

FirstWorks Virtual Learning Series: MACHINE DAZZLE

Introduction to Machine Dazzle:

“Machine Dazzle” a.k.a., Matthew Flower, is a costume designer and performer based in New York City. Known for creating outrageous looks for Broadway and the runway, he was brought to Providence by FirstWorks on two recent occasions. The first, to conduct a hat & sash-making workshop during PVDfest 2019 for anyone interested in marching in the festival parade or simply having a fun way of expressing themselves on the streets of Downtown Providence. The second, as a guest speaker during an artist residency with Taylor Mac which took place in September 2019 through a partnership between FirstWorks and Brown Arts Initiative at Brown University. Machine creates all of the costumes for Tony-nominated performer, Taylor Mac.



His process is interesting in that he gathers different kinds of materials and textures; many that normally would not be part of costume or apparel - the shinier the better, throws them on the floor, and creates! In this excerpt from his artist talk held at Brown University in September 2019, Machine recalls the best advice an art teacher in college gave him about creating - “fill the page!” It has stayed with him ever since and continues to inform and inspire his work.

Watch Machine Dazzle's Artist Talk by clicking [HERE](#)

Grade 7 - 12 prompts based on National Core Arts Standards for Visual Art:

7 - 8, VA:Cr2.3.7a, 8a; [Visual organizational strategies to communicate information or ideas, clearly, and in a compelling way](#)

Materials: blank white paper, craft materials and objects (with parents' approval) from around the house; think “outside the box”, i.e., paper cupcake baking cups might look like flowers or planets, etc.

Prompt: Ask students to create an overall image of what their last week was like. Make sure they fill the whole page! Have them explain what they have portrayed. If this lesson takes place a few weeks into distance learning, ask students to compare and contrast initial experiences and feelings compared to later experiences and feelings within their creation.

Follow-up question: Was there something in particular that Machine mentioned that inspired your process or creation? What was it? Can that action or idea translate to other parts of your life?

[Grade 9 – 12, VA:Cr2.3. IIIa; Demonstrate on paper how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives](#) Materials: blank white paper, any other materials student chooses

Prompt: Ask students to visually portray how the media and government convey a current issue of their choice. Encourage students to look globally and locally. Make sure they fill the whole page!

Extend it further: From materials at home (some may need parents' approval) create an outfit/costume that illustrates their chosen issue, taking inspiration from Machine Dazzle's idea of “a simple outfit with a lot of accessories... pageantry”. Who is to wear your creation? Why? Take a photo or video of your creation and share with the class.

Extra Lessons:

PATTERN & PERSPECTIVE: When designing for printed textiles, a croquis is a pattern that will have a set number of repeats when printed over many yards at a pre-determined width. Ask students to attempt the following based on Machine's college art class lesson of drawing a leaf:

- Using a leaf, shell or other natural object, draw the object so that it repeats in a certain pattern over the whole blank piece of paper. Teachers determine the precision of the repeats based on their students' drawing ability. Have the students photograph their drawing with the object to compare and contrast.
- Analyzing the natural object, have students hone in on one aspect of the object, expanding it so that one section covers the whole blank page. In this lesson, urge students to replicate lines, textures, shading as authentically as possible. In many cases, the resulting image will not resemble the original object. What does it look like now? Have the students photograph their drawing with the object to compare and contrast.

INFERENCE: 31 seconds into the video an image pops up on the left. Ask students what they think is taking place in the photo. What do they see? Is it inside or outside? What is the main focus? What is seen in the background? Choose other images from the video to ask students to compare and contrast what they see.

METAPHOR/SIMILE: Taking Machine's idea of "filling the stage" and "filling the blank page" of paper, how can this relate to everyday life? Using these ideas as a metaphor, have students list five life situations where going big might take place. When is the opposite true in life? For example, walking the dog, or, reading a book for pleasure? Ask students to compose a short poem illustrating a preferred scenario of going all out for something and another poem based on simple actions. Discuss their preference. How did they decide what would be a simple action and what would not be? Have them explain why.



Note to Educators:

FirstWorks Education will make every effort to connect appropriate supporting curricula to the arts presentations provided. However, your professional expertise, rapport with your students, and knowledge of their capabilities will make these lessons resonate. We welcome your feedback: Did you use the lessons? How did it go? Did you not use them? If not, why? Or, did you vary them? Please let us know. We are here to help. We'd also be delighted to see any resulting creations! Please contact Kathleen McAreavey at: kathleenm@first-works.org