



Teacher/Viewing Guide

Adnan Charara – Episode 109

Artist

Grade Level: 9-12

Episode Overview:

Artist Adnan Charara loved drawing as a child growing up in Lebanon and Sierra Leone, he even used to draw under the covers at night with a flashlight. He came to America at the age of 19 to go to college, where he studied architecture. He worked in Boston as a city planner, but he always knew that fine art was his true passion. He describes how when he came to America he was still learning English and no one understood his accent. But they understood his art. At that point, he realized that art was another language, and that he could speak powerfully with it. Today, Mr. Charara collects found objects, each with their own inspiring story to tell. He works with them in his Detroit studio to give them a new life in his sculptures and drawing. His use of found objects is an exploration of identity. He interprets an object in different ways, and in multiple pieces. This shows viewers that while an object may historically have a singular purpose or identity, through creative expression one can see its nuances and different possible symbolic roles. Of course, the true nature of the object is never lost in Charara's art. He believes that you cannot hide who you are, but must find the truth that hides within yourself, and not be afraid to express that truth. His art is an emotional expression of the struggle he sees in many immigrants who come to America. Often, immigrants have fled their home countries because they have lost a sense of purpose or value there, like the discarded objects he has found. But when they come to America, they find opportunity and inspiration, but only if they can overcome the challenges of ignorance and bigotry. Mr. Charara's art represents this new purpose as well as the struggle to find your place in a new culture. He expands his message of rebirth to his community. He sees Detroit as a source of inspiration, a city struggling to prove it has value and purpose again. Mr. Charara is not trying to change people's minds through his art—he is trying to open them. He knows the colors and forms he uses will surprise people and keep them looking, but he hopes that they seek the underlying message. Mr. Charara's art shows that, despite distortions and unusual imagery, you can still see the object or the person. Once you see that, you know it is not strange or weird, but something you yourself know and understand.

Previewing Questions:

1. Who is your favorite artist and what about their work inspires or speaks to you? If you don't have a favorite artist, what type of art do you like?
2. What drives an artist to create?
3. What is different about a person's life if they feel they are doing what they were meant to do?

Vocabulary:

1. Found object art: A natural object or an artifact not originally intended as "art," found and considered to have aesthetic value.
2. Medium: A material used by an artist to create a work.
3. Identity: The distinguishing character or personality of an individual.
4. Metaphor: A thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, especially something abstract.
5. Melancholy: Sad, gloomy, or depressed.

Lesson Overview/Review:



Teacher/Viewing Guide

After viewing the segment on Adnan Charara, students should be prepared to brainstorm the messages or emotions conveyed in Charara's works. The video may be paused on images to facilitate this. This can be done as a group activity, having students or the teacher record ideas on a board, or in their own journals.

Journal Option: Have students take a moment to write about a time when they felt useless or insignificant and how this situation was or could have been improved.

Post Viewing Class Discussion: Conduct a short discussion to synthesize the information they gained from viewing the video segment. Some possible topics:

1. Describe the example of the "melancholy hammer" to demonstrate Mr. Charara's purpose.
2. How does the city of Detroit relate to the Arab immigrant in America?
3. Mr. Charara seems like true artist. Do you think all artists are equally driven or obsessed?
4. What are the characteristics of a "good" piece of art?

Activity: For this activity, students will research different artists and their works in order to find inspiration for a class-created mural. The mural will depict the individual struggles and unifying forces that make up their school. The class should be divided into no more than five groups, each of which will research a different artist. Once the research is complete, each group will design one panel of the mural. The group will decide on the subject matter of the panel, the materials to use (approval of teacher recommended), and the message to be conveyed. It is up to the teacher how this panel will be rendered (computer, paper, wall) but if a wall mural is approved, it is suggested that teacher approval of a sketch design be required. Suggested artists to research: Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera, Charles Henry Alston, Zhang Dali, Moriko Mori, Kara Walker. Groups will record their answers to the following:

1. Which artists did you research?
2. Describe the style of their works (materials used, imagery.)
3. What influenced this artist?
4. What is the message(s) conveyed by the works?
5. What is the subject of your mural? Why did you choose this?
6. Explain the imagery in your mural.
7. Why did you choose this medium?
8. What overall message are you trying to convey? Do you think you were successful?

Assessment Ideas: Students will be graded on:

1. Participation in class discussion.
2. Participation in group work.
3. Group research answers.
4. Final project.

Explore Online: Use the following resources to allow your students to further explore the topic and the Arab American community:

1. Arab Cultural Center: <http://arabculturalcenter.org/>
2. Arab American Museum: <http://arabamericanmuseum.org/>
3. Arab American Antidiscrimination Committee: <http://adc.org/>
4. National Gallery of Art: <http://www.nga.gov/>



Teacher/Viewing Guide

Interdisciplinary Options: Art; Psychology; Sociology; Career Education

In this episode students will see how art can be used as a medium to both represent struggle and enlightenment and to explore universal truths about the human condition.

Common Core Alignment:

- RI6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- RI7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally
- SL4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate.