

## Joslyn Art Museum Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

Created by Mary Lou Alfieri, Josie Langbehn, Carter Leeka, Sue Oles & Laura Huntimer

### ARCHITECTURE AS ART

**Focus:** Joslyn Art Museum (Joslyn Memorial Building & Walter and Suzanne Scott Pavilion)

**Objectives – Students will:**

- Learn about Nebraska's impact on modern architecture with Bertram Goodhue's design for the Capitol Building along with its influence on the Joslyn Memorial's design.
- Compare and contrast architectural styles using their details and create artwork inspired by the Joslyn Memorial building's decorative scheme.
- Explore the cultural significance in the marble relief sculpture discussing both the Native American and European contributions to society.

**Common Core Standards** available on online version at [www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers](http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers)

**Resources:** Check out the **Teacher Support Materials** online, and <http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers> for additional resources

**Suggested Materials:** Joslyn Art Museum teaching poster, pink foam, glue, newsprint, tracing paper, Joslyn Art Museum images, scissors, various architectural images, pencils, foam trays, rubber topped wood blocks or oak tag, clay

**Vocabulary:** architecture Art Deco, Beaux Arts, built environment, decorative scheme, design, exterior & interior, geometric, juxtaposition, minimal, Moderne, noble gas, reliefs, rock cycle, streamlined, structure, stylized

**Procedure:**

- **Engage:** Flash images of buildings - start with well known structures and end with buildings in Omaha. The final images should highlight Joslyn Art Museum. While looking at the images, students should write or share words describing what they see.
- **Art Talk:** What is architecture? Talk about the built environment. Hold a debate with sides taking opposing positions. For example, form follows function vs. function follows form. Discuss the father-son architectural team of John and Alan McDonald, who designed and managed the Joslyn Memorial. How would you describe their design philosophy? Refer the *Joslyn Art Museum: A Building History* book for more details.
- **History:** Who were George and Sarah Joslyn, and what is their story? Refer to the teaching poster and additional information in Teacher Support Materials.
- **Aesthetics 1:** The original design of the Joslyn Memorial was in the Beaux Arts style, but inspired by Bertram Goodhue's design for Nebraska's Capitol, the architects convinced Mrs. Joslyn to approve a more modern approach to the building. Use images or come to the Museum to study the Art Deco characteristics and discover details that are still in the Beaux Arts style. A discussion starter – how has Art Deco impacted today's design world?

- **Aesthetics 2:** The Foster Addition. Discuss the minimal style of the 1994 Walter and Suzanne Scott Pavilion's addition to the Joslyn Memorial building. How did it respect the original design? Then research other Museum additions. Determine if they complement, contrast or perhaps do both to the original structure.
- **Production:** Art deco reliefs. Using Joslyn's panels for inspiration, have students create their own highly geometrical and stylized reliefs using thin pink foam. Refer to the workshop led by Chris Jansen at the September 2013 Thursdays for Teachers.
- **Other:** What does the music style Jazz and the decorative scheme of Joslyn have in common? Discussion starter - composers Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, and Duke Ellington were working to develop an American "style" that was a synthesis of Classical forms. An example from Joslyn would be the Thunderbird motif that fused a classical tradition with indigenous Indian culture. See the teaching poster for more info.
- **Close:** Think about how the Art Deco style was a luxurious focus for more than just architecture during the harshness of The Great Depression. It was a nod to the future and allowed people to have something of beauty even if it was, for example, a toaster in that style. Flash images of details and have a contest to see who can correctly identify those considered in the Art Deco style.

Extensions:

- **Cultural Connections:** Discuss the Native American and European influence in the Joslyn Memorial's decorative scheme. Consider the symbolism in the building. Talk about the juxtaposition of cultural significance with lavish materials.
- **Fine Arts 1:** Printmaking. Using the design from the relief activity or creating a new one, produce geometric and stylized prints. Use Styrofoam trays for younger students and soft rubber or oak tag for older students. Talk about positive and negative space.
- **Fine Arts 2:** Clay Making Reliefs. Show students the image of sculptor John David Brcin with his clay study for one of the relief panels (see image on teaching poster). For a contemporary comparison, show students the work of Louise Nevelson, too. Talk about building layers vs. carving out space as they create their own (smaller) clay relief.
- **Language Arts:** Share the work of poet Hartley Burr Alexander whose words grace both the Joslyn Memorial building and Nebraska State Capitol building. Using the artworks created in **Production** or **Fine Arts**, students should create poetry inspired by it. To add a challenge, students can research words and phrases from this time period to include in their writing.
- **Math:** The Geometry of It. Students should select a relief panel or the east doors to study. Using tracing paper, highlight various shapes for younger students and solve triangle problems for older students.
- **Science 1:** Joslyn's Lighting. The architects selected a leading designer to create striking light fixtures. Using aluminum in many instances and tube lighting, these inventive designs were Moderne. Have students deconstruct and sketch out one of the light fixtures to determine how it works. What noble gas is used for the lighting?
- **Science 2:** Rock Cycle of the Building. One of the unique features of the building is the bold choice of Georgia Pink or Etowah Fleuri [Et-o-wah fl-ER-ee] marble on the exterior and on the interior, there are 38 marbles from around the world. Use the building to study the rock cycle.