

Teacher Resource: *The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy* September 25, 2011–January 8, 2012

Introduction

Use this resource to prepare your students for a visit to see this exhibition or as follow-up after your visit. This exhibition can complement your K–12 curricula in science, language arts, math, and/or visual arts.

The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy

Grainger McKoy's sculpture defies classification. He carves, burns, and manipulates wood with woodworker's tools, yet his handiwork is rendered with the passion and expertise of a fine-art sculptor.

Birds are McKoy's subject—an age-old theme that has captured the attention of artists, scientists, and naturalists for centuries. Like a scientist, McKoy studies preserved skins and feathers of birds with an objective eye. Like a naturalist, he observes birds in their environment, watching how they feed and fly. He knows their predators and prey. As an artist, McKoy shares an interest in depicting avian subjects with many others before him, from John James Audubon (1785–1851) to Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957). McKoy's highly realistic representations of birds are made of basic materials—wood, metal, and paint—yet they grip the observant viewer with trompe l'oeil illusion.

Mastery and Materials

Experimentation has always been central to McKoy's approach. In search of new subjects or modes of expression, he has been innovative in his technical and artistic methods. In his early career he introduced inserted feathers, steel suspension, and elegantly disguised support for his dramatic, complex designs. In more recent years he has integrated the structure of the works, such as protective casings and base supports, to transform these functional tools into design or narrative elements, challenging the expectations of what sculptures of birds can become.

Scale Models

McKoy often works out his most complex designs with small models in basswood, the same wood used for the final composition. With these models he can test his design concept as well as structural soundness and balance. Though he typically begins with annotated sketches, the models provide information in three dimensions. Once satisfied with a design, McKoy will make a full-scale model before proceeding to the final version.

Activity Ideas

Elementary

Be a Naturalist!

Using *Study for Wood Duck in a Croker Sack* as inspiration, have students make a verbal/visual journal.

Take a nature walk around the school. Have students make sketches of leaves, animals, trees. They can make notes about details, observations, thoughts. They can add to their journal every time they go outside.

Patterns in Nature

What design pattern do you see in McKoy's *Five Pintails*? What does their formation remind you of? Why?

Observe *Mourning Dove*. What patterns can you find within the feathers? How many different patterns (colors, repeating shapes) do you see? Design a bird's wing using similar patterns and shapes.

Math and Nature

Although it is difficult to visualize the scale of the sculpture on a PowerPoint, look at the dimensions. Ask students to cut out paper to demonstrate the height, width, and/or depth of the work.

Middle and High School

Math and Nature

Observe McKoy's *Least Bittern*. A least bittern is a water bird and the smallest heron found in North and South America. Least bitterns feed mostly on insects and fish. The birds will grab their prey with fast jabs while wading through marsh plants.

If a minnow is swimming 25 kilometers per hour toward the spot right below where the least bittern is waiting, how long will the bird have to wait until the minnow arrives?

Compare *Recovery Stroke* (18 inches) to *Ivory-billed Woodpecker* (29 inches). Calculate the ratio of the wing to the woodpecker.

All Grades

Feathered Friends

Each bird body part gives us a clue as to where it lives, what it eats, and its lifestyle. Ask students to research different beaks, wings, and feet and their functions. Ask them to select one type of beak, wing, and feet to combine to create an imaginary bird. Students can draw their birds using pastels, crayons, watercolors, or colored pencils. Outline the drawing using a marker. Give the bird a name.

Write About It!

Narrative

Have students select a work of art from the PowerPoint presentation that depicts more than one animal. Have students write a story about what happened right before this moment occurred, describe what's happening at the moment depicted in the work of art, and then write about what will happen right after this. Students should include sensory details such as the weather, the sounds, and how it smells, among others. Students should describe the conflict, "characters," and plot.

Students can add a visual art element by illustrating their story in crayon or colored or watercolor pencils.

Persuasive Essay

Have students select one work of art from the PowerPoint presentation. Have them write an essay persuading their classmates why their work of art should receive the "best in show" award. The essay should support a position with relevant evidence that they discover in the work of art.

Informational Text

Ask students to select one work of art from the PowerPoint presentation. Ask them to research the bird's habitat, ecosystem, food, predators, relationship to the environment, etc. Tell them that they are going to write a label for the museum. Limit them to 100 words, in which they must convey the most important and interesting findings from their research.

Anthropomorphize Me

Have students select one work of art from the PowerPoint Presentation. Ask them to attribute human characteristics to their chosen animal. What's his/her name? Describe the personality, likes and dislikes, type of job they do, family, etc.

See/Think/Wonder

Select a work of art from the PowerPoint Presentation. Ask students to look carefully at the slide. They can either write their responses or respond verbally to the questions below.

What do you see?

What do you think about what you see?

What do you wonder about?

Literature and Nature

Use the following poem and quotes as essay prompts.

