

# SHEILA PEPE AND CARRIE MOYER

PMA CLASSROOM  
BEST FOR  
All  
Ages



## THEMES

- Inspiring Social Change through Art
- Identity
- Queer Art
- Feminism
- Activism
- Abstraction

Carrie Moyer and Sheila Pepe, *New Blue Bontecou*, 2016, oil and acrylic paint, wood, lampshade, fabric, and aluminum flashing on pre-painted canvas, 50 x 42 1/4 x 9 inches. Portland Museum of Art, Maine. Gift of the artists, 2020.4. © the artists. Image courtesy Alan Weiner Photography

# MAINE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS MET

[www.Maine.gov/dae/learning/content/arts/standards](http://www.Maine.gov/dae/learning/content/arts/standards)

## D.1A- CREATING

Students will demonstrate the ability to create and perform in the visual arts.

## D.2B- PERFORMING

Students will demonstrate the ability to present and perform in the visual arts.

## D.3C- RESPONDING

Students will respond to, analyze, and critique works of art.

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES

[www.Casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework](http://www.Casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework)

### SELF-AWARENESS

Understanding one's own emotions, thoughts, and values

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Understanding how to work together with others

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

Understanding how to use time and materials effectively

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Explore the concept of found materials in art, inspired by the works of Sheila Pepe.
- Create unique sculptures using unconventional materials.
- Analyze the paintings of Carrie Moyer.
- Create unique paintings relating to the group's theme.
- Reflect on personal expression in art.
- Explore how to create abstract forms.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why do you think collaboration with other artists is important?
- How does Sheila Pepe use found materials in her sculptures?
- Why does Carrie Moyer use the colors and textures she chooses for her artwork? How do you think these colors and textures affect how we interpret her paintings?
- What themes or messages do you think can be interpreted from their use of unconventional materials?
- How does the choice of materials contribute to the overall impact of the artwork?
- How is abstract art different from other kinds of art?

## MATERIALS NEEDED

**ASSORTED FOUND MATERIALS** (yarn, fabric scraps, wire, cardboard, plastic, etc.)

**GLUE, WHEAT PASTE, SCISSORS, PAINT, HEAVY PAPER, LARGE BACKGROUND PAPER, PAINT BRUSHES, GLITTER, PEARLESCENT OR OTHER UNUSUAL PAINT**

**WORK SURFACES OR TABLES**

**PROTECTIVE GEAR** (if needed, depending on materials used)

## INSTRUCTIONS



### LOOK

Look closely at the artworks. How are they **related**? How are they **different**? Where do you see a **conversation** happening between these two artists?

### RESPOND

Think about and respond to these questions:

What do you notice about the colors that Sheila Pepe and Carrie Moyer use?

How do the material choices affect the resulting work?

How do these artworks make you feel?

What social issues would you want to tackle in your own artwork?

Do you like working alone or in a group? Why?

## LEARN

Use this section to learn more about the artist, subject, and context of the artworks & objects.

### CARRIE MOYER AND SHEILA PEPE HONOR ONE ANOTHER'S ARTISTIC PROCESSES,

allowing the space and time needed to fully realize their ideas, sometimes in tandem and sometimes separately. When interviewed by the Portland Museum of Art (PMA) about their collaboration for the exhibition *Tabernacle for Trying Times*, which debuted at the PMA in early 2020, Sheila Pepe explained, “These are trying times . . . We are trying to be polite about saying absolutely everything is messed up for most of us here.”

Carrie Moyer described their idea of the tabernacle:

***“If instead of jabbing each other on Instagram or Twitter, can we have some other place where we all come together?” Pepe finished the thought: “That’s what the tabernacle is for. It’s a big tent. Leave the ideology at the door. Let’s do something all together . . . Something precious is inside here, and that would be us.”***

\*Digital tour of the exhibition in Resources section.

