Provocative Questions

• How is our response to an artwork affected by how and where it is displayed?
• Can the artist’s creative process be as important as the finished work?
• How do patterns and human behavior influence contemporary art?

Included in this guide is an introduction to this year’s Art Truck exhibit by artist Meridith Pingree, as well as four lesson plans that will help your students navigate through the Art Truck. These lessons explore the themes of pattern, geometry, geography and human behavior. All four lessons can be adapted to students in grades K-12.
Q & A Section

**Q** What is installation art?

**A** Installation art is often created specifically for one location, has three-dimensional components, and is intended to transform perceptions of the space in which it is located.

**Q** How is the installation experience different from the traditional art museum experience?

**A** The visitor cannot view the same work at a later time in a different location. Once the installation is taken down, it will never again be re-constructed in exactly the same way. Why? Because installations are site specific; that is, they are conceived and created for a specific exhibition space. Another exhibition space would require the artist to re-think the materials, configuration, and even the message of the installation.

In addition, unlike more traditional displays, installation art is meant to immerse the viewer in a transformed environment that evokes our emotions and senses. Installations can vary widely in the experience they present. For example you may encounter a multitude of visual stimuli into a fictional world, or the experience may be subtler in its change to a particular environment. You may be asked to participate, or just observe. Installations can include an array of materials from found objects to new media including video or sound. Often experiences of installation art are focused on the viewer’s interpretation of the experience, rather than solely on the artist’s intention or materials.

For example, in this particular truck installation the viewer is called upon to examine their understanding of human behavior through patterns and spatial relationships. Meridith Pingree combines appropriated technologies, like power-door lock activators and toy motion sensors, with materials like zippers, aluminum and plastic to include the viewer as a participant in the artwork and explore how technology can record, mirror and influence the viewer’s behavior. In her drawings, she manipulates mathematical systems like geometry to create structures of lines and shapes that are both organic and mechanical. These varied processes provide the viewer with multiple points of entry to develop an understanding of Meridith’s work.

**Q** Where do artists obtain their materials?

**A** Contemporary installation artists utilize a wide variety of materials depending on their concept. These can include everyday ordinary objects, personal belongings, recycled materials, technological gadgets, or fabricated objects. The artist may collect, create or purchase these materials. Keep in mind that an artist’s materials often communicate meaning, and sometimes the way in which they gather materials can be a meaningful part of the artwork, too.

**Q** Do artists know exactly what their installations are going to look like before they arrive at the exhibition site?

**A** They usually have a general idea, but often the pieces evolve as the artist begins to work within the actual exhibition space. Often, the nature of the space itself will prompt changes and revisions in the artist’s original conception. For instance, Meridith’s wall sculptures are made completely of hinged parts that compress or expand depending on the space in which they are hung, so the installation in the Art Truck will be slightly different than any other previous installation of the same works. Other considerations included safety, cost and meeting timelines.

**Q** Do installation artists assemble their work by themselves, or do they have assistance?

**A** Installations are sometimes so multifaceted and complex, they require a fabrication team to assist the artist.

**Q** Should an installation be perceived as one artwork or many?

**A** It depends on the installation. In the case of this Art Truck installation the inside and outside of the truck work in conjunction with one another to communicate different aspects of the artist’s exploration.

**Q** What happens to the installation art after the exhibition is over?

**A** Unlike traditional works of art, installations are disassembled when their time is done. Some of the materials are thrown away. Others are recycled. Yet other materials are re-used in future installations.

This section, in conjunction with your Art Truck experience, will help your students understand the nature of installation art and how it differs from traditional art presentations and exhibitions.
INTRODUCTION
About the Art and the Artist

MERIDITH PINGREE

Meridith Pingree is a Brooklyn, NY-based artist whose artworks investigate patterns of human behavior through reactive sculptures and geometric compositions. Born in Bountiful, she attended the University of Utah before traveling east to earn her MFA at Rhode Island School of Design and complete a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine.

