

1

Messages

How do people communicate through art and design?



1-1 Yinka Shonibare's artworks send messages about important issues facing our world today, including climate change and global warming. What message does this artwork send? Why do you think this? What evidence do you have to support your idea?

Yinka Shonibare CBE, *Water Kid (Girl)*, 2020. Fiberglass mannequin, Dutch wax printed cotton textile, globe, brass, steel baseplate, antique water jug, 52 ¾" x 22 ½" x 19 ¾" (134 x 57 x 50 cm). Courtesy of James Cohan Gallery. © Yinka Shonibare cbe. All Rights Reserved, DACS/ARS, NY 2022.

Unit at a Glance

Essential Question

How do people communicate through art and design?

What You Will Learn

- How art and design are forms of communication.
- How artists and designers use color to convey information, ideas, and feelings.
- How traditions in painting as a form of expression continue and change.
- How an artist refers to the history of art and society to communicate important ideas about the present.

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Meet Yinka Shonibare

Yinka Shonibare is known for artworks that are visually attractive, often due to his use of brightly colored patterned fabric. The artist also likes to surprise his audience with unusual combinations of objects that cause them to think. Referring to a particular time in the past, his artworks help viewers better understand the present.

What You Will Do

- Create a self-portrait that sends a message about who you are.
- Investigate different color schemes to express ideas and moods.
- Explore ways to combine painting and sculpture to convey ideas and moods.
- Collaborate with a classmate to create a meaningful portrait based on an artwork from another time.

Key Terms

English

portrait
self-portrait
color scheme
primary colors
secondary colors
intermediate colors
complementary colors
analogous
monochromatic
recontextualization
subject matter
tradition

Spanish

retrato
autorretrato
esquema de colores
colores primarios
colores secundarios
colores intermedios
colores
complementarios
análogo
monocromático
recontextualización
tema
tradicción



Kehinde Wiley Sends a Message

Lesson Objectives

- Explain how an artist uses artworks from the past to send messages about the present.
- Interpret messages sent and identify questions raised by some contemporary portraits.

Who Is Kehinde Wiley?

Kehinde Wiley and his twin brother were born in Los Angeles, California. Their mother is African American and their father is from Nigeria, a country in West Africa and the origin of the artist's name. In the local language Yoruba, Kehinde means "second born of twins." As a child, Wiley loved art, and his mother made sure he was able to attend art classes.

Early Years, Early Questions

As early as age eleven, Wiley was fascinated by European portrait paintings from the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s. He spent hours studying art in museums and books, wondering about the people shown in the paintings. He was curious about their poses, especially those of the men with their fancy clothes, horses, and objects of power. He also noticed that all of the people in those portraits were white. He saw no Black or brown people at all, and he wondered why.



Kehinde Wiley



1-48 **Artist Kehinde Wiley painting in his studio.**

© Kehinde Wiley.
Photographer: Humberto Contreras.

Recontextualization

What Is Recontextualization?

Artists are always exploring new ways to send messages. One strategy used by contemporary artists—artists working today—involves surprising the viewer. In the strategy referred to as **recontextualization**, the artist presents an object or idea in a new or surprising context.

A context is a kind of environment. Create a picture in your mind of a giraffe. Did you place the giraffe in a wild place—a landscape with a few bushes? Or did you see it in a zoo? We would expect to see a giraffe in either of these contexts. Now picture the giraffe in a school gymnasium. Or a restaurant. The giraffe is taken from one context and placed in a new or surprising context. This is what an artist does when using the strategy of recontextualization. Artists usually recontextualize when they want viewers to be surprised. More importantly, they want viewers to think about something in a new way.



1-31 In traditional depictions, Lady Justice is blindfolded and holds a balance and a sword.

1-32 This Lady Justice holds the same symbols, however, Yinka Shonibare replaced her head with a globe, dressed her in African textiles, and “tattooed” her arms with Javanese patterns. How has the artist used recontextualization?

Yinka Shonibare CBE, *Justice for All*, 2019.

