

Age Level: Grades K-5

Core SEL Competencies:
Self and social awareness

**National Visual
Arts Standards:**
(Connecting, Anchor Standard
#11) Relate artistic ideas and
works with societal, cultural,
and historical context to
deepen understanding.

**Common Core
Anchor Standard:**
(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.
CCRA.SL.1) Prepare for and
participate effectively in a
range of conversations and
collaborations with diverse
partners, building on others'
ideas and expressing their
own clearly and persuasively.

**Suggested
Learning Goals:**
After exploring the elements
of art and how they impact the
emotional quality of a piece,
students will be able to create
a work of art that explores a
particular emotion or feeling.

Share your feedback on this
lesson with us! Email our team
at education@harwoodmuseum.org.
Schedule a school tour at
harwoodmuseum.org/learn.

Exploring Emotions: Maja Ruznic



Maja Ruznic, Her Arrival III, 2020. Oil on linen, 94 x 76 in. (238.8 x 193 cm) © Maja Ruznic. Courtesy the artist and Karma.



Inclusive Welcome¹

Emotion Color Wheel

Place pieces of different colored construction paper around the room. Invite students to share an emotion or feeling word. Add student contributions to an anchor chart. Create opportunities to discuss new terms and invite students to share what that emotion feels like to them. For the activity, choose 3-5 emotion words from the chart and have students move to the color they feel represents that word to them. End with students going to the color that best represents how they feel in that moment. Wrap up by discussing how we each experience emotions differently and the changing nature of feelings.

Engaging Strategies

Slow Looking

The average museum visitor spends 30 seconds or less looking at a work of art. Think about the first time you met a friend. You probably didn't know that much about them: their favorite foods, what makes them laugh, etc. It takes time to get to know them. Art is the same way. It takes time to get to know and start to understand what's happening in a work of art.

Practice slow looking. Take a deep breath and spend 60 quiet seconds examining the painting. Scan from the top to bottom, left to right, then look all around, following what interests your eye the most. Notice a detail you may have missed upon first look.

Look Closer

Ask students these questions to explore Maja Ruznic's work further. Consider using strategies like Think/Pair/Share or Fishbowl to activate the discussion.

What did you first notice in the painting?

What colors caught your attention?

Where do you see lines, and what kind of lines?

What shapes do you see? What shapes are made by the sections of color?

What is nearest to the viewer (in the foreground). How can you tell?

What is farther away (in the background)? What makes you say this?

What do you think is happening in this painting?

How does this work make you feel? What one emotion word would you use to describe it to a friend?

What are you curious to know about this work of art? Do you have any questions you would like to ask this artist?

¹. For more about CASEL's 3 Signature Practices visit <https://signaturepractices.casel.org/>



Maja Ruznic, in her studio. Courtesy the artist and Karma. © Maja Ruznic. Photo: Joshua Hagler

