

# ADOPT-AN-ARTWORK

2023-2024  
SCHOOL YEAR



# Adopt-an-Artwork Teacher's Guide

## Teacher Objectives

1. Develop lesson plans based on the Biggs Museum's permanent collection that aligned with Delaware's Visual and Performing Arts standards for education.
2. Expose students to object-based learning while supporting an understanding of and comfortability with art and the museum environment by participating in in-person or virtual field trips.
3. Earn professional development clock hours.

## Biggs Museum of American Art Objectives

1. Provide teachers with the tools they need to introduce their students to and engage with art in a meaningful way.
2. Increase students' awareness and comfort within a museum setting.
3. Serve as an effective educational resource for teachers.
4. Strengthen ties with local communities and educational institutions.

## Summary

The Biggs Museum of American Art is continuing its commitment to arts-integration in Delaware's educational institutions through its Adopt-An-Artwork program. Participating teachers will receive a large reproduction of their selected artwork for classroom display as well as digital content such as informational videos, audio clips, and high-resolution images. Teachers and their classes will receive FREE Adopt-An-Artwork specific tours and participate in workshops hosted by the Biggs Museum to help facilitate arts integration in their classrooms. Teachers will use the artwork as a tool to develop a curriculum aligned with the current Delaware Standards for the Visual and Performing Arts. Curriculum will be attributed to the author(s) and integrated into the museum's online library of resources available to the public. Teachers who participate in the Adopt-An-Artwork summer or fall curriculum development sessions receive 12 professional development clock hours.

As part of Adopt-An-Artwork's mission of facilitating arts integration in the classroom, the Biggs will supply approximately \$200 in art materials for each participating teacher to ensure students have the tools they need to engage with their adopted artwork. Teachers are asked to collect samples of their students' work to display at the Biggs Museum of American Art for an exhibition celebrating the students' and teachers' participation in the program. This exhibition is typically scheduled to take place during the month of May.

# Timeline

## SUMMER

The Biggs, in collaboration with the Department of Education will run three, two-hour training sessions for teachers taking place on **July 12, August 2, and August 9, 2023** from **6–8 pm**. During these sessions, teachers will receive an orientation to the Biggs' collection, the current year's adoptable artworks, and instruction on planning and implementing the National Art Standards into their curriculum. Teachers will receive two clock hours per session, with additional hours granted for work on their lessons. In total, this program has the potential to provide each teacher with 12 professional development clock hours.

## FALL

Teachers who participated in the Summer Training Sessions will receive reproductions and requested art supplies. These teachers will continue refining their lesson plans and implement them in their classrooms and begin participating in required in-person or virtual field trips.

Fall Training Sessions begin. Teachers who could not attend in the Summer Training Sessions but would like to participate in Adopt-An-Artwork have the opportunity to do so by joining the Fall Training Sessions which take place on **November 15, November 29, December 6, 2023** from **5–7 pm**.

## WINTER/SPRING

Teachers who participated in the Fall Training Sessions receive reproductions and requested art supplies. Schools continue to participate in field trips and teachers continue to implement their lessons.

Student artwork developed through the Adopt-An-Artwork program are exhibited at the Biggs Museum with an opening reception on **Sunday, May 5, 2024**.

## EARLY SUMMER

All participating teachers will be invited to a wrap-up session at the Biggs to provide their feedback on the successes and challenges of the program.

## How to Use this Guide

This guide presents all the objects that are proposed for adoption. Each entry includes information about the piece, areas to take notes, places to think about supportive vocabulary, and spaces to consider how that work applies to non-art standards. Inside, you will also find a curriculum template to use in planning as well as a tearaway supply request form. The supply form will be requested by the end of the third summer training session.

The following artworks from the Biggs' collection have been selected for their range

in media, topics related to the work, themes in art, styles used, and date of creation. Each of these artworks are available for "adoption." Details about these works are highlighted over the next few pages.

