

# dallas contemporary

## Let's Practice Inquiry at Home!

**Artwork:** Kiki Smith, *Pilgrim*, 2017. This artwork is from a 2017 exhibition titled *Mortal* at Dallas Contemporary.

**Age recommendation:** Grade 6 and up.

Kiki Smith's exhibition, *Mortal*, explored life as an ultimate pilgrimage. Amassing works from the last ten years of Smith's oeuvre, the exhibition focused on images of birth, learning, love, and death. The artist drew upon a spectrum of religious and spiritual iconography, from the annunciation to baptismal fonts, to explore the relationship between the quotidian and the sacred. Through the incorporation of a multitude of different figures, the exhibition ultimately speaks to the totality of the life cycle and shared human experience.

Introduce inquiry into your day using the exercise below.

Ask your pupils to spend 2-3 quiet minutes looking at the images of Smith's work. Ask them to focus deeply and to look carefully.



What do you notice about these artworks? Or, what do you see?

What stands out to you about the figures that the artist has etched onto the glass windowpanes?

What are some words that you would use to describe them?

Paying careful attention to the clothing, hairstyles, and footwear that the artist has depicted, what period of time do you think these figures exist within? What makes you say that?

What do you think it might have been like to be a visitor to the exhibition? Imagine walking around and through these artworks. How might that make you feel?

From what you can tell from the photographs, how do the individual window panes work together?

Do you recognize any of the stages of life in her work? If so, make a list of major milestones in life that you notice in the artist's work:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Evidence of Kiki's search for female role models in the Catholic faith can be seen in *Pilgrim*. For example, a seemingly elderly woman, sitting down and visibly pregnant, evokes the biblical Sarah (the wife of Abraham). In another pane, a seated woman lifts her hand in a gesture emblematic of Mary's during the annunciation. Mary is evoked again in two double-paned frames, of a woman supporting the lifeless bodies of her daughter and son.

Using the window below, draw someone that you wish you honor from your life or from a story or historical event that you care deeply for. If you've got a washable or dry erase marker, you could even draw on a window at home!

Created by Angela Hall