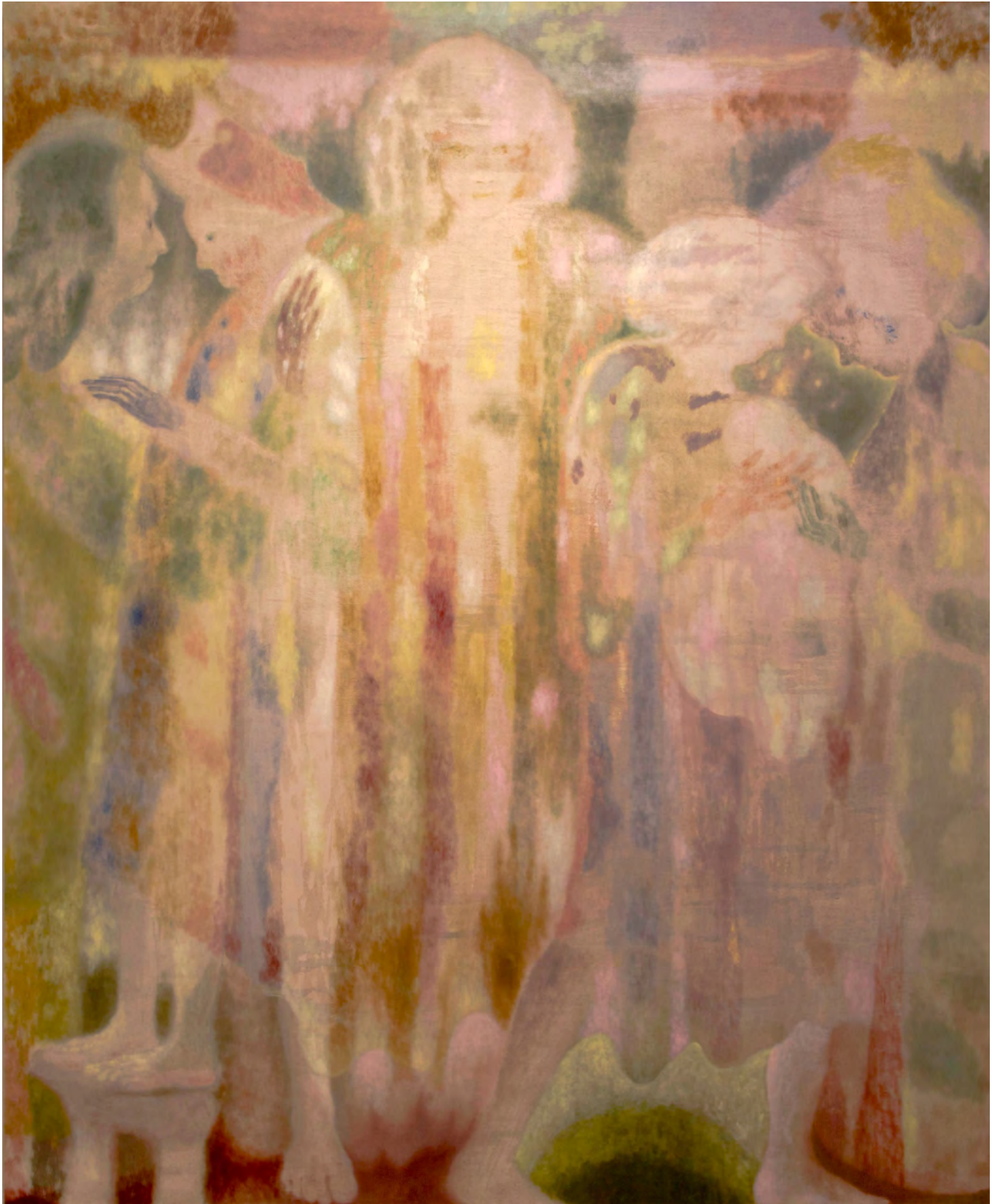
Meet the Artist

Maja Ruznic² is a New Mexico-based artist who was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When Ruznic was nine years old, civil war broke out and she fled her home with her grandparents. She reunited with her mother and eventually moved to the United States. Her paintings are known for their diluted, out-of-focus figures and landscapes that explore nostalgia and childhood trauma and are influenced by her experience as a war refugee. She says that “I want my paintings to evoke [a] sense of fluttering emotion, almost like a butterfly.”³ Ruznic often begins her work by choosing a dominant color. She associates colors with different periods in her life. Red is for the present, while green and yellow are part of her childhood.⁴ Her experimentation with layering figures and colors allows multiple interpretations, letting the viewer create their own connection with the work. Ruznic lives and works outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

2. <https://www.majaruznic.com/>

3. <https://www.claudia-cheng.com/editorial/the-art-of-maja-ruznic-motherhood-and-meditation>

4. <https://whitney.org/education/schools-educators/k-12/teaching-materials/teacher-guides/biennial2024/maja-ruznic>



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HARWOOD MUSEUM OF ART



Art Lab: Layered Emotions Collage

This project allows students to experiment with different art making materials to express emotion. It can be done in twenty minutes with fewer materials or be extended into multiple class periods.

Materials Needed

- Charcoal
- Pastels
- 8 1/2 x 11 newsprint
- 11 x 17 newsprint, watercolor, or multimedia paper
- Collage materials
- Glue sticks
- Scissors

Warm-Up: Gesture drawing with charcoal

- Gesture drawing is a process that artists use to get their hands and minds ready to create. Fold 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper into 4 quadrants. Choose 4 different emotions to explore in this exercise (reference the anchor chart you made earlier).
- Using charcoal, have students take a line for a walk in a manner that expresses one of the chosen emotions. Repeat 3 more times, 20-30 seconds each.

Layered Emotions Collage

- For their final project, students can choose one or more emotions to explore. They'll start by taking their pencil, charcoal, or marker on a walk to express that emotion or collection of emotions.
- Then using different pastels and collage materials, they will add to their piece working in layers. Demo different ways to work with chosen materials and encourage students to explore the qualities of the material in relationship to their chosen emotion.

Intentional Closing

Arrange final pieces around the room. Using a strategy of your choice (e.g. Gallery Walk, Concentric Circles, or Stand Up/Hands Up/Pair Up) to share something they appreciate about the work of another student and/or one thing they are proud of in their own piece.