Fiberglass sculpture, hand-painted with Dutch wax batik pattern, brass, hand-painted globe, and steel baseplate, overall: 115" x 81 1/8" x 27 1/2" (292 x 206 x 70 cm). Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. Photo: Stephen White & Co. © Yinka Shonibare CBE. All Rights Reserved, DACS/ARS, NY 2022.

Yinka Shonibare and Recontextualization

Contemporary artist Yinka Shonibare is known for using the strategy of recontextualization. His artwork *Justice for All* (**Fig. 1-32**) features a copy of the sculpture, *Justice*, that stands on top of the Central Criminal Court in London, where the artist lives. Lady Justice is a familiar symbol of fair and equal treatment for all. Shonibare recontextualizes the British statue by placing its copy in Singapore’s Old Parliament House, a reminder that Singapore was once a British colony. Much of the artist’s work refers to colonial history—a time when Britain and other powerful countries went into territories around the globe and called them their own.



STEAM: Science and Technology

Nathalie Miebach: Weaving the Weather



1-62 *The Burden of Every Drop* combines weather data with snippets of information from news reports about Hurricane Maria.

Nathalie Miebach, *The Burden of Every Drop*, 2018.

Wood, paper, rope, data, 17' x 10' x 2' (5.2 x 3 x 0.6 m). Courtesy of the artist.

Nathalie Miebach's artworks help people better understand and visualize the impact of weather on our environment. The artist creates mixed-media sculptures using data visualization—a way of interpreting scientific information into an image or three-dimensional form. She collects weather-related data, like temperatures, wind speeds, and moon phases, from hurricanes and floods to weave colorful artworks out of rope, paper, and found objects. She says about her process, "I've always been a tactile learner and have had to make something in order to understand it; my hands are my main investigator of the world."



Nathalie Miebach

Her weaving *The Burden of Every Drop* focuses on Hurricane Maria, which struck Puerto Rico in 2017, causing widespread damage to homes and businesses and leaving 3,000 people dead.

The artwork (**Figs. 1-62** and **1-63**) visualizes the storm and its impact on the people of the island, who lived without electricity for months. Miebach is interested in floods and extreme weather because they are becoming more common and can uproot homes and disrupt lives.

When beginning an artwork, Miebach first collects data using simple tools like thermometers and rain gauges. She then goes online to find satellite images and data from offshore buoys and weather stations. The horizontal and vertical elements of her weaving represent different points of data on a grid. She also assigns data to colored beads, sticks, and strings and posts a legend (a visual representation of the symbols she used) next to each artwork to tell the viewer what each element signifies. Her weavings bend and change as the data points interact, making them three-dimensional rather than the traditional flat forms of diagrams and graphs.

Careers

Fashion Designer

Can a piece of clothing share an important message? Absolutely! A garment doesn't need to be a T-shirt printed with a message in order to express a statement about issues like environmentalism. Kourtney Morgan, a fashion designer for the brand Patagonia, combines her passions for fashion and environmentalism in her work. She directs the ReCrafted fashion line, which transforms scraps of used clothing into new items.

Fashion designers create wearable items that are not just aesthetically pleasing but are tailored to the human body and designed to respond to movement and environment. Designers need to consider factors such as the way a garment feels and moves, what occasion it may be worn, and who is its target audience. Beyond having an eye for style, a fashion designer needs an understanding of available materials and manufacturing processes for clothing production as well as how to market their designs.