The Exposed Nest

By Robert Frost

You were forever finding some new play.
So when I saw you down on hands and knees
In the meadow, busy with the new-cut hay,
Trying, I thought, to set it up on end,
I went to show you how to make it stay,

If that was your idea, against the breeze,
And, if you asked me, even help pretend
To make it root again and grow afresh.
But 'twas no make-believe with you today,
Nor was the grass itself your real concern,
Though I found your hand full of wilted fern,
Steel-bright June-grass, and blackening heads of clovers.
'Twas a nest full of young birds on the ground
The cutter-bar had just gone champing over
(Miraculously without tasting flesh)
And left defenseless to the heat and light.
You wanted to restore them to their right
Of something interposed between their sight
And too much world at once—could means be found.
The way the nest-full every time we stirred
Stood up to us as to a mother-bird
Whose coming home has been too long deferred,
Made me ask would the mother-bird return
And care for them in such a change of scene
And might out meddling make her more afraid.
That was a thing we could not wait to learn.
We saw the risk we took in doing good,
But dared not spare to do the best we could
Though harm should come of it; so built the screen
You had begun, and gave them back their shade.
All this to prove we cared. Why is there then
No more to tell? We turned to other things.
I haven't any memory—have you?—
Of ever coming to the place again
To see if the birds lived the first night through,
And so at last to learn to use their wings.

Quotations

“There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before.” —Robert Lynd

“I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder for a moment, while I was hoeing in a village garden, and I felt that I was more distinguished by that circumstance than I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn.” —Henry David Thoreau

“Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.” —Henry Van Dyke

“A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.” —Chinese Proverb

Vocabulary

Trompe l'oeil: French for “trick of the eye”; describes artwork with deliberate visual illusion.

Tenon: projecting member in a piece of wood or other material for insertion into a mortise to make a joint.

Ornithological: the study of birds; zoology.

Anthropomorphism: attributing human characteristics (or characteristics assumed to belong only to humans) to non-human animals, non-living things.

Resources

National Audubon Society:

<http://education.audubon.org/>

Smithsonian Education:

<http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/>

Smithsonian Science & Technology Lesson Plans for Educators:

http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/science_technology.html

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History Lesson Plan & Classroom Resources:

http://www.mnh.si.edu/education/classroom_resources.html

Georgia Performance Standards

A docent-guided tour of *The Sculpture of Grainger McCoy* and the corresponding activities in this resource can support the following Georgia Performance Standards:

Kindergarten

Science

- SKP1 Students will describe objects in terms of the materials they are made of and their physical properties.
- SKL2 Students will compare the similarities and differences in groups of organisms.

Reading/Language Arts

- ELAKR1 The student demonstrates knowledge of concepts of print.
- ELAKR5 The student acquires and uses grade-level words to communicate effectively.
- ELAKLSV1 The student uses oral and visual skills to communicate.
- ELAKW2 The student begins to write in a variety of genres, including narrative, informational, persuasive, and response to literature.

Visual Art

- VAKMC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
- VAKMC.2 Formulates personal responses.
- VAKMC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
- VAKCU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.
- VAKCU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.
- VAKPR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.
- VAKPR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
- VAKAR.1 Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
- VAKAR.2 Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.
- VA1MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

Grade 1

Science

- S1LS Students will investigate the characteristics and basic needs of plants and animals.

Reading/Language Arts

- ELA1R5 The student acquires and uses grade-level words to communicate effectively.
- ELA1LSV1 The student uses oral and visual strategies to communicate.
- ELA1W2 The student begins to write in a variety of genres, including narrative, informational, persuasive, and response to literature.

Visual Art

- VA1MC.2 Formulates personal responses.
- VA1MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
- VA1CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.
- VA1CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.
- VA1PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

- VA1PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
- VA1AR.1 Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
- VA1AR.2 Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

Grade 2

Science

- S2L1 Students will investigate the life cycles of different living organisms.

Reading/Language Arts

- ELA2R2 The student acquires and uses grade-level words to communicate effectively.
- ELA2LSV1 The student uses oral and visual strategies to communicate.
- ELA2W2 The student begins to write in a variety of genres, including narrative, informational, persuasive, and response to literature.

Visual Art

- VA2MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
- VA2MC.2 Formulates personal responses.
- VA2MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
- VA2CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.
- VA2CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.
- VA2PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.
- VA2PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
- VA2AR.1 Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
- VA2AR.2 Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.
- VA2MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
- VA2MC.2 Formulates personal responses.
- VA2MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
- VA2CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.

Grade 3

Science

- S3L1 Students will investigate the habitats of different organisms and the dependence of organisms on their habitat.
- S3L2 Students will recognize the effects of pollution and humans on the environment.

Reading/Language Arts

- ELA3R2 The student acquires and uses grade-level words to communicate effectively.
- ELA3LSV1 The student uses oral and visual strategies to communicate.
- ELA3W2 The student begins to write in a variety of genres, including narrative, informational, persuasive, and response to literature.

Math

- M3M2 Students will measure length choosing appropriate units and tools.

