



MUSEUM
WITHOUT WALLS™ AUDIO
A program of the Association for Public Art

LESSON PLAN

Kopernik

TOPIC: An Introduction to Public Art in Philadelphia for 4th/5th Grade

Audio slideshow on TeacherTube: bit.ly/KopernikTeacherTube

Downloadable audio program: <http://bit.ly/MWW-AUDIO-programs>



Kopernik (1972)
Dudley Talcott
Photo: James Abbott

I. LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Goals: To acquaint students with one example of public art in Philadelphia, and to introduce them to the idea of abstract sculpture.
2. Objectives:
 - A. Students will have a basic understanding of *Kopernik*, why it was created and how.
 - B. Students will have a basic understanding of what the sculpture aims to represent and how.

II. VIDEO INTRODUCTION (5 mins)

Have class watch the Association for Public Art's online audio slideshow for *Kopernik*:
bit.ly/KopernikTeacherTube

III. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK (10 mins)

This sculpture by the artist Dudley Talcott was commissioned by a group of Polish Americans in 1972 to celebrate the 500th birthday of the astronomer Mikolaj Kopernik (1899-1986). Mikolaj Kopernik, better known as Nicolaus Copernicus, laid the foundation of modern astronomy. His theory that the sun, not the earth, is the center of the universe, revolutionized scientific thought.

The sculpture of *Kopernik* reflects this idea. Two welded stainless steel discs in the central part of the work represent the sun. The ring surrounding the discs represents the path the planets make around the sun. The artist Dudley Talcott uses formal elements (circles, triangles, rings) to illustrate his artistic theme. Because this work uses generalized formal elements in this way, it can be called "abstract" in form. Unlike some memorials, which depict an image of the person who is being memorialized, *Kopernik* depicts Mikolaj Kopernik's revolutionary concept.

IV. CLASS DISCUSSION (15-20 mins)

1. Have the class look at the sculpture/image. Begin by encouraging general conversation, for example by asking (2 mins):

- What do you see?
- What is being depicted (emphasize formal elements like circle, line, etc.) ?

2. Discuss specific techniques that are being utilized in the sculpture (5 mins):

- How do these formal elements reflect Mikolaj Kopernik's views of the universe?
- Why do you think the artist might not have wanted to make this sculpture a literal interpretation of the solar system?
- How does the depiction of the universe in this sculpture differ from other images you might have seen?

3. If the class is familiar with the elements of design, discuss how these elements are being used in the sculpture (3 mins):

- What is the form being depicted? (circle, sphere, triangle, line, ring, universe)
- Where are the visual points in the sculpture? (central sphere, sun)
- What are the basic lines felt from the sculpture? (circular motion, out and round focal point)
- Color, texture, plane, value also could be discussed.

4. If the class has previously looked at other public works, compare with them the goals of the sculptures and the formal techniques utilized to achieve these goals (2 mins). This lesson can be paired with the lesson plan for *Jesus Breaking Bread*.

5. Finally, discuss with your students why the artist thought it was important that the sculpture reflect Kopernik's revolutionary concept of the movement of the galaxy (3 mins):

- Do you think this monument is commemorating more than just a scientific breakthrough?
- Are there other values being memorialized? (ethnic pride)
- How do these relate to its placement between the church and Franklin Institute?

V. ACTIVITY: UNIVERSE OF PUBLIC ART (10-20 mins)

MATERIALS

- Markers / Crayons / Pencils
- Any dry drawing materials
- Tape
- Construction Paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Fishing line (for hanging the works)

The class will design their own "Universe of Public Art." Have each student design his or her own "public art planet." After everyone has completed their planets, ask each student to pick a place in the room to hang their planet. Have each student place their name on a strip attached to their work. The name may be attached by string and hang off the work, directly on the work, or as a "ring" around the work. After hanging the works, have students reflect on their classroom universe, promoting conversation on how all the different planets create a universe that is made up of separate individual parts that work together to make the whole.

VI. CLEANUP (5-10 mins)

VII. STATE STANDARDS

Arts and Humanities

9.1.3.A: Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.
Elements (Visual Arts): color • form/shape • line • space • texture • value

9.1.3.B: Recognize, know, use, and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review, and revise original works in the arts.
Elements (Visual Arts): paint • draw • craft • sculpt • print • design for environment, communication, multi-media

9.1.3.C: Recognize and use fundamental vocabulary within each of the arts forms.

9.1.3.I: Identify arts events that take place in schools and in communities.

VIII. EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

1. Was student attentive during video/historical background?
2. Did the student participate in class discussion? Did this participation reflect attentiveness during video? Did this participation reflect application to previous lessons?
3. Did the student complete activity?
4. Was student respectful to other students' opinions and work during lesson?

IX. PRE/POST-VISIT MATERIALS

1. This lesson can be paired with the lesson *Introduction to Public Art*
2. This lesson can be paired with the lesson for *Jesus Breaking Bread*. Related themes include:
 - attempts to create universal images
 - comparison of formal elements
 - comparison of figurative to abstract sculpture
3. This lesson can be paired with the lesson for *Iroquois*. Related themes include:
 - similar formal elements
 - abstract public art
 - metal sculpture

X. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NASA Astronomy Picture of the Day for your students to get ideas for their own artwork:
<http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/>

Elements/Principles of Design: <http://www.artsconnected.org/toolkit/explore.cfm>

The Association for Public Art: <http://www.associationforpublicart.org>

How to request hi-res/additional images:
<http://associationforpublicart.org/image-requests>

