

AT-HOME ART PROJECT: Strike-A-Pose Collage INSTRUCTIONS

INSPIRATION ARTIST:



Photo by John Butler

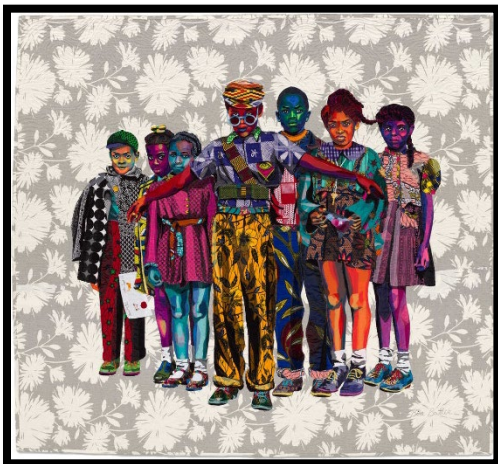
Bisa Butler (Born 1973, Orange, New Jersey)

Bisa Butler is a New Jersey-based contemporary fiber artist that creates elaborate portrait quilts. Her quilts are often based on found, undated black and white photographs with Black people - some are historical figures, some are famous, and some are anonymous. Butler says, "My subjects are African Americans from ordinary walks of life who may have sat for a formal family portrait or may have been documented by a passing photographer." As she works, she says she wonders what these people were like. What did they sound like? What made them tick?

Butler transforms historical photographs of family memories, intimate moments and cultural practices into brightly colored quilted portraits with new narrative stories, threading together a history of African American culture and art. She says that the process is like pulling her subjects out of the past and into life today.

Her quilts combine fabric that have different textures, colors, and patterns that recreate the images and shapes from the old photographs. She uses fabrics from around the world, particularly from her father's homeland in Ghana, as well as Nigeria and South Africa.

Butler states, "I hope people view my work and feel the value and equality of all people. By presenting all of my figures with a richness and dignity they deserve whether they are from a humble background or the upper classes. All of my pieces are done in life scale to invite the viewer to engage in a dialogue— the figures all look the viewers directly in their eyes."



The Safety Patrol
2018
Claire Oliver Gallery



Photo by Charles
"Teenie" Harris
1947
Carnegie Museum of
Art

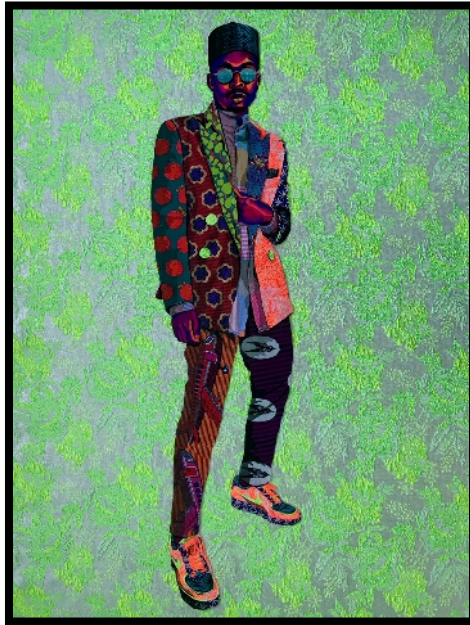
LESSON PLAN



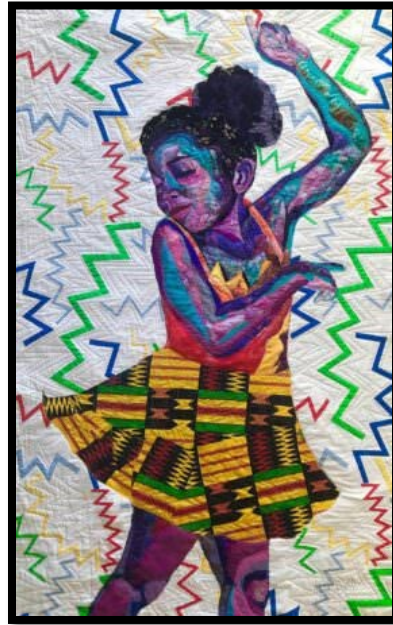
Southside Sunday Morning, 2018.
Claire Oliver Gallery



Photo by Russell Lee, 1941
Library of Congress



Black is King, 2021
Pérez Art Museum Miami



Kamaria at the Savoy, 2017
Claire Oliver Gallery

ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

LESSON PLAN

MATERIALS NEEDED FROM HOME:

