



# CRAFT IN AMERICA

REPRESENTING COMMUNITY EDUCATION GUIDE

## Essential Question

- How can artists connect us to our community?

## Supporting questions

- How do artists use juxtaposition to create new meanings?
- Why might artists borrow symbols and patterns from different times, places, and cultures?
- How can artists be community builders?

## Key Concepts

- Artists use juxtaposition to create new meanings.
- Artists can borrow symbols and patterns from different times, places, and cultures.
- Artists can be community builders.

## Before viewing

Tell students they will be viewing a video about artist Roberto Lugo, and that they will eventually use his work to help them imagine and create a larger community art project. Introduce the website of Roberto Lugo to students and allow them to browse for several minutes. Ask students to use their sketchbooks to draw quick sketches of things they notice such as the vessels, and the faces, scenes, detailed patterns, symbols, and lettering that decorate the works.

As you circulate, encourage students to consider some questions.

- What do you notice most as you look at Roberto Lugo's work?
- What do you imagine the artist wants you to think about when you look at his work?
- What would you like to ask him about his work?

Students can write some observations in their sketchbooks. After they have explored the site, ask students to share some of their notes. Finally, share the background information (above) with students as a further introduction to Roberto Lugo.

## During viewing

Hand out Worksheet 1: Welcome to My Neighborhood for students to use while watching the video. You may want to encourage students to work in small groups to allow for collaboration in answering questions. Pause at intervals to give students time to respond to the questions.

## After viewing

Go over the worksheet with students, sharing answers and discussing their ideas and reactions.

## Experimenting with juxtaposition

Continue with a discussion explaining juxtaposition, and Roberto Lugo's use of it.

Here is one possible example: (as you draw, or arrange some cutout images on a piece of paper) A simple definition for juxtaposition is putting two things side by side. But in artworks, using juxtaposition can create surprises or new meanings. Here is a turtle. I'm going to add a clock next to it. Now I have a turtle and a clock. But I also have a story. Why are these two things together in this artwork? Turtles are slow. Clocks keep track of time. Maybe the turtle is late. If I add a textbook and a pencil, the meaning could be a story about procrastinating on homework. Maybe the turtle is a student!



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Lead students in finding juxtapositions in Roberto Lugo's work. Roberto Lugo talks about people underestimating his neighborhood, and thinking of it as "The Badlands." He wants to show his neighborhood in a more positive way, and make sure his neighbors' stories are told. So he places, for example, a young man he knew who ended up in prison on a large vessel of a kind that usually only depicts characters with high status, like gods and historic heroes. Now the viewer might be surprised, and wonder about and pay attention to the young man's story. Roberto Lugo elevates the status of those he depicts, and honors them by placing them in honored traditions of art.

Have students look for more examples of juxtaposition in the images of Roberto Lugo's art, and have them share their discoveries with the class.

Here is one example: Roberto Lugo juxtaposes graffiti lettering in his work and in art exhibits next to older, traditionally respected art forms. The surprising effect of this juxtaposition acts as a claim that graffiti is also a respectable art form, and worthy of study and admiration. Give students some time to play with juxtaposing images (by either drawing them or using the ephemera you've gathered) and sharing them with each other.

### Taking it Further

#### Extensions

If students are interested in further exploration of patterns, see the Craft in America lesson on artist Bisa Butler, whose quilted portraits feature exciting and colorful patterns. If students enjoy creating designs with the protractor, see the lesson on the Poakalani Quilters who create quilts in traditional radial designs.