

MAKING OUR SPACE: *Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists*

Educator Handout: Grades 7-12

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

[Making Our Space: Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists](#) is a group exhibition featuring fourteen members of the ever-expanding Peoria-based artists guild, often referred to as [PGOBA](#). The artist collective was organized in June 2020 following the murder of George Floyd—and in response to nationwide uprisings and the Black Lives Matter movement—to focus on celebrating and uplifting the voices of Black artists in Peoria, Illinois. This exhibition explores Black identity, Black joy, and Black community through painting, drawing, graphic design, illustration, printmaking, photography, video, performance, and poetry. The exhibition also premieres [Carving Our Space: New Kids on the Block](#), a year-long remote print collaboration organized by [Normal Editions](#), a non-profit print research facility founded in 1976 within the Wonsook Kim School of Art.

ARTISTS

Participating artists: Kevin J. Bradford, Krystopher Dudley Brown, Alexa Cary, Kameron Hoover, David L. Jennings, Chantell Marlow, Alexander Martin, Erick Minnis, Morgan Mullen, Hannah Offutt, Brenda Pagan, Rose de Peoria, Kayla Thomas, and Quinton Thomas.

structural frame

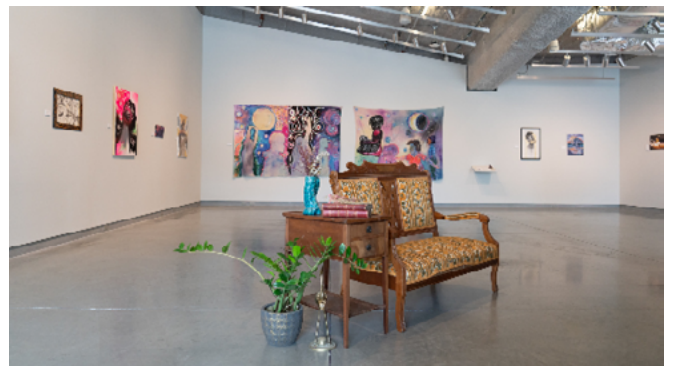
- Examine how artworks in the [exhibition](#) have been arranged throughout the gallery space. Why do you think the curator chose to arrange and display the artworks in this way? How do these choices impact the connections a viewer might make between works in the exhibition?
- Describe how PGOBA artists have used similar mediums and techniques in different ways. How have the artists used these materials to communicate meaning to the viewer?
- Explore the ways in which poetry has been incorporated and displayed throughout the exhibition. Describe how each format—handwritten, typed, and performed—affects your personal response to, and understanding of, the poems.

cultural frame

- What themes do you notice throughout the exhibition?
- How do artworks in this exhibition speak to social, cultural, and political topics and events?
- In what ways do artworks in the exhibition support or challenge your existing perceptions of the world?

subjective frame

- What associations do you have with the materials and subject matter seen throughout the exhibition?
- Which artwork stands out most to you and why? Based on what you see, what do you think the work is about?
- PGOBA members recently began taking yoga classes at Soulside Healing Arts—a yoga studio in Peoria, Illinois—to focus together on Black wellness. [Collective Subconscious](#) is a collaborative mural inspired by this practice. What self-care activities do you engage in to maintain your own mental and physical well-being? Can you find other artworks in the exhibition that relate to this theme?



Installation view of *Making Our Space: Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists* at University Galleries of Illinois State University, 2021.

VOCABULARY

CONTEMPORARY

something that belongs to the present or current time

CURATOR

a museum professional responsible for obtaining, displaying, and caring for works of art

DESIGN CONVENTIONS

refers to elements and principles of design such as line, shape, color, balance, movement, contrast, and unity

MEDIUM

materials used to create art

PRINTMAKING

an artmaking method of transferring an image from one surface to another, producing a mirror image

SELF-CARE

practices of caring for your mental, physical, spiritual, social, practical, professional, and emotional well-being

SUBJECT MATTER

what is being depicted in an image or artwork

SUBJECTIVE

something that is open to interpretation; up to the viewer to decide

TECHNIQUES

methods used to create an artwork

THEME

recurring ideas, materials, or subject matter

TRADITIONAL MEDIUMS

materials commonly used to create art, such as graphite, charcoal, paint, pastels, or clay

EVENTS

- Virtual exhibition tours are available for classes, community groups, and individuals by appointment. Contact gallery@illinoisstate.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule.
- Recorded artist talks produced by Normal Editions will be released online throughout the exhibition and announced via University Galleries' [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts.
- Early Career Black Artists, a virtual panel discussion, will be announced via University Galleries' [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts.
- *Poets of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists*, a spoken word poetry video, is available on the exhibition [web page](#).
- Educator resources, activities for children and youth, and art lesson videos are available on the exhibition [web page](#).
- An exhibition video tour will be available in July via University Galleries' [Vimeo](#).

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact gallery@illinoisstate.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.



ART-MAKING ACTIVITIES

- PGOBA was formed in June of 2020, shortly after the murder of George Floyd. These artists came together in the shared and supportive space of Brenda Pagan's home to discuss mutual experiences without fear of judgment or disregard. In response to PGOBA's origin, prompt students to create an artwork about their own safe spaces (whether existing or desired) and how they find a sense of community. Resources for teaching critical issues of social justice can be found at [Teaching for Change](#) and [Black Lives Matter at School](#).
- As a class, investigate ways PGOBA artists have used their artwork to reference specific times, places, and experiences—such as [Alexander Martin's](#) references to queer culture, Rose de Peoria's stencil image of the [Venus of Willendorf](#), and Krystopher Dudley Brown's work on cardboard titled [Look out world](#), that reads "Hard Times Please Help!" Then assist students in researching related current events and discerning how they are connected to their own lived experiences. Instruct students to create an artwork in response to their research and inquiry.
- Identity is one of many themes explored by PGOBA artists. Introduce students to different facets of identity, including personal, social, and cultural identities. Consider using this [resource](#) from the University of Minnesota Libraries as a guide. Following this introduction, ask students what they think they know about artists in the exhibition based on what they see in their artwork. Do students find that they relate to any of the artists based on their analyses? Then, invite students to create an artwork that communicates aspects of their own personal, social, and cultural identities.
- During their time working with [Normal Editions](#), participating PGOBA artists created [woodcut prints](#) based on themes within their individual artistic practices. Introduce students to [woodcut](#) printing tools and techniques. Then assign students to design and create a relief print based on a theme of personal interest.
- As a class or in small groups, [listen](#) to and analyze poems in the exhibition. Then discuss the content and structure of the poems. Prompt students to write a free verse poem inspired by their reading or a topic of their choice. Consider holding an in-person or pre-recorded student-led poetry slam. Encourage students to create artwork in response to their writing to display during the readings.
- Followed by a lesson or unit on [self-care](#), and in response to [Collective Subconscious](#)—a collaborative large-scale diptych painting of PGOBA members in various yoga poses—guide students in creating an artwork about their own self-care practices. Consider displaying students' work during a student-led school or community event such as a yoga session or artmaking workshop.
- After discussing the arrangement of works in [Making Our Space](#), guide students in curating a group exhibition around a theme of their choice. As a class, consider how the location of the exhibition, arrangement of objects and images within the space, and display choices—both digital and physical—impact the messages conveyed to viewers.