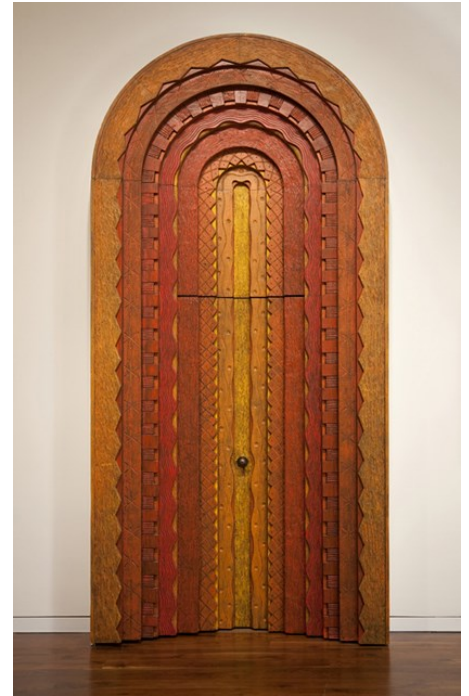


## Phillip Lloyd Powell: *Door and Surround* Interdisciplinary Connections

### Activities: Visual Arts

- Design your own doorway using an assortment of collage materials. For an additional challenge, construct your doorway in three dimensions, so that it stands upright.
- Take a field trip around your neighborhood, a local town, or a city. Bring a camera or a sketchbook. Record doorways you see that you feel have unique qualities. Share your discoveries with your class in a scrapbook.
- In 2005, Phillip Lloyd Powell created a tea cart made of a variety of colored woods. He adorned the front of the cart with real deer antlers, and created the handles and fenders to suggest animal legs and hooves. These natural elements contrast with the black and orange mechanical bicycle wheels. This piece of furniture reflects his interest in creating common objects out of an unpredictable collection of materials. If you were going to design a piece of furniture, what materials would you combine to make it unusual? Represent your idea in a drawing, a painting, or a magazine collage, where you find the actual objects and arrange them to form your piece of furniture. Alternately, create a ceramic model of an unusual piece of furniture.
- Found objects were important to Powell, and he frequently incorporated them into his work. Design a model of an original piece of furniture using natural and/or man made objects you collect. Look at the finished result. Do you feel this design would be functional or comfortable if it were life size?
- Use layered cardboard, assorted paper, oak tag, foamcore, chip board, mat board, and illustration board to create a relief sculpture door using a repeated geometric shape as the core element of the design.
- Create a design incorporating a variety of arch shapes repeated in a pattern. Add color by painting the design with either warm or cool colors. How do the warm and cool colors influence the mood or impact of the design?
- Phillip Lloyd Powell and Paul Evans often collaborated on their work. Powell commented on his partnership with Evans, writing, “Paul helped me refine my engineering-based designs, as his background was in the arts—and in return I turned his art into furniture.” In response to this collaboration, choose a partner and collaborate on a two or three-dimensional work of art. Reflect on your experience in writing. Display your written response alongside your work of art.  
(over...)



Phillip Lloyd Powell (1919-2008), *Door and Surround*, 1967, Stacked carved softwoods, polychromed, James A. Michener Art Museum, Museum Purchase with Funds provided by Sharon B. and Sydney F. Martin.

## Activities: Language Arts / English

### “Every wall is a door.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), American Poet, Lecturer and Essayist

- Read the following stories and learn how doorways are magical to a variety of authors:  
*The Sign on Rosie’s Door*, Maurice Sendak (1960)  
*The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett (1994)  
Madeleine L'Engle's Time Quintet: *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), *A Wind in the Door* (1973), *A Swiftly Titling Planet* (1978), *Many Waters* (1986), and *An Acceptable Time* (1989)
- Describe a time or event in your life where a doorway played a major part.
- The doorway plays an important role in both C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* and Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*. Read one of these classic works, and write an essay that describes the importance of the door to the story. You may also want to write your own story, where a special doorway begins an adventure for your characters.
- Descriptive writing helps readers share an experience through all of their senses. Whether you are describing a person, a place, or a thing, descriptive writing reveals a subject through the presentation of carefully selected details, and it is the details that help the reader visualize what you are writing about. Write a descriptive paragraph about a real or imaginary door. Incorporate all of the senses in your paragraph.
- Finish the story: “The heavy wooden door was rough with splinters, and cracked from overuse. I knew what lay beyond it was full of mystery and maybe even danger, but I just had to push it open...”
- Powell’s *Door and Surround* incorporates patterns, both in the repeated archways of its construction, and in the decorative carving on its surface. Pattern also appears in the written word. Create a poem or piece of prose that uses pattern to express an idea, emotion, or feeling.
- In the poem *The Door* by Charles Tomlinson, he writes, “For doors are both frame and monument to our spent time...” Read the poem in its entirety (found at [www.poetryarchive.org](http://www.poetryarchive.org)) and write a poetic response to his work.
- *The Door* is a book of poetry written by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. The works in this anthology address themes of advancing age, personal loss, environmental issues, torture and war, and the role of the poet in modern life. Read one poem from each section of the book. Choose the poem that has the most meaning to you, and write a reflective essay about the work.

