

# *Working Hard to be Useless 6-12*

Activities for Before, During and After a Field Trip to UMOCA

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Grades: 6-12

Utah Core Standards: See Appendix page 5

Objective: Students will recognize the existence of defensive architecture. Students will think critically about how defensive architecture influences different communities within an urban ecosystem. Students will also design and create an innovation to combat defensive architecture in order to bring communities together within an urban space.

Materials:

(Optional) Field Trip Engagement Activity Sheet - see Appendix page 7

Post-Field Trip Math Challenge Activity Sheet - see Appendix page 8

Glue

Scissors

Paper

Crayons

Defensive Architecture in the Real World Google Slideshow:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vSxxzvRRo4qyn04sAVG7PyXQApYo8y8RVfJ4\\_VI0s62Fm1NXxQoB2u29ZXZeELmPjv\\_auNn75Y556P1/pub?start=true&loop=true&delayms=3000](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/e/2PACX-1vSxxzvRRo4qyn04sAVG7PyXQApYo8y8RVfJ4_VI0s62Fm1NXxQoB2u29ZXZeELmPjv_auNn75Y556P1/pub?start=true&loop=true&delayms=3000)

Key Vocabulary:

- Defensive Architecture / Hostile Architecture:  
Subtle design choices that alienate some communities while making space for privileged others. There are both intentional and unintentional consequences of defensive architecture for the homeless community, skateboarders, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- Rough Sleepers:  
Rough sleepers are people sleeping or bedding down in the open air. This includes the streets, doorways, parks, bus shelters, buildings and any place not designed for habitation.
- Ecosystems:  
A community of living (biotic) organisms interacting with their nonliving (abiotic) environment.

- **Urban Ecosystems:**  
Urban ecosystems consist of three subsystems: green (all living matter in natural soil), grey (built-up areas) and blue (coastal zones, rivers, standing water, and fountains). All three are of equal importance.
- **Psychogeography:**  
Psychogeography describes the effect of a geographical location on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.

[Teacher Background:](#) See Appendix page 6

### [Pre-Field Trip Activity: \(20-30 minutes\)](#)

Discuss with your class what makes a city. Ask questions such as:

- How is a city different from a small town or suburb?
- How many people live in our city (or the nearest large city)?

Write the definition for an ecosystem on the board:

- Ecosystems: a community of living (biotic) organisms interacting with its nonliving (abiotic) environment.

**Engagement Tip:** As you discuss the following components of an ecosystem, have students brainstorm in pairs or teams. After pairs/teams share with each other, share 1 or 2 as a whole class.

Write on the board:

- Abiotic elements in the urban ecosystem -
  - Ask: What evidence of water is there in a city? (ponds, fountains, sewers, canals, gutters, etc.)
  - Ask: What man-made structures are there in a city? (buildings, sidewalk, bridges, pavement, parking garages, statues, etc.)

Write on the board:

- Biotic organisms in the urban ecosystem -
  - Ask: what evidence of plants are there in a city? (grass, parks, trees, parking strips, potted plants, weeds, etc.)
  - Ask: What about animals, bacteria or fungus? (people, stray animals, squirrels, birds, spiders, rats, mice, insects, molds, other microorganisms, etc.)
  - Ask: What is a group of people called? (A community)
    - What different communities are in our cities? (cultural, ethnic, social classes, business community, labor community, homeless community, skateboarders, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.)

- Where do the communities interact with each other?
- How do these communities interact with each other?
- How do the abiotic (non-living) elements in an urban ecosystem affect communities?

### Optional Multi-Media Connection:

Watch the following video of homeless people sharing their experiences.

\*A Note to Teachers: preview these videos and decide which one(s) are most appropriate for the demographic of your students\*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gB-BQxDf-b8\>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZi6KwfBGS8>

After students have watched the video, have them discuss 1 thing they learned from the video and 1 emotion they felt while watching the video.

### Field Trip: (45-75 minutes at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art)

Optional Field Trip Engagement Activity:

See Appendix page 7 for worksheet

See Appendix page 10 for scheduling a field trip at UMOCA

If you feel your students need a tool to connect with the exhibit, you can utilize the field-trip engagement activity. Within that activity, students will find 3 favorite art pieces in the exhibit and describe each in 2 adjectives. Students will also include 1 word or phrase that describes how each piece made them feel. Students must also cite the artist's name and title of each piece.

### Post-Field Trip: (30-40 minutes)

See Appendix page 8 for worksheet

Distribute the Post-Field Trip Engagement Activity. Have pairs/teams choose 1 example of defensive architecture from the Google Slideshow. As you move through the slideshow, have students discuss how the examples affect communities. Instruct pairs/teams draw a prototype of an innovation to combat the defensive architecture. Once their prototype is drawn, have students work together to use tape and paper to construct a 3D version of their innovation.

## Cross Curricular/Extension Activities:

- **Reading:** This article can be read as a class, in pairs or individually to deepen student understanding of the effects of defensive architecture.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jan/24/anti-homeless-architecture-seattle-bike-racks-block-rough-sleepers>
- **Writing:** Have students read the following article and write an argumentative essay on whether or not defensive architecture is beneficial. You could choose to further extend this activity by having students debate this topic.  
<https://www.cnn.com/style/article/new-dean-harvey-james-furzer-hostile-architecture-debate/index.html>
- **Engineering:** Have students bring recycled materials (boxes, paper towel rolls, containers, etc.) from home to engineer a larger 3D version of their innovation from the post-field trip activity.

## Appendix 6-12

### Utah Core Standards:

#### **Social Studies 6th Grade Standard IV Objective 2:**

Explore current global issues facing the modern world and identify potential solutions.

