



Installation view of *Butch Anthony: Inside/Out*

About this Teaching Resource:

This packet features artwork from the exhibition *Butch Anthony: Inside/Out*, which was featured at the Halsey Contemporary Institute of Art at the College of Charleston from January 17 to February 29, 2020. It is intended as a tool to help you look at art with your children/students. You can prepare for your inquiry-based discussions by reviewing the background information provided. Then use the Questions for Viewing below and full-page reproductions to look closely, think critically, and respond to the art together. Extend your investigations with one or more of the suggested activity ideas. In general, questions for younger audiences are listed first followed by progressively more complex ideas. Feel free to adapt the suggested activities according to the age group you are working with.

Share your teaching stories with us! If you use these materials, let us know by email at halsey@cofc.edu

About the Artist:

Butch Anthony is a multi-faceted self-taught artist from Alabama. At fourteen he was building birdhouses and stuffing his own taxidermy. His first building, a little log cabin on his grandfather's farm, would eventually become his shop. He has spent decades building the [Museum of Wonder](#), a walk-through cabinet of curiosities. Started in the 1970s as Butch's taxidermy shop and artifact room, the Museum of Wonder is now filled with art, artifacts, and antiques including the world's largest gallstone. Up until January 2020, Butch hosted the Possum Trot Auction, a weekly junk and art auction on his 80-acre parcel of land in Seale, Alabama. He has also built the Museum of Wonder Drive-Thru in 2014, the first drive-through art and antiques gallery. In addition to making and selling art, building bizarre roadside attractions, and collecting found objects to incorporate into his own artwork, Butch Anthony contributes to Auburn University's Rural Studio design + build program.



About the Exhibition:

The Halsey Institute was pleased to present an exhibition of work by Butch Anthony of Seale, Alabama. The exhibition consisted of new images, assemblages, and installations created specifically for our galleries. As a multi-faceted self-taught artist, Butch Anthony creates works that investigate and appropriate images from the American vernacular. His practice includes painting X-ray-like skeletons on top of antique portraits in elaborate, often gilded frames.

Though Butch's work emanates from the folk art or vernacular idiom, his works are unmistakably original in concept and execution. The term "folk art" is generally applied to traditional media such as wood carving, quilt-making, functional pottery, weaving—items that are passed down from generation to generation. Butch's work often has a charming immediacy because of the familiarity of the selected materials, yet this surface appeal is often undermined by the conceptual premise. Some images evince a biting sarcasm or ironic wit, while others poke fun at our consumerist society. There are several layers of meaning embedded in his artwork. For a few of the pieces in this exhibition, the artist hired a Chinese painter to create 5 x 7-foot enlargements of appropriated images he sent. Butch then reworks the surface of these commissioned paintings, melding appropriation and global commerce with indifferent seeming and graffiti-like embellishments. Now, many of these paintings become more elaborate with the addition of bones, artifacts, and shadow boxes that amplify the visual and conceptual presence of the piece.

As a sculptor, Butch's work often employs the detritus of our disposable society. He has become adept at creating imaginative combinations that subtly comment on the human condition. These assemblages then gain strength by being seen in the context of his other works, creating a kind of chain reaction that reinforces his primary message.

This exhibition brought together several of Butch's creative explorations over the past few years. Singular portraits, assemblage objects, and installations combine to create a working model of the inside of Butch Anthony's mind. You can see images of the exhibition in the galleries [here!](#)

Questions for Viewing:

We have included reproductions on the last pages of this PDF that can be used to complete the following exercises.

Look at *Voyage of the Beagle*

What do you notice? What material do you think this work of art is made of? How would it feel to touch? To pick up? How did the artist arrange the materials? Does it remind you of anything? What do you see that makes you say that?

Look at *Pinkie* and *Boy Blue*

Describe the two portraits. How are they similar? How are they different?

Look at *Rare Bird*

What different materials can you find? Which materials can be found in nature? Which are man-made?

Look at *Adam's Rib* and *Ossification*

Study these two works of art carefully. What materials can you find? How have the materials been transformed? What evidence can you find of the artist's process? What everyday item or natural material would you choose to use in a work of art?



Here is an image of the full *Intertwangle* portrait series wall. There are closer views in the end pages. Select one *Intertwangle* portrait to study. What clues can you find about the time period when it was taken? Consider the figure's pose, clothing, and hairstyle. How is this figure similar to or different from those in other portraits nearby?

Think about the answers you have given to the previous questions.

If you were going to create an artwork made from found objects, what kind of object would you make? What would you want to "say" with your artwork? What would you choose to include? Why?

Suggested Activities:

Science Activity:

Identify a key anatomical feature in any piece to explore in more depth (such as eyes, ears, teeth, nose, or hair). Create a labeled sketch of two examples noting the size, color, location within the painting, and types of lines used to illustrate the form (curved/angular) in the margin. Compare and contrast the examples.

