

Storm King Art Center Teacher Resource



What's the Big Idea? Concepts & Connections

Construct connections across art, time, nature, and humanity as you explore contemporary sculptures at Storm King.

Recommended for grades 6-12.

Dear Teachers,

We are delighted to welcome you to Storm King Art Center, a 500-acre outdoor museum located in New York's Hudson Valley, where visitors experience large-scale sculpture and site-specific commissions under open sky.

This resource is designed to help you prepare to explore the theme of "What's the Big Idea: Concepts & Connections" with your students at Storm King. By approaching visits through a thematic lens, we hope to engage learners in focused close looking, activities, and conversation—providing a solid foundation as students construct connections throughout their experience.

Whether you have chosen a guided tour or will be facilitating your own visit, this resource offers pre-visit ideas to prepare for your trip, tips and tools for onsite engagement, and post-visit activity prompts for continued exploration.

During a guided visit, your educator might build the experience around a particular sub-theme related to Concepts & Connections (ex: Cultural Commentary, Interactivity). Please be in touch at least two weeks before your program if you have specific interests.

While you may not see all artworks in this packet during a guided program, we invite you to visit additional artworks after your tour, if time allows. The artworks in this packet are situated within one mile of the School Group arrival area.

If you have additional questions about your upcoming visit, please contact us at: groups@stormkingartcenter.org

We look forward to welcoming you and your students soon!

Sincerely,
The Storm King Education Team

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Cover Image: Alice Aycock (American, b. 1946). *Low Building with Dirt Roof (For Mary)*, 1973/2010. Wood, stone, and earth, 30 in. x 20 ft. x 12 ft. (76.2 x 609.6 x 365.8 cm). Gift of the artist. © Alice Aycock, courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York

Pre-Visit

INTRODUCTION TO STORM KING ART CENTER

Storm King Art Center is a 500-acre outdoor museum where visitors experience large-scale sculpture under open sky. **We strongly recommend you download our free digital guide on the Bloomberg Connects app,** via the QR code here. You'll find photos, videos, audio recordings, maps, suggested routes, activities for children and families, and more. Use the app to plan your visit, then easily access helpful insights onsite. Afterward, use it in the classroom to dive deeper into your favorite works. You and your students can also learn more about Storm King's [environmental stewardship](#), collection, and community connections in this brief [video](#) featuring Storm King President John P. Stern.



INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME “WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?: CONCEPTS & CONNECTIONS”

“The viewer completes the artwork.” Ask students what this idea, expressed by [many contemporary artists](#), means to them. They might discuss in partners or as a larger group.

Invite students to explore association through writing. Name or hold up a series of objects (ex: spoon, pinecone, paper) and ask students to list as many words or ideas as possible inspired by each object. For example, paper might invite connections to school, rectangles, trees, airplanes, papercuts, etc.

Students could also play a verbal free association game with a partner. One partner shares a word, the second partner responds with the first thing that comes into their head, the first partner responds to *that* with the first thing that comes into their head, etc. (Ex: Tired. Bed. Sleep. Dreams. Flying. Airplane. Florida. Oranges...) Did any of their partners' connections surprise them?

Artists often engage us by inviting us to create connections. Certain **forms** and **materials** can evoke different ideas or feelings. Artists might communicate through **symbols**, which are concrete images or objects that represent ideas. Ask students to try to think of multiple symbols they might associate with peace. What symbols would they use to represent themselves or a friend?

Our interpretation of an artwork can depend on its **context**, or the time, place, and events surrounding its creation and viewing. Artists might also **juxtapose** different materials, forms, or symbols--combining elements to invite new ideas. For example, an apple on a plate might invite ideas about nourishment or roundness, but an apple in a pile of dirt might invite ideas about decay or life cycles. Juxtapose some of the objects or words that students initially free-associated about (ex: pinecone wrapped in paper) and see what ideas emerge.

OBSERVE AND DISCUSS

Project or print an image of Alice Aycock's [Low Building with Dirt Roof \(For Mary\)](#) (page 4). Ask students what they notice. What ideas does it make them think of? What choices did the artist make to evoke those ideas? Share some additional context about the piece through Alice Aycock's [Oral History Video](#). What did students discover? How does it relate or add to the ideas they formed?

