



# **Olympics of the Visual Arts**

## **2026**

### **44th Anniversary**



# **Information Packet**

# Olympics of the Visual Arts 2026

**Register Your District's Teams by  
March 13, 2026**

**OVA Event in Saratoga Springs  
April 30, 2026**



Please take time and read the guidelines for participation and submission for the OVA event this year. Evidence of brainstorming, creative problem solving, and development of your process should be presented in a portfolio displayed with your design solution at the venue.

Our panel of volunteer judges will review the portfolios along with the installed solutions on the day of the event.

**Teams will be required to submit a clear photo of their finished design in advance of the event, uploaded through a link on the NYSATA webpage.**

**Upload your entry photo by  
April 23, 2026**

**Teams must have their photos uploaded to be eligible to receive awards. Plan your timeline accordingly.**

Links for Registration and other helpful resources can be found on the OVA page of the NYSATA website.

# Olympics of the Visual Arts Overview

The **Olympics of the Visual Arts** is an extracurricular school program for students across New York State. Its founding group, the New York State Art Teachers Association (NYSATA), views the visual arts as a discipline equal to other disciplines that challenge and stimulate our youth, and believes that creativity and creative problem solving in the visual arts is vital to a full and enriched life in our technological and scientific society.

The **Olympics of the Visual Arts** presents a series of design problems that require utilizing contemporary, cultural, and historical references, brainstorming, problem solving, and creative solutions. There are two forms of problem solving. One is a long-term problem based on research, planning, and creativity, and is completed prior to the State Competition. The other form of problem solving will be a short-term or on-demand solution and is completed during the State Competition. All problems will have performance standards to meet through visual and media arts.

## Highlights of Participation:

- Teams may consist of at least **2 or more** student members.
- There are 3 grade levels for team registration:  
ELEMENTARY LEVEL (K-5)  
MIDDLE LEVEL (6-8)  
HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL (9-12)
- ACTIVE NYSATA Individual or District membership is required.
- DISTRICT Registration (1 main contact for ALL teams)
- 1 team per level in each category permitted.
- Registration is available through a link on the OVA page of the NYSATA Website.
- Registration fees are outlined as follows:  
\$150 1 Team  
\$200 2-5 Teams  
\$250 6-10 Teams  
\$300 11 Teams +
- Payment Questions: [tkonu@nysata.org](mailto:tkonu@nysata.org) and [ova@nysata.org](mailto:ova@nysata.org)



Consider the approach to your category design solution with your team carefully and register by the deadline of **March 13, 2026**. No late registrations or category changes can be accepted after the deadline as we prepare to facilitate a successful event with our team of volunteers.

# Olympics of the Visual Arts Overview

## SCORING & AWARDS

### Category Design Solutions:

The **Long Term Design Solutions** of ALL teams will be scored by our volunteer judges based on rubric criteria outlined below. The **Portfolio of Research and Planning** (exhibited with the entry and labeled accordingly) will be reviewed and contribute to the overall score. Qualitative and quantitative feedback will be provided on the Long Term Design Solution.

### Scoring Criteria:

#### Review of the PORTFOLIO:

- Evidence of Brainstorming
- Evidence of Research
- Presentation Quality of the Portfolio (Unity, thematic format, visual clarity)

#### Review of the DESIGN SOLUTION:

- Imagination/Originality/Risk Taking
- Addressing the Criteria of the challenge
- Quality of Craftsmanship/Technical skill in final creation

### On-Demand Design Challenge:

**ALL** Teams will participate in the **On-Demand Design Challenge** while the long term solutions are scored. Teams will be presented the design challenge during the opening ceremony and are limited to a specific list of supplies to develop their collaborative solution, free from any teacher or parent involvement. **On-Demand solutions will be scored, and points will be combined with the score of the Category Design Solution for an overall team total for every category (including Fashion this year )**

### Awards:

Awards will be presented for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place score totals in each LEVEL in each CATEGORY. At the judges' discretion, a special **HYNDMAN CREATIVITY AWARD** may also be presented in each category.



# Olympics of the Visual Arts Overview

## Event Schedule

**Arrival & Installation:** **8:30-9:45**

**ONE district representative** should check in ALL district teams at the check in table. Each team will be provided 3 copies of their assigned number.

