

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## GRADE 4: ART FROM MANY CULTURES

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**LAWRENCE JAMES BECK**

***PUNK NANUK INUA, 1986***

Metal, Plastic, Feathers, Glass, Rubber  
1990.15.2



## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

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Lawrence James Beck (1938-1994) was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. He is of Yup'ik and Norwegian heritage. From 1957 to 1959, Beck studied engineering at the University of Washington before studying art for one year at the Burnley School of Professional Art, now known as the Art Institute of Seattle. In 1964, Beck earned a B.A. in painting and a M.F.A. in 1965 from the University of Washington.

During the late 1960s, Beck created large abstract public art installations. The 1970s “Inukshuk” sculpture series—the Yup'ik term for presence—were inspired by his first visit to Alaska. In *Punk Nanuk Inua*, Beck uses contemporary metal objects including: chrome disk with an oil filter used for a snout, spoon for a tongue, fish lure and razor blade for an ear, safety pin in one cheek, and dental mirrors for appendages. The metal materials are found objects from Beck's urban landscape in Seattle.

Traditionally, Yup'ik masks are made of materials from the natural environment: wood, whale bone, feathers, and other materials found in the Arctic. Due to Western colonization, masks—considered a form of idolatry by Christian missionaries—became forbidden objects amongst Alaska Natives. Consequently, the traditions of mask-making, along with spiritual and cultural narratives, were suppressed and even lost. Beck's artwork is part of global contemporary movement of Indigenous artists revitalizing the traditions and innovations of Indigenous mask-making.

## ARTIST QUOTES

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- “*Punk Nanuk Inua* is playful but cannot and not meant to be worn.”
- “I just saw this mask there, this Eskimo mask on the side of this car. So I got this idea that I would use the materials that are in my environment as found objects.”
- “...My visions are mine, and even though I use Baby Moon hubcaps, pop rivets, snow tires, Teflon spatulas, dental pick mirrors and stuff to make my spirits, this is a process to which the old artists could relate. Because, below these relics of your world, reside the old forces familiar to the *Inua*.”



## KEY TERMS

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<i>Assemblage</i>	Also known as 3D collage, assemblage is characterized by the use of multiple objects, which may include everyday or found objects, to create a new artwork. In the 1950s and 60s, assemblage was popularized by artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns
<i>Culture</i>	Characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place, time and continuum of ideas or values
<i>Ella</i>	The Yup'ik term for the awareness that all things have life
<i>Eskimo</i>	Eskimo is a term imposed upon the Inuit, Iñupiaq, Yup'ik, and Siberian Yupik peoples as well as all Alaska Native peoples by outsiders and colonizers. Eskimo is not a self-designator or a term belonging to the Indigenous languages of the Inuit, Iñupiaq, Yup'ik, and/or Siberian Yupik peoples. Researchers and anthropologists have theorized upon various translations of the word. Most recent research indicates that the word may be derived from an Ojibwa term meaning 'to net snowshoes'
<i>Found object</i>	A natural or human-made object, or fragment of an object, found by an artist. Marcel Duchamp's <i>Fountain, 1917</i> , a readymade sculpture of an upturned urinal, is a widely known example
<i>Hybrid</i>	Made by combining multiple elements
<i>Inua</i>	The Inuit term for spirit
<i>Inukshuk</i>	The Yup'ik term for presence
<i>Lifestyle</i>	Habits, values, and ways of daily life
<i>Landscape</i>	An area of land and collection of landforms; culturally this may include the resources found in that area and the interaction of those resources with human inhabitants; the term may also reference a visual representation of an area of land. As a term in the visual arts, landscape is a type or genre of subject depicting scenes of nature, such as mountains and seascapes, and urban sceneries that may feature people, animals, or architecture. Landscape is derived from the Dutch word of <i>landschap</i>
<i>Nanuk</i>	The Inuit term for polar bear
<i>Punk</i>	A culture popular beginning in the 1970s which encompasses resistance to authority and is often associated with fast, loud music, specific fashions, and modes of personal expression



## INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

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

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

**OBSERVE** Invite students to share observations about the artwork.

**ASK**

- *What is going on in this artwork?*
- *Describe your perspective in this artwork.*
- *What colors does the artist use?*
- *What do you notice about the materials?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

**TITLE  
PUNK**

Reveal the title to the students.  
*How does the title change your understanding of this artwork?*

- *How do you define “punk”? When and where have you heard of this term?*
- *How is this mask “punk”?*
- *Discuss concept of punk as ‘identity’ and as a ‘performance.’*

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

**LEARN MORE** Smithsonian Institute Lawrence Beck Papers [sova.si.edu//record/NMAI.AC.017](https://sova.si.edu//record/NMAI.AC.017)



## LANDSCAPE COLLAGE MASK

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Like many Indigenous peoples from the North, Beck was displaced from his ancestral homelands. Growing up outside of Alaska, Beck found himself combing auto junkyards for materials as his ancestors would have combed beaches for driftwood. Beck saw his artwork as way to maintain his cultural identity and spiritual connection.