Artwork Images and Information



Siah Armajani (American, born Iran, 1939–2020). *Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini*, 1992. Painted steel and wood, 10 ft. 6 in. x 32 ft. 6 in. x 8 ft. 5 in. (320 x 990.6 x 256.5 cm). Gift of The Brown Foundation, Inc., the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, Cynthia Hazen Polsky, an anonymous foundation, gifts in memory of Elizabeth Collens, and the Joseph H. Hazen Foundation Purchase Fund. © Estate of Siah Armajani, courtesy Rossi & Rossi, Hong Kong and London

[Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini \(1992\) by Siah Armajani](#)

Gazebo for Two Anarchists is one of several works Siah Armajani has dedicated to twentieth-century anarchists—in this case, brother and sister Alberto and Gabriella Antolini, the latter of whom was imprisoned for transportation of explosives in the Youngstown Affair in 1918. The open lattice, or truss-work, of *Gazebo for Two Anarchists* suggests incarceration, while the elegance of the design almost belies this interpretation. The two gazebos at each end of the structure appear to symbolize the brother and sister, who are separated but nonetheless connected by the bridge. Each gazebo encloses a large chair with armrests that recall thrones or electric chairs. They are facing one another, suggesting an act of communication. The artist has transformed the gazebo, traditionally a picturesque garden folly, into a vehicle for political expression. It is no longer merely a site to contemplate the natural environment, but to meditate on the nature of democracy.

An Iranian-born American artist, Armajani is known for his politically resonant, large-scale, interactive environmental sculptures that merge sculpture with architecture. His sculptures, walking bridges, and reading rooms are created as functional places for people to use and enjoy. Armajani has created sculpture for plazas, parks, and other urban landscapes, as well as rural locations. The design of *Gazebo for Two Anarchists*, and most of Armajani's structures, is inspired by vernacular American architecture, but here the steel truss-work suggests civic engineering.

Media: Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects; [Archival images](#) of *Gazebo for Two Anarchists*; [exhibition website](#) for Storm King Art Center's 1993 exhibition *Siah Armajani: Recent Work*



Charles Ginnever (American, 1931–2019). Fayette: For Charles and Medgar Evers, 1971. Weathering steel, 7 ft. 10 1/2 in. x 16 ft. 10 in. x 18 in. (240 x 513.1 x 45.7 cm). Gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation

[**Fayette: For Charles and Medgar Evers \(1971\) by Charles Ginnever**](#)

Fayette: For Charles and Medgar Evers is named for two brothers who were prominent leaders in the civil rights movement. Medgar was killed by a sniper in 1963. Charles continued their work and was elected mayor of Fayette, Mississippi, in 1971. Ginnever made this sculpture that same year, taking part in public art's long tradition of honoring important people and commemorating heroic achievements and allying him with the aims of the civil rights movement.

Media: Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects



Martin Puryear (American, b. 1941) *Lookout*, 2023. Brick, concrete, and cobblestone. Storm King's commission and exhibition by Martin Puryear are made possible by generous major support from Janet Benton and David Schunter, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Roberta and Steven Denning, Bridgett and Bruce Evans, Glenstone Foundation, Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Ohnell Family Foundation, the Hazen Polsky Foundation, Thomas A. and Georgina T. Russo, and Margaret VB Wurtele. Lead support is provided by Agnes Gund, Barbara Bluhm-Kaul and Don Kaul, The Ronald and Jo Carole Lauder Foundation and Matthew Marks Gallery. Support is also provided by Robert Lehman Foundation and Sidney E. Frank Foundation and supported in part by Allison Berg, Jennifer Brorsen and Richard DeMartini, Andrew L. and Gayle Shaw Camden, Tommy and Dathel Coleman, Martha Gabbert, Debby and Rocco Landesman, and the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

[Lookout \(2023\) by Martin Puryear](#)

Martin Puryear's *Lookout*—Storm King's newest site-specific commission—is a structure created from layers of red clay bricks laid using thin-shell masonry techniques. Rather than straight lines and vertical walls, however, the work curves inward and upward, opening to allow entry from one side while producing a swelling form on the opposite end. The twenty-foot-tall sculpture is shaped by a series of nine segments: at the open end, the first of these segments emerges visually and structurally as an arch, set perpendicular to the ground plane. Each successive segment is set against its neighbor at an increasingly acute angle, sweeping upward until the bricks of the final segment are laid in the form of a dome at the summit of the artwork.

