

dallas contemporary

Let's Practice Inquiry at Home!

Artwork: Ambreen Butt, *I am All What is Left of Me*, 2017. This artwork is from a 2017 exhibition titled *What is Left of Me* at Dallas Contemporary.

Age recommendation: Grade 6 and up.

Introduce inquiry into your day using the exercise below.

Ask your pupils to spend 2-3 quiet minutes looking at the images of Butt's work. Ask them to focus deeply and to look carefully. These works deserve our close observation.

Ask aloud "What do you see?" Use your own words to paraphrase each response to make sure that everyone involved in the discussion is being properly understood.

What types of shapes do you notice? Use the large images at the bottom of this document for long-looking.

Does anything look familiar?

I Am All What is Left of Me is made from tiles (detail below, left), locks and keys (cast in multi-colored resin) that reference Multani tile patterns (example below, right) –a type of Pakistani, ceramic tradition that typically adorns Islamic architecture.



What does Butt's artwork have in common with the Multani tile design?

In what ways are they different? (Think color, materials, shapes, design)

As you read above, the works are made by individually casting everyday objects like locks and keys using a plastic-like material called resin. The creation of each artwork is incredibly time and labor intensive because of this process. What do you think it's like for the artist to work on something that takes so much time?

What might it be like to work on something with such precise, repetitive forms?

What could that say about the artist's personality or values?

How would it make you feel to work on something so large, made of small items, for an extended period of time?

Conceptually, these artworks represent interactions between nations around the world. Often 'locked' to outsiders, foreign countries can present an aura of exclusivity. The work calls attention to the various political and geographical divisions that exist between countries, but also acknowledges the pursuit of unity and togetherness many people make in attempts toward cultural exchange.

What meaning might the locks carry when speaking about relationships being divided or disordered?

What purpose, then, can the key serve?

Have you seen or heard of any situations recently that brought all sorts of different people together in harmony? How could we apply those scenarios to this artwork?

Take a moment to rummage through the junk drawer, the places where you keep paper clips, screws, pencils, nails, and other items in multiple. Gather as many as you can and come back to where you're working.

Use the items that you've gathered to make a kaleidoscopic pattern like those Butt has imagined. Remember to focus on symmetry.* Make sure that any pattern you create is mirrored exactly from one side to the other—like a heart shape split down the middle.



Share your creation on Facebook or Instagram using the hashtag #DCfromHome!

*Symmetry: noun; similarity or exact correspondence between different things. The quality of being made up of exactly similar parts facing each other or around a central axis.