

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

GRADE 8: IN FORM



JOHN GRADE

FLOAT, 2006

Glass, Wood
Anchorage Museum collection
2019.19.1-2

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

John Grade (b.1970) earned his B.F.A. in 1992 from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. He and his studio team create sculptures and installations inspired by the flux of ever-changing geological and biological forms in our world. Many of these works are intentionally left exposed outdoors with the intent for them to change through interaction with the elements. These changes are monitored and documented. Grade currently lives and works in Seattle Washington.

ABOUT THE ARTWORKS

Float (Slip) and *Float (Noatak)* are part of a series of installations meant to be released and monitored in various sites throughout the Arctic. The pieces are reminiscent of East-Asian glass orbs used for fishing, known as floats, that would wash ashore in North America after experiencing multiple freeze/thaw cycles and varying water conditions.

KEY TERMS

<i>Glass float</i>	Spherical glass objects used to keep fishing nets floating on water
<i>Glassblowing</i>	The craft of making glassware by blowing air into semi-molten glass through a long tube
<i>Geometric form</i>	A mathematical and angularly regular form like polyhedrons, cylinders, spheres, and cones
<i>Organic form</i>	A form defined primarily by a non-predictable, non-linear structure, often shapes found in nature
<i>Sculpture</i>	An artwork that usually exists in three dimensions

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The first recorded use of glass comes from Egypt. Beads, small figurines, and tile glazing were among the first objects made from glass, dating back at least to 1500 BCE. Early glassworks were filled with imperfections such as tiny pockets of undissolved sand and non-uniform transparency. Methods for creating glass have continued to develop and change, becoming more widely accessible by the 3rd century CE.

By the medieval era, the production of glassware was centered in Venice, which had a relatively long history of glassmaking compared to the rest of Europe. The techniques and innovative approaches developed by Venetian glassmakers continue to be highly sought after today.

As a material, glass can have applications which are both functional and fashionable. Glass floats are an example of this connection of function and aesthetics. Glass floats are orbs attached to fishing nets to help them stay buoyant. Glass floats may be hand-blown or machine-made. Historical records document production in Norway as the 1840s, but production may have predated these records. Manufacture of glass floats in East Asia is documented beginning in the 1910s, with production shrinking immensely in the 1940s due to larger commercial fishing outfits replacing them with wood and cork floats.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

Begin this art lesson by looking and discussing about the artwork together for 10 to 15 minutes.



CLOSE-LOOKING Invite students to look closely, quietly at the artwork.

OBSERVE Invite students to share observations about the artwork.

ASK

- *What materials might be in this artwork?*
- *How does the title relate to your experiences?*
- *Why do you think these materials were used for this artwork?*
- *What objects do you see?*
- *What colors does the artist use?*
- *What moods do the shapes create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

DISCUSS **USE [20 Questions Deck](#)** for more group discussion questions about the artwork.

LEARN MORE

- About John Grade:
<http://www.johngrade.com/#/bio/>
- Article with description of select works:
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/john-grade-sculpture-art-davos-2017>
- History of Glass:
History of Glass: Whitehouse, D. (2012). Glass: a short history. Smithsonian Inst Press.

PART I: FORM EXPLORATION

TIME FRAME 10-20 minutes

MATERIALS Palette knives or similar shaping tool
Modeling clay (tennis ball-sized per student)
Newspaper to keep table surfaces clean

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** [5-10 mins] Introduce students to the terms organic and geometric. Discuss where those forms are found in our daily lives and invite a discussion into possible methods or techniques for achieving such sculptural forms with mediums such as wood, stone, paper, and so on.
- 2.** [5-10 mins] Pass out newspapers to lay over tables, clay and palette knives. Invite students to explore creating geometric and organic forms both with their hands and with the palette knives. Engage students to share their experiences with the methods they employ as they create their forms.

PART II: "BUILDING" FORMS

TIME FRAME 40-50 minutes

MATERIALS Palette knives or similar shaping tool
Modeling clay (tennis ball-sized per student)



Newspaper to keep table surfaces clean

DIRECTIONS

1. [10 mins] Return to the idea that forms are described as being geometric or organic. Discuss with students how geometric forms may inform the formation of organic forms and how geometric forms may relate to organic forms.
2. [25-30 mins] In groups of 3-5, invite students to collaborate and create the forms that resemble a building. Discuss famous buildings (like the Taj Mahal), or a familiar building in the community (like a school, place of worship, or landmark). Prompt students to identify how organic and geometric forms play a part in the architecture. Direct groups to create a building from clay using their hands and palette knives which incorporates organic and geometric shapes
3. [5-10 mins] Invite students to present their structure and discuss their inspirations for their choices in subject matter, composition, and form choice. Invite them to share challenges and successes in creating the structure. Structures should be identifiable per group if being used for the next activity.

BIODEGRADABLE STRUCTURE

TIME FRAME

55-60 minutes

MATERIALS

Assorted medium-sized waxed and unwaxed cardboard pieces.

Assorted wood pieces (skewers, popsicle sticks, and similar material)

Cotton twine

Potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, and other produce shaped into rectangular blocks/1in.x1in cubes

Scissors

Elmer's school glue naturals/ biodegradeable glue

Clay to reinforce joints

Coloring utensils

DIRECTIONS

1. [5-10 mins] Grade's works engage with interaction of material with the elements. In this activity, students will collaborate to create a structure that will interact with the elements. Return to Grade's artwork and discuss how certain buildings are affected by the environment and time. Discuss these effects of qualities (old paint, rust, crumbling foundations, etc.) of materials in this respect as well.
2. [20-25 mins] Give each team of 3-6 a pair of scissors and access to other material. Invite students to build a structure frame using produce, wood pieces, and twine on top of a waxed cardboard base. Clay may be used to reinforce connecting pieces, and wood to serve as structurally stable elements. Invite students to color and design unwaxed cardboard to serve as walls for the structure.
3. [10 mins] Once finished, allow for students to glue cardboard pieces together and to further embellish their structures.



4. [1 min] Have students write their names somewhere on their structure and let components dry.

5. [5-10 mins] As components are drying, have student groups write and present on what they built, why they chose their materials, and how they think it may interact with the environment.

6. [1 min] Once finished, have students lay their structures in a safe place outside.

7. [weekly or monthly] Have students come outside by group and briefly sketch the current state of their structures as a group, and to place their names on the sketch. Collect sketches and keep them together. At the end of the semester, invite students to read the compilation of their notes and share with each other the changes in their respective structures.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on their participation in the discussion, completion of the two projects, and art presentation to class.

For more teaching resources, visit <https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/programs/for-educators/teaching-resources/>

Educational resources at the Anchorage Museum are made possible with the support of the Hearst Foundation.