TEAMS MUST report to the **Category Coordinator** with assigned numbers for direction to the assigned floor space to set up. (**Teams DO NOT choose their own spaces to set up** ) Place assigned numbers prominently displayed on the PORTFOLIO, THE DESIGN SOLUTION and the ON DEMAND SOLUTION.

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Scoring of the teams' On-Demand solutions will be added to the score of the Long Term Design and included in the team total. Clear labeling of the Portfolio, Long Term and On Demand pieces and visibility of assigned numbers is extremely important.*

**Opening Ceremony:** **10:00-10:30**

**ALL participants** assemble in the main room for a warm welcome, event kick off, and announcement of the On Demand Design Challenge.

**On Demand Challenge:** **10:30-12:00**

Teams in **ALL 8 categories** will complete the collaborative On Demand Challenge.

**Fashion Parade:** **12:00-12:30**

**NEW THIS YEAR** Fashion Teams are invited to model their Design Solutions for all in attendance. The Fashion Category Coordinator will facilitate and share the parade route. All others in attendance should assemble in the main stage room to view the parade and cheer on the models.

**Lunch and Review of Category Design Entries:** **12:30-1:45**

The upstairs meeting room is reserved for lunch storage and tables to assemble for lunch. Please clean up after your groups and leave the room the way you find it. Please also use this time to walk the category spaces to explore all of the team entries.

**Closing Ceremony & Awards:** **2:00-3:00**

All participants are invited to assemble in the main room for closing remarks and presentation of awards. We'll need pathways clear for students to quickly make their way to the stage for receipt of awards.





# 2026 OVA Theme

## Natural Connections

Inspired by the American Museum of Natural History's newest architectural marvel, the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation in New York City, this year's Olympics of the Visual Arts theme embraces STEAM and invites students to explore the profound intersections of Nature, Form, Science, and Imagination.

Like the Gilder Center itself where architecture flows like a canyon, insects reveal the unseen systems of life, and thousands of collected artifacts offer windows into our world, your work should reflect networks that connect us all. From microscopic ecosystems to monumental natural formations, and from ancient collections to futuristic design, each creative effort should capture the visible and invisible threads that define life, learning, and our place in New York and beyond.

### How the Gilder Center Inspires Natural Connections

- The Richard Gilder Center, designed by Studio Gang and opened in May 2023, is a striking 230,000-square-foot addition to the American Museum of Natural History. It introduces a light-filled, canyon-like five-story atrium, constructed using sculptural shotcrete, inspired by erosion, wind, and water giving the architecture a tactile, geological form.
- Its organically shaped windows and milford pink granite facade bridge new and historic museum buildings, forming more than thirty physical connections across the campus, improving visitor flow and accessibility.
- Inside, the center houses immersive and educational experiences including:
  - A butterfly vivarium, where visitors mingle with hundreds of live butterflies;
  - An insectarium spotlighting the diversity and importance of arthropods;
  - A visible storage core displaying millions of scientific specimens behind glass;
  - The Invisible Worlds immersive experience, revealing hidden networks like neuron firings and plankton ecosystems in dynamic, multisensory form.

### Resource Links

- [American Museum of Natural History](#)
- [Richard Gilder Center](#)
- [Virtual Field Trips](#)
- [QLogy! The science website for kids](#)
- [YouTube Video on the Richard Gilder Center](#)

Use this inspiring new addition not just as a backdrop, but as a conceptual springboard for your OVA driven creative endeavors. Whether you're drawing the fractal beauty of insect wings, designing flowing structures inspired by erosion, or capturing contrast through light and shadow, let **Natural Connections** guide your vision toward artwork that echoes the living landscape of science, art, and innovation.

**Competition Categories:**  
**Drawing, Painting, Illustration, Sculpture, Fashion,**  
**Architecture, Design, Photography**

# DRAWING: Patterns of Life



**draw-ing:** *n.* The art of representing objects or forms on a surface chiefly by means of lines.

Drawing allows us to explore, observe, and interpret the intricate patterns of the natural world. From the microscopic geometry of plant cells to the sweeping formations of migrating birds, artists have long captured both the visible and invisible networks that shape life on Earth. Through drawing, we can reveal rhythm, repetition, and structure, connecting science, mathematics, and cultural perspectives to create work that reflects the complexity and beauty of nature.

