

# **Lesson Plans Inspired by “Our Shared Future”**

## **April 5–7, 2022**

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For my report on the 2022 conference, “Our Shared Future,” I would like to offer four lesson plans inspired by my key takeaways. These lesson plans are designed after attending the following sessions:

- **Opening Session** (with Miko Lee, Heleya de Barros, Victor Sawyer, Cindy marten, and Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson)
- **Making Meaning** (with Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio)
- A Conversation about Systems and Barriers (with Precious Diamond Blake)
- **Making Meaning** (with Alphabet Rockers)
- **Supporting Teaching Artists as Culture Bearers and Bridge Builders** (Javan Howard, Tamara Anderson, and Lenora Helm-Hammonds)
- **The Call and the Response: How Teaching Artists Can Lead Racial Justice Work** (with Ashley Lipscomb)

I would like to sincerely credit these speakers for their quotes and philosophies that motivated every choice made in these lesson plans. Each one includes footnotes which discuss the intention behind my pedagogical choices. In addition to those notations, I am broadly inspired by themes mentioned by nearly every conference speaker:

- imagination
- community
- process over product
- access
- equity
- curiosity
- connection
- love
- possibility

It is my aim that these lesson plans could be adapted for a wide range of ages and artistic disciplines. Thank you for reading!

## Lesson Plan 1

**Word of the Day:** Gather

**Objectives:**

- Students will explore an outdoor space while gathering natural art-making materials
- Students will design their own small “**niwa**”, or Japanese gardens

**Entry Points:** Gathering art materials as environmental exploration, niwa as expression of beauty and individuality

**Warm Up Activity:**

- Look at images of Japanese niwa. Students will reflect on what they notice in the images.
- Some guiding questions might include:
  - What elements from nature do you see?
  - What human-made elements do you see?
  - What words would you use describe these niwa?
  - How do you think it sounds to be there?
  - How do you think it smells to be there?

**Mini Activity:**

- In a safe, outdoor space, students will explore their surroundings looking for these items:
  - Stones
  - Gravel or sand
  - Green vegetation
  - Flowers
- Students will gather each of these items. They should not pick plants that are growing and should only use items that they find already on the ground.<sup>1</sup>

**Main Activity:**

- Using the materials they gathered, students will create their own small niwa.<sup>2</sup>
- On placemats or paper, students can display their materials in any design. Just like a traditional Japanese niwa, all students’ niwa should contain these elements:

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio explained that one way of decolonizing our teaching could be through materials in nature, for example using berries as paint. In this activity, students are using found natural materials for designing their niwa.

<sup>2</sup> Inspired by conference discussions about diverse cultures and perspectives in our classrooms, I am offering a practice from my Japanese ancestry.

- A small hill
  - A walking path
  - A bridge
- On another paper, students will sketch their niwa as a way of remembering how it looks (in case items get disturbed between now and Lesson Plan 2)

**Closing Activity:**

- Without disturbing the niwa, students will walk around the space to observe each other's creations
- Store the niwa in a safe place to be used again in Lesson Plan 2

## Lesson Plan 2

**Word of the Day:** Breathe<sup>3</sup>

**Objectives:**

- Students will notice their breath and breathe with intention
- Students will observe the soundscape<sup>4</sup> they hear around them
- Students will explore meditation through breath and soundscape

**Entry Points:** Breathing as centering and reflection, soundscapes as meditation and observation of the music around us

**Warm Up Activity:**

- Students will retrieve their niwa that they created in Lesson Plan 1
- They may choose to make changes if they want or if items have been disturbed
- Seated with their niwa, ask students, “how is your breathing?” Students will reflect on their breathing.<sup>5</sup>

**Mini Activity:**

- Students will close their eyes and breathe in a 4-4-4 pattern (breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, breathe out for 4 counts)<sup>6</sup>
- Ask students again, “how is your breathing?” Reflect together on how it has changed.

**Main Activity:**

- Seated next to their niwa, students will continue to observe their breath, as well as the sounds around them.
- In an outdoor space, students will listen to the **soundscape** that they hear. A soundscape is the texture, pattern, or flow of sounds happening all around us all the time.
- Have students sit for 5 minutes and observe the soundscape they hear.

**Closing Activity:**

- As a whole group, reflect on the different sounds in the soundscape that students heard.

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<sup>3</sup> Ashley Lipscomb began her session by asking, “how is your breathing?” It meant so much to me to be asked that, even though she was addressing the whole group via Zoom.

<sup>4</sup> If listening to sound is not possible for some students, “sound”scapes can be created using any of the senses: smell, taste, sight, and touch.

