

TEMPORART

Arts in Education

Integrating Public Art Experiences with "Dancing for Joy"



Introduction

TEMPOart's commission of *Dancing for Joy* by the Myth Makers serves as an experience through which learners can connect with a monumental piece of temporary art in a community space that links the natural world with the urban environment, which serves as a celebratory visual landmark, meeting space, and interactive experience.

Learning Outcomes

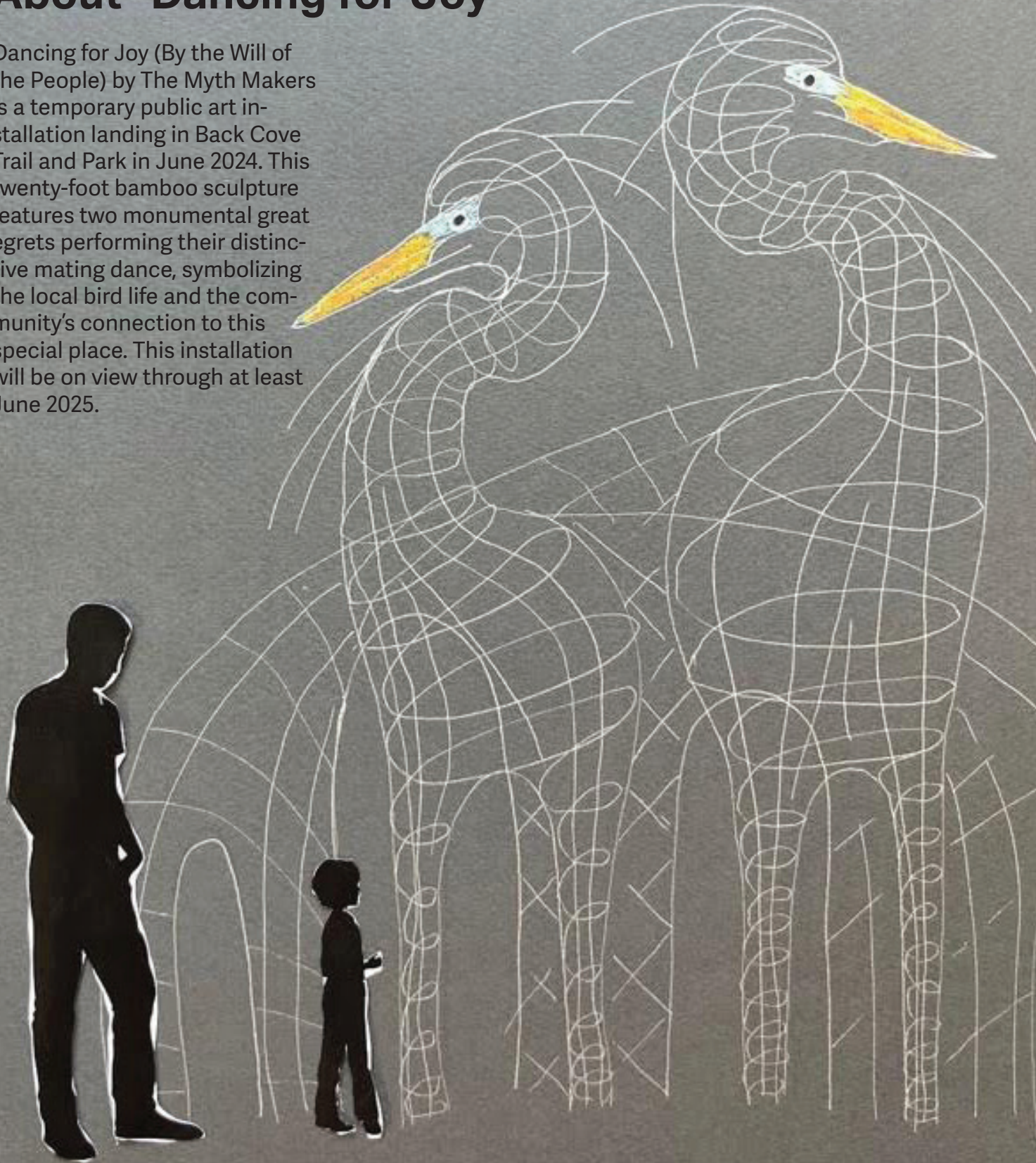
Learners can engage with the installation on many levels: through experiencing the installation, learning about the flora and fauna that inspired it, and by considering the meaning of the piece on a personal level. Information in this pack seeks to assist both the educators and learners in 'decoding' the installation and connect the experience to the broader curriculum. Suggestions for activities and exercises aimed at fostering learning engagement before and after visiting the installation offer an opportunity to not only make seeing this piece valuable to the learning process for your students and your school but will also help them connect with future experiences of arts and culture

