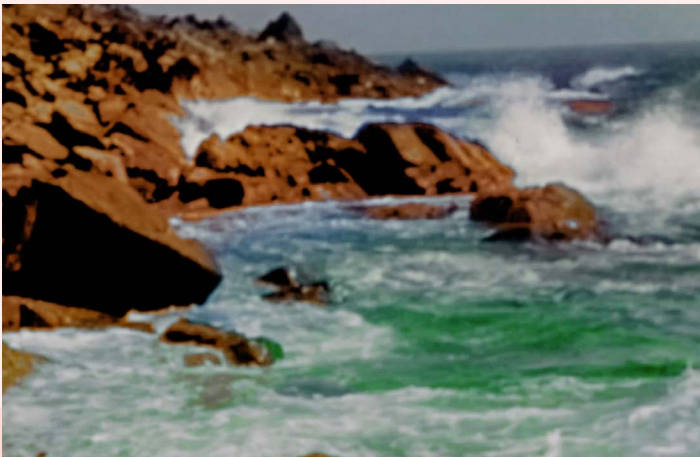


PMA CLASSROOM
BEST FOR
Elementary to
Middle School

The Sounds of the Seas

Seascape by James Welling



Stills from *Seascape*, 2017

James Welling (United States, born 1951)

Colorized 16mm film transferred to digital
video, 6:35 min, stereo sound

THEMES

- Maine Landscape
- Personal and family history
- Memory
- Mood and emotion
- Sense of Place

Content Areas and Standards Met

What Maine Ed Standards will this lesson meet?

What content areas does this lesson connect to?

VISUAL ART

A1. Artist's Purpose

Students explain purposes for making art in different times and places, and the relationship to cultural traditions, personal expression, and communication of beliefs.

D1. Aesthetics and Criticism

Students describe and compare art forms.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness: Linking thoughts and feelings, identify and recognize emotions

Self-management: Practicing mindfulness

Social awareness: Perspective taking

Relationship skills: Teamwork, social engagement, building communication

Responsible decision-making: Evaluating, reflecting

Objectives

What will students do/experience/think about, etc? What is the overall goal of the lesson plan?:

Students will explore how artists use their personal story as inspiration for artwork

Students will utilize critical thinking skills to envision how changing an element of an artwork can affect the overall mood or message

Essential Questions

What is the big question that this lesson plan seeks to explore or have students grapple with?:

How do artists visualize memories?

How can sensory elements like sound affect the overall mood of an artwork?

Materials Needed

For the Music Matching activity:

- Access to the film
- Smartphone or other device to play music or sounds

For the Meditative Drawing activity:

- Access to the film
- Piece of blank paper
- Drawing utensil of your choice

For the Soundscape activity:

- Access to the film

Instructions:

Look

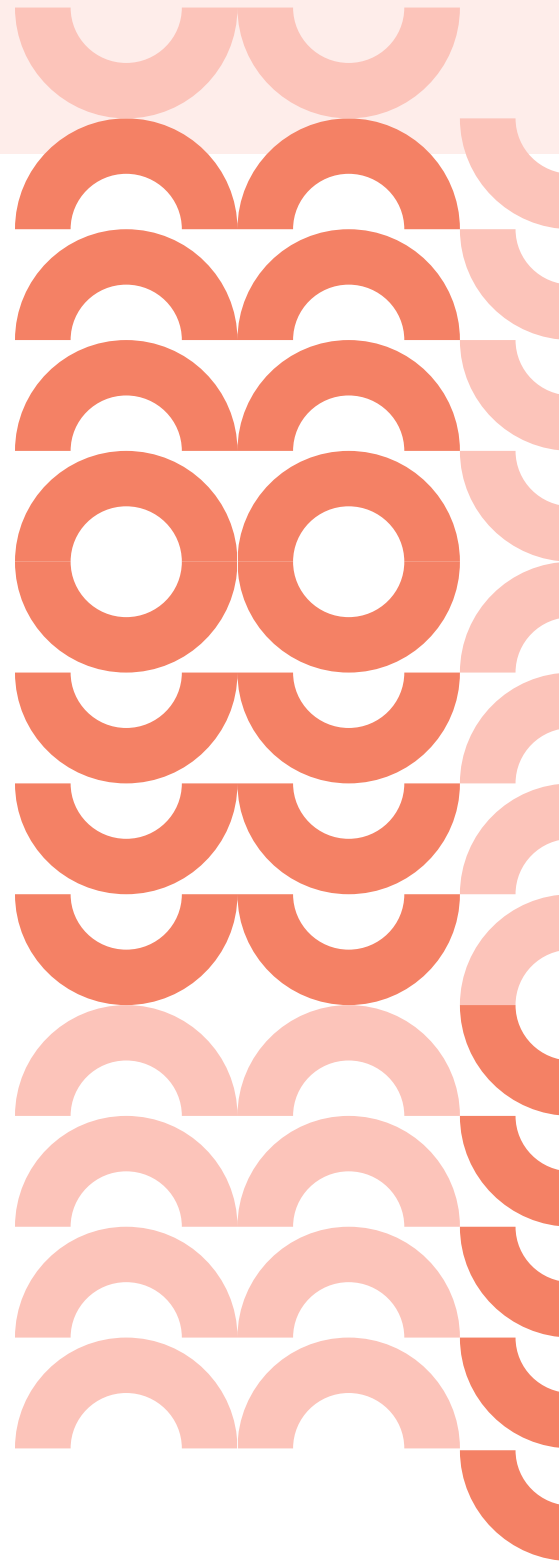
Begin by watching *Seascape* here.