- White Paper (Qty. 3)
- Pencil and Eraser
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Crayons (any coloring tools)
- Scissors
- Glue Stick or Glue
- Additional Decorative Papers (small pieces of wrapping paper, construction paper, newsprint, magazine pages, mail ads etc.)
- A picture of a person striking a pose from a photographic source (photograph, online photo, magazine photo)

ART PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Participants will create a work of art imitating the art style of Bisa Butler's quilted portraits. They will consider a pose of a figure – one that has meaning to them. Participants will find a photo or copy of their pose from a photograph, online picture, or draw it freehand. They will consider color, shape, and form as they transform their pose using decorative papers portraying the vibrant colors and patterns found in Butler's artwork.

VOCABULARY:

Pose: a particular way of standing or sitting, usually adopted for effect or to be photographed, painted, or drawn

Transform: make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character of

Collage: a piece of art made by sticking various materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric on to a backing

Color: An element of art made up of three properties: hue, value, and intensity

Pattern: a design in which lines, shapes, forms, or colors are repeated

Outline Drawing: a style of drawing in which contours are marked without shading, a line that marks the outer limits of an object or figure

Composition: the positioning and arrangement of elements within a pictorial space and work of art

PROMPT QUESTIONS:

Take a moment to look at the artworks by Bisa Butler above.

1. Why do you think she uses such bright colors and unique patterning in her portraits? What effect does that have on the portraits, how does it change or transform them?
2. Who are the people in her pieces? Why are they posed the way they are? What are they doing? How do the poses of each person make you feel? What can you tell about their personality from their stance?
3. What pose would best show your personality or express something special about you or someone you know?

ART MAKING PROCESS:

Step 1:

Consider the way people pose and how that gives us clues to who they are or what they are doing. Think about your own daily life, your favorite activities, and your personality. If you were going to create a pose of yourself doing your favorite activity, or doing something that is special to you, what would that be? If you were going to strike a pose that describes and shows off your personality, what would that look like?

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Decide on the pose you want to create in your work of art. You can look through photographs (like Bisa Butler does), you can search the internet for a specific pose, or thumb through magazines. It can be any pose that you would like to recreate and represent. It could be a dance move, a yoga pose, swinging a bat pose, a pose with an attitude – anything you relate to! **(FIG. 1)**. Note: You can also choose to create a pose representing another person, the choice is yours as the artist.

Step 2:

DRAWING YOUR POSE: Once you have decided on your pose, use one of the pieces of white paper, a pencil and an eraser to create a simple outline drawing of that pose. Try to draw your figure in the pose as LARGE as possible on the paper, fill the entire sheet if you can. If you don't have an image that large, try to free draw your pose or trace a large image from a photo or copy. The larger you draw your pose, the better. Tip: you can tape your photo or copy to a window, put your white paper over it and as the sunlight shines through it, you can trace your large pose onto your white paper. If the image you are using doesn't show the entire pose of the figure, feel free to draw it in!

Outline the different sections you see in your figure (the head, hair, shirt, arms, shoes etc.). Pay attention to the type of clothing your figure is wearing and how that impacts the pose. Don't worry about your figure looking proportionally perfect, it is OK if the drawing of your figure is a little off, or not to scale. Remember, you are drawing an outline version of the stance you chose, just simple shapes, not with any details **(FIG. 2)**. When your pose is drawn how you'd like it, set it aside.

Step 3:

CREATE PATTERNED PAPER: Use another piece of white paper and your coloring tools (colored pencils, markers, crayons, watercolors etc.) to create different patterned papers to use in your collage. Fold your paper in half, and then in half again. Open your paper so it is flat, you will have four sections. In each section, use your coloring tools to create different decorative papers. Use different color combinations and different patterning elements to create four different paper options to work with.

Think about what colors you want to use to represent the person in your pose. Consider using your favorite colors. Maybe use colors that bring back meaningful and fun memories, or colors that you connect with in a special way. Create a variety of decorative papers by making each section different. Try to fill each section completely with color. You can cut the sections apart to use if you'd like. Collect other decorative papers to use (wrapping paper pieces, pieces cut from a magazine etc.) **(FIG. 3)**.