in public spaces as lifelong learners. The Maine Department of Education emphasizes the significance of visual and performing arts as essential elements of a comprehensive education. Public art installations, like *"Dancing for Joy"* by The Myth Makers, offer unique opportunities for students to engage with art in their communities. This packet aims to help educators integrate *"Dancing for Joy"* into their curriculum, aligning with the Maine Learning Results: Visual and Performing Arts Standards.



About "Dancing for Joy"

Dancing for Joy (By the Will of the People) by The Myth Makers is a temporary public art installation landing in Back Cove Trail and Park in June 2024. This twenty-foot bamboo sculpture features two monumental great egrets performing their distinctive mating dance, symbolizing the local bird life and the community's connection to this special place. This installation will be on view through at least June 2025.



Learner Engagement

Learners can engage with the installation on multiple levels: experiencing the art, learning about the inspiration behind it, and considering its personal significance. This packet provides information and activities to assist educators and students in understanding and connecting with "Dancing for Joy" within the broader learning curriculum. Multiple learner modalities and entry points are provided, including discussion, interpretation, analysis, writing, kinesthetic engagement (movement), performance, and art-making.

Learning Activities



Preparation

Activity: Pre-Visit Discussion

Discuss in groups:

- What is public art? Can you name any public art installations you've seen?
- What role or purpose does public art play in a community? Why is it important?
- What does temporary mean? Why would artists create pieces in spaces that are temporary?

Reflective Writing:

- Write a paragraph describing what you expect when visiting "Dancing for Joy." Use your senses – what do you think the space will look, sound, feel or smell like?
- How do you think experiencing public art can impact your understanding of art and your community? What's something new you might notice or learn about the space, even if you've been there many times before?



Visit

Activity: Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) Discussion, while visiting artwork

Guided Discussion while viewing the artwork:

- Begin by asking “What is going on in this artwork?”
- Let students share their observations, paraphrase back their response neutrally, then ask, “What do you see that makes you say that?”
- Continue to ask “What more can we find?” as more observations come up, continuing to paraphrase each response.
- When the conversation seems to be coming to a close, thank the students for their thoughts, insights, and observations to wrap-up.

*NOTE: There are no right or wrong answers in VTS – it is designed to help student improve critical thinking skills, language, and literacy through open-ended discussions about art.



Post-Visit

Activity: Post-Visit Discussion

Group Sharing/Sticky Note Sharing:

- Share one word that describes your initial reaction to "Dancing for Joy."
- What part of the installation stood out to you the most? Why?

Reflection Writing/Turn and Talk (for pre/non-writers):

- Write/talk about a moment during your visit to "Dancing for Joy" that made you feel connected to the artwork or the community.
- How did the installation challenge or change your initial expectations or understanding of public art?

Interpretation

Activity: Theme Exploration

Artists Donna Dodson and Andy Moerlein, known as the Myth Makers, describe their monumental bamboo sculptures as "avian avatars". Avatars are symbols that represent a person or group of people. For the artists, this installation symbolizes the vibrant wild bird life present in Portland's Back Cove that co-exist alongside the humans that enjoy and move throughout the space.

Group Discussion:

- Discuss how the great egrets in "Dancing for Joy" represent nature, community, and connection.
- Can you think of other symbols that could represent these themes?

Symbolism Activity

- Create a drawing or collage that represents one of the themes (nature, community, connection) using symbols or images inspired by "Dancing for Joy."

Analysis

Activity: Technical Analysis

The Myth Makers intentionally chose to construct this piece from durable and environmentally sustainable materials (bamboo) that will withstand Maine weather as well as human interaction and curiosity. They are light and allow for air (and people!) to move throughout the piece, while also firmly anchored in the ground for stability.

Location Study:

- Why do you think Back Cove Trail and Park was chosen as the location for "Dancing for Joy"?
- How does the surrounding environment influence your experience of the installation?

Material Exploration:

- Research the properties and significance of bamboo. How does the use of bamboo in "Dancing for Joy" enhance its message or impact?