**Challenge:** Create a drawing that captures the patterns of life found in natural systems such as microscopic structures like the lattice of a diatom or the cellular geometry of plants, or of large-scale phenomena such as migrating bird formations or windswept sand dunes. Your approach can be abstract or representational. Think about how your choice of materials, mark-making techniques, and composition will communicate a sense of flow, balance, and rhythm.

## Research & Inspiration Ideas to Consider:

- Study fractals in nature, such as snowflakes, branching trees, or Romanesco broccoli.
- Investigate biomimicry, where design is inspired by natural forms and processes. Explore entomological sketches and scientific illustrations of insects, plants, and other living systems.
- Experiment with kinetic mark-making to capture movement and energy.
- Look into architecture that mirrors organic structures.
- Observe patterns in geology, such as rock striations and erosion lines, and in animal movements like schools of fish or flocks of birds.

### Historical Artists:

- **Leonardo da Vinci**– Scientific and anatomical drawings that merge art and observation.
- **Ernst Haeckel**– Detailed and decorative biological illustrations.
- **Albrecht Dürer**– Precise engravings and studies of plants, animals, and textures.
- **MC Escher**– Mathematically inspired patterns and tessellations reflecting natural symmetry.
- **Marianne North**– Botanical illustrations of global flora with attention to natural forms.

### Contemporary Artists:

- **Zaria Forman**– Large-scale pastel drawings capturing water and ice patterns.
- **Mark Dion**– Works exploring scientific collecting and natural history.
- **Janet Echelman**– Installations inspired by wind, water, and movement patterns.
- **Amy Gross**– Fiber art that echoes coral, fungi, and cellular forms.
- **Jim Denevan**– Land drawings made in sand, earth, and ice, inspired by repetition and geometry.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Depth of connection to natural patterns and living systems.
- Technical execution, mastery of drawing materials, and effective use of line, texture, and space to show flow, balance, and rhythm.



# PAINTING- Canyon of Light



**paint·ing:** *n.* The process, art, or occupation of coating surfaces with paint for a utilitarian or artistic effect.

Canyons and other natural formations offer dramatic demonstrations of light, shadow, and scale, inspiring artists for centuries to explore the atmosphere, depth, and emotion of a place. Painters have studied how illumination transforms surfaces, colors, and textures, capturing the interplay of light and environment to convey mood, time, and sensation. Observing how light interacts with both natural and built environments allows artists to interpret space and form in ways that connect viewers to the landscape's essence.

**Challenge:** Paint a scene or composition inspired by the natural play of light and form. You may choose to depict a real location of your choice such as a canyon, forest, cavern, coastal cliff or invent an imagined space that uses light as the central element. Consider how changes in light through time of day, season, or weather affect the mood and composition. Your painting can be representational or abstract, but should demonstrate intentional exploration of light's transformative qualities.

## Research & Inspiration Ideas to Consider:

- Study how light travels through natural formations such as canyons, caves, forests, and ice.
- Observe atmospheric perspective in landscapes, noting how light and color shift with distance.
- Explore light in architecture, including skylights, atriums, and spaces designed to channel daylight.
- Investigate desert and cave studies to understand light in extreme environments.
- Research natural illumination in art history and photography, such as golden hour landscapes or moonlit scenes.
- Examine how translucence in wings, leaves, or minerals alters color and shadow.

### Historical Artists:

- **J.M.W. Turner**– Master of atmospheric light and dramatic skies.
- **Claude Monet**– Impressionist studies of light at different times of day and season.
- **Frederic Edwin Church**– Hudson River School landscapes with luminous depth.
- **Caravaggio**– Dramatic chiaroscuro emphasizing light and shadow contrast.
- **Thomas Moran**– Expansive American landscapes infused with radiant light.

### Contemporary Artists:

- **James Turrell**– Installations that shape how we perceive light and space.
- **Wolf Kahn**– Vibrant color harmonies in landscapes.
- **April Gornik**– Atmospheric, light-filled paintings of land and water.
- **Olafur Eliasson**– Works exploring light, color, and perception in natural and built spaces.
- **Jeremy Miranda**– Dreamlike landscapes with architectural and light interplay.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Depth of connection to natural light and form.
- Technical execution, mastery of painting materials, and effective use of color, value, and composition.