1. *Interior: Fireplace with Blackbird* by Mickalene Thomas
2. *Untethered* by Michael Robear
3. *Aloft* by Erica Loustau
4. *Mani* by Charles Le Clair
5. *Chairs I* by Myrna Bloom & *Historic Wallpaper* from the Biggs' Collection

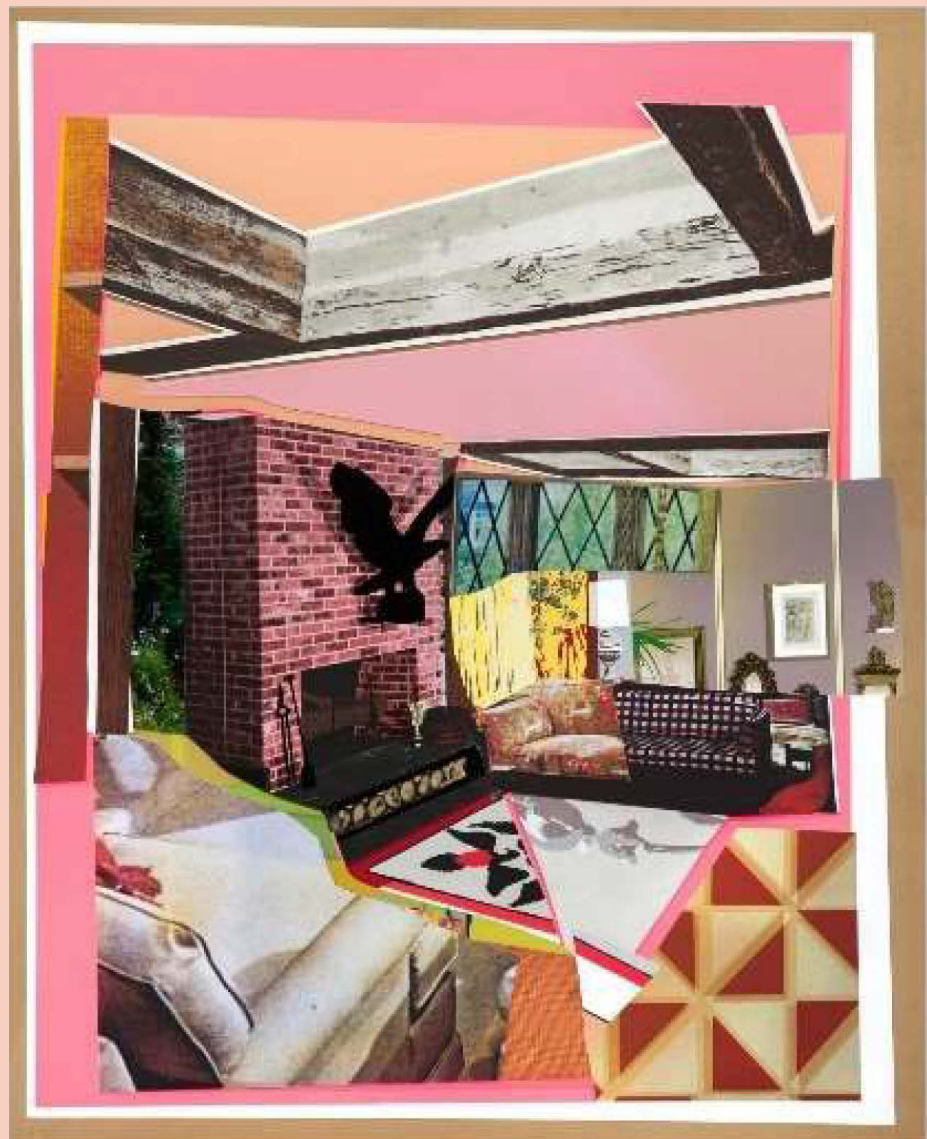


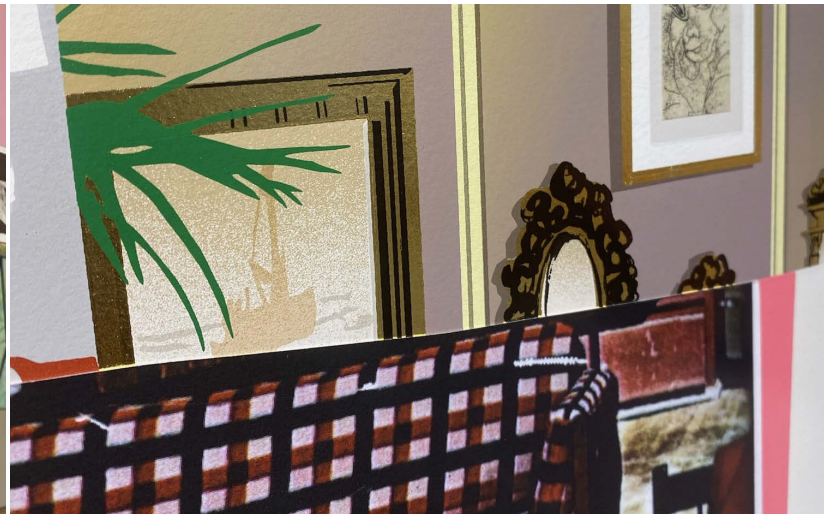
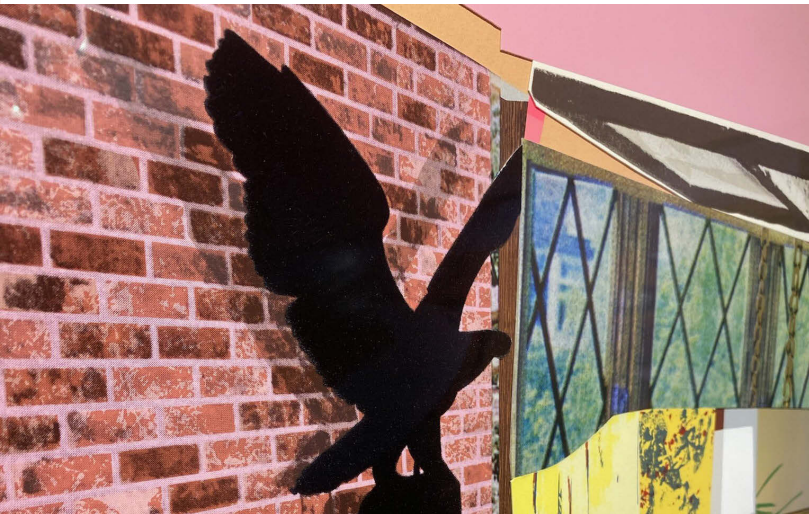
# Interior:

## FIREPLACE WITH BLACKBIRD

**Mickalene Thomas**

Screen print, woodblock, wood veneer, etching,  
flocking, gold leaf, and digital printing  
2016





Mickalene Thomas is a multi-media visual artist primarily known for her work in collage, painting, and print, although she also works in film, photography, and sculpture. Inspired by art movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, Impressionism, Cubism, and Dadaism, Thomas' work draws upon cultural histories as well as her own.

Thomas creates her pieces to highlight and validate Black femininity and culture, thereby bringing to the forefront an experience which has been primarily ignored within the art sphere. Many of her pieces seek to not only self-validate her own experiences but provide an opportunity for the viewer to interpret her visual symbolism in a way that resonates with the individual.

Thomas was born in Camden, New Jersey; she grew up in a close and strenuous relationship with her model mother. Her relationship with her mother provides inspiration that Thomas turns to again and again, often draws upon her mother's charisma in her representations of women. Thomas received a B.F.A. from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York and a M.F.A. from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut. Her work has been exhibited globally.

Interior: Fireplace with Blackbird is part of a larger series exploring interior scenes. This mixed media collage is an example of how Thomas creates artwork exploring self-expression while still inviting the viewer to define what the artwork means for themselves.

