

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## GRADE 6: ARTS IMPACT ON THE WORLD

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**JAMES TEMTE, MICHELLE XIAO, JON BURPEE**  
***NEQENIIGHTA, 2017***

Acrylic, wood  
2017.21.1



## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

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*Neqeniighta* is a collaborative artwork between James Temte, Michelle Xiao, and Jon Burpee.

James Temte (b. 1980), of Northern Cheyenne-American heritage, is an abstract painter and muralist based in Anchorage, Alaska.

Michelle Xiao (b. 1978) is ethnically Chinese and an artist based in Anchorage, Alaska. Xiao's paintings focus on the emotions and expressions through figure and floral paintings.

Jon Burpee (b. 1973), of American heritage, began painting in 2015 while recovering from a concussion. He is an artist and firefighter based in Anchorage, Alaska.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

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In the summer of 2017, Chris Appassingok, a Siberian Yupik hunter from Gambell, Alaska, successfully landed his first bowhead whale. As the village celebrated his accomplishment and gave thanks to the animal's spirit for its sacrifice, social media posts—a vital means of communication across rural Alaska—soon caught attention from afar, Appassingok was inundated with death threats, hate mail, and social media trolling from outside Alaska. The pride of a young hunter to provide for his community and part in a continuum of cultural tradition was ignored.

*Neqeniighta* is a celebrated Siberian Yupik word for hunter and provider. The work honors Appassingok's successful hunt to support the livelihood, culture, and traditions of his community.

## ARTIST QUOTES

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"The portrait of the *Neqeniighta*, crowned with arrowheads, nobly holds his head high, weathering the storm, for his family, his community, and his culture." – James Temte, Michelle Xiao, and Jon Burpee

"I love the challenge of manipulating medium, (oil, acrylic, and spray paint using nonconventional tools and techniques) to tell my story. This process of creating allows my mind to imagine. For me each piece starts with a vision, location, or concept, and I create from there." – James Temte



## KEY TERMS

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<i>Neqeniighta</i>	Siberian Yupik term for hunter and provider
<i>Harvest</i>	Sustainable and responsible use of wild, renewable resources from the land by individuals, families and communities for food, shelter, fuel and other essential needs that are fundamental to a way of life
<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>Symbiotic</i>	A special type of interaction between two or more species living together; a relationship with mutual benefit or dependence
<i>Sustainable</i>	The ability to support, maintain or continue



## 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 symbols and objects do you see?*
- *What colors does the artists use?*
- *What moods does the colors 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** “The Teenage Whaler’s Tale”. High Country News, 2019, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/49.12/tribal-affairs-a-teenage-whaler-pride-of-his-alaska-village-is-haunted-by-trolls>.  
[Bowhead Whale](#) Teaching Resource



## COMMUNITY PAINTING

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**TIME FRAME** 90-135 minutes

**MATERIALS** Pencil  
Large paper  
Canvas  
Liquid tempera or acrylic paint  
Small and medium paint brushes

**DIRECTIONS** Below is a contemporary art activity inspired by Temte, Xiao, and Burpee's *Neqeniighta* collaborative artwork.

**1.** [5 mins] Reflect and identify issues that your community faces today. In groups of 3, students will brainstorm and write down issues in their community that they care about.

**2.** [10-15 mins] As a group, sketch a draft of how to represent the community issue through images and color. Invite students to think about what shapes, designs, and forms might communicate the idea that is important to them and their community.

Make conscious decisions together regarding the sketch for the painting.  
*What story of the community issue are you trying to convey?*  
*Which color palette will you use? What text can you include? Why?*  
*Which symbols and objects related to the community issue will you represent?*  
*What meanings can you emphasize through the relationship of your symbols, objects, and text?*

**3.** [40-85 mins] Paint a large artwork together inspired by this issue using liquid tempera and/or acrylic paint.

**4.** [15 mins] Collaborate together and write an artist statement about the artwork.  
*How does your collaborative painting address the community issue?*

**5.** [5 mins] Title the artwork.  
*How does the title influence the meaning of your painting?*

**6.** Invite students to present their painting and artist' statements to their classmates.

## ASSESSMENT

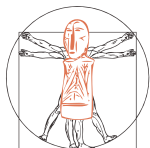
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Students will be assessed based on their participation in the discussion, completion of the two projects, and art presentation to class.

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

Educational resources at the Anchorage Museum are made possible with the support of the Hearst Foundation, the Atwood Foundation, and the Alaska Humanities Forum.



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