Collaboration: Amerocco (Grade 9–12)

Amerocco, 2019, Aaron Fowler

Find online at: https://tinyurl.com/y7dtuuxg

LOOKING QUESTIONS
Take a minute to look at the artwork and take in everything that you see. Then think about, write down, or discuss these questions with a friend.

〇 What’s going on in this artwork? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can you find?
〇 What do you think this is made out of? What materials do you see?
〇 What do you think is the relationship between the people in the artwork? What do you see that makes you say that?
〇 How would you describe this place? Have you ever been anywhere like this before?

INFORMATION
This artwork is a depiction of a dream, wish, and fantasy. It was inspired by a trip that American artist, Aaron Fowler, took to Morocco with his friend Yannis, who is Moroccan. In their travels, they became inspired by both the traditional and contemporary Moroccan fashions that they saw—especially djellabas (long tunic outfits) and babouches (pointed shoes). Search these fashions online to see Fowler’s inspiration! He and his friend daydream about starting a fashion brand called Amerocco, which would combine these Moroccan fashions with American clothing styles, like sneakers and hoodies. This artwork represents their imagined Amerocco shoe store. The artist is shown in the middle, helping someone try on shoes, and his friends are sitting around the table, wearing these imagined fashions in positions that mimic a biblical scene. This artwork is part of an exhibition called Into Existence, inspired by encouraging words from Fowler’s grandmother who often told him: “You need to speak it into existence.” In this scene, Aaron Fowler is surrounded by friends who are making this dream a reality.

Aaron Fowler creates assemblage artwork. An assemblage is made up of different objects, often everyday objects, which are found or purchased by the artist. The materials that Aaron Fowler uses in his artwork range from: furniture, found car parts, plastic bottles, afro wigs, broken mirrors, clothing, lights from movie sets, and more. He finds his materials at thrift stores and on Craigslist, appreciating objects that have a story of their own. He has many inspirations, including popular figures, religious iconography, American history, and Black culture. But, his main subjects are always very personal: himself, his family members, and his friends.
LEARN MORE

- Hear Fowler speak in a 2016 presentation at the Columbus College of Art and Design about his personal history, inspiration, and methods: [https://tinyurl.com/y85dquet](https://tinyurl.com/y85dquet)
- Hear SAM Emerging Arts Leader Intern Ramzy Lakos talk about what Amerocco means to him: [https://tinyurl.com/yajy3roc](https://tinyurl.com/yajy3roc)

VISUALIZE
Write or sketch the following ideas on a piece of blank paper.

- Who is your dream team? Who are the people who support and inspire you?
- If you all got together, what is something that you could collaborate on? What would you do or create together?
- What space would you all meet in? This can be a real, online/digital, or imagined space.

ART ACTIVITY
Assemble a “dream team” and create an assemblage that shows your collaboration.

Materials
Cardboard or heavy paper, magazines, newspapers, any interesting materials that you have around (like, advertising on a cereal box, cotton balls, dried leaves, rhinestones), scissors, tape, glue.

Steps

1. **Place**: Print out, find images from a magazine, or draw the place where you will meet your dream team. Glue this onto a piece of cardboard or heavy paper to create your background.

2. **People**: Cut and paste photos of your dream team members into your space. You can also draw them or cut out people from a magazine to represent them. Here’s another technique that you can do with magazine images:

   *Sketch all over the back of your image with a pencil. Flip the image face up and trace around all the lines, pressing hard.*

3. **Details**: Draw or cut out images and words that give more information and detail to your scene. Add any interesting materials that you can find.

   Look again at Amerocco, and notice the small details that Aaron Fowler adds. How does this help tell his story?

4. **Assemble**: Add all that you have drawn, printed, and collected onto your background. Move it around until you are happy with your composition. When you’re ready, glue or tape everything onto your background. You could also take a photo of your composition from above and record it that way.

   - Now that you have a vision of this reality, what does it make you think about or inspire you to do? What strengths would each person bring to this imaginary group? What is one way that you can collaborate with people in your real life now?
   - Share a photo of your artwork with any real-life members of your dream team.

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