Visual Arts:

As a society, how do we determine the worth of an object? What does it mean if something is worth more than it would cost to buy? Find an object that you consider having very little value. What makes your object less valuable? Use paint, paper, glue, and scissors to create a new purpose for it (for example, an old sneaker could be painted to become a running trophy.) Does transforming your object make it any more valuable? Why or why not?

Snapshot:

Consider the portraits Butch Anthony uses in his *Intertwangle* series. These photographs and paintings are often more than 100 years old. Select an old portrait from one of your textbooks or online. Practice posing like one of the figures. How does the pose feel? What do you think the sitter wanted to communicate to the viewer? Have someone take a photograph of you in that pose and compare it with the portrait in the book. How are they similar? What differences can you find?

Strings and Things:

Butch Anthony used a number of everyday materials that came from a variety of places. Materials like these are often called “found objects,” because they are items not normally considered art materials like oil paint or bronze, and often already have a non-art use. Gather materials from both inside your home as well as out in nature. Choose items that have different textures, shapes, colors, and sizes. Share your selections with a family member. Discuss how you might create a sculpture from them that uses at least one of the following principles: balance, proportion, repetition, and movement. Use tape, string, or rubber bands to assemble your sculpture. Experiment with stationery supplies to add further decorative elements.

Use the following questions as a guide: How did you come up with the idea for your artwork? Describe the process you used for creating your sculpture. What was the easiest part? What was the hardest? What do you like most about your artwork? If you could change anything, what would it be?

Glossary:

Appropriated images: The intentional borrowing, copying, and alteration of existing images and objects. The use of appropriation has played a significant role in the history of the arts (literary, visual, musical and performing arts).

Assemblage: an artistic process in which three-dimensional or two-dimensional artistic compositions are assembled from found objects.

Balance: Refers to how an artist develops a composition through the arrangement or placement of objects or elements on the picture plane in equal distribution.

Installation: Art that is created, constructed, or installed on the site where it is exhibited, often incorporating materials or physical features on the site.

Intertwangle: A term invented by artist Butch Anthony which refers to drawing skeletal-like images over found portraits and objects.

Movement: A principle of design used to create the look and feeling of action and to guide the viewer's eye throughout the work of art.

Proportion: A principle of art that describe the size, location, or amount of one element in relation to another.

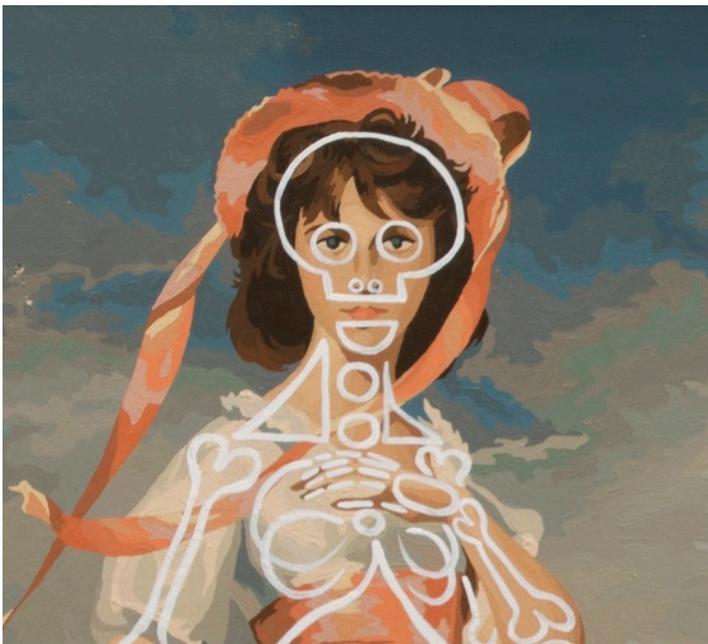
Repetition: Refers to one object or shape repeated.

Self-taught artist: Those who do not attend art school or receive formal training.

