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It pays to join! Visit telfair.org/membership for more information.

As an educator, you are eligible for a special membership rate. BENEFITS INCLUDE:

Unlimited free admission to Telfair Museums’ three sites (Jepson Center, Telfair Academy, and Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters) for one year

Invitations to special events and lectures

Discounted rates for art classes (for all ages) and summer camps

10 percent discount at Telfair’s Museum Stores

Eligibility to join museum member groups

A one-time use guest pass

VIRTUAL TOURS

PLAN YOUR VIRTUAL VISIT

Book your virtual tour 2-3 weeks in advance and notify us of any changes or cancellations. To schedule, call or email Carey Daughtry, Art Tour & Docent Program Coordinator, at 912.790.8827 or daughtryc@telfair.org.

VIRTUAL TOUR MANNERS

Please follow the same rules your teacher establishes for virtual classroom visits.

ON-SITE TOURS

PLAN YOUR VISIT

Book your on-site tour 2-3 weeks in advance and notify us of any changes or cancellations. To schedule, call or email Carey Daughtry, Art Tour & Docent Program Coordinator, at 912.790.8827 or daughtryc@telfair.org.

MUSEUM MANNERS

Explore with your eyes. We take special care of the art and objects so that they may be preserved and shared with others for a long time. Do not touch the artwork because even the gentlest touch can add up to harmful damage.

Point with your words. To avoid any accidents, keep your hands by your side. Describe what you are seeing in the artwork using terms such as “line”, “shape”, “color”, “at the bottom,” “next to,” etc.

Walk and move carefully. Stay with your teacher and follow the docent. Take your time, watch where you are going, and hold onto the handrails while using the stairs.

Listen carefully, raise your hand to speak, and speak clearly. The museum is a place for learning, just like your classroom. School rules are followed here too.

Eating, drinking, and gum chewing are not allowed inside the museum.

Ask about our photography policy before you take pictures. We don’t always own the artwork we have on display; therefore, we don’t always have permission to take photos.

Use a pencil. If you would like to take notes during your visit, make sure you bring your own paper and pencil.
THE EXHIBITION

SONYA CLARK: FINDING FREEDOM
OCTOBER 1, 2021–JANUARY 17, 2022
JEPSON CENTER

Sonya Clark’s (American, b. 1967) mixed media works use everyday objects to address tangled histories, cultural heritage, and identity. Clark has created installations and collaborations that coincide with conversations about racial injustice and historical imbalances in the United States. Sonya Clark: Finding Freedom consists of a large-scale canopy pieced together from cyanotype reactive fabric squares that were made with the help of workshop participants over the course of Clark’s various residencies. Draped as a night sky overhead, the work offers a celestial viewpoint that encourages us to consider freedom seeking enslaved individuals whose forced labor built the wealth of this nation. Often under cover of night with bounty hunters at their heels, they used the constellations like the Big Dipper to orient their way North along the Underground Railroad—a network of people, safe houses, and clandestine routes used by enslaved people in the early to mid-19th century to escape from states that sanctioned slavery, into Northern states and Canada.

This consideration of history can be expanded to the present day as visitors are urged to question what finding freedom means truly means in a world that continues to grapple with the traumas of the past as they persist in our present. This exhibition is part of Telfair Museums’ Legacy of Slavery in Savannah Initiative, which is a multifaceted project that seeks to engage local Savannahians, artists, scholars, and activists to consider how the legacies of slavery still manifest in the city and what work can be done toward justice. Please visit telfair.org/los for more information.

Sonya Clark: Finding Freedom is organized by the Phillips Museum of Art at Franklin & Marshall College in collaboration with Telfair Museums and is curated by Amy Moorefield. The presentation of this exhibition at Telfair Museums is curated by Erin Dunn, curator of modern and contemporary art.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

SONYA CLARK

Sonya Clark is a Professor of Art and the History of Art at Amherst College in Massachusetts and was a Distinguished Research Fellow in the School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University. She earned an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a BA from Amherst College where she also received an honorary doctorate in 2015. Her work has been exhibited in more than 400 museums and galleries in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia. She is the recipient of a United States Artist Fellowship, a Pollock Krasner Foundation award, and an Anonymous Was a Woman Award.

The materials used in creating the Finding Freedom installation includes cotton cloth and images of constellations made with seeds. These materials were also harvested by enslaved people at one time. This work was inspired by the Underground Railroad in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Lancaster was a location along the Underground Railroad. In other works, Clark uses human hair to honor her ancestors. For people of African descent, hair can be a part of Black identity as it also contains DNA markers to pinpoint an individual’s identity. Throughout Clark’s body of work are the crafting of conversations about cultural heritage, history, and identity.
QUESTIONS:
WHAT IS GOING ON IN THESE PHOTOGRAPHS?
WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
HOW ARE THE VISITORS INTERACTING WITH THIS WORK?
WHAT MATERIALS WERE USED TO CREATE THIS WORK?
WHAT MORE CAN WE FIND?

