

# MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

## Ecosystem Triarama Paintings Inspired by Alfredo Arreguín

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY  
DESIGNED BY MONA  
EDUCATORS

### Materials

- Oil pastels
- Black permanent markers
- Pencils
- Watercolor paper pre-cut to 9" x 9"
- Scissors
- Watercolor paints & brushes
- Paint cups
- Glue sticks
- Galopa and Orca's Strait by Alfredo Arreguín, located at the end of this lesson.
- Optional: ecosystem video

**Age:** Second Grade

**Lesson Duration:** 1 hour

**Subjects:** Science & Ecosystems



*Educator example*

*Source: Museum of Northwest Art*

### Description

During this activity, students will make a paper triarama where they depict an ecosystem of their choice after examining the works of Alfredo Arreguín. They will use watercolor and oil pastel to color in their landscape scenes.

### Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Ecosystem
- ✓ Triarama (pyramid diorama)
- ✓ Watercolor resist

## Instructions

- 1)** Assess prior knowledge by asking students what they already know about ecosystems and fill in any background information on the topic. After discovering a baseline for students' prior knowledge, you might choose to share the ecosystem video and lead a discussion about ecosystems.
- 2)** Share *Galopa* and *Orca's Strait* with students and use VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to examine the pieces with students. You can help them identify the ecosystems being shown in these pieces and brainstorm ideas for their own.
  - VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS are included at the end of this lesson.
- 3)** First demonstrate how to create the triarama and then build them together as a class. Give students the square paper and ask them to fold it diagonally one way then unfold, then fold it diagonally the other way and unfold. Then have students cut from one corner to the center to create a flap. A photo example of this step and the following one are included on the next page.
- 4)** Fold one side over until it creates a pyramid. Kids can use a pencil to mark an X on the side that will be covered so they can still work with the paper flat.
- 5)** The students can use a pencil to sketch out what plants and animals they want to include in their triarama. Students can then trace their drawings using a permanent marker and erase the pencil marks.
- 6)** Next, students will add color to their triaramas using oil pastels.
- 7)** Finally, students will paint over the oil pastel with watercolor.
- 8)** When dry, students can glue the triarama into a pyramid by repeating step #5 and securing with the glue stick.
  - If they want, they can also make a "pop-up" animal and/or plant for their ecosystem using the extra watercolor strip you cut off when you make the 9x12" paper into squares. They can sketch their picture and fold down the paper to add it, or they can add any extra touches with clay etc.
- 9)** After students have finished their triaramas, guide them through the reflection activity.

## Cutting the Triarama

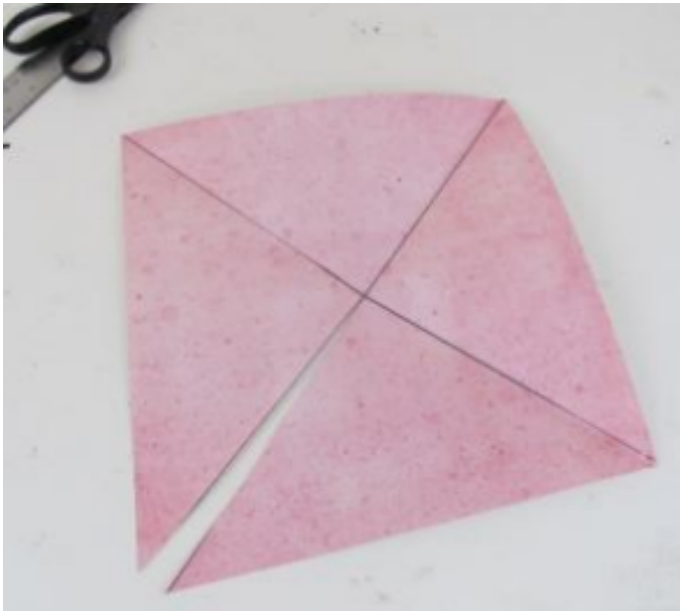


Image Source:  
Stormthecastle.com

## Reflection

### Discuss with students:

- If you were to repeat this activity, what would you do differently?
- Ask students if they would like to share what they depicted in their ecosystem. Further the discussion by asking them to explain their choices.

## Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- **VA:Cr1.1.5** (Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making)
- **VA:Cr2.2.5** (Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment)

# Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development, including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art, encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

*What's going on in this picture?*

*What do you see that makes you say...?*

*What more can you find?*

## Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to use in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: [www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators](http://www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators)

# About the Artist: Alfredo Arreguín



*Image Credit: University of Washington Magazine*



Alfredo Arreguín (1935-Present) is a Mexican-American painter and celebrated artist in the Pacific Northwest. Born in Morelia, Mexico, Arreguín began his art career as the youngest student at the Morelia School of Fine Art and continuing his career in Mexico until moving to the United States in 1959.

Arreguín then attended the University of Washington for undergraduate and graduate studies in fine arts. Arreguín is known for his magical realism style, and his work has been exhibited in many notable collections, such as the 11th International Festival of Painting, the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American Art.



***Galopa*, Alfredo Arreguín**  
**Image Credit: [alfredoarreguin.com](http://alfredoarreguin.com)**



***Orca's Strait, Alfredo Arreguin***  
**Image Credit: [alfredoarreguin.com](http://alfredoarreguin.com)**