Lookout marks the artist's first use brick as a material, recognizing brickmaking as a once-primary industry in the Hudson Valley and referencing the vernacular structures that dot the local landscape. The work emerges from Puryear's exploration of traditional masonry forms, including the daring techniques of Nubian vault-building without formwork that the artist witnessed in Mali; classical Roman arches and domes; the curved and tapered forms of bottle kilns at the ceramics factories of Stoke-on-Trent, in England; and the curved entablatures of the Squadron A Armory on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, which seem to defy gravity. To achieve this ambitious and unconventional use of the material, Puryear worked closely with several trusted collaborators, including structural engineers, architects specializing in Guastavino vaults, kiln-builders, and expert brick- and stonemasons.

Inside, Puryear uses the work's form and setting to encourage a heightened sense of presence. Facing southwest, the masonry arch frames a sweeping view of Storm King's landscape, with the contours of Schunnemunk Mountain in the far distance. The brick surface is punctuated by a constellation of ninety circular openings created by tubes of fiberglass-reinforced concrete in varying sizes. The tubes, or oculi, act as apertures, creating pinhole vignettes of the surrounding trees and sky. The "sweet spot," indicated by the paving pattern, enables visitors to see out of all of the oculi at once.

Puryear describes the title of the work, *Lookout*, as simultaneously "a physical place, an invitation to observe and engage with the natural world, and a warning."

Media: Photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects; [Exhibition video](#) on the Storm King website; [Exhibition website](#) for Storm King Art Center's 2023 exhibition *Martin Puryear: Process and Scale*



Alice Aycock (American, b. 1946). *Low Building with Dirt Roof (For Mary)*, 1973/2010. Wood, stone, and earth, 30 in. x 20 ft. x 12 ft. (76.2 x 609.6 x 365.8 cm). Gift of the artist. © Alice Aycock, courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York

[Low Building with Dirt Roof \(For Mary\) \(1973/2010\) by Alice Aycock](#)

Low Building with Dirt Roof (For Mary) was first created in 1973—a time when many artists were working with the earth as an artistic medium—at Gibney Farm, Pennsylvania, land owned by Aycock’s family. There, its roof was intended to be planted with whatever crop was growing in the fields surrounding it. Aycock has associated *Low Building* with both a farmhouse and a small cemetery on her family’s property. Mary, of the work’s title and dedication, was a child in Aycock’s family who died prematurely. Aycock also has said that she was inspired by “frontier homes, the tunnels and tombs of Mycenae, the myth of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, dreams, the memory of my grandparents’ attic,” and finally adds, “I also have a shelter concept—a sort of physiological need for a ‘first house’.” The work was re-created at Storm King in 2010.

Media: Audio recording and photos available on our digital guide on Bloomberg Connects; [Alice Aycock’s Oral History Video](#)

During Your Visit to Storm King

GENERAL INFORMATION

PLEASE FULLY READ YOUR GROUP CONFIRMATION LETTER for complete details about arrival, lunch, chaperones, trams, tours, and weather. Additional information about Group Visits can be found at <https://stormking.org/groups/> or by contacting groups@stormkingartcenter.org

PREPARE TO BE OUTDOORS: Storm King is a 500-acre outdoor sculpture museum. Keep in mind that your group will be outside for your entire visit to Storm King, rain or shine. We recommend dressing in layers and wearing comfortable shoes for lots of walking. It's a good idea to bring a refillable water bottle, sunscreen, bug spray, and weather-appropriate attire.

HELP US PROTECT THE SCULPTURES: Touching, walking on, or climbing on most of the works of art at Storm King is prohibited. The sunscreen, hand lotion, bug spray, and even natural oils on your hands damage the surface of the sculptures. You might not think one touch matters but remember, about 200,000 people visit Storm King every year. Thousands of touches add up to lots of damage. Always refrain from climbing artworks for your own safety and the safety of others.



INTERACTIVE ARTWORKS: Artworks which visitors may touch are designated on the map and on the grounds with a hand icon, pictured at left.

RESPECT WILDLIFE: All kinds of animals and plants make their home at Storm King – be good guests by giving them plenty of space. Do not enter our long and native grass fields and please refrain from climbing trees.

TERRAIN: The Art Center's grounds comprise varied terrain including rolling meadows, hills, wooded areas, paved paths, and gravel paths. During guided tours, please be prepared to cover up to one mile on grass.