Engaging with the Body

Activity: Movement Exploration

Mirror Movement:

- Have students partner and “mirror” each other’s movements (silly faces, dance moves, etc.) Describe a moment when you felt completely in sync with your partner. How did this connection feel?
- What challenges did you face when trying to mirror your partner's movements?

Community Dance:

- Create a short dance routine with your group that represents the themes of "Dancing for Joy" (nature, community, connection). You can dance as “avatars” such as birds, animals, or other symbolic creatures.
- What movements or gestures did you use to convey these themes? What feelings did you experience while performing your dance routine as a group?

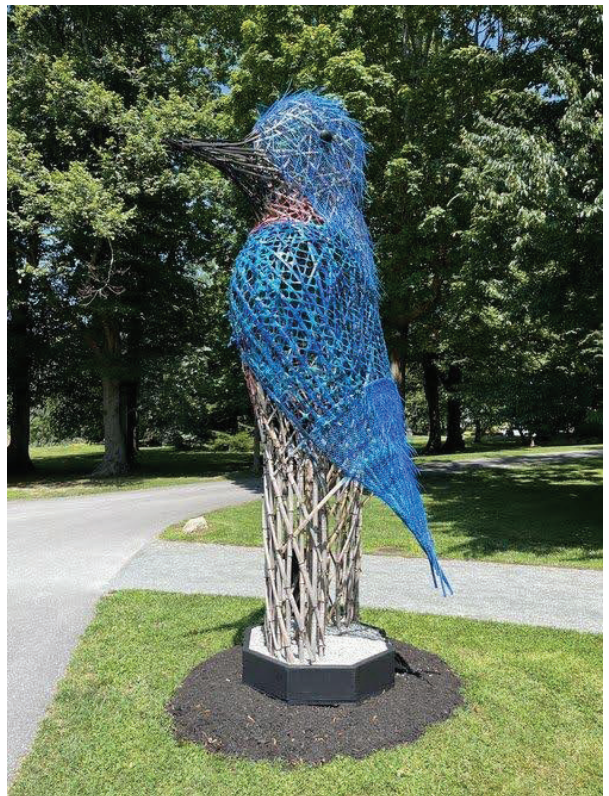
Art-Making and Creation

Activity: Mixed Media Sculptures and Coloring Page

(Materials included: model magic single packs, fuzzy sculpture wire (pipe cleaners), colorful twist ties, beads, colorful stones.)

Mixed Media Sculpture Activity:

- Ask students to think of an outdoor space that is special or meaningful to them. (examples: backyard, playground, soccer field, campground, etc.) What sculptural avatar from nature would they create for the space? (example: seagull near the playground, squirrels in the backyard.)
- With the provided materials, students can create a small model of their sculpture design by building up their avatar by bending and twisting the fuzzy sculpture wire, anchoring it into the model magic base. They can also add embellishments to the sculpture (feathers, eyes, fur, etc.) with the twist ties and add “weight” to anchor the base with beads and stones.



Art-Making and Creation (cont.)

Activity: Mixed Media Sculptures and Coloring Page

Persuasive Writing/Skit:

- Write an "artists proposal" for your monumental avatar sculpture (written or acted out to the group). How would it enhance the special space you chose? How would people from the community interact with it? What materials would you need?

Coloring Page

- Younger artists or those who cannot engage in the mixed media sculpture activity due to challenges with fine motor control, etc. can opt to color the enclosed coloring sheet OR simply explore the model magic material to create free-form sculptures. Note that model magic will dry in several hours and can be embellished using markers.

Conclusion

TEMPOart's "Dancing for Joy" offers a unique opportunity for students to engage with public art, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural understanding. We hope this packet provides valuable insights and activities to enhance your students' learning experience with this inspiring installation.



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All images by The Myth Makers. Guide developed by arts educators Jessica Muise and Heather Livingstone and designed by Victoria Gordon.

Materials Guide and Instructions for Art-Making Activity

Materials included in kits:



1. Build a secure base with the model magic clay (1-2 pouches per artist).



2. Insert pipe-cleaner wires into base.



3. Attach additional pipe cleaners to create your 3D avatar form. Twist ties can also be used to fasten and attach pipe cleaners and to create embellishments.



4.) Add any additional beads or buttons to your sculpture.



5.) Place in a safe, dry place until model magic clay has air-dried (Dry to touch in 24 hours. Fully dry in 72 hours.)

