

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students watch two segments from Craft in America's QUILTS episode featuring artists Victoria Findlay Wolfe and Michael A. Cummings. Findlay Wolfe has always been fascinated with color, pattern, and design. She pushes boundaries through her quilt-making and believes that creativity requires risks. Michael A. Cummings brings years of painting and collages skills to creating quilts that are narrative and tell stories about the African American experience across historical, cultural, philosophical and mythological realms. Through exploration and interpretations of the artists' quilts, students consider how their quilts are used, the artists' processes and where they get their inspiration. In studio work, students will make a paper patchwork design, choosing to alter a traditional patchwork design or create a collaged portrait of a notable subject.

Key Concepts:

- Some quilt artists choose to work with traditions; others choose to break with and change traditional designs to make new ones.
- Some quilts are intended as art objects and not used as blankets.
- Quilt artists may work in themes.

Critical Questions:

- How can a traditional quilt design be altered to make a new one?
- How can quilts be used if not as a blanket?
- How can you discover a theme in a quilt artist's work?

Objectives

Students will:

- Sketch a traditional quilt design and alter it to make it different.
- Create a paper quilt design that could be a plan for a non-functional quilt.
- Organize their paper quilt designs in groups with similar themes.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Visual Arts/Creating #VA:Cr2.2
Process Component: Investigate
Anchor Standard: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Visual Arts/Presenting #VA:Pr.4.1
Process Component: Relate
Anchor Standard: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- Visual Arts/Responding #VA:Re8.1
Process Component: Perceive
Anchor Standard: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Student Worksheets

- Handout #1: *Quilts Video Search*
- Handout #2: *Studying the Art Quilts of Victoria Findlay Wolfe*
- Handout #3: *Studying the Art Quilts of Michael A. Cummings*

Interdisciplinary Connection

Social Studies: With Michael A. Cummings' work as inspiration, students choose notable African American individuals to feature in collaged patchwork portraits. This provides an opportunity for investigating notable individuals and important events in American history, especially those pertaining to African American history and culture. Also, as they study traditional American quilt block designs, students will encounter many stories detailing particular times and lives in American history.

About the Artists

Victoria Findlay Wolfe is a New York-based international award-winning quilter, fabric designer, teacher, author and lecturer. Findlay Wolfe is known for making quilts that look difficult to make, then teaching quilters to make them. Each quilt she makes pushes boundaries, supporting her premise that creativity requires risk. Findlay Wolfe was always fascinated by color, pattern, and design. Growing up in Minnesota, inspired by a creative mother and grandmother who was an avid quilt maker, she learned to quilt and sew at 4 years old. After training as a painter, she found her life's passion to be quilting. She has a fine art degree in



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painting but found her life's passion in quilt making. Now a New York-based international award-winning quilter, fabric designer, teacher, author and lecturer.

Michael A. Cummings is a nationally recognized quilter who lives and works in the historic Sugar Hill neighborhood of New York, NY. Self-taught, Cummings brought years of painting and collage skills to his quilt making. Inspired by jazz and working in the narrative tradition, Cummings and his sewing machine tell stories of the African American experience across historical, cultural, philosophical and mythical realms. Using vibrant colors, applique technique, and a sewing machine for the main body of the piece, he often embellishes the surface with hand embroidery and found objects. Stories involve celebrations of Josephine Baker, Harriet Tubman, Langston Hughes, jazz music, mythical/historical characters, and commemorate historical events in African American history. Cummings views his quilts as giant collages, likening the process of construction to painting on canvas.