

# LANDSCAPE CONFECTION

Pre-Visit Activities for High School Students

These pre-visit activities will help prepare your students for their museum visit to see the exhibition *Landscape Confection*. *Landscape Confection* showcases new and intriguing works that expand the boundaries of landscape painting. The exhibition features more than 50 imagined landscapes portrayed in stitched fabric, beads, wax, metal, silk flowers, and other surprising materials. *Landscape Confection* brings together 13 contemporary artists from countries around the world including England, Switzerland, France, Australia, India, Germany, and the United States.

Your museum visit and pre-visit activities support interdisciplinary learning by connecting Visual Arts and Language Arts, and address the California State Content Standards in the Visual Arts.

- 1.0 Artistic Perception
- 2.0 Creative Expression
- 3.0 Historical and Cultural Content
- 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
- 5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Feel free to adapt these activities according to your classroom needs.

# orange

COUNTY  
MUSEUM  
OF ART

850 San Clemente Drive Newport Beach CA 92660 949-759-1122 [www.ocma.net](http://www.ocma.net)

## Learning Objectives:

Students will make discoveries about a work of art from the exhibition *Landscape Confection* by using their observations to derive meaning. Students will explore the genre of landscape painting and consider the relationship between nature and culture. Students will learn vocabulary and concepts related to landscapes in preparation for their museum visit.

## Featured Artist:

Lisa Sanditz, *Surfing the Artic Circle*, 2003



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## Materials:

Transparency of *Surfing the Arctic Circle*

Overhead projector

Paper

Pencils

Large drawing paper or canvas

Colored pencils or markers, or painting media such as gouache, tempera or acrylic paint

## Discuss:

Tell students that they will visit the Orange County Museum of Art to view the exhibition *Landscape Confection*. Ask students to define the term **landscape**. Traditionally, landscape is defined as a view of nature. When you think of a landscape, what images come to mind? Are there buildings, freeways, billboards? What role do people play within the natural world?

Landscape paintings depict more than just the natural environment; they reflect humanity's relationship with nature and convey ideas about our place in the world. When landscape painting originated in the early 16th century, people sought control over the land. Landscape painting achieved a sense of order by containing all of nature's beauty and terror within a rectangular picture plane. Landscapes reveal perceived relationships between nature and culture and can reflect social and political beliefs. The exhibition at the Orange County Museum of Art features over 50 landscapes by thirteen **contemporary** (living) artists from all over the world. These artists use a variety of unusual materials and techniques to illustrate their view of the world. The exhibition is called *Landscape Confection* because many of the artworks look whimsical or fantastical, even as they reveal complex ideas about nature and culture. Although these confections look tempting, they are very fragile, so please remember when you visit the museum not to touch any of the artworks.

## Look:

Project the transparency provided. Tell students that this is one of the artworks in the exhibition *Landscape Confection* by the artist Lisa Sanditz.

Ask students to describe what is happening in this piece. What do you see in this landscape? What don't you see? If this was a scene from a movie, what is the location? What might have happened just before this moment? What could happen next? What would the soundtrack sound like?

Reveal that the title of this artwork is *Surfing the Arctic Circle*. Ask students if knowing the title changes their understanding of the scene. An artist's choice of title often reinforces their **intent**, or the ideas they want to communicate. Why do you think the artist chose this title?

Lisa Sanditz took creative inspiration from the mysterious beauty of the **Arctic Circle**. Ask students to describe what they know about the Arctic Circle. The Arctic Circle refers to the northernmost circle of latitude and marks the point where anything north has a least one day a year with 24 continuous hours of sunlight, as well as one day with 24 continuous hours of darkness. It includes territory from Russia, Canada, Norway and the USA (Alaska). How does the artist use color to portray the Arctic Circle's unique light? The Arctic Circle is also considered to be ground zero for the effects of global warming. In the last four years the Arctic ice shelf has melted to its smallest size in a century. Why do you think the artist chose the Arctic Circle as the setting for this painting?

Tell students that the artist, Lisa Sanditz, often examines the collision of America's consumer culture with the natural world. Ask students to identify things in this landscape that are natural. What represents consumer culture? Is there a conflict between the two? How is it portrayed? What appears stronger: nature or culture? What might the artist be suggesting by the absence of a human presence in this piece?

The artist increases the dramatic tension between the environment and cultural influences by disorienting the viewer through her choice of **composition**, or the visual arrangement of elements in the painting. Instead of painting a realistic representation, the artist uses **abstract** (simplified) shapes to construct the landscape. What forms has the artist chosen to abstract? The surfboard, mountains, waves, clouds. How has the artist created a sense of tension in this work? The diagonal line created by the surfboard intersects with the horizontal lines of the waves, suggesting a moment of impact.

What is our point of view? Are we positioned above or in front of the scene? How does the artist's use of **perspective** impact our experience of this piece? The artist's use of perspective, or the positioning of objects in space, is jumbled. Sanditz uses a combination of **aerial** (from above) and frontal perspective. It is difficult to determine where the different elements of the painting reside. The clouds mingle with the mountains, while the ocean seems infinite, flooding the picture plane. To add to the visual confusion, Sanditz uses a **palette**, or range of colors, comprised of **mistints** (incorrectly mixed colors), purchased from the bargain bin at a hardware store. By creating disorienting situations charged with visual tension, the artist causes the viewer to experience the confusion and drama of the moment depicted.

### Write:

Ask students if they can recall any scenes from literature that describe a conflict between nature and culture? Any scenes from cinema? Ask students to write a sequence of events from their own lives that includes a dramatic interaction with the natural world. Was the student triumphant over nature? Or did nature prevail?

### Create:

Ask students to isolate the most dramatic moment from their narrative to depict in a work of art. Tell students to create several thumbnail, or preliminary, sketches experimenting with composition, perspective, and abstraction to convey visual tension. Students should select one of the sketches to enlarge in a finished work of art. The final version can be a drawing on paper with colored pencils or markers, or a painting on paper or canvas with gouache, tempera or acrylic paint.

## Vocabulary

- Exhibition
- Contemporary
- Landscape
- Intent
- Arctic Circle
- Composition
- Abstract
- Aerial
- Palette
- Perspective
- Mistints



## Who is Lisa Sanditz?

Lisa Sanditz was born in 1973 in St. Louis, Missouri. She lives and works in New York. Lisa Sanditz is interested in capturing the peculiarities of the American landscape as it exists today. Using a color palette derived from “cheap house paints,” she creates dense, tapestry-like landscapes that combine aspects of urban and suburban space seamlessly together. Some of her paintings examine the relationship of people to the natural environment in the context of outdoor recreational activities such as tailgate parties, sports events, camping, and backyard cookouts. Others focus on such “pseudolandscapes” as shopping malls, freeways, golf courses, or theme parks. The catch is that a typical Sanditz landscape is depopulated, imbuing her works with a distinct sense of melancholia despite their high-spirited color schemes. They depict a world of fun-filled group activities minus the groups, where everything is in place except for the people.