

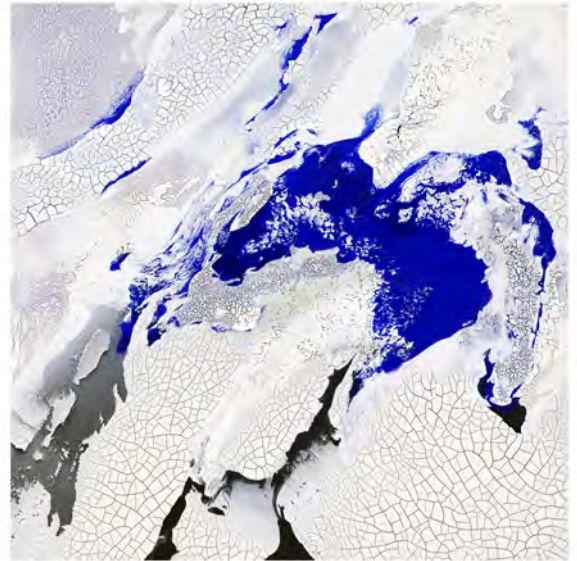
RISING TIDES

CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE ECOLOGY OF WATER

Elegy Series by Diane Burko

Looking Questions

- What do you see in this series of works by Diane Burko?
- How many paintings are in this series? How are they similar and different?
- Where do you see contrast being utilized in this series? Explain.
- Describe the colors Burko chose to use in these paintings. How do they make you feel?
- An elegy is defined as a sad poem or song that typically mourns the loss of a loved one – what or whom do you think this elegy series is for? Explain.
- Do you think her series effectively gets her point across? Why or why not?



Diane Burko, *Elegy for Mount Kenya, Kenya*, 2016, Archival Inkjet Print, 30 x 30 inches, Courtesy of the Artist.

About the Artwork

Diane Burko is an award-winning painter, sculptor, and environmental activist based in Philadelphia. She has had more than thirty solo exhibitions in galleries and museums across the United States, and she is frequently invited to speak about how the arts can help to communicate scientific findings to the public in an engaging way. Her artwork is in many private and prestigious public collections. As an artist who values accuracy, Burko has travelled the world in order to witness the effects of climate change firsthand. The polar regions, as seen in *The Elegy Series*, are an enduring subject for Burko. Related works have paired historic photographs with present day visuals in order to highlight dramatic changes in the landscape. Likewise, several larger paintings deftly meld satellite imagery with gestural brushstrokes, evoking a sense of beauty, awe, and also urgency.

The Elegy Series is comprised of ten prints, each one an enlargement of details from some of Burko's larger paintings. Each one is named after a glacier or area in the world whose existence is being dramatically threatened by climate change. The restrained use of color and contrasting form reflect a mournfulness for these vulnerable regions and the biodiversity they sustain. She states, "I chose to use stark and somber contrasting forms of white and black or dark blue to invoke what an elegy is: a poem or lament for the dead. Each painting in this series is a fabrication that I created – and while they are not literal images of glaciers, their abstract, crackling forms reference aerial views of glacial landscapes." Burko hopes to move viewers beyond sadness, however, and encourages them also to act.



Pre-Visit Activities

What Are Glaciers Anyway?

Glaciers are made from fallen snow that, over time, transform into a huge dense mass of ice. Glaciers can move and melt slowly over hundreds of years, but other times these changes occur quite dramatically. For instance, in 2008, a piece of the Ilulissat Glacier in Greenland about the same size as lower Manhattan broke off and floated a mile away in just over an hour. Find out more things you didn't know about glaciers at: <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/10-things-glaciers/>. Discuss your findings with a classmate.

Polar Bear Zines

Polar bears are one of the many species that are being affected by the melting of polar sea ice. Read *Sea Bear: A Journey for Survival* and *The Lonely Polar Bear*. Make an illustrated zine (or mini book) that shares important facts about polar bears, including their habitat, food sources, and how they are experiencing climate change. Investigate another species that live in the polar region, such as the narwhal, ringed seal, walrus, bowhead whale, and the snow leopard. Make an Arctic Creatures zine library.