The mid-century aesthetics through this piece are drawn from an early 1970s set of books that

told readers how to design and care for their homes and domestic spaces, titled *The Practical Encyclopedia of Good Decorating and Home Improvement*. Through collaging and arranging fragments of the books, Thomas creates a decorative and idealized symbol of everyday life and space. The rooms in this piece are not being inhabited because they are glamorized versions of habitats for human beings to live. They define both home and space as well as representing the conglomerate of differences in how those subjects are defined for different people.

**TOPIC TIE-INS**

- Photography
- Collage
- Consumerism
- Economy
- Architecture
- Identity
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**ARTISTIC LANGUAGE**

- The Gaze
- Mid-Century Modernism
- Decorative arts
- Textile/Collage
- Feminist Art
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# Untethered

**Michael Robear**

Watercolor on paper

2009





Michael Robear is a multidisciplinary artist from Cecil County, Maryland who uses frame crafting, photography, and watercolor as the means to create his work. His use of houses and buildings that symbolize people appear as a recurring theme throughout in his oeuvre. Robear uses the house to highlight that “we all store things in the attic and the cellar, because we don’t want them to be in our front room. Human beings are the same way.”

Robear began his professional artistic journey as a wildlife illustrator. Later, as a professional metalsmith, he created an identifiable style that focused on placing these buildings within unique sculptural frames, while still allowing the influence of nature to be observed in his pieces.

As an artist living and creating in the Mid-Atlantic region, his work evokes the regional landscapes and are inspired by the works of artist Andrew Wyeth. Educated at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design in Washington D.C., his work has been exhibited in the Biggs Museum of American Art in Dover, Delaware as well as the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, Delaware.

To make his artwork, Robear begins by photographing architectural structures and piecing together the fragmented photographs into a scene. Forging frames from both metal and wood resources, his frames hold as much significance to the meanings of his pieces as the paintings do. While Robear’s creative process is extensive and he utilizes a myriad of materials, he notes that “I’m married to the emotion, not the materials. What I do is start hunting the

emotion, putting things together -- buildings or landscapes or skies or colors that support the emotion. Then things start to pile on. When the cup gets full emotionally, then the painting comes.”

**TOPIC TIE-INS**

- Photography
- Psychology
- Identity
- Weather/Climate
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**ARTISTIC LANGUAGE**

- Presentation
- Iconography/Symbolism
- Landscape
- Watercolor
- Perspective
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# Aloft

**Erica Loustau**

Welded stainless steel, stamped concrete, stainless steel cable, powder-coated and hand painted aluminum

2015







Erica Loustau is a sculptor who specializes in creating gravity-defying, suspended installations of birds in flight. Her piece *Aloft* is exhibited both inside and outside of the Biggs Museum of American Art as a commissioned piece for the museum’s 15th Anniversary. The building itself is as engaged in the artwork as visitors to the museum are. This particular piece is inspired by the unique flora and fauna of Delaware: featuring red winged black birds that migrate annually through Delaware.

Surrounded by art and architecture since childhood, Loustau’s affinity for these mediums, as well as space and objects, have influenced her pieces which are on view across the region. Two of Loustau’s other installations, created with monofilament and archival paper, can be seen displayed at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts and the Delaware College of Art & Design, both in Wilmington, Delaware.

Loustau received a B.A. from Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts, and a M.F.A. from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is currently the Assistant Professor of Art, specializing in sculpture, at West Chester University in southeastern Pennsylvania. She has worked as an art instructor at multiple colleges across Pennsylvania whilst creating her aviary projects.

Loustau remarks that her “site specific installations behave like swarms. Suspended mixed media elements form swirling volumes which float through a space. They seem to morph and swoop. The effect is created by

an accumulation of repeated shapes on geometrically arranged lines (monofilament). The viewer is wrapped into the same space as the work. Like real swarms they are ephemeral. Because they are constructed from impermanent materials and installed for a restricted time, their life span is limited. The obsessive and excessive construction suggests an attempt to achieve a sublime level of illusion.”

