

Safe Haven

Grades 9-12

Inspired by Adrian Kellard

Artist Adrian Kellard created large-scale wood carvings featuring religious icons and sacred symbols. Working only in his small New York City apartment, Adrian often made artwork that was functional and useful—like shutters for a window, or a large calendar. Adrian used his artwork to transform his apartment into a personal, special space for himself.

In this activity, students will think about the idea of sacred spaces and create a work of art depicting a haven or safe space for themselves, inspired by Adrian Kellard.



Madonna Della Lacrime by Adrian Kellard

Objectives

- Students will explore the concept of haven and sacred space.
- Students will collaboratively generate and refine ideas.
- Students will incorporate constructive feedback to refine an artistic piece.

Critical Questions

What is a haven?

What are some reasons people take or make haven?

How does a place or thing become sacred?

Activities

(suggested 2-3 50 minute class periods)

Session 1:

1. **Warm Up (5 minutes):** Ask students to consider the question “What is a safe haven?” where all students can see, and ask them to freewrite or free sketch their answers in their sketchbooks.
2. **Discussion (10 minutes):** Teacher reads aloud the definition of the word “haven” or safe haven - A noun which means: 1 : harbor, port. 2 : a place of safety : refuge. 3 : a place offering favorable opportunities or conditions. Explain that the students will further explore the concept of a haven in smaller groups. Split students into small groups. Choose a method of visual brainstorming that best helps your students organize and communicate thoughts (mindmap, web, sketchnoting, list, etc). Assign each group one topic to collaboratively explore on a piece of large chart paper/white board/Jamboard:
 - a. For what reasons do people seek haven / safe haven?
 - b. What are some examples of safe havens?
 - c. What makes a space or thing sacred?
 - d. What are some sacred spaces or things?
3. **Present (10 minutes):** Post the chart paper around the room or share each Jamboard while a spokesperson from each group shares their groups questions and ideas.

4. **Inspire (15 minutes):** Teacher shares images of Adrian Kellard's work while reading the artists' biography to students. [Share this clip of Kellard on an NYC News Segment regarding experimental treatment during the AIDS epidemic.](#)

Teachers review and consider using one, both or parts of these scientific explanations of the history of AIDS and HIV, and treatments: part 1 [How a Sick Chimp Led to a Global Pandemic: The Rise of HIV](#), part 2 [Why HIV Isn't a Death Sentence Anymore](#)

Guiding questions for discussion:

- Why was Adrian Kellard seeking haven?
 - How did he create a sacred space?
 - What symbols did the artist use to sanctify his space?
 - In your opinion, is this a sacred space? Why or why not?
 - What was the artist's process? How does his choice of medium and process add to the meaning of his work?
5. **Revise (5 minutes):** Instruct students to revisit their brainstorming paper from small group time. Students from any group may add any notes or new ideas defining haven and sacred space after learning about Adrian Kellard. Highlight or write new ideas in a different color to note that they came after artist research.

Session 2

6. **Share (10-15 minutes)** the artwork prompt with students: ***Where do you seek and find haven?*** Students review their warm ups from previous class, and use them as a springboard to create three ideas and accompanying thumbnail sketches for their Haven project.

7. **Present (10 minutes):** In small groups, students will each present their ideas and sketches to get feedback from classmates and choose a composition / concept to explore in a final piece.

Guiding questions for small group critique

- Which composition is most successful and why?
 - Which concept is most successful and why?
 - What pieces of the artist's sketches and concepts should continue on into the final piece?
 - What medium will communicate this message the best?
8. **Revise & Explore (20 minutes):** Students will spend studio time researching images or information to inform their final piece, and testing mediums as necessary. For more information about works at the AVAM visit AVAM.org or, students can access digital materials here:
- a. [Virtual Tour of "The Science and Mystery of Sleep" Exhibition at AVAM by Curator Rebecca Hoffberger](#)
 - b. [Virtual tours for The Secret Life of Earth: Alive! Awake! \(and Possibly Really Angry!\)](#)
 - c. [In depth review of Adrain Kellard's works at the AVAM with friend and former roommate Regina DeLuise](#)
 - d. [Still images of Adrian's work here](#)

Session 3

9. **Create:** Students spend the class in studio mode creating final work.
10. **Present and Assess:** Once students are finished with their artwork, engage in small group or one large class critique using the guiding questions:
- a. What is the haven or safe space depicted here?
 - b. Did the artist successfully communicate that someone could find safety, calm, or refuge here? How?
 - c. What might someone taking haven here be escaping from?

- d. How does the medium used contribute to the work's meaning?

Materials

Student choice - paint, pencil, marker, charcoal, recycled materials, fabric, glue.

Modification/Extension

- If students are in virtual learning, consider narrowing focus and asking students to create and photograph an installation in their bedroom or other space in or around their home as their final answer to the prompt.
- For ages younger than high school, narrow focus to one specific medium.

Maryland State Standards/Common Core Standards

High School

Anchor Standard 1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

E:9-12:1: Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art or design that can elevate the community and influence social change. Apply knowledge of histories and traditions.

E:9-12:2: Brainstorm ideas to make artwork based on a main/central idea or concept. Following or breaking established conventions, plan the making of a series of works of art or design based on a theme's main/central idea or concept.

Anchor Standard 2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

E:9-12:2: Create works of art or design that demonstrates how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.

Anchor Standard 4 Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation.

I:9-12:1: Interact effectively with others to determine factors that influenced the creation of art objects that provide social commentary in historical time and place

Adrian Kellard

1959—1991

Adrian Kellard was born in 1959 in New Rochelle, New York. Much of his work was inspired by ecclesiastical woodcuts, which Kellard emulated by using an X-Acto knife on pine boards. The carvings are shallow, and then brightly painted. Kellard passed away from AIDS-related causes in 1991. In 1990, he made these comments about how his artistic style evolved: "In college, I knew how to draw, but I didn't know how to make art. One day I went back to New Rochelle and went into the church where I had been an altar boy. The first thing I saw was the art. It became apparent to me that a lot of what I was involved with at that time was an attempt to forget where I came from, which a lot of gay people go through at that age. I came back to myself."

In the early days of the AIDS epidemic, the mechanism of its transmission was unclear. This fueled much fear. Kellard's small apartment became a source of great tender comfort and beauty, all of his own making.