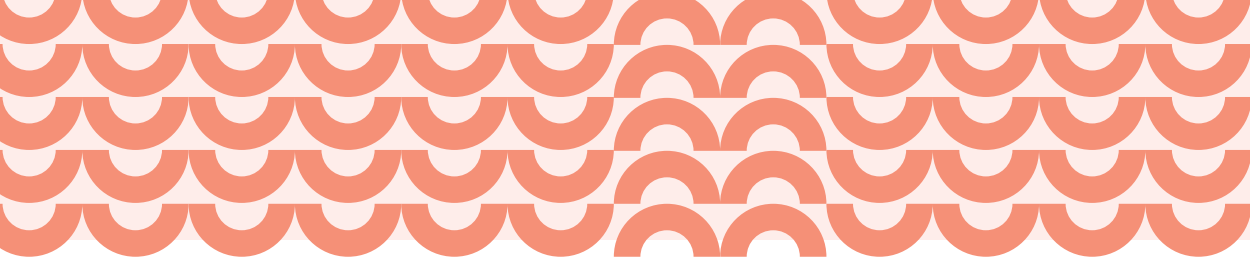
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/199900803>.

Respond

After you watch *Seascape*, think about and respond to these questions:

- What do I think is happening here?
- What type of mood or emotion do I get from watching this film?
- How would I describe the music I am hearing?
- How does the music affect how I feel when watching this film?
Does the music make me feel a certain way?





Still from the film *Seascape*. Click [here](https://player.vimeo.com/video/199900803) to watch video.
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/199900803>

James Welling (United States, born 1951)

Seascape, 2017

Colorized 16mm film transferred to digital video, 6:35 min, stereo sound

Purchased jointly by the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, 2018.5.1

and the Portland Museum of Art with support from the Photography

Fund, the Irving Bennett Ellis Fund, the Bernstein Acquisition Fund, and

the Harold P. And Mildred A. Nelson Art Purchase Fund, 2018.31.

© James Welling. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner.

Learn

Use this section to learn more about the artist, the process, and the subject.

In his artwork, James Welling (born 1951) often features locations that are personally meaningful to him. He created *Seascape* as a tribute to, or as a way to honor, his grandfather, William C. Welling (1887-1946). William C. Welling (W.C. Welling) filmed this ocean scene in Ogunquit, Maine in the early 1930s, and then created a color painting from that black-and-white film. James Welling then used contemporary technology to add color to the black-and-white film that his grandfather created. James Welling colored the film using colors that his grandfather painted with. The blue of the ocean in the film is the same type of blue that W.C. Welling used to paint his blue ocean. Would you choose different colors? How would different colors change the mood of this artwork?

James Welling is interested in including elements of his personal story in a lot of his artwork. In *Seascape*, James Welling focused on family history and collaboration by adding his own spin on the film his grandfather created and by having his brother, William B. Welling, create the music that you hear. William Welling used an accordion as the main instrument. The accordion is a box-shaped instrument that is played using both hands to expand and close the instrument, making a motion like opening your arms to hug someone. As you listen to the accordion being played with the film footage of the ocean waves, how would you describe the sound you hear? Do you notice any similarities between the accordion sounds and the way the waves move?

As you watch *Seascape*, the way it makes you feel changes depending on your mood and how one thinks the music and video fit together. James Welling made choices about the colors he used and the music he included to create an artwork focused on personal and family history. This ocean view in Ogunquit was important to James Welling's grandfather and helped him create many paintings of this beach scene. James Welling created his own version of his grandfather's film, adding personal elements of a specific place. Do you have a place that means a lot to you or to your family?



Photo courtesy Hall Arts Hotel

“The process of making any kind of artwork is about working with materials, being sensitive to those materials, and making something out of it. And then being able to look at that, and see new possibilities for that material. It’s an unending process of transformation.”
—James Welling

**Teacher’s note: Use Google Classroom or another online platform where you could set up a chat function or a message board where students could share their responses. Find the way to respond that works best for you and your students.*

Act

Music Matching

James Welling's brother developed the music for this film, but how would different music change the feeling or mood? In this activity you will explore how sound and music have the power to alter your mood.