**TOPIC TIE-INS**

- Geometry
- Earth Sciences
- Habitats
- Physics

**ARTISTIC LANGUAGE**

- Sculpture
- Installation Art
- Site-Specific Art

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# Mani

**Charles Le Clair** (1914–present)

Oil on Canvas

1969





Charles Le Clair was born in Missouri in 1914 and grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, where he received a Masters degree in Fine Arts in 1935. After receiving his M.S. in Art he pursued a Doctoral degree in Art History at Columbia University. Le Clair had a prosperous career in academia: he instructed at the University of Alabama, Buffalo's Albright Art School; he was a professor of Humanities at Chatham College in Pittsburgh, and he was the Dean and instructed of Temple University's Tyler School. After retiring from academia, he went on to publish *The Art of Watercolor* in 1985 and *Color in Contemporary Painting* in 1991. Le Clair also was a contributing author to the group publication of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Oil Painting* in 1993.

He grew in fame as a Regionalist Painter after he moved to Pittsburgh in 1946. While Regionalist artists focus their work on depicting rural town life in a Realistic manor, Le Clair's work expanded upon those themes and he became associated with his depictions of abstracted still lives. While many artists prefer to focus their attention building a body of work in one medium, it is noted that Charles Le Clair was equally comfortable producing final products in watercolor, acrylic, and oil paint. He noted in a catalog about his work that "you will find a frontal image in everything I do - an image pressed forward, its shapes and colors interacting within a shallow, shadow-box like space that is parallel to the picture surface itself ... I have moved around, rather than sticking to a single genre, because exploring new themes often leads to new and intriguing technical discoveries."

In addition to the Biggs Museum, Le Clair's artwork can be seen at Gross McCleaf Gallery in Philadelphia, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

**TOPIC TIE-INS**

- Architecture
- Consumerism
- Mathematics
- Anatomy
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**ARTISTIC LANGUAGE**

- Color blocking
- Pop-Art
- Golden Ratio
- Modernism
- Transposing
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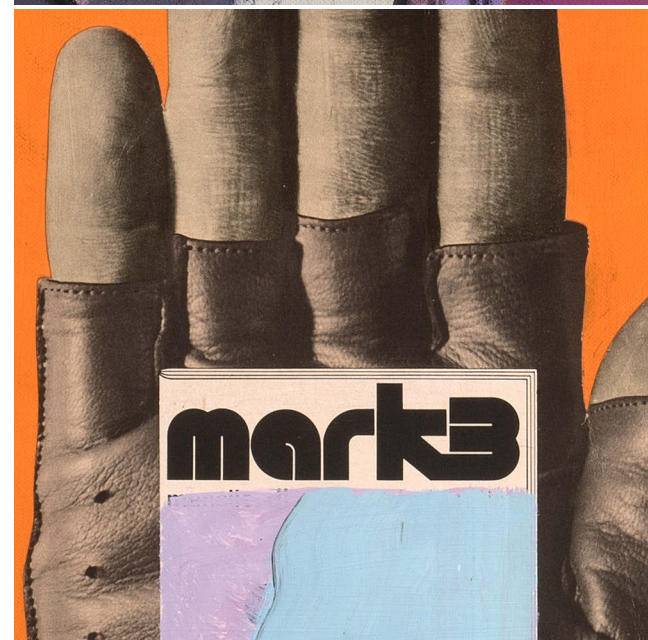
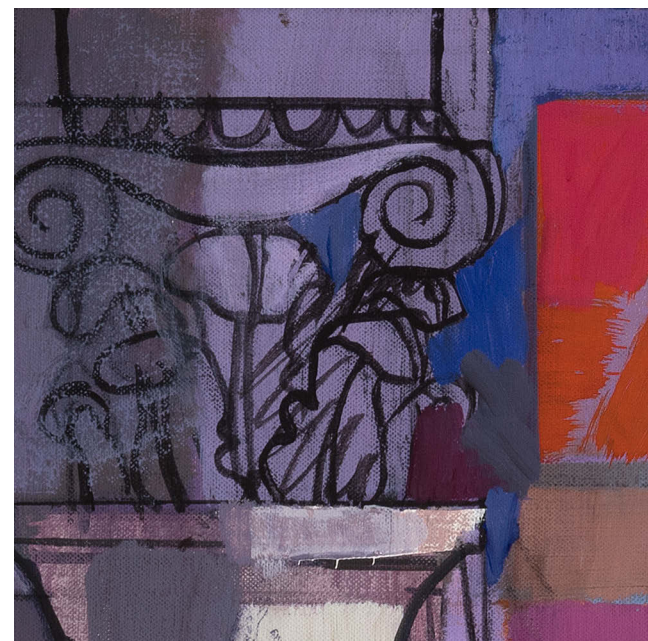
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# Chairs I