ACCESSIBILITY: Storm King Art Center is committed to offering a rich experience of art and landscape to every visitor. **Please let us know in advance if anyone in your group has accessibility needs.** Level, paved pathways traverse many parts of the Art Center; however, some areas may only be accessed via steep terrain, unpaved pathways, or mown grass. The visitor map indicates paved and unpaved paths and steep areas (where slope exceeds that of a wheelchair-accessible ramp, or 12.5%). [Learn more.](#)

TIME: We recommend planning at least 3 hours for your visit. Guided tours are usually 45-60 minutes. If your visit is self-guided, or you have time before or after your tour, you may have lunch at a designated picnic area and explore the grounds on your own.

MATERIALS: You may choose to bring pencils and sketchbooks or notebooks for students to draw and write during the self-guided portion of your visit. Check out the digital guide on Bloomberg Connects and the tips and techniques for onsite engagement document on p. 14 for more inspiration.

MAP: Access an up-to-date map of Storm King on our [“Plan Your Visit” webpage](#), or pick up a map when you arrive at the Art Center. The digital guide on Bloomberg Connects features a live map.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Ball playing and other recreational items and sports are not permitted.
- Indoor galleries are located in the Museum Building on Museum Hill. We ask that you limit the number of students inside the galleries at one time to 10.
- Roadways are used by pedestrians and Storm King staff, trams, personal vehicles, and rented bicycles. Please use caution.
- Carry in, carry out. Be sure that all trash and recycling makes it into bins. If you have lunch at Storm King, tidy up after yourself to make sure the next hungry visitors can enjoy the area too.
- Storm King reserves the right to refuse entry or to eject any group for misconduct at any time. Groups that are asked to leave the site or that cause damage to the site may be prohibited from visiting in the future.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? CONCEPTS & CONNECTIONS

Continue exploring the theme of conceptual connections with your students at Storm King. If you are on a self-guided visit, or have time before or after your tour, walk the grounds. Explore the form, material, symbolism, and context of each artwork. What ideas and connections arise for students?

Visit some or all of the artworks featured in this resource packet:



Artwork: *Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini (1992)* by Siah Armajani

Location: North Woods; see map on page 13

Engagement: This work is interactive, and students are invited to respectfully step into, touch, walk through, and sit in it. Ask students what it feels like to engage with the work, and what ideas the structure brings to mind for them. The artist named this work after Gabriella and Alberto Antolini—two siblings who were active as anti-government anarchists in the early 20th century, leading to Gabriella's incarceration. Many of Siah Armajani's works invite us to consider democratic systems. Invite students to share how they think this work might feel relevant today.

Artwork: *Fayette: For Charles and Medgar Evers (1971)* by Charles Ginnever



Location: North Woods; see map on page 13

Engagement: Walk all the way around the sculpture, inviting students to sketch or photograph it from multiple angles. What are some words they might use to describe this form? The sculpture is named for two brothers who were prominent leaders in the civil rights movement. Medgar was killed by a sniper in 1963. Charles continued their work and was elected mayor of Fayette, Mississippi, in 1971. Ginnever made this sculpture that same year. Ask students how they think the form of the sculpture might symbolically relate to its source of inspiration. How is it similar to and different from *Gazebo for Two Anarchists*?



Artwork: *Lookout* (2023) by Martin Puryear

Location: North Woods; see map on page 13

Engagement: Ask students to walk around and enter the sculpture. Invite them to stand on the central stone circle and look up and around them. Puryear describes the title of the work, *Lookout*, as simultaneously “a physical place, an invitation to observe and engage with the natural world, and a warning.” How might students relate those ideas to their experience of the artwork?



Artwork: *Low Building with Dirt Roof (For Mary)* (1973/2010) by Alice Aycock

Location: North Woods; see map on page 13

Engagement: View from multiple angles. Ask students what they notice about the artwork in person, which they did not notice when viewing a photo of it in class. Aycock described the piece as both safe and warm, as well as oppressive or dangerous. Do students agree? Why or why not? Ask students to free write or create a poem inspired by this artwork. Compare and contrast with *Lookout*, considering both form and concept.

“WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA? CONCEPTS & CONNECTIONS” ARTWORK LOCATIONS

#108: *Fayette: For Charles and Medgar Evers* by Charles Ginnever

#127: *Martin Puryear, Lookout*

#102: *Alice Aycock, Low Building with Dirt Roof (For Mary)*



#101: *Siah Armajani, Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini*

Artworks featured in this resource packet are located within 1 mile of the main entrance.