# ILLUSTRATION- Moonlight Magic



**il·lus·tra·tion:** *n.* A visual representation (a picture or diagram) that is used make some subject more pleasing or easier to understand.

Illustrating from literature involves more than simply drawing what is described on the page. It is about translating words into visual storytelling, where every choice, color palette, composition, perspective, and level of detail helps the viewer step into the world of a story.

**Challenge:** Your illustration will be inspired by an excerpt from the children’s picture book *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen (1987), which was awarded the Caldecott Medal. Your task is to capture the stillness, quiet anticipation, and luminous beauty of this moonlit winter scene. Consider how to convey the silence of the woods, the crisp brightness of the snow, and the subtle emotional connection between the characters and the moment. Use composition, texture, and light to guide the viewer’s eye and create a sense of depth and wonder. Your illustration should be your interpretation of the scene, infusing it with your own artistic voice and vision rather than a copy of the original illustrations.

*“It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Papa and I went owling. There was no wind. The trees stood still as giant statues. And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine. Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.*

*We walked quietly through the snow. The crunch of our footsteps was muffled by the thick blanket of white. The air was cold and sharp, making my breath puff out in little clouds. Papa held my hand tightly, steady and warm.*

*The woods felt alive with waiting. Waiting for the hoot of the owl, waiting for the moment when the night would open up and reveal its secret. I listened carefully. The world was hushed except for the distant sound of the train and the occasional snap of a twig underfoot.*

*Suddenly, a great horned owl called out from somewhere deep in the trees. Its voice was strong, haunting, a wild song that echoed through the stillness. I looked up at Papa, and he smiled quietly. We stood there together, wrapped in the night and the magic of the moment.”*

## Research & Inspiration Ideas to Consider:

- Explore how illustrators and painters depict moonlight, snow, and nighttime scenes.
- Study how artists use contrast between light and shadow to create mood.
- Look at examples of winter landscapes from different cultures—traditional Japanese woodblock prints, Russian winter scenes, Scandinavian folklore art, or modern graphic novel styles.

### Historical Artists

- **Claude Monet**– Impressionist use of light and color in landscapes.
- **Caspar David Friedrich**– Romantic, atmospheric scenes that evoke solitude and mystery.
- **Ivan Shishkin**– Detailed winter forests and rural landscapes.
- **Winslow Homer**– Narrative scenes in nature with strong light effects.
- **Utagawa Hiroshige**– Seasonal woodblock prints with night and snow themes.

### Contemporary Artists

- **Jerry Pinkney**– Richly detailed children’s book illustrations with nature themes.
- **Shaun Tan**– Surreal, atmospheric storytelling through illustration.
- **Brian Selznick**– Dramatic light and shadow in narrative drawings.
- **Jessica Roux**– Detailed, nature-inspired illustration work.
- **Carson Ellis**– Whimsical yet grounded illustrations with a strong sense of place.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Thoughtful connection to the mood and imagery of the passage.
- Storytelling through composition, light, and detail.



# SCULPTURE - Insects Inside



**sculp·ture** : *n.* The art of carving, modeling, welding, or otherwise producing figurative or abstract works of art in three dimensions, as in relief, intaglio, or in the round.

An ecosystem is a community of living organisms interacting with one another and with their physical environment, forming complex networks that sustain life. Insects are critical players in these systems, serving as pollinators, decomposers, and prey for other species. Their activities influence plant growth, nutrient cycling, and the balance of food webs, making them essential to the health and stability of the natural world. Through sculpture, artists can explore these hidden relationships, using three-dimensional form, texture, and scale to reveal the interconnections that shape ecosystems and the vital roles insects play within them.

**Challenge:** Create a three-dimensional sculpture inspired by insects and their ecological roles. Consider how you can show the relationships insects have with their surroundings, such as the way bees pollinate flowers, ants build intricate tunnels, or beetles recycle nutrients in soil. Use materials that reflect textures and colors found in nature, or experiment with unexpected materials to evoke the fragile yet powerful presence of these creatures. Your sculpture should represent insects' connection to the environment and encourage others to appreciate their often unseen but essential roles.

## Research & Inspiration Ideas to Consider:

- Explore a variety of materials: natural, recycled, or handmade.
- Think about scale: will your sculpture be magnified to show detail or small and delicate like the insects themselves?
- Reflect on the life cycles, behaviors, or habitats of your chosen insects. Consider the roles of Insects in their ecosystems: pollination, decomposition, food source, soil health, pest control, ecosystem engineer
- Study how different cultures view insects symbolically—some as messengers, others as symbols of transformation or resilience.
- Look into artists who create insect-inspired sculptures or use natural materials to connect to the environment.

### Historical Artists:

- **Maria Sibylla Merian**– Pioneering studies of insects and metamorphosis.
- **Alexander Calder**– Wire sculptures that evoke insects' delicate forms.
- **Louise Bourgeois**– Organic, spider-inspired sculptures exploring nature and emotion.
- **Albrecht Dürer**– Detailed natural studies, including insects like beetles and flies.
- **Jan van Kessel the Elder**- Entomological paintings on copper.

### Contemporary Artists:

- **Heather Jansch** – Driftwood sculptures of lifelike animals and insects.
- **David Rogers** – Large-scale insect sculptures made from metal and recycled objects.
- **Ritsuko Taho**– Abstract, nature-inspired sculptures using metal and stone.
- **Christopher Marley**- Artist, photographer, uses natural artifacts as his artistic medium.
- **Mike Libby**- Insects combined with mechanical elements in whimsical biocybernetic sculptures.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- How well your sculpture represents the relationship between insect and ecosystem
- Technical execution & effective use of sculpting techniques.



# FASHION- Aquatic Threads



**fash-ion de-sign:** *n.* A graphic representation, especially a detailed plan for construction or manufacture of the prevailing style of dress.

Water covers over 70% of our planet and has shaped life for millions of years. Oceans, rivers, lakes, and wetlands form the foundation of ecosystems, supporting food webs and influencing climate. Coral reefs bustle with life, kelp forests sway with tides, and deep-sea creatures glow in the dark. From the spiral of a seashell to the shimmer of a fish fin, aquatic environments offer patterns, textures, and colors that have inspired artists for centuries. In fashion, water has sparked flowing silhouettes, iridescent fabrics, and designs that capture both its calm and its power.

**Challenge:** Design and construct a *wearable* fashion piece that is made from paper-based materials. Your design should reflect elements of aquatic nature such as oceans, rivers, lakes, wetlands, coral reefs, marine life, plant forms, or even the movement of water itself, while showcasing innovative use of paper as your material. Imagine the underwater realm as your canvas, where the patterns of waves, the translucence of organisms, or the intricate shapes of seashells inspire a paper fashion piece that celebrates nature's water landscapes.

## Research & Inspiration to Consider:

- Explore water movement such as ripples, waves, tides, and currents.
- Consider how to translate motion into wearable forms.
- Study light in water including sunlight, moonlight, and bioluminescence and suggest it through layering, translucency, or texture.
- Observe aquatic plants, coral, and marine life for patterns, shapes, and symmetry to inspire structure or embellishment.
- Experiment with paper techniques such as folding, pleating, cutting, and sculpting to mimic natural forms.
- Research artists and designers using aquatic imagery or paper for inspiration in palette, pattern, and texture.

### Historical Artists

- **Hiroshige Utagawa**–Ukiyo-e prints of rivers, waterfalls, and coastal scenes
- **Winslow Homer**– Realistic paintings of the sea, storms, and fishermen.
- **Claude Monet**– Impressionist depictions of water lilies, rivers, and reflections.
- **Chigiri-e Artists** –Torn paper used to create textured collages, as backgrounds for calligraphy
- **Ernst Haeckel**– Scientific yet artistic renderings of jellyfish, corals, and microscopic sea life.

