



TEACHER WORKBOOK

KIDSPACE

MASS MoCA

ART 4 CHANGE

The four-year **ART 4 CHANGE** project engages children with art in ways that promote empathy, optimism, and courage, with the ultimate goal that they become more self-aware, confident, and open to participation in the problem-solving process to effect social change.

2015-2016

PEAK 1: EMPATHY

Understanding others and acting with compassion.

It is empathy that lets us **identify** problems and relate to others.

2016-2017

PEAK 2: OPTIMISM

Being hopeful and having confidence in a positive outcome.

We need optimism to **believe** that a problem can be addressed before initiating a solution.

2017-2018

PEAK 3: COURAGE

Having the strength to face risks, fears, dangers, and obstacles.

Courage allows us to design innovative solutions and **persevere** throughout complex undertakings.

2018-2019

SUMMIT: PROBLEM-SOLVING

An essential skill for navigating a challenging world.

Problem-solving is an ongoing process by which individuals and groups **identify** with others, **believe** they can take action, and **persevere** toward positive solutions.



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Nick Cave, *Kaleidoscopic Playground*
(installation shot), 2016

On Optimism

“We might be doomed not by a lack of skill, but by an absence of hope. Today’s problems are rarely created by people taking too sunny a view of things; it is because the troubles of the world are so continually brought to our attention that we need tools that can preserve our hopeful dispositions.”¹

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’ To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother’s words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers—so many caring people in this world.” – Mr. Rogers

We have chosen **optimism** for the second phase of A4C, as it is hope and optimism that enable one to believe that a problem can be addressed and a positive outcome can be achieved. Optimism is crucial to initiating a plan of action, to taking the first step, to envisioning a sunnier horizon. Research suggests that optimism is key to not only academic, occupational, and personal successes, but it can also lead to greater health and longer life expectancy². Pessimism, on the other hand, leads to apathy, resignation, despair, and poor health; pessimistic habits are a plague of doubts and insecurities that inhibit action.

Optimism and pessimism are often misconstrued to be permanent, character-based traits: one is an optimist, one is a pessimist; one cannot be both. This misperception, however, does not allow for natural fluctuations of mood and circumstance. In practice, one has optimistic attitudes in some areas of life and pessimistic attitudes in others; or one may feel optimistic about a prospect one day and pessimistic the next. Rather than permanent personality traits, optimism and pessimism are learned behaviors, habits of mind that can be strengthened—and weakened—through practice. The key, therefore, is to be mindful of what choices one is making in the moment, to notice when a response is a result of a default pattern and when it can be upended and replaced by a new one. Yet it’s equally important to not ignore the negative and adopt a naïve, rose-colored view of the world—to do so would be to suppress our empathic responses, strengthened in Year 1 of A4C. Optimism instead sees reality in all its ups and downs, while nurturing and highlighting the ups.

In *Here Comes the Sun*, the educators who will be working with your students will use our arts-centric model* in exploring the artwork to build awareness of students’ own perceptions and their ability to shift them.

Optimism builds on empathy (Year 1), necessary for identifying problems and developing compassion. Courage (Year 3) will follow as the third habit of mind comprising A4C, to encourage perseverance in spite of risks and initial setbacks.

*Refer back to your original A4C Teacher Workbook for a definition of arts-centricity.

1 De Botton, A. & Armstrong, J. *Art as therapy*. London, UK: Phaidon Press Limited, 2013. 16.

2 Seligman, M. *Learned optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. New York: Vintage Books. 5.

About the 2016—17 Exhibits

Here Comes the Sun and Kaleidoscopic Playground

The second installment in the four-year A4C exhibition project, *Here Comes the Sun*, features the vibrant found-object sculptures of Colombian-born artist Federico Uribe, as well as a special installation, *Kaleidoscopic Playground*, by Chicago-based artist Nick Cave.

Optimism might not be the first quality to come to mind when viewing the materials that Uribe repurposes for his animal sculptures. Colorful shotgun casings and golden varying caliber bullets are brought together to form a lion, for example; leather sneakers are arranged into a leaping puma; an army helmet becomes a turtle's shell. In an interview, Uribe underlines the irony inherent in his choice of materials: "People kill animals to make shoes, I make animals out of shoes." One might then think that Uribe intends to make viewers alert to the senseless killing of animals. But instead, Uribe aims to use ordinary—and sometimes provocative—materials to challenge associations; the goal is to go against the grain—or, as he says, to "make people happy"—in spite of preconceived connotations.

Cave is best known for his *Soundsuits*, sculptures, and performance objects made of materials such as twigs, beads, raffia, feathers, and buttons, which both reference and mask the human body. Cave's art functions as a pointed commentary on issues of race, gender, and inequality, while at the same time his playful, brightly colored works offer the antidote of hope. In making his work, Cave relies on what he calls "creative positivity" – a tool for responding to life's struggles with optimism. Cave has transformed the Kidspace ArtBar with *Kaleidoscopic Playground*, an immersive wallpaper featuring patterns of repeated *Soundsuit*-inspired graphics along with mirrored figures that carry prompts to inspire visitors to think about how they see themselves and others around them.

