

# Craft Contemporary

## Lesson Plan Art and Remembrance

**Essential Question** How can we create an artwork using shapes, colors and symbols to help us to represent and honor people that are important to us?

**Grade** 3rd - 5th (lesson plan will be scaled depending on grade level and lesson time)

**Time** 1 hour - 1 hour 30 minutes

**Art Concepts** Drawing, collage, fiber and textile, symbolism, symmetry

**Materials (Art Kit)** Art board (piece of cardboard 8x10 or thick cardstock), fabric, beads, feathers, yarn, tacky glue, 2" X 3" paper (**In-Classroom/Home**) scissors, pencil, extra glue (Elmers or other school glue), extra paper, coloring tools, (optional) copies of family photographs brought in from home

**Artworks in Focus** Consuelo Flores, *The Roots of Our Resistance*

## TALKING ABOUT CRAFT

### What is Craft?

Craft has been described as the skilled creation of objects, installations and other artworks using metal, fibre, glass, clay and wood. Craft is often collaborative and involves techniques, colors, patterns and ideas passed on between people in different cultures and communities. Art and craft often overlap.

### Vocabulary

**Fiber** - Fibers are long, thin strands of material made by plants, animals, or humans. People use fibers to make many useful products. Some examples are brushes, rope, paper, and textiles (cloth). Fiber can be natural and artificial.

**Collage** - A piece of art made by layering and sticking different materials such as pieces of paper or fabric onto a backing.

**Symmetry** - Symmetry is when an object looks the exact same on one side as the other.

**Altar** - An altar is a raised structure for the presentation of religious offerings, or other ritualistic purposes. Altars are found at shrines, temples, churches and other places of worship. Many religions and cultures have used altars throughout history.

**Día de los Muertos** - The Day of the Dead or Día de los Muertos is a time of the year during which we honor and recognise the gifts that people who have passed have given to us. The tradition traces its earliest roots to the Aztec people in what is now central Mexico.

Aztec: The Aztecs were a Mesoamerican people and culture, indigineous to central Mexico (1300 to 1521.)

We are going to look at an artwork by the artist Consuelo Flores. Flores creates artworks in the form of altars or *ofrendas*, designed to remember and honor people. She is often inspired by the Mexican tradition of Dia de los Muertos.

Look closely at this artwork by Flores. What do you notice? What materials and objects can you see? Does this artwork remind you of anything you have seen before?

*“This altar installation is dedicated to the Black and Brown first responders and essential workers of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are the backbone of our communities. They have now become the roots of my resistance.”*

Why do you think this artist used these materials and put them together in this way? Why do you think the artist called this artwork *Roots of Our Resistance*?

*“This altar. . .includes rows of flowers that descend from high on a wall, the hanging threads of flowers symbolic of roots. Below, at the ground level, are lush green tropical plants, which is my interpretation of the paradise land of Mictlan [from Aztec mythology] where the spirit dwells in the afterlife. In 2021, Día de los Muertos is more significant than ever because of the way Covid-19 has altered all our lives.”*

Altars are usually symmetrical. Do you know what symmetrical means? If you draw a line down the middle of something and it is the same on both sides it is symmetrical. Flores specifically chose to make this altar unbalanced and not symmetrical, or asymmetrical. Why do you think she may have done this?

Flores said that she made the artwork this way because *“the world is imbalanced.”* She is representing the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, people of color have suffered disproportionately compared to white people.

## **CRAFTING PROJECT**

Inspired by Consuelo Flores’s work we are going to create a fiber collage dedicated to someone special:

1. Decide on a special person that you want to dedicate your artwork to. Draw a picture of them on a small piece of paper or use a photograph if you have one.
2. Choose colors and materials that remind you of the person your artwork is dedicated to.
3. Start with a background. Glue collage materials onto your art board, or use coloring tools.

4. Place your photo or drawing somewhere onto your background and start arranging materials around your picture. When you are happy with your composition, glue each piece down.
5. Add details that remind you of your special person. You could use yarn or beads to create symbols, or spell out their name, initials or a word to describe them.

### **Reflection**

Which colors, textures, shapes, and symbols did you use? How do they represent the person you made your artwork about?

