

Wellin Museum Virtual Workshop | Creative Food Trucks

What do food trucks have to do with art? Our favorite foods connect us with other people through shared meals and the comforts of home. Meals and ingredients can also be important symbols of culture. Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz turns the foods of his culture into art by sharing the meals and ingredients of his upbringing with others.

This has taken multiple forms, including a free food truck serving traditional Iraqi dishes, and elaborate papier mâché artworks made from food products imported from the Middle East to the U.S. His work shows us that art is a powerful tool for encouraging understanding and cross-cultural communication.

In this workshop, students will spend time investigating Michael Rakowitz's latest work: a recreation of a banquet hall from the ancient palace of Nimrud in Assyria (modern-day Iraq). Students will examine the wide range of patterns, textures, and colors in the panels made from food wrappers decorating the hall. They will be invited to think about the foods and meals important to their family and design their own food truck showcasing the special ingredients and recipes in their own culture.



About the Exhibition

Michael Rakowitz: Nimrud

For *Michael Rakowitz: Nimrud*, the Iraqi-American artist has recreated Room H from the well-known Northwest Palace in the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud (Kalhu), located near Mosul in present-day Iraq dating from 883-859 B.C.E. To make his colorful reproductions of the ancient carved-stone reliefs, Rakowitz uses packaging for food products imported from the Middle East to the U.S. and sold in local Middle-Eastern groceries in Chicago, where the artist lives and works. In the mid-nineteenth century, many of the palace's reliefs were removed by archeologists and acquired by private collections and public institutions throughout the Western world, including Hamilton College. While Rakowitz's materials reference the current Middle Eastern diaspora, the content of his work is a reaction to centuries of looting ancient sites—both legally sanctioned and illegal, often occurring in times of foreign occupation. His work implicates the museum as a colonial entity and calls attention to the problematic and pervasive practice of removing cultural artifacts from their original context.



Docents at the Wellin Museum

As a teaching museum, the Wellin offers experiential learning opportunities to students. All tours and programs are led by docents in collaboration with museum education staff. Docents are Hamilton College students who act as educational guides through our exhibitions and collections. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and offer their own academic knowledge, creating a unique, personalized, and fresh perspective while discussing the artwork on view. Hamilton College's mission highlights "education in all its forms," and this approach is at the core of the Wellin Museum's interdisciplinary approach for all of our visitors.

Creative Food Trucks Abbreviated Lesson Plan

Essential Question:

How do certain foods, ingredients, or meals connect us with others and with our homes?

Outline of Workshop:

- Welcome and Mindfulness Moment
- Warm-up Activity: Colors, Shapes, Lines
- Close Looking Activity: Looking Ten Times Two
- All about the Artist
- Group discussion: What are your favorite foods to share with others? How are those foods packaged?
- Introduction of Suggested Art Project: Make your own food truck showing your favorite foods and ingredients. What colors, words, and designs do you find on materials you use in your everyday life?



Suggested Project: Creative Food Trucks

Make your own food truck showcasing the special ingredients and recipes in your own culture! Download the accompanying slideshow as a .pdf or .ppt file.

Suggested Materials:

- A tissue box or other cardboard box
- Extra cardboard or paper for add-ons
- Scissors
- Glue
- Something to write with
- Food wrappers from some of your favorite foods

Steps:

1. Create a menu, including ingredients and recipes.
2. Design the truck. Decide which food wrappers you will use. Ask yourself: which colors and patterns are most important?
3. Make the truck! Using the tissue box as a base, paste on wheels and cut out windows.
4. Decorate your truck with food wrappers, and paste the menu on the outside.
5. Name your truck, and write the name in large letters on the side of the truck.
6. Imagine you are visiting the food truck with a friend or family member. Who are you with? What do you smell? Where is your food truck parked? What do you order? How does the food taste?



Related Resources:

Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art: [Exhibition Webpage](#)

[Rakowitz Exhibition Video](#)

[Artists in Conversation: Michael Rakowitz](#), Recorded Tuesday, October 6, 2020

[Michael Rakowitz's Art of Return](#) - Profile of the artist published in the New Yorker magazine, August 2020

[Michael Rakowitz's Food Truck Project: Enemy Kitchen](#)

Thinking Routines used in this lesson:

- [Colors, Shapes, Lines](#)
- [Looking: Ten Times Two](#)

[More thinking routines to check out](#) from Harvard Graduate School of Education's *Project Zero*

[National Gallery of Art Interdisciplinary Teaching Ideas \(by grade\)](#)

Wellin-recommended at-home art activities for families:

[MoMA At Home](#)

[Wellin Museum: Color Our Collection](#)



Colors, Shapes, Lines

A routine for encouraging detailed observation of artwork.



Look at the artwork or object for a moment.

What **colors** do you see?

What **shapes** do you see?

What **lines** do you see?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

The routine helps students make detailed observations by drawing their attention to the forms in an artwork—its formal aspects—and giving them specific categories of things to look for.

Application: When and where can I use it?

The routine can be used with any kind of visual art. It can also be used with visually rich non-art images or objects. Like the Looking: Ten Times Two routine, students can use the routine on its own, or prior to having a discussion about an artwork with another routine. It is especially useful before a writing activity because it helps students develop descriptive language.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

You can begin using this routine by simply building a broad inventory with students about each step: list of colors, then shapes, then lines. You can have students make their own lists first or scribe those to revisit and see if there is anything they can add after an initial look. Upon a closer look students might add more details to their initial observations.

Share your experience with this thinking routine on social media using the hashtags **#PZThinkingRoutines** and **#ColorsShapesLines**.

Looking: Ten Times Two

A routine for making careful observations about images, visual art, or objects.



1. Look at the image quietly for at least 30 seconds. Let your eyes wander.
2. List 10 words or phrases about any aspect of the picture.
3. Repeat steps 1 & 2: Look at the image again and try to add 10 more words or phrases to your list.

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

The routine helps students slow down and make careful, detailed observations by encouraging them to push beyond first impressions and obvious features.

Application: When and where can I use it?

The routine can be used with any kind of visual art. You can also use non-art images or objects. The routine can be used on its own, or to deepen the observation step of another routine. It is especially useful before a writing activity because it helps students develop descriptive language.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

You can invite students to do a first look with little guidance and encourage them to simply make a broad inventory of what they see. You might invite some guided looking during one of the opportunities by borrowing some prompts from the Thinking Routine: Color | Shape | Line, and ask students to notice colors or shapes... You can have pairs of students share their lists after both looking sessions to notice what their partners saw. If a list of ten observations seems too long to start with, shorten the ask so students list or draw just 3-5 things they notice each time.

Share your experience with this thinking routine on social media using the hashtags **#PZThinkingRoutines** and **#LookingTenTimesTwo**.



WELLIN

Ruth and Elmer
Wellin Museum of Art
Hamilton College

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