RIGHT: Carrie Moyer (United States, born 1960), *Humming at the Gate*, 2020, acrylic and glitter on canvas, 90 x 108 inches. Portland Museum of Art, Maine. Museum purchase with the support of Friends of the Collection, including Eileen Gillespie and Timothy Fahey, Cyrus Hagge, Harry W. Konkel, Judith Glickman Lauder and Leonard Lauder, Christina F. Petra, and Joan Carpenter Troccoli and Robert C. Troccoli, 2022.3. © Carrie Moyer. Image courtesy DC Moore Gallery. Photo by Alan Weiner



### AS A PAINTER, CARRIE MOYER USES BOLD, EXPRESSIVE FORMS, BODY SHAPES, AND DELICIOUS COLORS TO CONVEY HER IMAGES,

and her painting *Humming at the Gate* engages the viewer in all these ways. In the PMA interview, Moyer said, “Often what inspires a painting is a color or a texture, so I’m not really thinking about a composition or what the painting is about or what it’s supposed to mean or what it’s a picture of. What I’m thinking about [is] can I get that specific kind of light . . . In a funny way, this is one of the grand lessons of being an artist, which is that you kind of trust the process.” Her paintings are at once aggressive and alluring, and they encourage the viewer to take a keen interest in their surfaces and colors. Elsewhere, Moyer says, “For me, I’m interested in a kind of beauty and depth that you can get through glazing and transparencies, these kind of shimmering surfaces . . . Beauty and color [are] the first gestures towards the viewer” (From *Eye on Pratt*, Alumni Interview).

## LEARN

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Sculptor Sheila Pepe uses fibers, found materials, and industrial materials and often creates site-specific installations that form spiderweb-like structures within their environments. She has long engaged in feminist politics through collective art making as well, exploring the themes of social justice, feminism, traditional women's work, and her Catholic upbringing. In *American Bardo*, Pepe draws from her early experiences of kneeling during mass. This act of penance, prayer, and thoughtfulness makes one vulnerable; likewise, the idea of the bardo or halfway point between two realms such as death and rebirth (as expressed in Buddhism) spoke to her.



Sheila Pepe (United States, born 1959), *American Bardo*, 2020, wood, brass, glass, pottery shards, hardware, fabric, and paint, 36 x 54 x 24 inches. Portland Museum of Art, Maine. Museum purchase with the support of Friends of the Collection, including Eileen Gillespie and Timothy Fahey, Cyrus Hagge, Harry W. Konkel, Judith Glickman Lauder and Leonard Lauder, Christina F. Petra, and Joan Carpenter Troccoli and Robert C. Troccoli, 2022.4. © Shelia Pepe. Image courtesy DC Moore Gallery. Photo by Alan Weiner

When asked in the PMA interview how their experience as a lesbian couple in the art world influences their work, Moyer stated,

***“For people like us, who have been historically excluded from the canon, what we bring to the topic of abstraction is our personal experience, which transforms canonical ideas about art or how abstraction is meant to be used. If I’m making a painting, it’s queer abstraction, automatically.”***

Pepe added, “All these factors of culture, and that’s one of them, the queer piece, we wouldn’t want to leave it out, but that ain’t all she wrote.” In other words, their identities as queer artists, as feminists, and as activists are simply parts of the larger picture of who they are as artists.

For more information, see the [Resources section](#).

# ACT

In this section, students will either work together on a large-scale mural for the wall or work individually or in small groups on smaller-scale painted and collaged compositions.

## PREWORK

**WHAT IS COMPELLING TO YOU ABOUT CARRIE MOYER AND SHEILA PEPE'S WORK?**

**WHAT SHAPES DO YOU NOTICE? DO YOU LIKE THESE SHAPES, OR WOULD YOU LIKE TO USE OTHER KINDS OF SHAPES?**

**DISCUSS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORGANIC AND GEOMETRIC SHAPES.**

**NOTICE THE WAY LINES ARE USED IN EACH OF THEIR STYLES.**

## WORK

### OPTION 1: WHEAT PASTE WALL MURAL

**1. THINK ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE COLORS AND SHAPES.** Draw some large shapes that you think would be beautiful. Use heavy paper.

**2. PAINT THE SHAPES IN INTERESTING COLORS.** Add a shadow on the bottom edge of each shape to make it look three dimensional by using a darker value of the same color. Use glitter paint or pearlescent paint if you like. Remember, black is also a color, and it can create some wonderful contrast with the other shapes in the work.

