

**The Natural World**  
**Service Learning 9th/10th**  
**Visual Arts 9th**

**In the Landscape**

In the 1960s and '70s a movement of artists rejected the exhibition spaces of museums and galleries as too limiting and prescriptive. As the predecessors to future artists who would also leave the confines of traditional exhibition spaces, these artists also worked outside of particular art media like painting and sculpture. Instead, these artists created “earthworks”—art that transformed an area of land using rock, soil, and other natural materials. These artists encouraged a new way of thinking about the parameters that define how art was made and where art should happen.

Artists have used the landscape as both a source of inspiration as well as an actual material or site of installation. A contemporary artist’s approach to the landscape is highly personal and idiosyncratic. Some, for example, will carefully observe, respond to, and record the world around them. Others will integrate the landscape as part of their art-making process and then alter and transform it into art. Still others consider the landscape subordinate to their art and will seek sites that enhance rather than inform their work. This lesson explores various approaches to integrating landscape into art both through the process and the final piece. You will consider the following concepts:

- the natural world as a source of inspiration
- environmental and conceptual landscapes
- land art and nature as a medium
- the relationship of humans to nature
- environmental ethics, responsibility, and preservation
- identity and personal connections to the environment
- metaphor and emotional connections to landscapes
- the sublime

**objectives**

- Students will explore a range of artists who incorporate elements from the landscape or integrate the landscape into their work.
- Students will create their own proposals and works of art that integrate both elements of the landscape into the process as well as integrates the work of art itself into the landscape.
- Students will explore the history of “Land Art,” “Earth Art,” and “Earthworks.”

**critical questions**

- How is the site of a museum or gallery similar to or different from natural landscapes?
- What are different ways that artists have used the landscape throughout history to contemporary times?

- What are examples of different relationships between art and the landscape– for example: art that investigates and records the environment as it exists, art that responds to and is influenced by its setting or environment, or art that imposes itself onto the landscape? What are the similarities and differences between them?
- What are other issues that become important in creating art in the landscape—preservation, documentation, accessibility?
- What is the history of Land Art, Earth Art, and Earthworks and what are the differences and similarities between them?

## activities

### activities

#### Photography

Use photographic images to record the environment as it exists.

- black and white digital photographs of natural space or objects (landscapes or macro images)
  - use rule of thirds to make your photograph interesting
  - use the highest resolution setting available on your camera
  - if you do not have a digital camera available, please schedule time with me for photo shoots with the Woodlawn camera
  - send your digital images to klysne@woodlawnschool as a jpeg

#### A Timeline from the Beginning

After learning about the general concepts of art in and from the landscape, research how artists throughout history have approached the landscape to create art—from the Caves of Lascaux and Stonehenge to the present. As a class you will create a visual timeline of your findings of different ways humans have intervened in the landscape. This will become a piece of your history website. While researching, document the following:

Date, location, culture, intended purpose, medium or how it was constructed, dimensions, interesting facts, and include a visual.

At the completion of the timeline, you will answer the following questions:

How have the art and artists' processes changed or evolved over time? How have they remained consistent?

I am researching: \_\_\_\_\_

see the class pages for website information

#### 'Earth Art,' 'Earthworks,' and 'Land Art'

We will then compare the work of contemporary artists with early history to answer the following questions:

Why do artists choose to work outside the gallery and museum system to create their work?

How is their work similar to or different from art you see inside museums or galleries?

How have contemporary practices changed or remained the same from the early

interventions students found in pre–history and early history?

### **Recording, Integrating, or Imposing?**

Create one of the following three different works of art that involve three different processes of interacting with the landscape:

- 1) art that carefully investigates and records the environment as it exists;
- 2) an artwork that responds to or is influenced by a particular environment
- 3) an artwork that imposes itself upon the landscape.

Consider how the process of conceptualization, planning, realization, and documentation is different for each work of art?

(Time: Three 55 minute sessions)

### **Project Ideas based on class examples**

James Turrell and Roden Crater

Research the monuments of other cultures that mark or pay tribute to astrological events. Compare the effects of different kinds of light (e.g. candlelight, skylights, oil lamps, fluorescent lights, etc.) on a particular space and write about the differences. Make a preliminary drawing for a work of art in which they capture or utilize light as a basic element of their composition.