Myrna Bloom  
Acrylic on Canvas  
1970





Myrna Bloom was born in Philadelphia and began her formal art training only after becoming a parent in the early 1960s and taking night classes in painting, ultimately receiving a full scholarship in 1968 to Temple University's Tyler School of Art where she then graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1972 with a BFA in Painting and Sculpture. Her work is highly influenced by her affinity for Persian rugs and the bright colors and patterning. She had openly admitted throughout her life that she was more comfortable working sculpturally, stating "despite concentration on my model, it's humor or elegance to me, its juxtaposition to other objects and the space around. The result is a final image is generally different from what the camera's eye would see."

Bloom's *Chairs* is an example of Optical Art or "Op Art." Op Art is meant to manipulate your eyes and fits into a larger conversation among Modern Artists that focuses on exploring the scientific and psychological implications of color. This research and exploration is focused on the 18th century development of Color Theory, the concept of the color wheel, warm and cool colors, and how colors interact with both each other and the viewer. For example blue, green, and purple are considered "cool colors" and will typically be overlooked by the eye in favor of "warm colors" such as red, yellow, and orange. This painting also explores how opposite colors interact with each other. Normally the warm red would capture the eye's attention, however because both the red and the green have the same amount of grey in them the viewer's eye cannot decide what to look at—thus causing the painting to "vibrate."

This artwork is paired with a collection of historical wallpaper designs that can be viewed throughout the Biggs' 2nd floor. The wallpaper designs feature changing interior fashion and technology between 1765 and 1855. The historic wallpapers provide a glimpse into the changing fashions of early America. All reproductions are manufactured by Adelphi Paper Hangings. Although the patterns and colors vary widely, all the historic wallpapers are created in a similar way. Wallpapers in the 18th and 19th centuries were made through a wood block printing process. Patterns would be carved into a series of wood blocks with each color having its own block. These blocks are then covered in paint and pressed, like a stamp, onto a roll of paper. This process was done completely by hand until the 1840s at which point the first wallpaper printing machines were becoming widespread. The new style of production used a cylindrical drum which guided paper over a series of self-painting, patterned rollers. The machine-made wallpaper was much less vibrant and with less intricate detail than the hand-stamped patterns, however it was significantly cheaper and by the 1860s wallpaper was affordable to the working-class.



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# Lesson Plan

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TITLE

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SUBJECT(S)

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TEACHER

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GRADE

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DATE

OVERVIEW

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TIME REQUIRED

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NOTES

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	TEACHER GUIDE	STUDENT GUIDE
LEARNING OBJECTIVES (standards)		"I Can" Statements
FEATURED WORK OF ART		
MATERIALS		
LESSON ACTIVITY		
ASSESSMENT OF UNDERSTANDING		
VOCABULARY		
REFERENCES		
EXTENSIONS		



# Requested Supplies

Complete this page, then remove it and turn it in to the Biggs on day 3 of the workshops.