This route includes paved paths, grass, and some steeper, unpaved paths.

For more information about accessibility, or to request alternative suggestions for this theme, please contact groups@stormkingartcenter.org

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT STORM KING

EXPLORE PERSPECTIVE. View sculptures and vistas from afar, close up, above, and below. Move around and through artworks to experience them from different angles. Invite students to create a rectangle with their hands to use as a viewfinder, “zooming in” on details and “cropping” views. Try photographing the same artwork or area from multiple perspectives. Ask students to imagine or draw what something might look like from a bird’s-eye view or a worm’s-eye view.

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS. Engage students in conversation by asking open-ended questions such as: What do you notice? What does this make you think of? What do you wonder? What artworks or areas do you like the most? Why?

ENGAGE YOUR SENSES. Take the time to slow down and breathe deeply. What scents do you notice? What sounds do you hear? Invite students to create a six-word poem or story inspired by their sensory experiences. In addition to feeling the tickle of breezes and grass blades, we invite visitors to interact with sculptures marked on the map with a hand icon.

EMBRACE THE LANDSCAPE. Enjoy cloud gazing, downhill rolling, and creature and critter watching. Please engage with the land safely and respectfully.

SKETCH. Ask students to try capturing sculptures and vistas with single-line contour drawings, challenging them to create quick sketches without lifting their pencil from the page. Try drawing the same artwork or area from multiple angles. Zoom in on details. Experiment with mark making to capture different textures and create compositions featuring both sculpture and landscape.

GET MOVING! Encourage students to explore ideas with their bodies. They might physically recreate shapes they observe or respond to art and nature through dance and movement.

CONSIDER TITLES. The digital guide and Storm King [website](#) can provide additional information about each artwork, and many works have nearby placards listing the artist and title. You might add an additional layer to group conversations by considering how a title might relate to an artwork.

TUNE INTO THE AUDIO GUIDE. Accessible on Storm King’s digital guide on the free Bloomberg Connects App. Make the most of your visit with audio and video commentary by artists and Storm King staff. Artwork lookup numbers can be found on the map and on the label next to each artwork. Download the Bloomberg Connects App via the QR code below.



Post-Visit

REFLECT

Ask students to individually journal or talk with a partner about their visit to Storm King. What are some sculptures and ideas they explored?

BIG IDEAS

Ask each student to think or write about one artwork they explored which felt engaging to them. How did that artist use materials, forms, and/or symbolism to express or inspire ideas? You might share images and info from this packet (pages 4-8) to help refresh their memories. If time, students might research more about the artist who interested them, and consider the artist's work at Storm King in the context of their broader practice.

ART EXPLORATION

Prompt for Students: Work individually or in small groups. Choose an idea you would like to explore. It could be an abstract concept (ex: eternity, joy, freedom) or a political, social, or cultural issue. How might you create a large-scale sculpture that explores your chosen concept? Draw your idea and make notes to communicate your plan.

Students might consider the following as they create their plans:

- What **materials** might you use to express your idea? Why?
- What shapes and **forms** will make up the sculpture?
- What **context** would the sculpture be viewed in? (What type of space would it be in? How would people interact with it?)
- How might you use **symbols** to communicate your idea?
- How might you **juxtapose** different elements to help inspire connections?

Ask students to create a large-scale drawing with notes to help convey their vision for a sculpture. If time allows, students could also construct small scale models out of materials like paper, clay, and aluminum foil.

Invite students to share some of their choices with the class, or do a "gallery walk" around the room to explore each other's plans. If possible, the class might even consider ways they can adapt and create versions of their sculptures to exhibit in or around the school.

Resources

Storm King Art Center Collection

<https://collections.stormking.org/index.php/About/collection>

John P. Stern Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4867>

SFMOMA Shorts: Art is...Complete by the Viewer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQVZ9tREv2c>

Archival images of *Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini* by Siah Armajani

https://collections.stormking.org/Browse/archival/facet/rel_entity_facet/id/160

Exhibition website for Storm King Art Center's 1993 exhibition *Siah Armajani: Recent Work*

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/98>

Martin Puryear Exhibition website and video

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/204>

Alice Aycock Oral History

<https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4862>

Storm King Art Center Groups

<https://stormking.org/groups/>