



Loy Bowlin-Inspired Portals



5 PURPLE ORANGES

This project is designed by Sara Willadsen. The development of the original lesson was supported by 5 Purple Oranges.

Visit jmkac.org/educator-resource/bowlin-loy to watch a video of Willadsen sharing her art practice and giving a step-by-step demonstration of this project.

Loy Bowlin spent years transforming himself into “The Original Rhinestone Cowboy,” inspired by Glen Campbell’s hit record *Rhinestone Cowboy*. In a project that took about five years to complete, he covered every inch of his home’s interior, and part of the exterior, with daubs of bright paint and intricate patterns of cutout paper, rhinestones, glitter, tinfoil, tinsel garlands, Christmas ornaments, and collaged photographs and magazine illustrations.

Artist Sara Willadsen creates mixed media landscapes and interiors that are based on her immediate surroundings. Working mainly with paint and various collage elements, Willadsen’s work explores concepts of abstract spaces and objects guided by where she lives and the places she visits. Just as Bowlin spent years transforming his space, Willadsen has been collecting collage materials over the years and creating compositions that represent what home is to her. Willadsen received her MFA in painting from Northern Illinois University in 2014 and her BA in studio art and graphic arts from Lakeland University in 2010.

Taking inspiration from Bowlin’s work on view at the Art Preserve, join Willadsen in creating a collaged composition that reflects elements of what reminds you of home.

Essential Questions

- What does home mean to you?
- What images, objects, and feelings do you associate with the idea of home?
- What places or spaces feel like home to you?



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1 Loy Bowlin in front of his Beautiful Holy Jewel Home, McComb, MS. Photo: Sally Griffiths.



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Materials

- Two pieces of sturdy paper or matboard, the same size—one piece will become the portal (or window) and the other will be used as a backing piece
- A piece of scrap paper the same size as the backing piece
- Collage materials, such as construction paper, tissue paper, patterned paper, any paper with imagery (discarded books, magazines, old calendars)
- Precut images/objects of items you would find in a house
- 4 spacers to add depth—these could be foam pieces, but you could play around with other materials (like layered paper or cork) to see what depth you are most interested in
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Marker or mark-making tools (optional)
- Ruler or straight edge (optional)
- A device to adhere on the back so the piece can hang. Suggestion—self-adhesive hanging tabs

Vocabulary

- Perspective
- Depth
- Layering
- Background
- Middle Ground
- Foreground
- Composition

Create

1. Watch the video of Willadsen demonstrating this activity at jmkac.org/engage/educators/educator-resources.
2. Start by discussing the essential questions. If time allows, prompt people to bring in personal pictures or papers. Items could be scanned and printed. For those who want to think more deeply about the composition of their piece, having a discussion the day before and day-of is helpful.
3. As Sara demonstrates in the video, create a collage puzzle to look like the corner of a room using the piece of scrap paper. Label the pieces floor, right wall, and left wall. Then cut them out.
4. Plan the background of your room by laying different collage materials over the top of your puzzle pieces. Once you find what you like, glue your background puzzle pieces to the material and cut off any extra.
5. Then reassemble and glue your collaged background puzzle pieces to the back piece of your portal.
6. Next, select precut images or look through the collage materials and cut out objects that you would like to add to your room. Glue them down. Consider layering and creating depth by placing images in the back, middle, and foreground of the room.
7. Once your room is set, add spacers in the four corners of the backing piece. Then attach the front portal window on top of the spacers.
8. Finish by attaching a hanging device to the backside.

1 Sara Willadsen, 2023. Photo: Frank Juárez.

2 Sara Willadsen, *Keen Dream 9*, 2022; graphite, ink, found materials, laser cut paper, and acrylic on panel; 10 1/2 x 14 1/2 in. Photo courtesy of the artist.

3 Collaborative Portal with Artist-in-Residence Sara Willadsen, 2023.