TOP: Photograph courtesy of Deb Grove, Franklin & Marshall College Staff Photographer. BOTTOM: Workshops to create constellation patterns on cyanotype fabric.
Cyanotypes are a form of photography in which a chemical process is used to make a photographic image that yields a distinctive blue color, the word “cyan” deriving from a Greek word meaning “dark blue.” Used for documentation of natural specimens, early photo proofs, and paper architectural blueprints, cyanotypes were first invented in 1842 by astronomer John Herschel. In the same decade, British naturalist Anna Atkins used the process to make photographic contact prints of algae in an important natural history publication, similar to the way that seeds are used to make the cyanotype panels in Sonya Clark’s Finding Freedom installation.

In the process used to create cyanotypes on fabric like the ones in Finding Freedom, cloth is treated with a solution of two compounds, ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide. The chemicals are dissolved in water, applied to the fabric and because they are light sensitive, left in a dark place to dry. The fabric is kept in low light conditions until time for exposure to light. Vegetal seeds are placed on the fabric in a manner suggesting stars and constellations. The fabric with seeds is then exposed to full daylight for a period of up to 10 minutes. When exposure is complete, the fabric is brought indoors or away from light, seeds are removed, and the fabric is washed in warm water with hydrogen peroxide. The exposed areas of the fabric develop as a deep blue while the areas covered by the seeds remain white.
CREATE A FABRIC CYANOTYPE

Supplies: Board (cardboard/clipboard, etc.) to attach your fabric square, pretreated fabrics for cyanotypes, thick plexiglass sheets sized to hold down objects on the fabric, objects to create a design (flowers, leaves, cut paper, etc.), sun.

1. Cut fabric to match the size of the plexiglass. Attach the fabric to your board.

2. Gather and arrange objects (flowers, leaves, cut paper) on the fabric.

3. Place plexiglass cover on top of fabric to hold objects in place.

4. Leave exposed in the sunlight for up to 30 minutes.

5. Rinse the fabric in warm water with hydrogen peroxide. The image will turn blue!

6. Finish by rinsing the fabric in clear water.
QUESTIONS:

HOW WERE THESE SCULPTURES MADE?
WHAT MATERIALS WERE USED?
WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?

HOW ARE THE TWO SCULPTURES SIMILAR?
HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

WHO WAS FREDERICK DOUGLASS?
WHO WAS HARRIET TUBMAN?

WHAT IS AN ABOLITIONIST?
VERNON EDWARDS

Vernon Edwards was one of a small number of accomplished African American woodcarvers working in the Savannah area in the late twentieth century. He followed in the footsteps of self-taught artist Ulysses Davis and, like him, made valuable contributions to the folk art of the region. In his youth in Georgia, Edwards was exposed to woodworking through his father, a carpenter. In his teen years, living in Cleveland Ohio, Edwards met an elderly African American carver who showed him some walking sticks he had carved. As an adult Edwards carved sporadically while he worked in various other occupations in Philadelphia. Returning to his hometown of Pooler, near Savannah, Edwards began to pursue carving to a greater extent by the 1980s. He soon developed his signature works: realistically carved walking sticks in the form of snakes, especially venomous species. At the same time, he made freestanding and relief portrait sculptures of important figures in black history. Some of these works are reminiscent of the carved portraits of Ulysses Davis, which Edwards had seen and admired in Davis’s barbershop. Edwards’s pieces have an undeniable emotional power that rises from a fierce sense of pride in his heritage.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Artist Vernon Edwards pays homage to Frederick Douglass in his signature blocky woodworking style. Douglass, a central figure in 19th-century America, escaped from enslavement to become a noted abolitionist, statesman, speaker, and author. He was born into slavery around 1818 in Talbot County, Maryland. Douglass wrote an autobiography (one of five), published in 1845, titled Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. In this book, he writes about his time as an enslaved worker in Maryland.

HARRIET TUBMAN

Edwards’s portrait of Harriett Tubman presents the escaped slave who became a leading abolitionist in simple frontal terms. With a wide steely-eyed gaze and a rifle, Edwards’s Tubman clearly means business. Tubman did carry a rifle, both to protect the slaves she was leading to freedom and to threaten those who might entertain thoughts of backing out or leaking information about the Underground Railroad. Totemic despite its small size, this work functions as an icon of black history.