Test Your Knowledge

How much do you know about climate change? Visit the American Museum of Natural History's site at www.amnh.org/explore/ology/climate-change/what-is-climate-change to learn more about the issues surrounding climate change, and test your knowledge in a fact or fiction game.

Diane Burko: Sneak Peak

Learn more about Diane Burko's work by visiting her website at www.dianeburko.com and the Michener's Bucks County Artists Database at <https://bucksco.michenerartmuseum.org/artists/diane-burko>.

Post-Visit Activities

Now and Then

Look through local history books and websites to find an older photo (aim for at least 30+ years ago) of a familiar area near where you live. Go to the location and take a new photo from the same spot, as best you can. Use printed copies of the old and new photos as the background layer for mixed media paintings. You can paint over some or most of the image, depending on your preferences. Display the finished works side by side. Why did you choose this location? What changed about this area between "then" and "now"? Would you describe these changes as positive or negative?

Post-Visit Activities (continued)

Write an Elegy

Elegies are traditionally poems that mourn the loss of a loved one; but, they can sometimes be about different types of feelings of sadness and a general sense of grief. They can also praise or celebrate life, as opposed to solely focusing on death. Write an elegy for something that is affected by climate change. It might be an endangered species, inhabitable land, a sense of safety, or anything else that comes to mind.

ART Inspiring Change

Art like Burko's can help connect people to what scientists are learning. It can also help to inspire changes in public policy and individual behaviors. Look online to find artwork or posters about climate change and choose your favorite work. Answer these two questions: 1.) Why did you choose this? 2.) What elements of the artwork make you think of climate change? (Older students may want to check out some examples of environmental street art at www.boredpanda.com/environmental-street-art-graffiti-climate-change/.)

Gallery Activities

Guess Which...

Get ready to be observant and descriptive. Choose one of the paintings in this series but do not tell your partner which one you have chosen. Look very closely at it and then turn your back to the art. Describe the work in as much detail as you can while your partner looks at the *Elegy* series. Were you able to point them to the right painting?

Snowy Sayings

People who live in the polar regions of the world have a lot of experience with cold weather. In fact, the Inuit language has more than fifty words just to describe snow and snow formations. How many words can you think of that describe snow or snowy weather? Challenge yourself to list at least twenty.

Arctic Charades

There are thousands of plant and animal species that make up the arctic ecosystem. Choose one of the species below, and act it out without using any words or sounds. Whoever guesses correctly gets to go next. (If you are playing with a group of friends, the outdoor sculpture garden just next to the Museum cafe is a great place to gather without disturbing other visitors.)

Narwhal

Polar Bear

Seal

Walrus

Salmon

Arctic Fox

Snowshoe Hare

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Gallery Activity Sheet: CO₂ Golf

One of the biggest contributors to climate change and global warming is the greenhouse gas *carbon dioxide*. Some things produce carbon dioxide like factories, emissions from vehicles, heating homes, and the exhalation of animals. Other things actually store, or “sink” carbon. The biggest natural carbon sinks are plants, the ocean and soil.

Now you are ready to play a round of CO₂ Golf.

1. Stand in the middle of one of the Museum galleries. Choose any painting that catches your eye.
2. Record the title of the painting in the score card below.
3. Next, give the painting one point for every carbon source you see, and negative one for every carbon sink.
4. Write in your painting’s final score. It will be a net source (positive numbers) or a net sink (negative number).

In the mural, *A Wooded Watershed*, the respiration of the deer is one source. Trees and soil are sinks.

Walk into a another gallery and repeat the steps above. When you have visited four galleries or “played four holes”, tally up your total points. The person with the lowest score wins the game!

| CO ₂ Golf | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|
| | | | Player Name _____ |
| Painting Title | Sources (+) | Sinks (-) | Net Score |
| Example: <i>A Wooded Watershed</i> | + 1 | - 2 | - 1 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Player Total | | | |

Golf Cart Conversation Starter: Although we aren’t using them as part of this golf game, any surfaces that help reflect, or bounce, heat from the sun away from earth helps to keep the planet’s temperature healthy. Did any of your paintings include a surface like this?