Meridith is intrigued by the subtle systems that frame our daily experiences as we navigate through the built environment and how our relationships with technology influence that movement. Her artworks physically track patterns of behavior, such as the movement of visitors through the gallery space, to create chaotic feedback loops of action and reaction. She says, “My work exists as amplifications of this subtle energy, creating unconventional, complex portraits of people and spaces.” She views her sculptures as quasi-scientific devices not unlike aura cameras or mood rings.

Meridith’s art asks us to re-examine our awareness of our physical selves through the visual language of geometry and the scientific languages of observation and questioning. Her work promotes collaboration between homemade technology and creativity, complicates distinctions between the natural and mechanic, and suggests alternate systems with which to understand our relationships with the world around us.

INFLUENCES

Meridith’s work is influenced by many different sources, from painters and sculptors to innovators and fashion designers. She is most inspired by math and geometry, science, rhythm and pattern, music, industrial machinery, fashion, dreams and nature.

LINKS

Tim Hawkinson - pacegallery.com/artists/175/tim-hawkinson
Theo Jansen - strandbeest.com
Nina Katchadourian - ninakatchadourian.com
Arthur Ganson - arthurganson.com
Rosemarie Fiore - rosemariesfiore.com
Philip Beesley - philipbeesleyarchitect.com
Caroline Lathan-Stiefel - carolinelathanstiefel.net
Spencer Finch - spencerfinch.com
Natalie Jeremijenko - nataliejeremijenko.com
Bridget Riley - tate.org.uk/art/artists/bridget-riley-1845
Chris Doyle - chrisdoylestudio.com
Tom Sachs - tomsachs.org
Alexander McQueen - alexandermcqueen.com

DISCUSSION TOPIC

We are surrounded by material goods in our homes, at work and at school. We are encouraged to spend money on things in order to add value to ourselves as people, solidify our social standing and have fun. The objects around us guide our behaviors every day in ways we may or may not understand, from how we get from place to place, what we do when we enter a space unfamiliar to us and how we spend our free time, together or alone. Technological devices like cell phones, computers, iPods and much more have drastically changed our lives, including our basic interactions with the people and spaces around us. We can instantly contact friends or family and we have different expectations for others, both acquaintances and strangers. We can access more thorough information about our surroundings with interactive maps. Meridith’s artwork explores the interplay between our actions and our environment, asking viewers to self-reflect by highlighting the patterns and objects that underlie how we go about our everyday lives.

What forms of technology do you use most often? How is your behavior influenced by your technology? Do you act differently when you have your cell phone than when you don’t?

What other objects have the most influence on your everyday actions?
INTRODUCTION
About the Art and the Artist

THE ARTISTIC PROCESS
The following discussion will help your students understand that the artistic process – research, creative thinking, collaboration, choice of materials, and manipulation of these materials – can be as important and meaningful as the completed work.

Research
The work of many artists spans multiple disciplines, extending into areas such as math or technology. Meridith’s work reflects her investigation into subjects such as geometry, biology, architecture and psychology. Her artistic process typically includes starting with an idea and letting the process of making transform and refine that idea as she works with her materials. Her ideas may spin off from current artworks she is working on, another artist’s work or experiences from her everyday life. Contemporary life and our access to information offers up a never-ending source of ideas, processes and artistic identities that are open for sampling, recycling and exchange.

Media
Just as a poet carefully chooses their words to create meaning, an artist carefully chooses their materials (or media) to convey ideas and thoughts. For this exhibit, the artist has used a variety of resources and materials, including large quantities of the same type of material, from found materials like zippers to appropriated technologies like toy motion sensors.

What other materials do you see in the truck? Why do you think Meridith chose those materials? How do those materials fit into Meridith’s ideas about human behavior and use of technology?

What do you notice about the materials used on the outside of the truck? What type of imagery do you see on the outside of the truck? How does this imagery relate to the artist’s concept for the rest of her exhibition?

Mobile Gallery
The space in which we view a work of art can influence the way we see it. Normally, artwork is viewed in a museum setting. Here the context has been changed. Rather than traveling to a gallery to see artworks, the gallery has the ability to travel to you.

How is viewing art in a truck different from visiting a museum? Does it change the way you see and understand the art?

What are some advantages to having an art exhibition in a truck? What difficulties might there be with creating a gallery in a truck rather than a museum?
LESSON 1
EXPLORING PATTERN: Tessellations

INTENTIONS
Students will investigate pattern by creating their own tessellations and discovering shapes that tessellate and shapes that do not.

BACKDROP
In art, pattern is created by repeating an element of the artwork, such as the repetition of shapes, lines, colors or forms. A tessellation is a pattern of repeating shapes that fills up an area completely without any space in between. A checkerboard is a basic tessellation created using squares of the same size and shape; when placed next to one another in rows and columns, the squares cover the available space without gaps or overlaps. Tessellations can be created using polygons as well as more complex shapes. Meridith uses tessellations in her artwork, but she manipulates the patterns by stretching, squishing and moving them through space so that they become more organic and can no longer be categorized as true tessellations.

CONVERSATIONS
What is a pattern? What is a tessellation? Why are tessellations patterns?

Can you think of any tessellations you could find in your home or at school? What about the bricks in a wall, the squares of a sheet of graph paper, a soccer ball, a basketball net, or the skin of a pineapple?

What basic shapes did you see in the artwork you saw in the Art Truck (hexagons, triangles, etc.)? Did any of these shapes repeat to form tessellations or near-tessellations?

Can tessellations be 3-dimensional? How might you repeat the same 3D form in space so that there are no gaps (stacking the same type of Lego block, etc.)?

ACTIVITY
Find a real life example of tessellation from the classroom, nature, or home to use as a visual aid as you introduce and discuss the ideas of pattern and tessellation (see examples above).

Have each student pick out twelve or more of the same shape from the pattern blocks (squares, triangles, rhombuses, trapezoids, and hexagons) as well as a piece of colored paper or an index card. Students should place their first shape in the middle of their colored paper and see if they can cover the remainder of the paper by adding more shapes without overlapping or creating gaps. Can you see any color showing through? If so, try to find another way to fit the shapes together. This type of pattern is called a tessellation.

For added difficulty, have students pick out two shapes from the pattern blocks and combine them together using tape. Repeat the above activity to have students try to form a tessellation using the two shapes together. Is tessellation possible with all shape combinations? Which shape combinations form tessellations and which do not?

MATERIALS
Pattern Blocks (available for print out online at: mason.gmu.edu/~mmankus/Handson/manipulatives.htm)
Colored index cards or 9x12 colored paper cut into eighths
OPTIONAL:
Tape, glue, markers or colored pencils, scissors, paper

LINKS
MC Escher: mcescher.com
El Anatsui: jackshainman.com/artists/el-anatsui
Timothy Nolan: timothynolan.com

EXPANSION
Color Wheel: Students use a repeating pattern of two or three colors (primary, secondary, warm, cool, or complimentary) to color in their tessellation. What kind of color pattern emerges? How do your colors change the appearance of the tessellation?

Draw-Your-Own Tessellation: Students alter a four-sided polygon by drawing a line from one corner to an adjacent corner, cutting on the line, sliding the cut piece to the opposite side, taping together and repeating. Students trace their new shapes onto paper to create a unique tessellation. Does this method work using a triangle? Why or why not?
INTENTIONS
Students will explore pattern, space and form by making a three-dimensional sculpture using everyday objects.

BACKDROP
Meredith uses everyday objects, like zippers or safety pins, that already have a function outside of art (such as keeping our jacket closed or pinning a badge to our shirt). She takes these non-art objects and modifies and arranges them in such a way that they become art. By making repeating patterns with these ordinary objects, she creates new visual experiences out of things we look at every day. When an artist uses commonplace items in their artwork they are called found objects.

CONVERSATIONS
What is pattern? How is a three-dimensional pattern different from a two-dimensional pattern?

How could you arrange objects in this room to make a three dimensional pattern? Could we move the desks into a pattern? Or our shoes? What about our bodies? How does arranging the objects in this room differently affect the space in the room?

What is a found object? What makes an object art or not art? How could we take an everyday object like a paperclip and turn it into art?

ACTIVITY
Provide each student with 10-20 multiples of an everyday object. Explain that they will be using their objects to explore how to make different types of patterns in three-dimensional space.

Have your students arrange their objects on their desk or the floor to make a flat pattern. Once everyone in finished, have students stand up and look at the different patterns that were created. Students should share observations about the patterns and how they affect the space around them. Are all the patterns the same? What are similarities and differences between different students’ patterns? Are there any arrangements that don’t quite meet the requirements of being a pattern? What would have to be changed to make it a true pattern? How do different patterns fill up the space on the desk or floor? What ideas for new patterns do you have now that you’ve seen other students’ ideas?

Now, challenge your students to create a sculpture by arranging their objects to form a three-dimensional pattern. If your pattern stretched into the air instead of laying flat, what might it look like? Students can use tape or glue to form their sculptures, or use string or wire to tie the objects together. They can hang them with string or create a base out of clay to stick their objects into. How are the three-dimensional patterns of the sculptures different than the flat patterns you made?

MATERIALS
Multiples of any commonly found object: paper clips, leaves, bottle caps, straws, rubber bands

Tape and glue

OPTIONAL:
String, wire, clay

LINKS
Tara Donovan: pacegallery.com/artists/111/tara-donovan

Moshe Safdie: www.msafdie.com

Astrid Bowlby: www.stevenzevitasgallery.com/astrid-bowlby

Piper Shepard: pipershepard.com
INTENTIONS
Students will develop their understanding of geography by mapping and analyzing the distribution of different types of familiar places within their community.

BACKDROP
In art, pattern is created by repeating an element of the artwork, such as the repetition of shapes, lines, colors or forms. Patterns can structure the composition of an artwork and add to a sense of rhythm. However, patterns can also be found in real life, even in the ways we build our roads and plant our gardens. Meridith’s interactive sculptures and geometric drawings use visual patterns as a way to explore different types of patterns all around us, including the repetitive ways in which we interact with our environment. Consider the visual patterns you might find by using a map to explore a place you know from a bird’s-eye view.

CONVERSATIONS
What is a pattern? Can a pattern exist in 3-dimensional space?

What kinds of spatial patterns do you notice in how your environment is organized around you (the classroom, your neighborhood, etc.)?

How do we organize the houses, stores, parks, schools and other human-built features in our communities?

How do patterns in the natural environment affect the way we structure our towns and cities? How does the way we structure our town and cities affect how we behave?

ACTIVITY
Define the scope of the map with which your students will be working prior to the activity. Lead your students in a discussion about land use in your community. What are the different types of businesses and residences you might find? Use the terms commercial, industrial, and residential. Have students brainstorm examples of each of these and sort their ideas into the three categories.

Divide students into groups of two or three. Give each group a small map, markers and sticky notes, and assign each group a type of business. Have each group use an Internet search or phone book to look up as many of their type of business as they can within the local area. Students should record the locations on their individual map. When they have completed their small group map, have each group choose a symbol to represent their type of business (like a clothes hanger for retail, apple for grocery stores, or a car for auto mechanics) and place sticky notes bearing their symbol on the large class map to mark the proper locations. As they work, mark any schools, parks and residential areas on the map with appropriate colors to help them identify additional relationships.

Groups should present their findings to the class. Ask students: What patterns did you notice? Are related businesses next to each other? Are there different types of businesses that are always or never found together? What is the distance between residential areas and certain businesses? What other connections do you see?
LESSON 4
CREATIVE WRITING: Patterns of Behavior

INTENTIONS
Students will investigate patterns of behavior by making a story-map of their own daily behaviors and then writing a short story about how fictional characters might act in the same place.

