

Architecture Stamps

Level: Middle School (and High School)

Lesson Overview:

During this lesson, repetition, pattern and design are explored through the inspiration of Puryear's featured sculpture installations in the United States Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice. Students will invent their own architectural patterns and create interesting compositions while focusing geometric shapes, symmetry/asymmetry, scale, repetition, and placement using handmade stamps.

Teacher Reference: Before the class, listen to:

<https://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/martin-puryear>

Essential Questions:

How do I find inspiration in architecture?

How can I combine shapes to make an interesting composition?

What are some important elements in architecture to me as an artist? (Geometric shapes, symmetry/asymmetry, scale, repetition)

As an artist, how do I consider my work's impact and reflection of the culture?

As an artist, how do I consider the environmental influence on design and construction?

Students will...

- understand a print is a work of art that is transferred by pressing one surface (stamp) to another (the paper)
- understand prints can be repeated over and over again to make multiples
- understand that artists explore ideas reflecting their interests
- understand reversal of the image takes place in the printing process
- create an architectural stamp
- ink a stamp properly and get a clear, strong print
- recognize that viewers bring prior knowledge to their interpretations of a work of art

Materials:

Black foam board, foam self-adhesive sheets, sketch paper, pencils, metallic printing ink, 9x12 white paper, non-porous tray for ink (plastic or Styrofoam), paper towels, scissors

Reference Images:

- Martin Puryear, *Swallowed Sun (Monstrance and Volute)*, 2019 (Southern yellow pine, steel, polyester, canvas, rope sculpture)



- Martin Puryear, *A Column for Sally Hemings*, 2019 (Cast Iron, painted tulip poplar sculpture)
- William Adams Delano and Chester Holmes Alrich, architects. *United States Pavilion*, Giardini della Biennale, Venice 1929-30

Session:

Step 1: Close-looking and Engagement

The teacher will begin the session with a close-looking activity related to Martin Puryear's featured architectural work at the United States Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice. The teacher should show images of the United State Pavilion with and without the Puryear structure *Swallowed Sun (Monstrance and Volute)* at different angles.

The teacher will ask, "What are the two parts of the structure? Do they individually remind you of anything? How are the two elements working together? How does the meaning change when they are viewed together? How is the structure interacting with the Pavilion? Are there similar elements in both Puryear's structure and the Pavilion? What shapes are you noticing (geometric shapes, symmetry/asymmetry, scale, repetition)? What effect does the placement of shapes have on the building?" The teacher will list student's responses focused on shape and ask the class to provide other architectural details that they have noticed in their own experiences.

The teacher will then display an image of Puryear's *A Column for Sally Hemings* and ask, "How does this sculpture relate to architecture? (It is the shape of a column and fluted on the base.) What are the materials that Puryear chose for this piece? Does the work have (or look like it has) a function?" Tell students the title of the work and ask for them to share what they know about Sally Hemings and slavery. Then return to the work and ask, "Now that you know the title of the work, how does the meaning of the work change for you?"

Background information: At the United State Pavilion, two of Martin Puryear's sculptures are directly inspired by elements of the building itself. The first, *Swallowed Sun (Monstrance and Volute)*, the screen's crisscrossing lines echo the shape of a dome, and the "tail" resembles the swirl that decorates the sides of an ionic column. The second is *A Column for Sally Hemings*, where a rusted shackle is piercing a fluted column, giving prominence to the shackle and the history of slavery that it's associated with. The United State Pavilion was constructed in 1930 and its style is derived from the Renaissance architect, Andrea Palladio, who worked extensively in Venice. The pavilion was inspired by the architecture of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and Sally Hemings was Jefferson's slave (turned mistress). Reference article: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/a-first-look-at-liberty-martin-puryears-exhibition-for-the-us-pavilion-at-the-venice-biennale-1538956>

The teacher will then introduce the class to the art-making portion of the session. The teacher will discuss combining shapes in interesting ways to create an architectural image. The shapes will be cut out of self-adhesive foam sheets and adhered to a base for printing. The students should be reminded that because the stamps will be printed, the shapes can touch but they should not overlap.

Step 2: Art-making

The teacher will sketch a basic composition of shapes then demonstrate how to cut and attach the architectural shapes to the stamp base. The teacher will tell the students that when printing, the foam will be the positive image that will be inked, and the stamp base or board will be the negative space. The students should also be made aware that their images will print in reverse. The students will first begin by creating a few thumbnail sketches of their ideas. The students should be encouraged to use the elements that they discuss in the engagement portion of the lesson: shape, symmetry, scale, and repetition to create an exciting stamp. Once they have created an interesting architectural design, the students will cut the foam sheets and attach the shapes to the stamp base.

Once the stamps are complete, the teacher will review the steps of printing with the students while writing them out on the board. The students will then print their stamps.

1. Load the brayer with ink
2. Roll the brayer across the entire surface of the stamp in different directions (quickly so that the ink does not dry)
4. Press the stamp firmly on the paper
6. Carefully lift printing paper off and hang to dry

Students can also be provided larger format paper and encouraged to print multiple times on one sheet to create a repeated pattern or rotate their stamp to create a dynamic image.

Step 3: Reflection

As a class, the teacher will lead a discussion about artistic choices and the results of their stamp prints.

Vocabulary:

Architecture, architectural, stamp, print, brayer, geometric shapes, symmetry/asymmetry, scale, repetition, composition, sculpture, function, construction, design, environment, positive and negative space



This lesson was developed through a partnership between Madison Square Park Conservancy and Studio Institute to tie formally and thematically with the 2019 United States Pavilion's exhibition, "Martin Puryear: Liberty/Libertà", at the 2019 Biennale Arte. Learn more about this at martinpuryearvenice2019.org and studioinstitute.org/arts-intern-venice-2019-biennale-arte