Hi! My name is Billy, and I’m excited to show you some art that you can find at the Walker or in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden next time you visit.

Artists use their artwork to communicate their ideas, feelings, and experiences. Today we’re going to spend about 20–30 minutes talking about three works of art and thinking about what the artist might be trying to tell us through their choices. All you’ll need are a camera, pencil, paper, and your imagination! I’ll be asking you a few questions throughout the video, so you may want someone to watch with you so you can discuss what you see! I’ll give you about ten seconds per question, also feel free to stop the video.

Our first stop is this assemblage by the artist George Segal. An assemblage is a sculpture made from a mixture of objects that the artist has found. Before I tell you the title, take a close look at the artwork.

What do you notice first?

What does this remind you of? Maybe a place you’ve been before, or somewhere from a movie or book?

Where do you think these figures might be? What makes you say that?
Imagine you are one of the people in this scene. What do you think it would smell like? What sounds would you hear?

This artwork is called *The Diner*. The pieces that make up the scene were taken from a real dining car in a train. The two people are made by the artist from plaster and are life size. That’s because George Segal creates his figures by casting real people using plaster. Plaster is a wet and sticky mixture made from minerals mixed with water that hardens as it dries.

Can you imagine being one of Segal’s models and having to sit still for hours while the plaster dries? What do you think that would feel like?

Who do you think these people might be? Do you think they know each other? What makes you say that?

Why do you think the artist chose to leave these figures as rough, white plaster? How would the artwork be different in the figures were painted?

Okay, it is your turn to create a scene like George Segal’s. Think of a place that you often go—maybe it’s your school or the grocery store. What do people usually do there? Ok, now imagine that you could freeze everyone in time. What would their poses look like?

Grab a family member and act out those frozen poses. What do you think the person you are pretending to be would be thinking? What might they say?
Ok, have someone take a picture! You can share it with a friend, or you can post it on Facebook with the #walkerartcenter to share with other kids and families!

Ok, now that we have our imaginations warmed up, let’s take a look at another work of art, a portrait by the artist Alice Neel. A portrait is a representation of a person that can take many forms. It can be a drawing, a painting, a sculpture—or even a poem! Take a close look.

What do you notice?

Look at this person’s expression. What do you think she might be thinking? What makes you say that?

Try putting your body in this person’s pose. How does it feel? Are you comfortable?

Do you think the artist knows this person? What makes you say that?

This artwork is called Portrait of Charlotte Willard. Charlotte Willard was an art critic, which means she spent a lot of time looking at art and writing about it so other people could learn about new artists.

Why do you think Alice Neel painted Charlotte Willard?

If you were to paint a portrait of someone, who would you choose? Would it be someone you know? A person? A pet?

Why did you choose this person or pet?
Where would you paint them? Would they be outdoors? Indoors? Why?

Ok, it’s now your turn to try creating a portrait! You can choose someone in your home, or you can create a portrait from memory. You can even create a self-portrait!

Ok, have you chosen someone? Think about how you want to depict them and where would they be. Now, pause this video and pick up your paper and pencil and create a quick sketch!

Did you notice anything as you were drawing the portrait? What are you going to title your portrait?

We would love to see it! Share it on social media using #walkerartcenter and don’t forget to look at the portraits other people made!

Let’s keep exploring the choices artists make and how they communicate with us through their art.

You can find this next artwork by artists Ta-coumba Aiken and Seitu Jones on the sidewalks in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. It is called Shadows at the Crossroads. Take a close look. What do you notice?

Does this remind you of anything?

Ta-coumba Aiken and Seitu Jones created seven of these sculptures that were inspired by important people in the history of Minnesota, such as Cloud Man, a Dakota Chief.
who founded a farming village on the shores of Bde Maka Ska.

They made them by tracing shadows of people on the ground and casting them in bronze, incorporating seeds that are native to Minneapolis to create the bumpy textures you see. Writer Soyini Guyton wrote poems for some of the sculptures. Then the sculptures were installed in the sidewalks in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

What do you think it would feel like to walk on one of these sculptures?

Take another look at the artwork.

Have you ever noticed your shadow on the ground when your body blocks the sun or a source of light? How do you think the person was standing to cast this shadow? Try out this pose.

Think about the people who are important to you. If you were going to create an artwork to honor someone, who would it be, and what form would it take? What would you want people to know about that person?

I want to thank you all for joining me to talk about how artists communicate through their art! I want to leave you with one more challenge! Find a family member and experiment tracing your own shadows on the sidewalk with chalk. Try out different poses.
Next time you visit the Walker or Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, be sure to remember to take a close look at the art, and then based on what you notice think about what the artist might be trying to tell you. Be an art detective! See you next time!