BACKDROP
In art, pattern is created by repeating an element of the artwork, such as the repetition of shapes, lines, colors or forms. Patterns can structure the composition of an artwork and add to a sense of rhythm. However, patterns can also be found in real life in our everyday actions, from the scanning of groceries at the checkout lane to the swinging back and forth of a swing set on a playground. Meridith’s interactive sculptures and geometric drawings use visual patterns as a way to explore underlying patterns of human behavior.

CONVERSATIONS
What is a pattern? What types of patterns are there besides visual patterns?

What patterns of behavior do you have? Do you always wake up at the same time? Do you never step on cracks on the walk to school? Do you eat the same food or sit by the same friends at lunch? Do you tease your siblings about the same things?

Is there any special behavior that you do with someone else? Like a secret handshake with a best friend? Of a holiday tradition you do with your family?

Is there anything that you do that you think no one else does? How do different people’s behavior patterns differ from one another?

ACTIVITY
Students will make a story-map of their own daily behaviors, starting in the morning and going until the end of the day. Begin by folding your paper in half and creasing it three times, then unfolding it so that there are eight sections total. In the top right section draw and write about a ritual you have when you first wake up in the morning. Do you stretch, jump out of bed, or maybe do a dance? Continue to fill the remaining seven sections with something you do each day for: breakfast, school, lunch, recess, after school, dinner and bedtime.

Students will write a short story that examines how different characters might exhibit diverse patterns of behavior in the same space. Have students choose a specific place that they are familiar with (such as a grocery store, amusement park or favorite restaurant) as well as three characters (such as an alien, superhero, statue or ballerina). They should make their characters as different from each other as they can, and think about how each of them might act differently in the setting of the story. For example, a mad scientist, a tiger and a baby are at a restaurant. Maybe the tiger doesn’t order anything and eats the waiter, the baby cries until it gets birthday cake, and the mad scientist sprays a potion on everyone and turns them into ants. How would they interact with the others around them? Would they do anything unexpected? Write a short story that explains your three characters and what happens using a beginning, middle and end.
HOW TO SCHEDULE A VISIT

The Utah Museum of Contemporary Art makes the Art Truck available free-of-charge for a wide variety of educational and charitable purposes. To schedule an Art Truck visit, please contact elly.baldwin@utahmoca.org.

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM LINKS

Visual Arts – Grades 3-6
Core Standard 1, Objective 2
• Predict the processes and techniques needed to make a work of art.
Core Standard 2, Objective 1
• Analyze and reflect on works of art by their elements (line, shape, color, form, texture, space, and value) and principles (e.g., balance, emphasis, and pattern).
Core Standard 3, Objectives 1 and 2
• Explore possible content and purposes in significant works of art.
• Discuss, evaluate, and choose symbols, ideas, subject matter, meanings, and purposes for artworks.
Core Standard 4, Objective 3
• Recognize the connection of visual art to all learning.

Secondary Fine Arts – Visual Arts; Art History and Criticism
Core Standard 1 Visual Arts – Making, Objectives 1 and 2
• Understand techniques and processes in a variety of media.
• Explore how works of art are organized using art elements and principles.
Core Standard 2 Visual Arts – Perceiving, Objectives 1 and 2
• Perceive content in works of art.
• Evaluate works of art.
Core Standard 3 Visual Arts – Expressing, Objective 1
• Evaluate works of art.
Core Standard 3 Visual Arts – Expressing, Objective 2
• Perceive content in works of art.
Core Standard 4 Visual Arts – Contextualizing, Objectives 1, 2 and 3
• Align works of art according to history, geography, and personal experience.
• Synthesize visual art with other educational subjects.
• Evaluate the impact of visual art on life outside school.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FAMILY FUN

After visiting the Art Truck, students and their families can make a record of art in unexpected places through photography, drawing, and writing.

Ask them to share their discoveries with us by sending ideas, comments, and images to: elly.baldwin@utahmoca.org