“...My visions are mine, and even though I use Baby Moon hubcaps, pop rivets, snow tires, Teflon spatulas, dental pick mirrors and stuff to make my spirits, this is a process to which the old artists could relate. Because, below these relics of your world, reside the old forces familiar to the *Inua*.”

**TIME FRAME** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS** Mod podge or gloss acrylic medium  
Thick paper  
Pencil  
Markers  
Watercolor supplies  
Photocopies of personal photographs  
Magazine

**DIRECTIONS** Below is a contemporary art activity inspired by Beck's *Punk Nanuk Inua* artwork. Please note that it is culturally appropriative to create or replicate an Alaska Native culture mask created by any culture for ritual, ceremonial, or religious use.

**1.** [5 mins] In homage to Beck's artwork and style, invite students to reflect on their cultures and what their landscapes looks like. For this activity, students will create a collage that represents their physical landscapes on a mask.

*Which communities and cultures are you a part of?  
How do you want to represent your communities and cultures?  
What found objects are in your community?*

**2.** [15 mins] Prompt students to select relevant images from magazines or copies of personal photograph to cut and arrange on thick paper. Use mod podge or a gloss acrylic medium to glue and seal the images on the thick paper. Allow for the collage to dry. {You may ask students in advance to bring copies of personal photographs for you to photocopy if you are able.}

**3.** [5 mins] While waiting for the collage to dry, invite students to sketch their mask's shape on a blank paper.

*What shapes and symbols can you incorporate as part of the mask's shape?  
How do these shapes and symbols reflect you, your cultures, and your landscapes?*

**4.** [5-10 mins] Once the collage is dry, students will draw and cut the mask's shape outline. Prompt students to incorporate symbols, objects, and text by painting on the mask with watercolor or markers.

*How does this mask represent your experiences?  
How do you want to convey your landscape and culture with paint?*

**5.** [5-10 mins] **WRITE** *How does this mask represent your experiences?  
How did you convey your community and culture's landscapes?*

**6.** Students may present their mask and its accompanying artist statement.



## 3D IDENTITY AND CLASSROOM CULTURE MASK

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<b>TIME FRAME</b>	45-60 minutes
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Vellum/tracing paper Drawing paper Pencils Craft materials (pipe cleaner, paper straws, beads, buttons)
<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<p><b>1.</b> Below is a contemporary art activity inspired by Beck's <i>Punk Nanuk Inua</i> artwork. Please note that it is culturally appropriate to create or replicate an Alaska Native culture mask created by any culture for ritual, ceremonial, or religious use.</p> <p>[10 mins] Invite students to reflect on their identity and experiences.</p> <p>Think about aspects of your identify you want to emphasize or conceal. <i>Why?</i> Students may volunteer to share their responses. Students may also keep their reflections private.</p> <p><b>2.</b> [2 mins] On 8.5x11" vellum/tracing paper, make a list of words that you identify as. <i>What labels or adjectives would you like others to use when they think about you?</i></p> <p>[3 mins] On the same paper, make another list of words you identify as the ideas and values of your classroom. <i>What is your classroom's values? What is your classroom's 'culture' like?</i></p> <p>Invite students to select 2 labels or adjectives from both lists as inspiration for their 3D mask project.</p> <p><b>3.</b> [10 mins] On 8.5x11" vellum/tracing paper, sketch a mask incorporating symbols and objects unique to your identity and classroom experiences.</p> <p><i>What symbols and objects can you incorporate to represent your sense of self and your classroom's experiences? How can you incorporate these symbols and objects to your mask?</i></p> <p><b>4.</b> [15 mins] Based on the sketches, create a 3-dimensional mask using crafts materials.</p> <p><b>5.</b> [5 mins] Invite students to title their mask and write a paragraph about the meaning of their masks and its relationship to their identity and experiences in your classroom.</p> <p>Overlay the 3 papers together in order to showcase the student's design process and final reflections.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Students may share about their masks and writing to the class.</p>

## ASSESSMENT

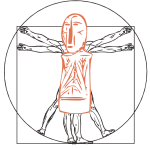
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Students will be assessed based on their participation in the discussion, completion of the two projects, and art presentation to class.



For more teaching resources, visit [anchoragemuseum.org/teachingresources](https://anchoragemuseum.org/teachingresources)

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