### **Suggested Pre-visit/post-visit activity:**

Have students write a story about someone who is special to them. Ask them to describe why they are special and include details about their personality and things that remind them of this person.

NOTE: If students ask to represent a pet, try to encourage them to choose a person because there is more potential for them to identify things that person likes to do, objects they use/like, favorite flowers, patterns and colors to represent them, etc. But if they feel super strongly about their animal that is also okay.

### **Curriculum Connections**

California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

3.VA:Cr2.1:Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials. 3.VA:Re7.2:Determine messages communicated by an image.  
4.VA:Re7.2: Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages. 4.VA:Cn10: Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions. 4.VA:Re8: Interpret art by referring to contextual information and analyzing relevant subject matter, characteristics of form, and use of media  
5.VA:Cr2.1:Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice. 5.VA:Cr2.3:Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance.

*Prepared by Billie Rae Vinson, Education Programs Manager, Craft Contemporary*

**ARTWORK INFORMATION:**



Consuelo Flores, Roots of Our Resistance



Fiber collage example



Consuelo Flores, Roots of Our Resistance  
(detail)



Consuelo Flores, Roots of Our Resistance  
(detail)

## Example of Student Work



Saturn Street Elementary, Teacher - Baharak Saadat Beheshti

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade General Education Class

These two students created relief portraits of someone important to them inspired by Consuelo G. Flores Día de los Muertos installation, *The Roots of Our Resistance, Altar*. They successfully added colors and collaged/drawn details to symbolize the person in their picture. They have both experimented with compositional elements by centering the figure and adding a frame.

They also created a short description about the person in their artwork for a presentation at school.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Consuelo Flores, *The Roots of Our Resistance*, 2021

This altar installation is dedicated to the Black and Brown victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are the first responders and essential workers —those who do work in areas that our society needs done in order to function daily. Those workers who are most at risk and are the backbone of our communities. They get paid hourly wages but oftentimes, don't have enough to pay for health insurance. When these workers got sick with Covid, they brought it home, where multiple generations lived together, infecting entire families, from elderly grandparents to infant children. Some of these essential workers waited before seeking medical treatment. They couldn't afford to lose a day's wages, nor could they afford another bill from a doctor or clinic. Some waited until the last moment and died. The disproportionate number of deaths of people of color due to COVID-19 parallels the same inequality protested by Black and Brown communities over the last several decades. The delivery method of this inequality has changed, but the victims remain the same—people of color are most at risk from different social injustices and are still considered disposable. This altar honoring the Black and Brown casualties of the pandemic include rows of flowers that descend from high on a wall, the hanging threads of flowers symbolic of roots. The flowers are not the typical marigolds used for Dia de los Muertos. Some have red in them, like a variety of marigolds that have red petals. I added the red to the traditional orange of the marigolds to visually approximate a 3-D model of the Covid-19 virus when magnified.

Altars are typically symmetrical and balanced, but this one, purposely, is not. The world is imbalanced, I wanted there to be a visual discomfort as we all experience the discomfort of the abnormal reality in which we're collectively living.

In the middle part of the altar are the roots, from which our society receives what is essential. They hold the photos of our Black and Brown dead. Behind each photo is one of the red and orange marigolds. They are the roots of our resistance. Below, at the ground level, are lush green tropical plants, which is my interpretation of the paradise land of Mictlan where the spirit dwells in the afterlife. In 2021, Día de los Muertos is more significant than ever because of the way Covid-19 has altered all our lives, even in times of mourning. Because of social distancing and in person restrictions, many people have not had the opportunity to attend a funeral for a family member or friend. And so, what has been traditionally the end-of-life celebration has been altered as well. The altar has become a focal point for many, a ceremony they can have privately or virtually, so they can have closure. And though an altar can be built while still in isolation, there's a definite sense of community, of not being alone, of sharing and processing grief together. For our global community to survive, it really comes down to the strength of the virus versus the strength of the body—each individual body as well as the body of humanity. We must honor all who have died by fighting for equality, ensuring communities of color are safe,

healthy and have a secure future. This altar is personal. What's happened in our society is personal. I felt the need to look at the people who died and really recognize that I could be one of them. They have now become the roots of my resistance.