

MAKING OUR SPACE:

Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists

Educator Handout: Grades K-6

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

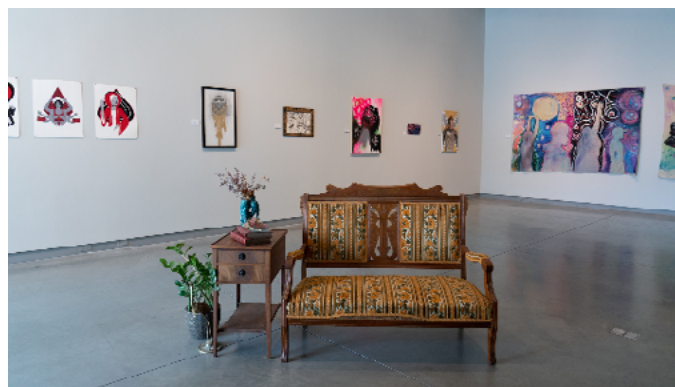
- Search for artworks in the [exhibition](#) that are displayed in surprising ways. Why do you think the artists made the decision to show their work in this way? How does the method for displaying artwork alter the meaning of the work?
- Look closely for artworks in the exhibition made from similar materials. How have the artists used these materials in different ways? Why do you think the artists made these decisions?

cultural frame

- Community is central to the work of PGOBA artists. Find an artwork in the exhibition that you think best represents this theme and describe why you chose it.
- What signs and symbols—such as smiley faces, flowers, and crosses—do you recognize throughout the exhibition? Why do you think the artists included these in their work?
- Many artists in the exhibition explore identity—the things that make a person who they are—in their artwork. What do you think you know about the artists based on what you see in their work? Do you find that you relate to the artists in any way? How so?

subjective frame

- In what ways do you see PGOBA artists exploring joy in their work?
- Which artwork stands out most to you and why? Based on what you see, what do you think the work is about?
- To focus on Black wellness, PGOBA members recently began taking yoga classes together at Soulside Healing Arts in Peoria, Illinois. [*Collective Subconscious*](#) is a collaborative mural inspired by this practice. What are some things that you do every day to take care of your mind and body? 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

ACCESSIBILITY

having access to something, such as art museums and galleries, art classes, and exhibition spaces

COLLABORATION

the process of communicating and working with others to achieve a goal

COMMUNITY

a group of people with similar interests, values, and goals

COMPOSITION

the arrangement of visual elements in an artwork

CONTEMPORARY

something that belongs to the present or current time

MEDIUM

materials used to create art

SUBJECT MATTER

what is being depicted in an image or artwork

SUBJECTIVE

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

SYMBOL

an image or object that stands for an idea or a feeling such as a peace sign, a red light, or a heart shape

TECHNIQUES

methods used to create an artwork

THEME

recurring ideas, materials, or subject matter

VISUAL ELEMENTS

the basic building blocks of art including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value

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

- Inspired by the theme of Black joy—one of many narratives explored in [Making Our Space: Members of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists](#)—guide students in creating an artwork in response to activities, experiences, people, or places that bring them joy.
- Many PGOBA artists work in portraiture as a means of expression, depicting themselves, their friends, or celebrities. As a class, view and analyze portraits within the exhibition. Ask students to describe what they think they know about the figures based on the body language, colors used, and details in the backgrounds. Prompt students to create a portrait of themselves and a portrait of someone they admire or are close with. Encourage students to consider how they will communicate the interests and personalities of both individuals through their compositional and design choices. After completing both artworks, ask students to describe how it felt creating a portrait of themselves versus a portrait of someone else. What creative choices did they make to communicate information about themselves and the other person?
- As a class, discuss accessibility in the arts. Who has easier access to art materials, art spaces, and exhibition opportunities? Collaboratively brainstorm ways that art could be made more accessible for all. Consider museum ticket costs, the height at which artwork is displayed, where museums and galleries are located (rural vs. urban areas), and access to art classes in school. Prompt students to create artwork based on one or more of their proposed solutions.
- Inspired by the spoken-word poetry video, [Poets of the Peoria Guild of Black Artists](#), lead your class in writing and performing a collaborative poem. Consider providing students with writing prompts based on themes central to this exhibition, such as community, wellness, identity, and joy. Predetermine the poetry format students will use such as haiku, sonnet, limerick, or slam poetry. Provide opportunities for students to practice writing in the chosen format prior to beginning this project. Guide students to individually write a stanza of the poem or offer students a Mad Libs-style format to complete designated sections of the poem. Once the poem is written, collaboratively design a mural on paper or cardboard that relates to the theme of the poem. Record each student reading their portion of the poem in front of the mural. Edit the video in sequential order, then share with the class and school community. After completing the project, ask students to share how they felt both writing and performing their section(s) of the poem. How did they decide what to write about? And after viewing the video, what passage of the poem stands out most to them and why?