## Activities: Social Studies

“Travel influences my work the most – for the awareness of what’s been done.”

- Phillip Lloyd Powell (1919-2008)

- In 1966, Powell began to travel extensively to Spain, Portugal, England, Sicily, and Morocco, where he was inspired by the carvings and decorative elements of these cultures. He once said, “A door in Morocco might suggest the front of a cabinet, a museum frame might show gold inlay technique, and a ceramic might have a shape I like.” Research Powell’s work on the Internet ([www.michenerartmuseum.org](http://www.michenerartmuseum.org) and [jzerrer.com/phillip-lloyd-powell](http://jzerrer.com/phillip-lloyd-powell)). For comparison, research the furnishings and architectural elements of one of the countries that inspired him. What specific examples can you find that make connections between his work and the works from one of these cultures?
- Historians often use photographs as the basis for research about an artist. Looking at captured moments with family and friends can add insight into an artists’ personality and character. Look carefully at the images from Phillip Powell’s life at [jzerrer.com/phillip-lloyd-powell](http://jzerrer.com/phillip-lloyd-powell). What can you learn about Powell as a person by looking at these images?
- Egyptians put “false doors,” or doors that did not open, on many of their tombs in order for the family to have a place to lay offerings. Research these false doors, and present your findings in written form, or in a photographic essay.
- During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, doorways became essential architectural elements of religious buildings in Europe. Research religious architecture during this time period. Why were doorways so important? What features did they embrace that made them so popular? Do significant doorways appear in religions other than Christianity? Has modern architecture developed a similar art form with a similar purpose?
- Read the Cameroon folktale “The Sacred Door” from the book, *The Sacred Door and Other Stories* by Makuchi. How does the role of the door in this story differ from the role of the doorway you might read about in Western culture?
- Powell became very involved with the Nataraj Grukul School in West Bengal, India. He was moved by the poor Tibetan children who had been forced to flee from Tibet into India. Find the location of the school on Google Earth (<https://www.google.com/earth/>) by copying and pasting the text, **Darjeeling Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, West Bengal 734301, India**, in the search bar. Carefully study the area around the school in the satellite photograph. Use the weather, video, and especially the photo options from the menu bar. The photos will teach you about the art forms, the plant life, and the lifestyle of people near the school. What else can you learn by looking at the surrounding buildings and terrain? Continue to open the lens of the map and study the geography of the region. You will find that you will learn a great deal about this area of India while exploring it on Google Earth!

## Activities: Art History

- Look at the following doorways from history. What influences do you see in these doorways that may have influenced Powell when he created his doorway?
  - Gate of Ishtar, ca. 600 BCE ([www.ishtaragate.com](http://www.ishtaragate.com))
  - Imperial Door of the Hagia Sophia, 537 CE ([www.hagiasophia.com](http://www.hagiasophia.com))
  - Gates of Paradise* by Lorenzo Ghiberti, 1452 (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com>)
  - Doorway from Moutiers-Saint-Jean, ca.1250 ([www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org))
  - The Columbus Doors* by Randolph Roger, 1863 ([www.aoc.gov](http://www.aoc.gov))
- Compare the decorative elements on Powell's *Door and Surround* with decorative elements found on doorways throughout history. How do Powell's carved stars, waves, and dots relate with images used on doorways in other cultures?
- Powell was good friends with artists Paul Evans, George Nakashima, and James Martin. Compare and contrast images of artwork created by all four men on the Museum's Bucks County Artists' Database (<https://bucksco.michenerartmuseum.org>). How do the artists' techniques differ? How is each artists' view reflected in their individual styles? Present your findings in a two or three-dimensional visual display.
- Research the depictions of a door in three different artworks: Johannes Vermeer's *A Maid Asleep* (1656-67), William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Open Door* (c. 1884), and Charles Sheeler's *The Open Door* (1932) ([www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)). Compare and contrast the role the door plays in each image in a class discussion.
- Several art forms have existed throughout the ages that show pattern and repetition. Choose at least three from each of the following cultures: Native American, Western European, African, Asian and South American. Develop a comparative project reflecting your findings. Why are pattern and repetition important in all these cultures?
- Powell's *Door and Surround* needed the attention of an art conservator prior to its installation at the Michener Art Museum. Learn about art conservation around the world, and research a project that is of particular interest to you. Prepare a presentation for your class in written or oral form. Include images with your presentation. Look at the University of Delaware Department of Art Conservation ([www.artcons.udel.edu](http://www.artcons.udel.edu)) and The Getty Conservation Institute ([www.getty.edu/conservation](http://www.getty.edu/conservation)) as two resources in your research.
- Compare Powell's *Door and Surround* with Henry Ossawa Tanner's *Gateway in Tangier*, found in the Michener's collection on [Google Arts and Culture](https://www.google.com/cultural/instant). How are they similar? Different? Discuss your findings with a classmate or friend.

