to greatest cost.

TN State Standards in Mathematics
Grade 6: NS.A.1, EE.A.1, EE.A.2, EE.B.7
Grade 7: NS.A.2, NS.A.3, EE.B.4, G.B.5

Activity 4 | Middle School Science Connection

Artists are heavily influenced by anything and everything that goes on in the environment around them. The human body is something that has influenced and fascinated many artists for centuries. Have the students research an aspect of human biology that interests them (whether it is an eye or mitochondria or fingernail, it doesn’t matter) and have them come up with a design for a sculpture, including the materials and dimensions. Have them include a brief essay about why they chose those materials, dimensions, and aspect of the human body.

Activity 5 | Lower and Upper Elementary Science Connection

As a class, have a discussion comparing the culture and events of the early 20th century with contemporary issues that the United States faces today. What’s different? What are the similarities? What makes you say that?

- Elected officials, presidential campaigns, and administration scandal
- Commerce, trade, and the stock market
- Wage gap
- Interest in celebrities and sports players
- Immigration

TN State Standards in Social Studies

Contemporary Issues
Grade 9-12: 1,2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15

United States History & Geography
Grade 9-12: 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 54