After you watch the film once with the sound on, try watching it again with the sound off. As you watch with the sound off, imagine what type of music you might hear with the film. Do the images remind you of a song you know? Maybe there is a song that reminds you of the ocean or a time you spent near water. What speed, or rhythm, would you associate with this scene? Is it fast, slow, or kind of in-between? What sounds might you hear in this scene? Are there instruments that mimic those sounds?

As you start to imagine what music or sounds you would add to this film, write down words to describe these sounds or this music.

Begin to pair your chosen music or sounds with the film. Play the film without sound and use your smartphone or another device to play the music or sounds of your choice.

Does your chosen music alter the mood or emotion you feel from the film now?

Try choosing another song or other sounds that are very different than what you chose before, and notice how the music you choose alters how you view the ocean scene.

Meditative Drawing

Sometimes watching film and listening closely to music can help us focus on the present, quiet our minds, and observe more closely. In this activity, we will use a process of meditative drawing to connect to the present moment while listening to and observing *Seascape*.

Gather your materials (drawing utensil and blank piece of paper) and begin watching the film.

Take a few deep breaths, breathing in and breathing out, and let your eyes lead you around the scene. Focus on your breath. Focus on what you are hearing in the music. Focus on what you are seeing and observing.

Take another deep breath, inhale and exhale.

Pick up your drawing utensil and begin to make lines in rhythm with your breath, and in rhythm with the music. Try to keep your eyes focused on the film, and not on your paper.

Don't overthink what lines you are drawing—you are drawing to match your breath, not trying to draw anything specific. These lines could be up and down with the rhythm of the music or with your breath, or the lines could be more free-flowing and roam all over your paper.

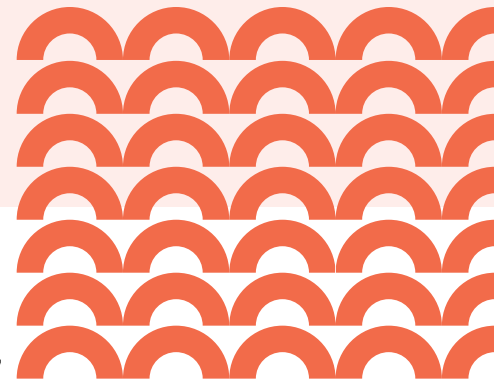
Don't worry about how the view keeps changing and moving. Stay focused on your breath and the lines you are seeing, even as the picture changes.

Continue drawing lines for about 3 minutes, letting your lines change with the rhythm of the music and of your breath. Maybe your lines become more influenced by what you are seeing in the film—the waves or rocks. Or perhaps your lines stay simple and connected with your breath.

If you feel ready to stop, lift your drawing utensil and look at the marks you've made on your paper.

Notice how you feel after taking this time to be present with this artwork and to look and listen closely. What did you notice about the marks you've made? Did patterns, or repeating lines, emerge? Where were lines thicker or thinner? Darker or lighter?

You can keep drawing to the music for however long you'd like or however long feels good to you.



Collaborative Soundscapes

Note: This activity is best done with the whole class or in smaller groups.

James Welling made a choice to have his brother create the music for *Seascape*. Without the music, we can make our own choices without needing any music or any device. In this activity, we will explore how to make a soundscape, or sounds that will go along with what we are seeing.

Begin by watching *Seascape* again without sound. You can mute the sound so that you are just hearing silence and watching the film.

As you watch the film, notice certain moments or details that you think might make a noise or a sound. Maybe it's the waves crashing on the beach, or another detail that you see. Imagine what sound you think that moment or detail might make—what would those waves sound like? Make that sound now.

Come together with some of your classmates, or your whole class and your teacher, and share your sounds and where they happen in the film.

Watch the film together as a class or in your small group on mute, with no sound. Add your sounds you created as they happen in the film, creating your own collaborative soundscape of the film!

Reflect and Share

Let's reflect on what we just did and the experience we just had engaging with this artwork.

How do you feel after watching this 5-minute film? Did you want it to be longer or shorter? Why?

If you watched the film more than once, what did you notice that you hadn't noticed before?

If you could create a film of your favorite place or a place that is special to you and your family, what would that film look like?

The last step in interacting with art is to share your experience with others. Share your meditative drawing, your soundscapes, or your music choices with the PMA! Email learning@portlandmuseum.org. Or, share your experience with others in your home or class.

