

## Weatherspoon Art Museum

**Lesson Plan:** Materials & Meaning

**Overview:** The following lesson plan is based on sculptural works that are almost always on view when you bring your students to visit the Weatherspoon Art Museum. Figurative works can enhance the way your students think about working with the human form in the classroom.

**Level:** Grades 9-12

**Content:** Visual Art & Social Studies

**Resources:** *DYBY* by Magdalena Abakanowicz and *Compton Nocturne* by Alison Saar. Visit the Weatherspoon Museum of Art to view these works in person.



**Magdalena Abakanowicz** Polish (b. 1930)

*DYBY*, 1993

Burlap, resin and wood

Overall: 63 x 82 5/8 x 25 5/8 in.; 160.02 x 209.8675 x 65.0875 cm

Collection: Weatherspoon

*Museum purchase with funds from the Tannenbaum-Sternberger Foundation in honor of Leah Louise Tannenbaum, 2000*



**Alison Saar** American (b. 1956)  
*Compton Nocturne*, 1999  
Wood, tin, bottles, paint and tar  
Overall: 33 x 80 x 28 in.; 83.82 x 203.2 x 71.12 cm  
Collection: Weatherspoon

*Museum purchase with funds from the Benefactors Fund, 1999*

### **Curriculum Objectives:**

Visual Art: COMPETENCY GOAL 5: The learner will understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures. (National Standard 4)

Social Studies Strands: Cultures and Diversity; Historic Perspectives

**Essential question:** In what ways do artists' choices of materials lend insight into history and culture?

**Activating Strategies:** Bring a selection of materials to class for students to see, touch, and describe in terms of their associations. Make sure these materials are old, new, worn, different colors, and evocative of many possible ideas, memories, or stories. Divide students into small teams to brainstorm a list of associations and descriptive words to accompany each material or object.

**Strategy:** Recall *Compton Nocturne* by Alison Saar. What materials did the artist use? What associations do you have with these materials?

Listen to the museum's audio guide about the work: (336) 201-0688. Press 12#.

Read about the artist on one of these websites: <http://phylliskindgallery.com/artists/as/index.html>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison\\_Saar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alison_Saar)

- After learning more about the artist, what new associations can you bring to these materials? What stories or images come to mind as you view this work?

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- How does the artist's choice of materials affect the way you think about this sculpture? How would you understand this sculpture differently if it were made of shiny polished and new materials?

Now look at Magdalena Abakanowicz's *DYBY*.

- What materials can you identify and how would you describe them?
- What associations come to mind as you look at this sculpture?

Listen to the audioguide for *DYBY*: (336) 201-0688. Press 11#.

- How does the artist's choice of materials reference particular cultural and historical ideas?

Read more about the artist on one of these websites:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdalena\\_Abakanowicz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magdalena_Abakanowicz)

<http://www.abakanowicz.art.pl/about/-about.php>

Return to your sketches from the prior lesson and select one idea to explore further—from the point of view of 2-3 different cultures or time periods you have studied. Make more sketches/studies of this work. Consider how the meaning of the work changes as the imagined materials of its making change.

**Summarizing strategy:** Again, create an artist statement that uses comparison and contrast to discuss your use of different materials as you answer the EQ.

The images used in these lesson plans can be accessed on Weatherspoon's website and copied and printed for classroom use. Their locations are as follows:

Abakanowicz, Magdalena:

<http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu/searchmobius/detail.php?t=objects&type=all&f=&s=Abakanowicz&record=0>

Saar, Alison:

<http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu/searchmobius/detail.php?t=objects&type=all&f=&s=Saar&record=0>