- a. Investigate pressing issues facing the world today.
- b. Identify potential solutions to pressing issues.

#### **Health 6th Grade Standard 7 Objective 1:**

Participate in service-learning that benefits the environment.

- a. *Identify* environmental protection *needs*.
- b. Examine situations where a person or group assists with the protection of the environment.
- c. *Plan, implement, and report* on environmental service.

#### **Health 7-8th Grade Standard 1 Objective 2:**

Identify strategies that enhance mental and emotional health.

- b. Determine how societal norms, cultural differences, personal beliefs, and media impact choices, behavior, and relationships

#### **Social Studies - Utah Studies 7-12th Grades:**

UT Standard 5.2: Students will use geographic tools and resources to investigate a current issue, challenge, or problem facing Utah or their community, and propose a viable solution. (Geography)

#### **Social Studies - Utah Studies 7-12th Grades:**

UT Standard 5.4: Students will use recent population growth and other demographic trends to make predictions about Utah's growth, and create and defend a public policy in response to those trends. (Economics)

## Teacher Background:

- Defensive Architecture is urban design most typically associated with aggression against the homeless in the form of "anti-homeless spikes" — studs embedded in flat surfaces to make sleeping rough uncomfortable and impractical.
- Defensive Architecture often targets the city's most vulnerable, both intentionally through anti-loitering measures and unintentionally by making the cityscape hostile to all parts of the public, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and children.
- Other forms of behavior which are commonly prevented by defensive architecture include skateboarding, loitering, and urination which are deterred with methods including sloped window sills to stop people from sitting, benches with armrests positioned to stop people from lying on them, and water sprinklers that "intermittently come on but aren't really watering anything."
- Although there are positive aspects of the current push for urban development and densification of city centers, the questions arise of who benefits from that development and who does it negatively affect. Public spaces become less public with the inclusion of well-designed but also well hidden "defensive architecture," dictating who can and cannot use the space. Walkability, which is defined by the final destination and not by the act of leisurely wandering the city, is touted as the ultimate goal, but walkability to where and why? To work, to shopping centers, or to public parks? Does use become prescribed in these new spaces? If so, how do we react to these restrictions?
- UMOCA's exhibition, *Working Hard to be Useless*, examines these issues through the lens of Situationist International ideas and aesthetics. The Situationists were a group of artists and theorists that operated in Europe during the 1960's and 1970's. Their work critiqued what they called "advanced capitalism" and the related "spectacle of commodity" in urban centers. They developed strategies for resisting the spectacle including Anti-Art, the Dérive, Detournement, and Psychogeography. Each action allowed the artists to subvert the status quo they felt was damaging everyday life.
- The artists in *Working Hard to be Useless* carry on the practices of the Situationists, incorporating their strategies as a way to evaluate current urban design and growth.

# *Working Hard to be Useless*

Field Trip Engagement Activity at UMOCA

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please find 3 favorite art pieces in the exhibit and describe each in 2 adjectives. Include 1 word or phrase that describes how each piece made you feel. You must also cite the artist's name and title of each piece.

#1 Title of art piece:

\_\_\_\_\_

Artist's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Two adjectives to describe the art piece:

\_\_\_\_\_

One word or phrase that describe how this piece made you feel:

\_\_\_\_\_

#2 Title of art piece:

\_\_\_\_\_

Artist's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Two adjectives to describe the art piece:

\_\_\_\_\_

One word or phrase that describe how this piece made you feel:

\_\_\_\_\_

#3 Title of art piece:

\_\_\_\_\_

Artist's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Two adjectives to describe the art piece:

\_\_\_\_\_

One word or phrase that describe how this piece made you feel:

\_\_\_\_\_

# *Working Hard to be Useless 6-12*

Post-Field Trip Engagement Activity after UMOCA

Engineering Challenge

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Choose 1 example of defensive architecture from the Google Slideshow. In the box below draw a prototype of your innovation to combat the defensive architecture. Once your prototype is drawn, use tape and paper to construct a 3D version of your innovation.

**Describe your example of defensive architecture:**

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**Describe how your innovation will help the urban communities:**

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**My Team's Prototype:**





## Selected Artworks from *Working Hard to be Useless*:

Nils Norman, *The Urbanomics Archive Trailer*, 2008  
<http://www.dismalgarden.com>

This digital video points out the pervasiveness of defensive architecture design and our lack of awareness of how often it is used to control how we interact with places that are designated for public use.



Sara Ross, *Archisuits*, 2005-2006  
<http://www.insecuritiespaces.net>

Ross' *Archisuits* were created as a response to defensive architectural structures found in urban centers. Each suit allows the wearer to fit into or onto structures designed to deny them.



Nathaniel Russell, *Fake Fliers*, Ongoing  
<http://nathanielrussell.com>

Russell's photocopied fliers use collaged found images and handwritten messages to create humorous calls-to-action for those who feel disenfranchised from everyday life.



## Field Trips at UMOCA:

*The Working Hard to be Useless* exhibit is on display at UMOCA until December 29, 2018

- Free guided tours of the galleries are available for all ages. Please schedule tours two weeks in advance. Tours are limited to a maximum of 60 students, and we require an adult chaperone to student ratio of 1:10.
- To schedule a school field trip to UMOCA, download the field trip request form at: [www.utahmoca.org/school-tours-2](http://www.utahmoca.org/school-tours-2)
- For questions about school field trips and to submit your tour request form, contact Elly Baldwin at: 801-328-4201 x124 or [elly.baldwin@utahmoca.org](mailto:elly.baldwin@utahmoca.org)

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