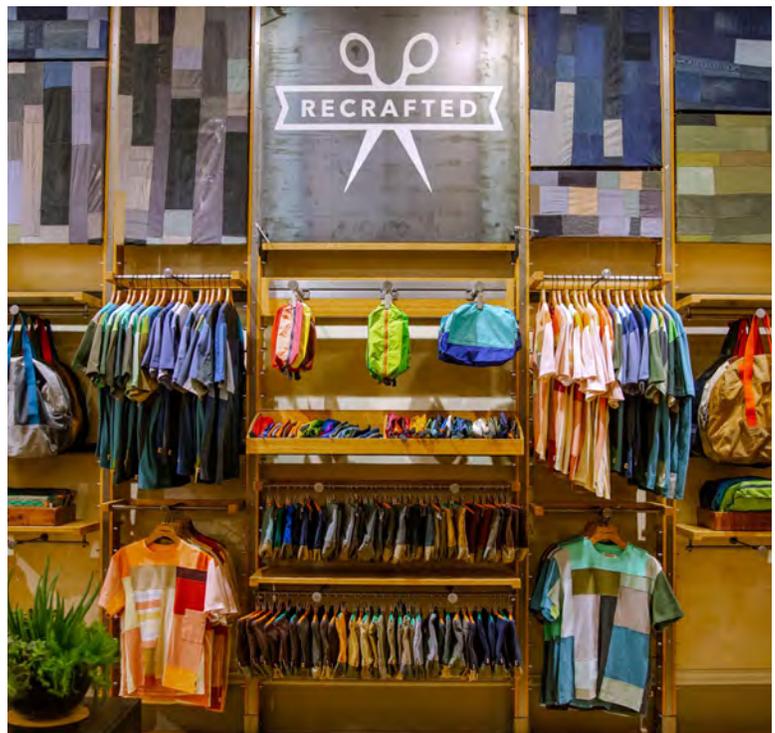


Fashion designer Kourtney Morgan believes that "clothes can have many lives. They don't ever need to end up in a landfill."



1-66 A one-of-a-kind shirt from the ReCrafted fashion line.

Courtesy of Patagonia.



1-67 Items on display from the ReCrafted clothing line.

Courtesy of Patagonia. Photo: Kern Ducote.

Exploring Background Messages

Studio Objective

Investigate the symbolic power of color and pattern.

You have learned:

- Artists can use artworks from the past to send messages.
- Portraits can express ideas and emotions.

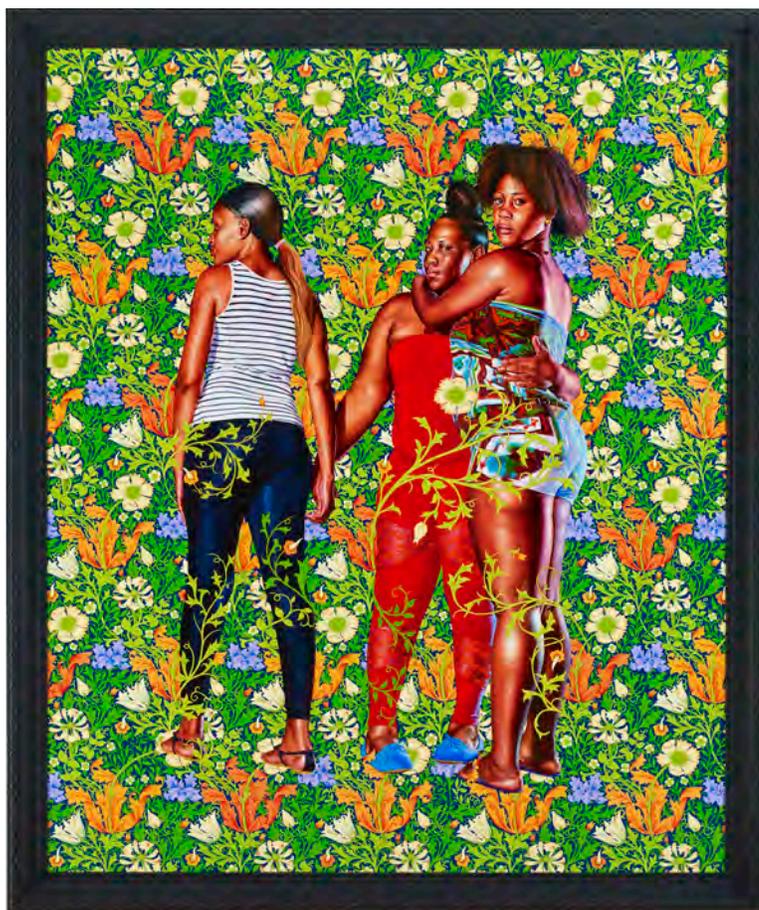
Now, to grow as an artist, you can explore the ways color and pattern can be used to suggest ideas.