Visual Art

- VA3CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.
- VA3PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA3PR.2	Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
VA3AR.1	Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
VA3AR.2	Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.
VA3MC.1	Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
VA3MC.2	Formulates personal responses.
VA3MC.3	Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
VA3CU.1	Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.
VA3CU.2	Views and discusses selected artworks.
VA3PR.1	Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.
VA3PR.2	Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
VA3AR.1	Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
VA3AR.2	Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

Grade 4

Science

S4L1	Students will describe the roles of organisms and the flow of energy within an ecosystem.
S4L2	Students will identify factors that affect the survival or extinction of organisms such as adaptation, variation of behaviors, and external features.

Reading/Language Arts

ELA4R3	The student understands and acquires new vocabulary and uses it correctly in reading and writing.
ELA4LSV1	The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.
ELA4LSV2	The student listens to and views various forms of text and media in order to gather and share information, persuade others, and express and understand ideas.
ELA4W2	The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

Visual Art

VA4MC.1	Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
VA4MC.2	Formulates personal responses.
VA4MC.3	Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
VA4CU.1	Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.
VA4CU.2	Views and discusses selected artworks.
VA4PR.1	Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.
VA4PR.2	Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
VA4AR.1	Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
VA4AR.2	Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

Grade 5

Science

S5L1	Students will classify organisms into groups and relate how they determined the groups.
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Reading/Language Arts

ELA5R3	The student understands and acquires new vocabulary and uses it correctly in reading and writing.
ELA5LSV1	The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.
ELA5LSV2	The student listens to and views various forms of text and media in order to gather and share information, persuade others, and express and understand ideas.

ELA5W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

Visual Art

VA5MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
VA5MC.2 Formulates personal responses.
VA5MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.
VA5CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.
VA5CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.
VA5PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.
VA5PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.
VA5AR.1 Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.
VA5AR.2 Utilizes a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

Grade 6

Math

M6A1 Students will understand the concept of ratio and use it to represent quantitative relationships.

Reading/Language Arts

ELA6LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.
ELA6KSV2 The student listens to and views various forms of text and media in order to gather and share information, persuade others, and express and understand ideas.
ELA6W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

Visual Art

VA6MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.
VA6MC.4 Engages in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.
VA6CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.
VA6PR.4 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal to collect, develop and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art.
VA6AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.
VA6C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

Grade 7

Science

S7L4 Students will examine the dependence of organisms on one another and their environments.

Reading/Language Arts

ELA7LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.
ELA7LSV2 The student listens to and views various forms of text and media in order to gather and share information, persuade others, and express and understand ideas.
ELA7W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

Math

M7G3 Students will use the properties of similarity and apply these concepts to geometric figures.

Visual Art

VA7MC.3 Interprets how artists create and communicate meaning in and through their work.
VA7CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.
VA7PR.4 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art.

- VA7AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.
 VA7AR.3 Reflects and expands the use of visual language throughout the artistic process.
 VA7C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

Grade 8

Reading/Language Arts

- ELA8LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.
 ELA8LSV2 The student listens to and views various forms of text and media in order to gather and share information, persuade others, and express and understand ideas.
 ELA8W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

Visual Art

- VA8MC.3 Interprets how artists create and communicate meaning in and through their work.
 VA8CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.
 VA8PR.4 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art.
 VA8AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.
 VA8AR.3 Reflects and expands the use of visual language throughout the artistic process.
 VA8C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

Grades 9-12

Biology

- SB4 Students will assess the dependence of all organisms on one another and the flow of energy and matter with their ecosystems.

Reading/Language Arts

- ELA9RC3,
 ELA10RC3 The student acquires new vocabulary in each content area and uses it correctly.
 ELA9LSV1,
 ELA10LSV1,
 ELA11LSV1,
 ELA12LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.
 ELA9W2,
 ELA10W2,
 ELA11W2,
 ELA12W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

Visual Art

- VAHSVAMC.1 Engages in the creative process, imagines new ideas by using mental and visual imagery, conceptualizes these ideas by using artistic language and contextual understandings in assessing learning, and develops a personal artistic voice that gives unique form to these concepts.
 VAHSVACU.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.
 VAHSVAPR.6 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art around themes of personal meaning.
 VAHSVAAAR.1 Makes written and oral critiques of own works of art.
 VAHSVAAAR.2 Critiques artwork of others individually and in group settings.
 VAHSVAAAR.3 Develops multiple strategies for responding to and reflecting on artworks.
 VAHSDRCU.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.
 VAHSDRCU.2 Demonstrates an understanding of how art history impacts the creative process of art making.
 VAHSDRPR.4 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art around themes of personal meaning.

- VAHSDRPR.4 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art around themes of personal meaning.
- VAHSDRAR.2 Critiques art work of others individually and in group settings.
- VAHSDRAR.3 Develops multiple strategies for responding to and reflecting on artworks.
- VAHSPACU.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.
- VAHSPACU.2 Demonstrates an understanding of how art history impacts the creative process of art making.
- VAHSPAPR.5 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art around themes of personal meaning.
- VAHSPAAR.1 Writes and critiques own works of art.
- VAHSPAAR.2 Critiques artwork of others individually and in group settings.
- VAHSPAAR.3 Develops multiple strategies for responding to and reflecting on artworks.
- VAHSSCC.3 Utilizes a variety of resources to see how artistic learning extends beyond the walls of the classroom.