<sup>5</sup> Ashley Lipscomb’s facilitation of our breathing allowed some of us to feel better about our breath simply from her asking! Students may also notice this.

<sup>6</sup> Just as Ashley Lipscomb had all of us do.

- Some guiding questions might include:
  - What sounds are nature sounds?
  - What sounds are human made?
  - Are there any sounds that surprise you?
  - Do any of the sounds relax you?
  - Why is it important to notice the sound of our breath and notice the soundscapes around us?

## Lesson Plan 3

**Word of the Day:** Grittiness, Messiness

**Objectives:**

- Students will compose musical graphic scores using magazine clippings
- Students will describe their compositions and composition process
- Students will hear an example of Matana Roberts's sonic experimentations

**Entry Points:** Sonic experimentation, art as graphic notation, sound worlds as messiness and grittiness of society.

**Warm Up Activity:**

- Students will move around the classroom space (walk, dance, wander) as they are compelled while listening to *COIN COIN Chapter Four: Memphis (trail of the smiling sphinx)* by Matana Roberts.<sup>7</sup>
- Discuss students' observations of Matana Roberts's sound world and have students imagine how we could notate music like this.

**Mini Activity:**

- Using magazine clippings and glue on paper, students will compose musical graphic scores based on one of these words:
  - Resilience
  - Piddling
  - Breathe
  - Borderlands<sup>8</sup>
- Students should imagine which instruments/voices would perform their piece, and should decide how the piece begins and ends

**Main Activity:**

- Students will premiere their graphic scores by showing them and describing how the visual art can be interpreted into sound
- Students will also describe how they captured their word (resilience, piddling, breathe, or borderlands) in the graphic score and through sound

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<sup>7</sup> In the session with Javan Howard, Tamara Anderson, and Lenora Helm-Hammonds, panelists discussed how art reflects the grittiness of society. One word I use to describe Matana Roberts's sound world and compositional themes is "gritty." I see Matana Roberts as an artist who consistently demonstrates the grittiness and messiness of society in her music.

<sup>8</sup> Words that Matana Roberts has used in her composition process

**Closing Activity:**

- Listen to *Piddling* by Matana Roberts,<sup>9</sup> and look at examples of the composer's graphic scores.
- Some guiding questions might include:
  - How are these scores similar to what we created today?
  - How do you think this musical score sounds?
  - How would you perform this musical score?

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio discussed the importance of exposing ourselves, as teaching artists, to diverse perspectives and making opportunities for those perspectives in our classrooms. Matana Robert's innovative sound world is different than the music I make, so while I don't want to speak on the perspectives that are not mine, I would like to offer them in my music classrooms and make space for composers' work that is different from my own.

## Lesson Plan 4

**Word of the Day:** Self

**Objectives:**

- Students will create and display three self-portraits
- Students will learn about Pacita Abad and the Universal Blues Band

**Entry Points:** Self-portraits, abstract and minimalist visual art

**Warm Up Activity:**

- Using a mirror, paper, and markers, students will create contoured-line self-portraits. They must not look at their paper (only looking into the mirror at their face), and they must not let the marker leave the paper.<sup>10</sup> The result might look something like my self-portrait here<sup>11</sup>:



- Students will show their portrait to a peer nearby.

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<sup>10</sup> While drawing a self-portrait might feel intimidating to some at first, giving these rules as limitations makes the process feel more accessible and equitable, regardless of students' prior experience creating a self-portrait.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio mentioned one method of decolonizing our classrooms is through making mistakes. This abstract portrait style exemplifies how wonderful it is to make mistakes and not worry about perfection!

**Mini Activity:**

- Students will draw another self-portrait, only using circles and straight lines. They should use as many colors as possible.
- Filipino artist, Pacita Abad<sup>12</sup> was known to paint while listening to blues music. She even collaborated with Singaporean group, Universal Blues Band for installations. Students will listen to tracks by Universal Blues Band while they work.
- Students will show their second portrait to a peer nearby.
- Students will look at *Self-portrait, 2003* by Pacita Abad and discuss how this piece is similar to the portraits we all created.

**Main Activity:**

- Students will draw one more self-portrait in any style. This is freestyle with no guidelines, which students might be comfortable doing at this point in the lesson.
- Students will share their third portrait with a peer nearby.

**Closing Activity:**

- Display all self-portraits throughout the classroom. Students will move through the room in a gallery walk to observe and celebrate all portraits.

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<sup>12</sup> Inspired by conference discussions about diverse cultures and perspectives in our classrooms, I am introducing students to an artist from my family's home country of the Philippines.