VOCABULARY

ABOLITIONIST

An abolitionist is a person who sought to abolish slavery during the 19th century. Abolitionists included both black and white Americans, and often ran for political office and sent petitions to Congress to end slavery. Other famous abolitionists in history include William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sojourner Truth, and John Quincy Adams.
The Underground Railroad was a network of people and safe houses that helped enslaved people who were seeking freedom. The routes differed. For each enslaved person, it started at their place of enslavement. It was not a train route with railroad cars, but rather routes that followed rivers, canals, bays, ferries, river crossings, roads, and trails that were concentrated mostly along the central and eastern United States from southern states to as north as Canada. Enslaved people seeking freedom along the Underground Railroad often used disguises and falsified documents to travel undetected. Those who helped people to escape slavery included other enslaved people, free Blacks, American Indians, and abolitionists of diverse races and religious affiliation.
WATCH AND DISCUSS

The Underground Railroad - Connections to Science and Freedom on Vimeo
http://vimeo.com/6123905

1. WHAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE BEING USED TO LOCATE AND PRESERVE THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITES?

2. HOW ARE THESE TECHNOLOGIES USED IN THESE EFFORTS? EX: GROUND PENETRATING RADAR (GPR)?

3. WHAT IS THE NORTH STAR, AND HOW DID IT PLAY A ROLE IN THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD?

CLASS DISCUSSION

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. Fugitive Slave Laws were passed in 1850 to punish enslaved people and the people who helped them escape. If you knew that you were going to be thrown in jail, would you have helped someone escape from a life of slavery? Why or why not?

2. What are some things you can do to help someone who is in trouble or being treated unfairly? Do you think these things would have worked during the time of slavery? Why or why not?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Book—Uncle Tom’s Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Book—Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (1845)
- Why Frederick Douglass Matters - HISTORY
- Harriet Tubman: Facts, Underground Railroad & Legacy - HISTORY
  https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/harriet-tubman
- “Let it be placed among the abominations!”: The Bill of Rights and the Fugitive Slave Laws (U.S. National Park Service) [nps.gov]
- A Tour of the Underground Railroad | Georgia Public Broadcasting (gpb.org)
  https://www.gpb.org/georgiastories/stories/growth_of_slavery
QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS PICTURE?
WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
WHAT MORE CAN WE FIND?
ABOUT THE ARTIST

FAITH RINGGOLD

Faith Ringgold is an internationally recognized artist and activist best known for her painted narrative quilts that deal with African American life and culture, civil rights, and gender equality. Although Ringgold has worked in a variety of mediums, her art is generally united by a blend of semi-autobiographical, fictional, and historical storytelling.

ABOUT THESE WORKS

This print of two figures journeying to a white house under a “blood red sky” is part of a larger body of work known as the Coming to Jones Road series—a group of prints, quilts, children’s books, and paintings chronicling the escape of 28 enslaved people to Aunt Emmy’s farmhouse on Jones Road in the Palisades in New Jersey. The artist created this vibrant group of works in response to her relocation from New York to New Jersey, where she felt unwelcome. By exploring and depicting the area’s history as a hub of the Underground Railroad, Ringgold sought to forge a meaningful connection to her new home and community.

ACTIVITY

Take a few minutes to look at this image and imagine you are walking along the path in the center. Write a monologue expressing a first-person point of view as one of the people on the path. Describe where you are going and how you are feeling. Consider including things like: What were you doing before this moment? What caused you to be at this place and time? What will you do next? Share and discuss your story with others.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
Faith Ringgold – If One Can Anyone Can All you Gotta Do Is Try  https://www.faithringgold.com/
Faith Ringgold - Art, Tar Beach & Quilts - Biography  https://www.biography.com/artist/faith-ringgold
Complete writing worksheet on the opposite page.

This writing activity may be used as a follow up to the Finding Freedom virtual field trip, or as a starting point for classroom discussion of images in this guide or other, related works of art. Ask students to spend a moment looking over the image carefully. Then ask them to write what they think is going on in the left column, and in the right, what they see that makes them say that. The activity may be followed by group discussion, or creative writing.

This activity and many of Telfair’s tours are informed by Visual Thinking Strategies, a teaching methodology based on facilitated discussion of works of art. For more information on Visual Thinking Strategies, please visit vtshome.org

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**Curriculum Connections**

**English and Language Arts Connections:**

ELAGSE4RL3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

ELAGSE4W1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting views with reasons.
- a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer’s purpose.
- b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- c. Link opinion and reason using words and phrases.
- d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

**Visual Arts Connections:**

VA4CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.
- a. Identifies elements, principles, themes, and/or time period in a work of art.
- b. Discusses how social events inspire art from a given time period.

VA4PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional art process (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

**Social Studies Connections:**

SS4H4 Examine the main ideas of the abolitionist and suffrage movements.
- a. Discuss the contributions of and challenges faced by Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman.

**Computer Science Connections:**

CSS.DA.3-5.9 Understand the relationship between technology, lifelong learning, and the appropriate use of information.
- a. Discuss computing technologies that have changed the world, and express how those technologies influence, and are influenced by, cultural practices.
What’s going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

Writing Checklist. Did you:

☐ Read your work silently to yourself? Does it make sense?
☐ Describe what you think is happening in the picture?
☐ Include details that help explain what is happening?
☐ Check spelling, punctuation, and capitalization?
FINDING FREEDOM

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