Step 4:

CUTTING OUT YOUR FIGURE: Use your scissors to carefully cut out around the outside outline of your posing figure. Then cut your figure into 4-8 different shapes, cutting it up by feature (head, hair, shirt, shoes, arm, etc.). Be sure not to cut the pieces too small, keep them large enough to be easy to work with **(FIG. 4)**.

Step 5:

Use the cut shapes from the white paper of your posing figure as stencils. Trace the shapes from the white paper shapes onto the decorative paper, and then cut them out. Think about the papers you are choosing for each shape, what does that shape represent, what color and pattern will enhance it? Consider how the colors and patterns will

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work together and look next to each other. Try piecing your figure back together on your workspace as you cut each piece out. Be careful not to lose any! **(FIG. 5)**

Step 6:

ASSEMBLING YOUR COLLAGE: Once you have your posing figure put back together with each decorative cut-out shape (like a puzzle!), use your glue stick to reassemble and secure each shape in place onto the third piece of white paper, to create your pose. Think about how you want to position your posed figure in your composition on your paper. Glue each piece into place. When the final piece is glued down and your pose is filled in, your artwork is complete! **(FIG. 6)**

OPTIONS:

- Consider assembling your posed figure on a large colored or patterned piece of paper, in place of the white background paper.
- Consider cropping the edges of your white paper so your posed figure is centered, fills the art space and is the focal point in your composition.
- Consider centering and mounting (or gluing) your artwork onto a larger colored piece of paper to frame your work of art.

POST PROJECT PROMPT QUESTIONS:

1. Why did you select the pose that you did?
2. What do you hope viewers will realize from your work of art?
3. Describe how your work of art is inspired by Bisa Butler's artwork.
4. Is there another pose you would like to recreate?
5. Try creating a collage with different poses of your family in one work of art!

ART PROJECT STEP-BY-STEP EXAMPLE:



FIG. 1

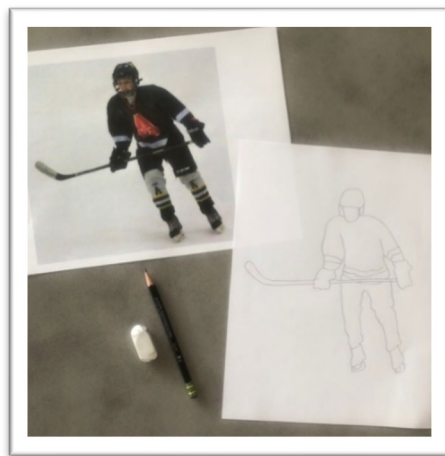


FIG. 2

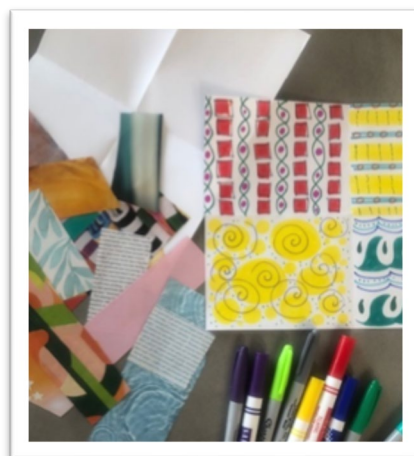


FIG. 3

LESSON PLAN



FIG. 4



FIG. 5



FIG. 6

EXPLORE MORE: “Musical Connection”

Bisa Butler’s husband, John, is a longtime DJ. They created a playlist of music with different genres (blues, classic soul, rap, and hip hop) that pairs many of Bisa Butler’s individual works of art with a particular song.

For instance, Butler pairs her quilted portrait “*Southside Sunday Morning*” with the song “Move On Up” by Curtis Mayfield (1970): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9RMr9KuVZo>

Take a moment to view the work of art “*Southside Sunday Morning*” (shown above) and listen to the song “Move On Up” by Curtis Mayfield.

- What images does the song make you think of?
- What words or phrases stand out to you?
- What feelings do you have as you listen? How would you describe the mood?
- How do you think the song connects or relates to Butler’s artwork “*Southside Sunday Morning*”?
- What is a song that you would pair to your life in this moment?

Bisa Butler’s Playlist: <https://www.artic.edu/highlights/31/bisa-butler-the-playlist>

OTHER ARTISTS TO CONSIDER:

- Kehinde Wiley
- Amy Serald
- Faith Ringgold
- Romare Bearden