

Noah Davis, *Pueblo del Rio: Public Art Sculpture*, 2014. Oil on canvas, 72 x 48 in. (182.9 x 121.9 cm). Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase, 2014



HAMMER MUSEUM

Noah Davis (b. 1983, Seattle; d. 2015, Ojai, CA)
Pueblo del Rio: Public Art Sculpture, 2014
Oil on canvas
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase, 2014

The large-scale figurative paintings of Noah Davis explore themes related to community, history, and the intersection between modernist aesthetics and Black culture. *Pueblo del Rio: Public Art Sculpture* is part of a body of work that takes as its subject the community of Pueblo del Rio, a public housing project in South Los Angeles, constructed in 1941 and designed by the group Southeast Housing Architects Associated which included architects Richard Neutra and Paul Revere Williams. In these somber and surreal scenes, Black subjects are pictured engaging with traditions of fine art and performance: ballerinas executing arabesques in a rainy courtyard, a young trumpeter playing a

lonely night song, a conductor leading an invisible orchestra from his front porch. The painting on view presents a group of figures contemplating an abstract sculpture, their expressions hidden. Although rendered in a muted color palette that suggests a somber mood, the painting demonstrates what Davis characterized as “the potential of art and performance in a low-income community.”

Noah Davis (b. 1983, Seattle; d. 2015, Ojai, CA) was a figurative painter and co-founder of The Underground Museum in Los Angeles. Despite his exceedingly premature death at the age of 32,

Davis’s paintings are a crucial part of the story of the rise of figurative and representational painting in the first two decades of the 21st century. Generous, curious, and energetic, Davis was also the founder, along with his wife, the sculptor Karon Davis, of The Underground Museum, an artist and family-run space for art and culture in Los Angeles. The UM began exceedingly modestly—Noah and Karon worked to join a series of 3 storefronts in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of LA. Davis’s dream was to exhibit “museum-quality” art in a working-class black and Latino neighborhood.

ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS WITH THIS ARTWORK!

Lead a discussion about this artwork with your students. Follow the Hammer Museum’s pedagogy for facilitating student-centered conversations that cultivate standards-aligned skills including **observation, analysis, integrating contextual knowledge, presenting ideas**, and **collaborative comprehension**.

1. QUIET MOMENT

Begin by inviting students to spend 30-60 seconds silently looking at the artwork:

Take a quiet moment to look at this artwork.

2. DISCOVERY

Encourage students to share observations and inferences through open-ended conversation. Use one of the following questions to prompt their close-looking:

*What are your observations?
What are you noticing?
What stands out to you?
What’s going on here?
What are you seeing, thinking, or wondering about this artwork?*

3. CONTEXTUALIZE & CONNECT

Once you’ve held space for the class to discover the work, share selective contextual information that will further the conversation by generating more thinking, and/or help students look deeper. We recommend offering the information in relevant and digestible pieces rather than sharing all of it at once.

Here are some examples of information that you could share:

This artwork is by Noah Davis and it is called Pueblo del Rio: Public Art Sculpture. This painting is set in Pueblo del Rio, a public housing project built in South Los Angeles. Here, the artist shows a group of people looking at an abstract sculpture. Noah Davis has said he was interested in “the potential of art and performance in a low-income community.” He and his wife founded a museum dedicated to making artwork accessible to the working class Black and Latinx community in Arlington Heights, LA.

After sharing any information, ask one of the connecting questions below to facilitate further student discussion:

*Now that we’ve learned a little more, what more can you find?
How does knowing this shift the way you are thinking about this artwork?
What new reflections about the artwork do you have?*

4. WRAP UP

Bring the conversation to a close by asking students for any final comments, and thanking them for their participation and any skills you noticed them practicing.

THROUGHOUT

We recommend **paraphrasing** every comment, **pointing** to relevant parts of the artwork, and asking for visual evidence when someone makes an inference by asking “**What do you see that makes you say that?**”

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Learn more about the Hammer’s pedagogy, teacher resources, free tours, and other ways to get involved with the Hammer here.