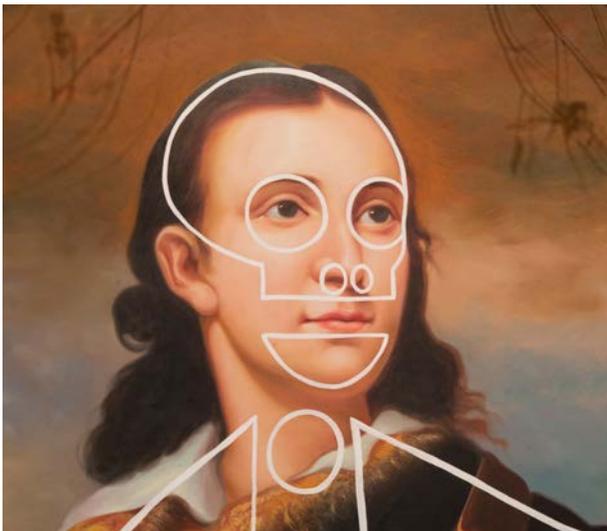
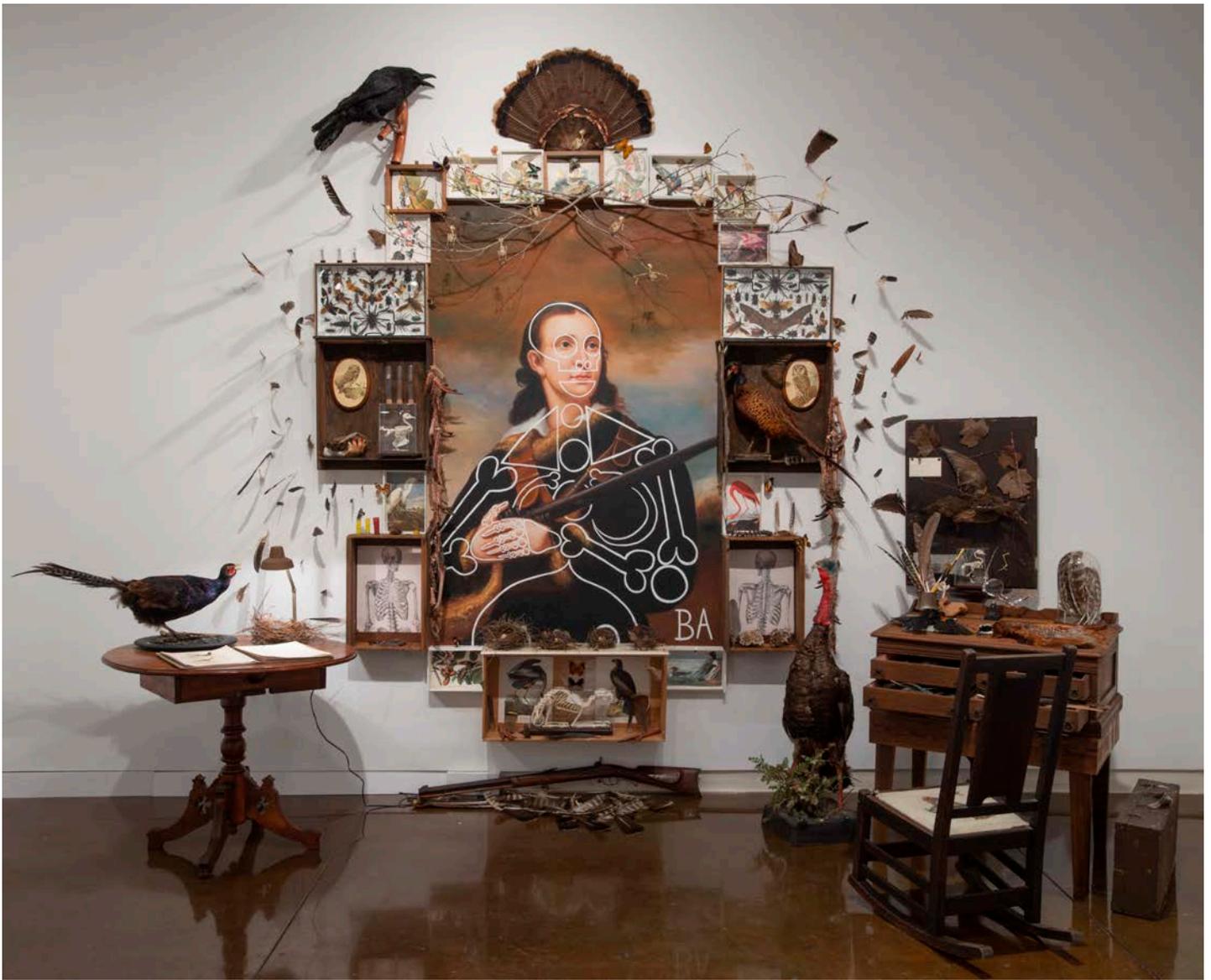
Vernacular: The language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region.



Voyage of the Beagle and detail images, 2018-19. Mixed media.



(L) *Pinkie* and detail image, 2019. Acrylic on found portrait in wooden frame (R) *Boy Blue* and detail image, 2019. Acrylic on found portrait in wooden frame.



Rare Bird and detail images, 2018-19. Mixed media.



Adam's Rib and detail images, 2019. Bones, wire, mixed media, and acrylic on found portraits, mounted on stretched linen.



Ossification and detail images, 2019. Painted bones and steel wire.



Closer views of the *Intertwangle* portrait series wall.