Maya Lin's Wave Field & Grand Rapids Ice Skating Rink

Create a companion work of art for the light–based project that uses the element of water. Consider how you might incorporate the different stages or attributes of water in their design.

Mel Chin and Revival Field

After viewing Chin's video segment and reading the transcript describing Revival Field, describe his perspective on the role the landscape plays in his artwork. Think of other artworks that incorporate strong natural elements or intervene with nature or public spaces such as Sally Mann's photographs of the south or Richard Serra's large–scale, site–specific installations. How do these works engage the landscape? Compare their work and processes with Chin's approach for Revival Field. Design a project that uses these same concepts and processes.

Bruce Nauman's Setting a Good Corner & Staircase

Devise a project where the work of art consists of either the record of an everyday activity in the landscape (in writing, video, photography) or where there is a fit between the body and the earth—where the meaning of the work is realized in the interaction between the two, it is experienced in a body.

Gabriel Orozco's Photographs

Consider what landscape means to them and how they would define the term. Is a landscape always rural, uninhabited, expansive? Can a landscape be a crowded sidewalk or a busy intersection? Use a daily walk to explore their familiarity with their immediate surroundings. Document your walk using a camera, a collection of objects or artifacts they find along the way, a journal or a sketchbook. Before you get started, consider

another statement by Orozco:

“For me photography is like a shoebox. You put things in a box when you want to keep them, to think about them. Photography is more than a window for me; photography is more like a space that tries to capture situations—it’s notational. I use the camera like drawing.”

After you have collected your documentation, Create a collage or assemblage that narrates the experiences and visual elements of your walk.  
(Time: Two to three 45 minute sessions)

### **reflection & evaluation**

- Have students viewed and discussed the work of a range of artists who incorporate elements from the landscape or integrate the landscape into their work?
- Have students created their own proposals and works of art that integrate both elements of the landscape into the process and/or integrate the work of art itself into the landscape?
- Have students articulated an understanding of the history of “Land Art,” “Earth Art,” and “Earthworks?”

Sources:

Art 21

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/naturalworld/lesson3.html>

Ana Mendieta

[http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics\\_mendieta.php](http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics_mendieta.php)

### **Additional Web Sites**

- [http://arted.osu.edu/160/13\\_Lin.php](http://arted.osu.edu/160/13_Lin.php)

Maya Lin

- [http://arted.osu.edu/160/13\\_Holt.php](http://arted.osu.edu/160/13_Holt.php)

Nancy Holt

- [http://arted.osu.edu/160/13\\_Christo.php](http://arted.osu.edu/160/13_Christo.php)

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff

- [http://www.robertsmithson.com/earthworks/spiral\\_jetty.htm](http://www.robertsmithson.com/earthworks/spiral_jetty.htm)

Spiral Jetty, Robert Smithson

- [http://www.diacenter.org/exhibs\\_b/heizer/](http://www.diacenter.org/exhibs_b/heizer/)

Michael Heizer, North, East, South, West

- <http://www.lightningfield.org/>

Lightning Field, Walter De Maria

- <http://www.earthroom.org/>

The New York Earth Room, Walter De Maria

- [http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics\\_mendieta.php](http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics_mendieta.php)

Ana Mendieta

- <http://www.culture.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/>

The Cave of Lascaux, France

- <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/earthmysteries/EMStonehenge.html>

Stonehenge, England

- <http://www.nps.gov/chcu/home.htm>  
Chaco Canyon National Historic Site
- <http://wonderclub.com/WorldWonders/MayanHistory.html>  
Maya Temples of Tikal
- <http://www.mysteriousplaces.com/mayan/TourEntrance.html>  
Maya Temples of Chitzén Itzá
- <http://www.mts.net/~lisco/PAGE4.HTM>  
Aztec temples
- <http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/~crsmith/hopewell.html>  
Ohio Hopewell Native American Burial Mounds
- [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/xray/hd\\_xray.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/xray/hd_xray.htm)  
Arnhem Land Rock Art, Australia
- [http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/serp/hd\\_serp.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/hd/serp/hd_serp.htm)  
The Great Serpent Mound, Adams County Ohio
- <http://www.mythicalireland.com/ancientsites/newgrange/>  
Newgrange, Ireland passage tombs