Big Idea
Using art to honor and represent people, cultures and places we admire

Your students will:
• Learn about potter Roberto Lugo’s art
• Select a vessel template to create a portrait in the style of Roberto Lugo, featuring someone they admire
• Include patterns and symbols that represent both the person in the portrait and aspects of students’ own identities

Visit Grounds For Sculpture with Freddie and Ty
As a class, co-view from the episode “Sculpture & A New Perspective,” in which Freddie and Ty meet artist Roberto Lugo in his exhibition. Watch Lugo talk about his creative process of sculpting clay vessels inspired by ancient cultures of the past and adorning them with portraits of people he admires today. Conversations starters might include:

1. Freddie tries to cram in seeing as many sculptures as she can at Grounds For Sculpture but decides to change up her plan when she sees Roberto Lugo in his exhibition. Why was it hard for Freddie to change her plan? Think about a time when you needed to be flexible. How did that feel?
2. Freddie and Ty ask Lugo lots of questions about his art. What’s something you would have asked him?
3. What did you notice about Lugo’s artwork? Was anything surprising to you? In what ways does his art borrow from history? How does his art find inspiration from today?

Materials
• Printer
• Printed vessel templates
• Drawing supplies
• Glue stick
• Scissors

No printer? No problem! Draw your own vase silhouette inspired by Roberto Lugo’s art.
Lesson Activity

Teacher Prep

- Print out enough vessel templates for students to be able to select which shape they would like. Alternatively, you can print one of each shape and cut it out to use as a stencil for students to trace.

Instructions

1. Lead students in a conversation about people they look up to. Roberto Lugo includes portraits of people he admires on his vessels. What does it mean to admire someone? Who are the people you admire and why? They might be people you know or famous leaders, celebrities or athletes. Pick someone you want to honor by featuring them on your own vessel.

2. The shapes of the vessels that Lugo sculpts from clay are inspired by pottery from ancient cultures around the world, from Egyptian jars and vases to Greek amphoras to Eastern porcelain. Select one of these shapes for your own artwork. Which feels like it would make the best silhouette or shape for a portrait of the person you chose? Why?

3. Like Lugo, students can create a black and white portrait of their selected person in the oval on their vessel. They can either draw their portrait or print a photograph of that person to cut out and paste on the vessel.

4. Surround your portrait with colorful designs, symbols and patterns. As Lugo describes in the episode, students can include animals or imagery that symbolizes something about the personality of the person on their vessel. They can also add colors or patterns that reflect something about their own personal heritage or culture. Encourage students to incorporate words and text as well, just like Lugo uses graffiti in his own work.

5. Display all of the vessels together in a class exhibition and invite students to present their artworks. They should be able to explain how everything surrounding the portrait connects with that person or reflects something about themselves and their own personal perspective.

Vocabulary

Sculpture: A three-dimensional artwork
Vessel: A type of container
Pottery: Objects made from clay
Potter: A person who work with clay
Perspective: Your personal point of view
Tips and Extensions

- Have students research the subject of their vessel and share with the class why they admire them and what they achieved in their lifetime. If they know the subject of their artwork personally, students can conduct an interview with them.
- Repeat the vessel art project using self-portraits instead. As Lugo says in the episode, “put yourself in the picture.”

School-to-Home Connection

- Invite students to talk with their families about colors, patterns or images that represent something about their family’s culture or heritage. Have them look at old photographs or objects that have been passed down for inspiration.
- Who do the people in your family admire and why? Students can ask their family members to share who their heroes are.
- Students who choose to feature family members or friends on their vessels can take a photo of that person to print out for their portrait. Students can also copy old photographs of family members from home as they consider who to feature on their vessel.

More about Roberto Lugo

- Roberto Lugo is a Philadelphia-born potter, educator and activist whose work has generated international acclaim. Using a potter’s wheel, he creates clay vessels inspired by classical art on which he paints portraits of contemporary figures he admires. His work represents people and communities who have been historically excluded from art and incorporates patterns and imagery that relate both to history and modern life. Discover more about Roberto Lugo on his website at robertolugostudio.com.

More about Grounds For Sculpture

- Grounds For Sculpture is a sculpture garden, arboretum and museum in New Jersey that was founded by artist Seward Johnson in 1992. Three hundred sculptures can be found on its forty-two acres, along with rotating indoor exhibitions. Grounds For Sculpture celebrates both art and nature as creative experiences through which people can connect more with their surroundings.
Related Resources

More Classroom Activities
Visit PBS LearningMedia for more lesson plans like this inspired by The Infinite Art Hunt.

Children's Books with Related Themes
Check out these children's books online or at your local library to continue exploring the concepts in this episode.

Dave the Potter by Laban Carrick Hill
A book about David Drake, a potter who was enslaved in South Carolina, who created large vessels with words, phrases and sometimes hidden messages on his pottery.

Milo Imagines the World by Matt de la Peña
While on a long subway ride, Milo studies the faces of the people around him and imagines their lives and what's meaningful to them.