Investigate and Document

Textile patterns give life and meaning to Kehinde Wiley's portraits. He finds textile patterns from history and in places he visits.

Notice the brightly colored, patterned backgrounds in Wiley's paintings (**Fig. 1-54**). Wiley keeps the original floral design but adds bold colors to suggest the subjects' strength and resilience.

Consider. Your gender, race, religion, age, the neighborhood you live in, hobbies you enjoy, and holidays you celebrate are important layers of who you are. How can you use these histories, experiences, likes, dislikes, hopes, and dreams to send messages in your artworks?



1-54 In this painting, Wiley filled the background with colorful flowers over a field of bright green. What messages do these flowers send to the viewer? Do you think the colors he chose have an important meaning? Why do you say this?

Kehinde Wiley, *Naomi and Her Daughters*, 2013.

Oil on canvas, 9' x 7' 6" (2.7 x 2.3 m). © Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery.



1-55 George Dawe, *Naomi and Her Daughters*, exhibited 1804.

Oil paint on canvas, 37 3/4" x 30 5/16" (96 x 77 cm). Tate, purchased 1990, T05746. Photo © Tate.

Posing with History

Studio Objective

Collaborate to create a portrait of a classmate based on a historical portrait.

Most artists know about art history and have favorite artists and styles they go to for inspiration and ideas. Kehinde Wiley's paintings refer to historical portraits that send a message about status, power, and authority. Poses, gestures, facial expression, clothing, and objects add to the meaning (**Figs. 1-58** and **1-59**). Historical portraits are often very large in scale, requiring viewers to look up at the person.

What happens when ordinary people today are painted in power portraits? What messages do these new portraits send? How do our ideas change? Like Wiley, you can investigate these questions.

Create

Your Challenge

Create a portrait of a classmate based on a historical portrait. With your classmate, choose a portrait from the past and the message your artwork should send.

Consider Your Choices

Narrow Your Focus

- **Subject Matter** What historical portrait will be your source?
- **Expression** What message or feelings do you want to send? Consider clothing, pose, facial expression, and gestures.
- **Personal Connection** What message does your classmate want the portrait to send?



1-58 How has the man in this painting interpreted what he saw in the historical portrait by Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck? What words describe his attitude?

Kehinde Wiley, *Portrait of Andries Stilte II*, 2006.

Oil on canvas, 8' x 6' (2.4 x 1.8 m). © Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy of Columbus Museum of Art, the Ron & Ann Pizzuti Collection and Roberts Projects, Los Angeles.

1-59 Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck, *Portrait of Andries Stilte*, 1639–1640. Oil on canvas, 24 5/8" x 16 5/8" (62.6 x 42.2 cm). Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio: Museum Purchase, Bequest of J. Willard Loos. 1981.003.



Select Your Materials

- You may take photographs of your classmate, paying attention to clothing, pose, facial expression, and gestures.
- Will you include the actual photograph in your artwork or use it as a reference?

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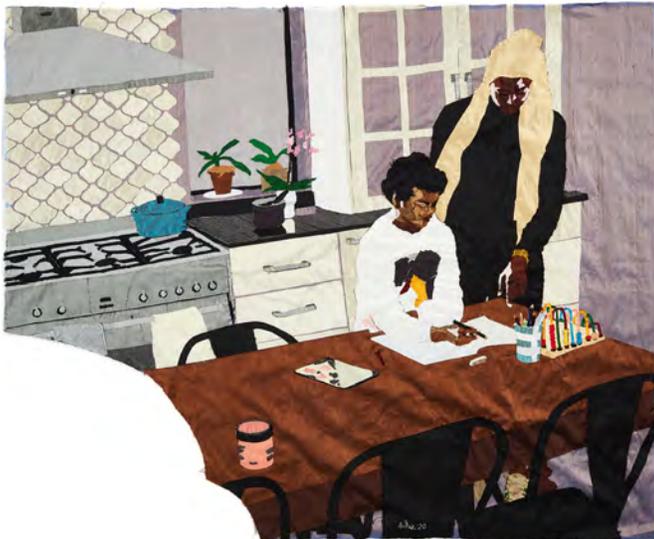
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