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Lesson Plan: *Profiles in Courage*

Grade Level: 5-8

Subjects: Language Arts, Art, History, Technology

Overview: Students will research a climate activist that inspires them. They will present a short slideshow with key details about their subject and create a 2D magazine cover that features them. Students will be challenged to take their own form of action if they are motivated to do so.

Objectives:

- TSW** research a climate activist in history or present
- TSW** give a presentation on their climate activist
- TSW** create a summary of qualities shared by the activists
- TSW** analyze a magazine cover
- TSW** create a magazine cover featuring their climate hero

Materials:

- Access to the Internet
- List of Climate Activists (handout)
- Digital art application (*SumoPaint* or *Publisher* works well for less experienced students; *Procreate*, *AutoDesk Sketchbook* or similar program for more advanced students)

Differentiation:

Students can work individually or in pairs. They may create a physical magazine cover using available art supplies instead of a digital product. Students can shoot a two minute trailer for a documentary about their climate hero or record a podcast-style interview (Vocaroo is an easy audio recording website). Students can be challenged to write an article that would be found in their magazine.

PA Standards: Arts & Humanities 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4; Civics & Government 5.1, 5.2; Geography 7.4; History 8.2, 8.3, 8.4;

ELA Core: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 3.5, 8.5, 8.6

Procedure:

1. Introduce students to Burko's work. She is a self-proclaimed "artist-activist" who hopes to raise awareness and inspire change with her work. Discuss how this might happen. What kinds of qualities might a person need in order to make change in the world. Write this list on the board.
2. Invite students to choose a climate hero to research. They can pick from the suggested list or may discover someone they would like to learn more about. This person might be from history or currently active. They might even be someone the students' know personally.
3. Prepare a presentation that includes key information about this individual. Make sure they are answer the five W's. Who is this person? Where are they? When did engage as a climate activist? What is their area of focus? Why and how are they/did they inspire change?
4. Have students present their findings. Ask students to be making a list of commonalities they are hearing and seeing that link these different people. Make a class summary of these qualities.
5. Show the image of Greta Thunberg on the cover of TIME magazine as the "Person of the Year" for 2019. Ask students how the image and layout of this cover reflect the qualities they listed. Magazines put much time and thought into what their covers will look like – it is a key part of soliciting sales. What else do they notice about this cover that speaks to that?
6. Show students some other magazine covers – note the different fonts, image placement, and colors used. Who are the audiences for these publications? How do we know?
7. Students will be creating magazine covers that recognize their climate hero. The magazine can be real or imagined. Students must consider the magazine's target audience, and make appropriate design choices to appeal to them. Ask students to consider what ideas they want to depict on their cover image.
8. When completed, students can print out their covers, and arrange in a classroom news stand for group sharing. Which covers seem to stand out to you? What is successful about yours? What was challenging?
9. Brainstorm ways in which students might take action themselves (e.g., letter writing, supporting green policies in their school and communities, organize attendance at a student climate protest nearby). Is this part of being a good citizen? Discuss the responsibility of government organizations to steward the environment responsibly. Invite them to ask for your support in these pursuits now or in the future.

Vocabulary:

ART: design, font

LANGUAGE ARTS: media, audience, depict, format

SCIENCE: climate change

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Participation in class discussions
- Presentation and knowledge of climate hero
- Magazine cover rubric

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Climate Activists

Rachel Carson

Alexandria Villaseñor

Patrick O. Brown

Greta Thunberg

Jacque Cousteau

Al Gore

Vic Barrett

Diane Burko

Caroline Dama

Bren Smith

Chico Mendes

Isatou Ceesay

Nakabuye Hilda F.

John Muir

Gifford Pinchot

Dr. Shuchi Talati

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