Resources

ocula.com/art-galleries/david-zwirner/exhibitions/seascape/

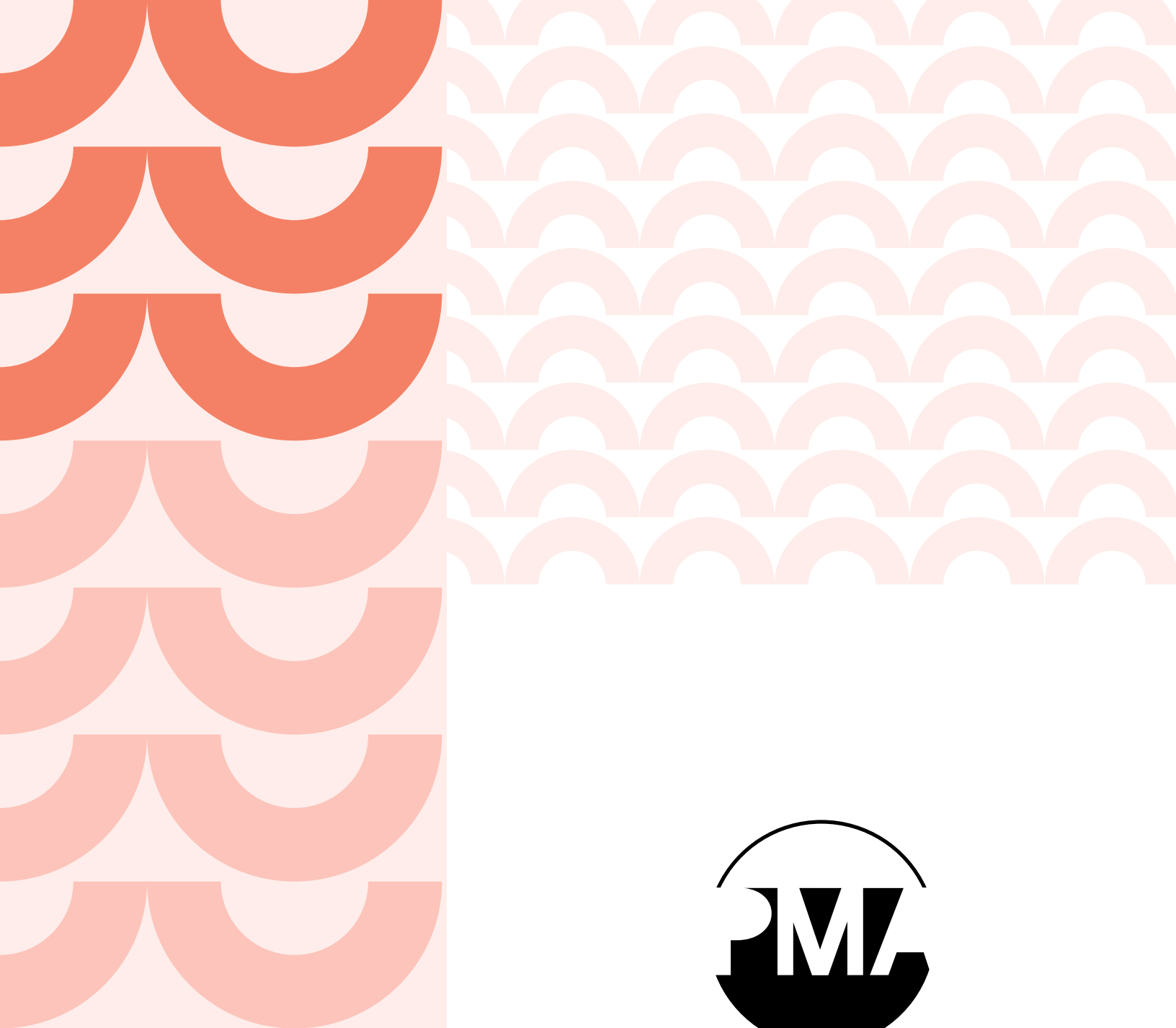
jameswelling.net/biography

www.riotmaterial.com/james-wellings-seascape/

www.davidzwirner.com/exhibitions/2017/seascape

www.classicfm.com/discover-music/instruments/accordion/how-it-works-how-to-tune-history/ (for a video explaining the accordion – you may be able to find a more “kid-friendly” version by searching on YouTube!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8c1YOljhFk> (The Artist Profile Archive – James Welling)



PORTLAND MUSEUM *of* ART
PortlandMuseum.org

PMA Classroom is made possible by the generous support of the Arthur K. Watson Charitable Trust, AVANGRID Foundation, Inc., Charles A. Came Educational Fund, the Sam L. Cohen Foundation, the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, Gorham Savings Bank, Katherine K. Monks Education Fund, Madelyn Busker Cohen Endowment Fund, Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust, Onion Foundation, Peggy L. Osher Education Endowment, Rachel F. Armstrong Education Fund, the Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation, Unum, and Marguerite and William J. Ryan, Sr.