**3. ONCE THE PAINT IS DRY, CAREFULLY CUT OUT THE SHAPES.**

**4. CLEAR A SPACE ON THE FLOOR AND WORK TOGETHER TO LAY OUT THE SHAPES THAT WILL EVENTUALLY CREATE THE MURAL.**

Overlap them and rearrange them until they make an interesting composition. Play with your ideas.

**5. ONCE THE GROUP HAS DECIDED ON A COMPOSITION, HAVE THE TEACHER TAKE A PHOTO OF IT.**

**6. WORKING FROM FARTHEST AWAY TO CLOSEST UP, START LAYERING THE OBJECTS ON THE WALL.** If it's okay with the administration and custodial staff, the shapes can be glued to the wall temporarily with wheat paste. Students can apply the paste to the back of the object and glue it down, then add a layer of wheat paste over it to seal it to the wall.

**7. CONTINUE LAYERING THE OBJECTS UNTIL YOU HAVE A VIBRANT MURAL.**

**8. IF IT'S OKAY, USE TAPE OR ANOTHER REMOVABLE ADHESIVE TO ADD THREE-DIMENSIONAL OBJECTS SUCH AS ROPE, YARN, OR PLASTIC TO THE COMPOSITION.**

Notice how the addition of these materials changes the experience for the viewer.

# ACT

In this section, students will either work together on a large-scale mural for the wall or work individually or in small groups on smaller-scale painted and collaged compositions.

## WORK

### OPTION 2: INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL-GROUP COLLAGES

**1. BEGIN BY BRAINSTORMING SOME SHAPES AND IDEAS.**

**2. SKETCH THE SHAPES ON HEAVY PAPER.**

**3. PAINT THE SHAPES IN INTERESTING COLORS.**

Add a shadow on the bottom edge of each shape to make it look three dimensional by using a darker value of the same color. Use glitter paint or pearlescent paint if you like. Remember, black is also a color, and it can create some wonderful contrast with the other shapes in the work.

**4. ONCE THE PAINT IS DRY, CAREFULLY CUT OUT THE SHAPES.**

**5. CREATE A BACKGROUND FOR YOUR SHAPES BY PAINTING ON A LARGE PIECE OF HEAVY PAPER OR POSTER BOARD.**

**6. LAY OUT THE CUT SHAPES ON YOUR DRY, PAINTED BACKGROUND.** Make an interesting composition. Layer the shapes and consider adding lines or details.

**7. GLUE YOUR SHAPES DOWN TO THE BACKGROUND.**

**8. PAINT DETAILS OR LINES ONTO THE COMPOSITION.**

**9. ADD THREE-DIMENSIONAL MATERIALS SUCH AS YARN, WIRE, ROPE, OR PLASTIC PIECES IF YOU THINK THEY SUIT THE COMPOSITION.**

## REFLECT AND SHARE

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

**WHAT** did you learn from this process?

**WHAT** do you like most about your finished work?

**WHAT** would you do differently?

If you worked with a group, **WHAT** were the things you liked most?

**WHAT** were the difficulties? **HOW** did you communicate with each other effectively?

## RESOURCES

### JAIME DESIMONE INTERVIEW WITH CARRIE MOYER AND SHEILA PEPE

[PORTLANDMUSEUM.ORG/MAGAZINE/MOYER-PEPE-INTERVIEW](https://portlandmuseum.org/magazine/moyer-pepe-interview)

### PMA ART AT HOME WITH SHEILA PEPE

[Vimeo.com/421528366](https://vimeo.com/421528366)

### PMA ART AT HOME WITH CARRIE MOYER

[Portlandmuseum.org/magazine/moyer-pepe-interview](https://portlandmuseum.org/magazine/moyer-pepe-interview)

### CARRIE MOYER AND SHEILA PEPE ON *TABERNACLES FOR TRYING TIMES*

[Vimeo.com/397505145](https://vimeo.com/397505145)

### INTERVIEW WITH CARRIE MOYER

[Youtube.com/watch?v=3dEvcO\\_0b04&t=101s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=3dEvcO_0b04&t=101s)

### VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE EXHIBIT *TABERNACLE FOR TRYING TIMES AT THE PMA*

[Youtube.com/watch?v=t9-T9u5rqGM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=t9-T9u5rqGM)