Both artists reflect a fundamental component of optimism: making an active choice to shift one's perspective and see circumstances through a lens of hope. Bullets become a source of beauty instead of pain; colored pencils become tools for sculpting rather than drawing; a costume becomes an exuberant source of joy and dance rather than a place to hide. Uribe and Cave both invite viewers to join them in shifting ordinary perceptions to make room for hope, joy, and optimism.

Federico Uribe



Federico Uribe, *On Good Faith*, 2015
Courtesy of the artist and Adelson Galleries Boston

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1962, Federico Uribe currently lives and works in Miami. He studied art at the University of Los Andes in Bogotá, and in 1988 he traveled to New York to pursue an MFA degree under the supervision of Luis Camnitzer at SUNY Westbury. After receiving his degree, he left New York to study and work in Cuba, Mexico, Russia, England, and finally Miami. His work has been exhibited at art institutions such as the Chelsea Art Museum, New York, and the Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, DC. He is represented by Adelson Galleries.

For more information on Uribe:

<http://federicouribe.com/>

<https://vimeo.com/31547267>

Nick Cave

Born in Missouri in 1959, Nick Cave studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan, and trained with the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. His solo work has been exhibited at art institutions such as the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; the Denver Art Museum; and the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Cave's work is included in public collections at the Brooklyn Museum; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; the High Museum; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Smithsonian Institution. Cave teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.



Nick Cave, *Kaleidoscopic Playground* (installation shot), 2016

*STAY TUNED:

Nick Cave's work will be featured in MASS MoCA's main gallery exhibition *Until*, on view October 2016 – August 2017. With *Until*, Cave transforms MASS MoCA's signature football field-sized space with his largest installation to date, made up of thousands of found objects and millions of beads. For *Until* – a double play on the phrase "innocent until proven guilty" or in this case, perhaps "guilty until proven innocent" – Cave addresses issues of gun violence and race relations in America today. He believes in humanity, celebrating possibility while also creating a forum for sharp debate and critical discussion.

An independent **Educators' Guide** with resources and activities for engaging students with the topics addressed in *Until* will be produced in Fall 2016.

For more information on Nick Cave:

<http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/nick-cave/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpNcmh3rxko>

*Stay tuned for an ART21 episode featuring Nick Cave. Season 8 premieres on PBS on September 16, 2016.

Contemplating Art Sample Questions

The following suggested questions may help prepare students for a class visit to *Here Comes the Sun* at Kidspace, or they can be used following the visit to reinforce concepts. Contact Amanda Tobin, Senior Museum Educator, for high-resolution digital copies of these images (atobin@massmoca.org).

Pig (2016)



Federico Uribe, *Pig*, 2016, measuring tape

1. Can you tell what material(s) the artist used to make this pig?*
2. Describe the qualities of this material: is it smooth or rough? Glossy or matte (how shiny is it)? What color is it? How would it feel?
3. How do you think the artist created the form of a pig using that material? Can you tell from looking? What other methods can you think of to use that kind of material to make a 3D object?

*Answer: measuring tape, woven together!



Federico Uribe, **Pig** (detail)

Nick Cave, *Kaleidoscopic Mirror*



Nick Cave, *Kaleidoscopic Mirror* (detail)

1. What objects can you identify in this image? What do they have in common? What is different?
2. What kinds of feelings does looking at this image inspire? Consider the textures and colors. How do they affect the mood?
3. This image is only a small piece that is repeated over and over on wallpaper. What do you imagine it would look like to see this pattern covering a whole wall?



Nick Cave, *Kaleidoscopic Mirror* (detail)

Suggested Activities and Resources

Writing Prompts:

- Create a superhero whose super-power is optimism. What kinds of obstacles does the superhero encounter, and how does optimism help him or her overcome them?
Write down every good thing that happened to you today, starting with the fact that you woke up. Then, write one thing you can do to make tomorrow even better—for you, or perhaps for someone else.
- The installation in Kidspace can be considered a utopian space (an ideal world), where all the animals live in harmony. What elements make it “perfect” for its inhabitants? What parts of this world are taken from our imperfect world? What parts are different? What would you add to make it even more ideal?
- Keep a journal to track the “roses and thorns” of each day. A rose is a positive moment or memory you would like to record, and a thorn is a negative memory (a neutral memory can be considered a “stem”). At the end of each week, count how many roses and how many thorns you have. Do you notice any patterns over time?

External Materials Provided in the Binder:

- “Choosing Optimism” excerpts from the MindUP Curriculum Guides for Grades PreK-2, Grades 3-5, and Grades 6-8
- Hewson, M. (2014, January 26). Commentary: The importance of optimism in the workplace. The Washington Post. Retrieved from:
https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/commentary-the-importance-of-optimism-in-the-workplace/2014/01/24/625a7890-82a5-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html

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