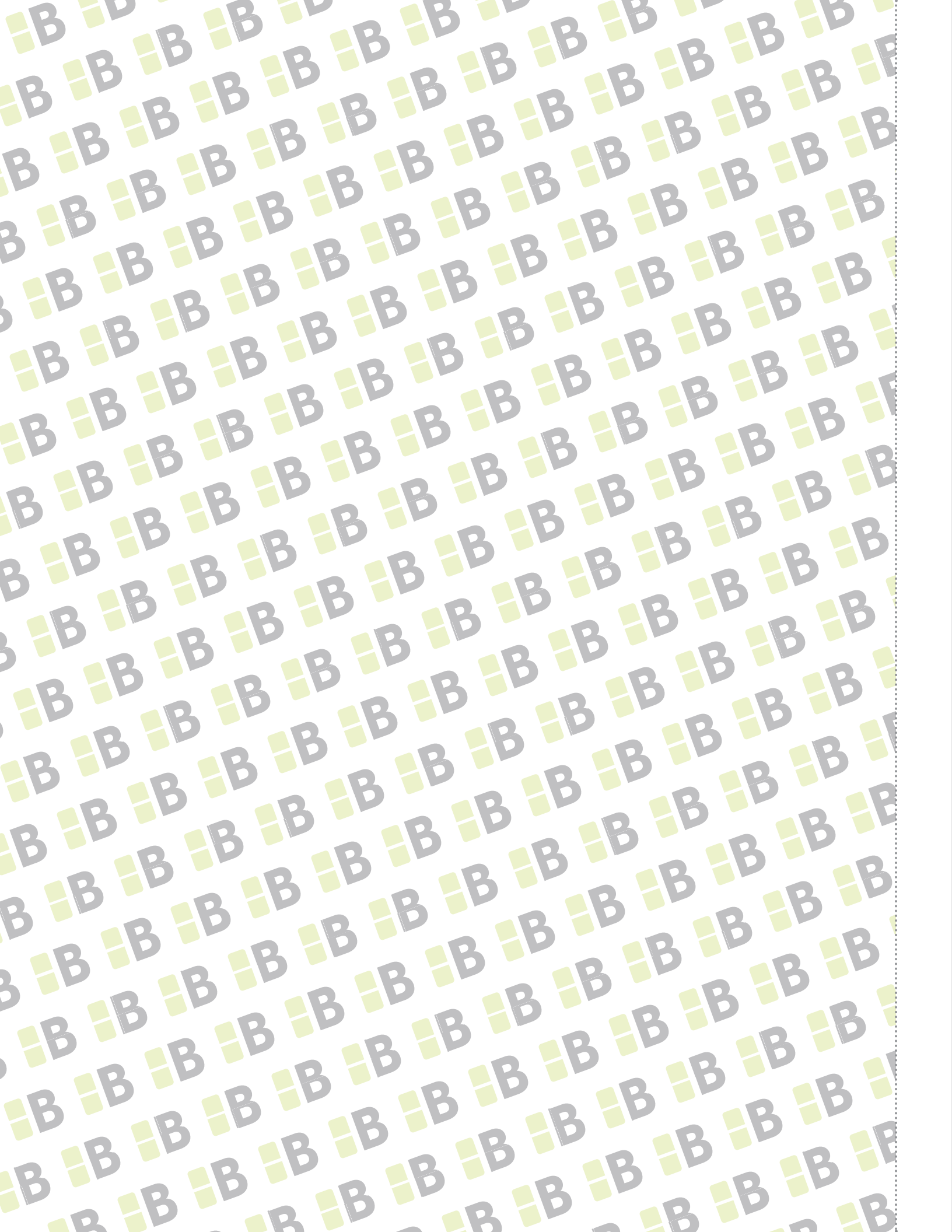
TEACHER

GRADE

REQUESTED SUPPLIES & QUANTITIES

Handwriting practice lines for the 'Requested Supplies & Quantities' section.





Join us for

# Teachers' Night 2023

Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>  
from 5:00–7:00 pm

At this **FREE** event, teachers can explore the museum, participate in workshops, learn about our other school offerings and resources, and connect with the Biggs Education Staff to see how we can be of better assistance to you and your classroom.

Our offerings and resources include:

- Virtual tours and talks
- Field trips in a range of topics
- Workshops at the Biggs and in your classroom
- Recorded meditative tours
- *and much more!*

 **BIGGS**  
MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART







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The Adopt-An-Artwork Program  
is made possible through support from