### Contemporary Artists

- **Joanna Jia** – Fashion designer whose "Water of Life" collection features ocean-inspired couture
- **Courtney Mattison**– Large ceramic coral reef installations related to ocean conservation.
- **Maya Lin**– Sculptures and installations inspired by water currents, maps, and waterways.
- **Mlle Hipolyte** – Sculptor whose colored paper structures mimic the diverse forms of coral reefs.
- **Mark Dion**– Installations exploring marine biodiversity, with scientific and historical references.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Thoughtful connection to water environments
- Team's process for translating those elements into wearable fashion, with paper products as the primary construction material.



# ARCHITECTURE- Biomorphic School



**ar·chi·tec·ture:** *n.* The profession of designing buildings, open areas, communities, and other artificial constructions and environments, usually with some regard to aesthetic effect.

Architecture in the biomorphic world is the art of designing spaces that draw inspiration from the forms, patterns, and functions found in nature. These designs often blur the line between the built environment and living systems, creating structures that feel alive and responsive. Examples include buildings with canyon-like walls such as the one seen in the Gilder Center of the American Museum of Natural History, flowing organic curves, branching structures inspired by trees, or communal layouts reflecting coral reefs and beehives.

**Challenge:** Design a school or learning space that merges natural form with architectural possibility. Your building could reflect organic systems such as canyon walls, branching trees, coral reefs, honeycomb geometry, river networks, or seashell spirals, though there are countless other natural systems you could explore. Consider how people will interact with the learning spaces, how sightlines and light shape the experience, and how materials and scale contribute to both function and inspiration. Your school can be for anyone or anything: a traditional classroom, a community learning hub, an art academy, a nature-focused outdoor school, or a completely imaginative purpose. Use creativity to determine who inhabits the space and how the design supports their learning, while showing how nature can guide both form and function.

## Research & Inspiration Ideas to Consider:

- Study organic architecture that harmonizes with its environment.
- Explore different learning environments, considering who uses them and their purpose.
- Look at natural formations like coral reefs, beehives, and root networks as structural models.
- Investigate sustainable materials and design strategies that reflect natural growth.
- Examine the Richard Gilder Center, the Wild Center in the Adirondacks, and the Biomuseo in Panama City for examples of nature-inspired architecture.

## Historical Architects & Designers:

- **Antoni Gaudí** – Spanish architect whose forms echo nature’s curves and geometry.
- **Frank Lloyd Wright** – Architect known for harmony with the environment.
- **Zaha Hadid** – Architect celebrated for fluid, organic architectural forms.
- **Julia Morgan** – Architect known for structures integrating natural surroundings.
- **Geoffrey Bawa** – Architect who pioneered “tropical modernism.”

## Contemporary Architects & Artists:

- **Jeanne Gang & Studio Gang** – Designer of environmentally integrated community spaces.
- **The Wild Center Design Team** – Biomorphic, educational architecture in the Adirondacks.
- **Frank Gehry** – Biomuseo Design Team, Panama City museum inspired by biodiversity and nature.
- **Neri Oxman** – Designer blending biology, materials science, and architectural form.
- **EcoKidi Kindergarten, Vietnam** – Kindergarten in Vinh features a facade resembling natural forms

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Depth of connection to natural forms and systems.
- Technical execution, structural logic, and thoughtful use of spaces and materials in a school environment



# PHOTOGRAPHY: Shifting Perspective



**pho-tog-ra-phy:** *n.* The art or process of producing images of objects on photosensitive surfaces or through digital processes.

Kate Messner's *Over and Under* book series explores life in contrasting environments, showing readers what happens above and below surfaces in nature. In these books, she might illustrate life in a river, highlighting the plants, fish, and creatures underwater, while also showing birds, trees, and insects above. Other books in the series explore forests, oceans, or urban ecosystems, using visual storytelling to emphasize the interconnectedness of these layers. Messner's work showcases the juxtaposition of environments, revealing surprises, contrasts, and relationships that are often overlooked when seen from a single perspective.

**Challenge:** Create a pair or series of photographs that explore juxtaposition and multiple points of view, telling a richer story together. Your perspectives could appear in separate frames or within a single image. Think about contrasts such as high versus low angles, close-up versus wide shots, stillness versus movement, light versus shadow, or natural versus man-made environments. Consider how composition, lighting, texture, and framing will support the contrasts you want to highlight. Decide whether your images will be documentary, abstract, or narrative in style, and reflect on how your choices in perspective influence the viewer's understanding and interpretation of the subject.