## Activities: Architecture

**“It's wonderful where the door isn't just something that leads you between places, but is something unto itself.” - Dan Kershaw, Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition designer**

- Read David Macaulay's classic work, *Building Big*. This book of architectural wonders answers the questions, “Why this shape and not that? Why steel instead of concrete or stone? Why put it here and not over there?” In the book, Macaulay describes the basic process of design from which all structures begin, from the realization of a need for the structure to the struggles of the engineers and designers to map out and create the final construction.
- Get inspired! Take an exciting walk through the history of incredible doorways in painting, photography, and architecture while watching the video: <http://www.metmuseum.org/connections/doors#/Feature/>.
- Powell's *Door and Surround* is made of wood, carved and assembled by hand. French sculptor August Rodin constructed a pair of massive doors adorned with figures inspired by Dante's *Inferno*. Watch Rodin: *The Gates of Hell*, a 1981 movie about how these bronze doors were created after the artists' death ([www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)). You can also see *The Gates of Hell* at the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia.
- Powell's 1951 New Hope house was whimsical and fantastic, just like his *Door and Surround*. If you were going to design your own house, what would it look like? Present your ideas for your house, either by hand drawing the design, or by using a CAD computer program.
- Powell created a unique home, reflecting his love of nature and his appreciation of natural and found materials. His “Lighthouse” was torn down after his death. Fortunately there are other fascinating area artist homes you can visit. Fonthill in Doylestown, Pennsylvania ([www.mercermuseum.org](http://www.mercermuseum.org)), was built by archaeologist, anthropologist, ceramist, scholar and antiquarian Henry Chapman Mercer between 1908-1912. The Wharton Esherick Museum in Paoli, Pennsylvania ([www.whartonesherickmuseum.org](http://www.whartonesherickmuseum.org)) is a National Historic Landmark for Architecture hilltop studio/residence begun in 1926, featuring organic forms complemented by over 200 pieces of Esherick's hand made furniture.
- The Michener Art Museum used to be the site of the Bucks County Prison (1884-1985). If you enter the Museum through the Sally Port, you will notice two sets of large red wooden doors that frame the stone tunnel that passes between and beneath wings of the former warden's home. These doors were a foreboding entrance to the prison. Visit the Museum and take some time to look at the doors and experience the original entry way to the prison or learn more about on the Museum's Permanent Collection Mobile app: <https://michenerartmuseum.oncell.com/en/the-history-of-the-bucks-county-prison-110864.html>. How do these arched doors compare with Powell's *Door and Surround*?

## Activities: Math and Science

- Powell's *Door and Surround* takes the shape of the arch, and incorporates repeated arches in its design. An arch is a structure that spans a space while supporting weight. Arches can be found in many places, including bridges, tunnels, and doorways. True arches were first used in the Ancient Near East and Mexico, primarily to help support underground structures. They became more commonly used by the Romans, who were the first to apply the concept of the arch to a variety of structures, including bridges, aqueducts, cathedrals, and triumphal entryways. Look around you – where do you see arches? Look big and small! Keep a record of all the arches you can find.
- Create a timeline representing the development of the arch, from the first triangular arch in ancient times to the parabolic arch as seen at the Priory Chapel of Saint Louis Abbey in Creve Coeur, Missouri. Use examples from world architecture and engineering to represent your findings.
- Inventor Alexander Graham Bell said, "When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." How does this quote about a doorway relate to the work of a mathematician or scientist? Describe your thoughts in a reflective essay.
- The work of an art conservator requires an understanding of both science and art. Conservators work at museums around the world. Research their accomplishments on the following websites:
  - The Getty Conservation Institute, ([www.getty.edu/conservation](http://www.getty.edu/conservation))
  - Colonial Williamsburg, Bouche's Murray Sisters ([www.history.org/history/museums](http://www.history.org/history/museums))
  - James A. Michener Art Museum, Daniel Garber's *A Wooded Watershed* ([www.michenermuseum.org](http://www.michenermuseum.org))
  - The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Thomas Eakins's *The Gross Clinic* ([www.philamuseum.org/conservation](http://www.philamuseum.org/conservation))
- The word parabola is derived from a New Latin term that means "compare" or "balance." The word catenary is derived from the Latin word for "chain." Research both the parabola and the catenary. How do these word origins reflect their contemporary meaning? Find examples of both in ancient and modern architecture. Create a PowerPoint presentation to present your findings to your class.
- Mathematical equations are used in calculus to describe arches, parabolas, and catenaries. Learn more about them at [www.whistleralley.com](http://www.whistleralley.com).