## Research & Inspiration to Consider:

- Kate Messner's *Over and Under* book series
- Dual perspectives in art & photography – How two vantage points can tell different stories.
- Diptych & triptych formats – Ways to visually connect related images.
- Minimal editing – Focusing on in-camera composition rather than heavy manipulation.
- Natural history photography – Capturing life above and below ground, water, or sky.

### Historical Photographers:

- **Gordon Parks** – Photographer revealing powerful narratives through perspective.
- **Ansel Adams** – Master of landscape photography and tonal contrast.
- **Berenice Abbott** – Captured New York City's transformations with architectural perspective.
- **Edward Weston** – Close-up studies of natural forms.
- **Manuel Álvarez Bravo** – Mexican photographer blending documentary and surrealism.

### Contemporary Photographers:

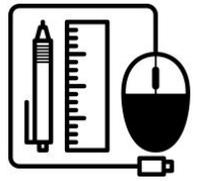
- **Rinko Kawauchi** – Japanese photographer known for poetic, close-up nature imagery.
- **Edward Burtynsky** – Large-scale landscapes showing the intersection of industry and nature.
- **Cristina Mittermeier** – Conservation photographer documenting life above and below water.
- **Jimmy Chin** – Adventure photographer capturing extreme perspectives in nature.
- **Ohan Breiding** – Swiss-American artist working with photography, film & video, to reinterpret historical events.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Strong composition and technical execution (light, angle, texture, focus, etc.).
- Ability to communicate duality of perspectives clearly through photography.



# DESIGN- Natural Setting



**de-sign:** v. to create, execute, or construct according to plan; to devise for a specific function or end

Developing an artistic design for a dining table presentation involves arranging and styling a table so that it functions as both a practical eating space and a visually engaging work of art. It goes beyond simply setting plates and utensils. Every element is chosen, placed, and coordinated to create a cohesive atmosphere and convey a specific mood, theme, or story, inviting guests to sit for a meal. In essence, it's the art of transforming a dining surface into an immersive, sensory experience where visual beauty, thoughtful design, and hospitality meet.

**Challenge:** Imagine you are hosting a gathering based on the beauty and wonder of nature. Design and develop a tablescape inspired by the natural world, which includes everything from forests, oceans, deserts, and gardens, to the patterns in weather, animals, or the cycles of the seasons. Decide how to place dishes, napkins, utensils and other items so the table looks balanced and inviting. Incorporate a centerpiece that stands out but still lets people talk and eat comfortably. Consider artists who depict nature in their work, and how colors, textures, shapes, and found objects can be arranged artistically to capture a specific natural environment or moment in nature.

## Research & Inspiration Ideas to consider:

- You may use a variety of materials- natural, handmade, or recycled in your display.
- Think about who or what your gathering is for. What experience are you creating ?
- Consider how each element of the table setting contributes to your theme.
- Examine artists of the past and present who use nature in their work. A few ideas include:
- Explore how different cultures use natural elements in table settings and celebrations. Might you reflect a cultural or seasonal tradition in your design?

### Historical Artists:

- **Vincent van Gogh** – Bold, swirling skies and vibrant fields.
- **Katsushika Hokusai** – Woodblock prints of mountains, waves, and seasonal changes.
- **Maria Sibylla Merian** – Detailed studies of insects, plants, and the life cycles of butterflies.
- **John James Audubon** – Lifelike bird illustrations.
- **Henri Rousseau** – Imaginative, jungle-like scenes full of plants and animals.

### Contemporary Artists:

- **Maya Lin** – Sculptures and earthworks inspired by landscapes and water patterns.
- **Patrick Dougherty** – Large woven structures made from sticks and branches.
- **Yayoi Kusama** – Nature-inspired patterns, especially organic dots and flowers.
- **Emma Sheehan** – Artistic tablescapes with contemporary design and personal storytelling.
- **Makoto Azuma** – Artist known for avant-garde floral and botanical sculptures.

**Scoring Considerations:** In Addition to the General Scoring Criteria on Page 4.

- Thoughtful connection to nature and the components within the tablescape
- Technical execution & effective use of materials and space

