

VIEW FINDING

New Museum Kids Menu provides families with activities to learn about contemporary art and ideas at home.

Jordan Casteel, known for her large-scale portraits of people gazing directly at the position of the viewer, has also created what she describes as “**cropped** paintings” of strangers she photographs on the subway. In these paintings people remain anonymous. Casteel zooms in on the part of scene she wants to emphasize, leaving the subject’s faces out of the frame.

“My practice has always included these cropped paintings and real investigations of what it means to have balance within a frame, what it means to be a painter who loves paint...and the relationships between color, shape, and line.”

– **Jordan Casteel Audio Guide for *Lean* (2018)**

To learn more about Casteel’s exhibition “Within Reach,” you can watch [a virtual tour](#) or [listen](#) to Casteel speak about her work.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- **Composition:** arrangement of figures and objects, in a work of art; or the organization of the elements of art (shape, line, form, color, texture, etc.) in a work of art.
- **Crop:** zooming in on the main subject matter to cut away unnecessary or unwanted portions of an image. This can help focus the viewer’s attention, create different mood or emphasis, and sometimes tell a story.
- **“Filling the Frame”:** a common phrase in photography for filling the image’s frame with the subject, going past or off the edges on at least three sides of the picture.

START WITH ART: JORDAN CASTEEL



- What's happening in this picture? Have you seen or felt a moment like this before?
- Why do you think the painter does not show us faces, "filling the frame" with only part of the larger figure?

- What does she think is important to include in the **composition**?
- With the visual information you do have, can you tell where this scene occurred?
- What do you think the relationship is between the two people?

In the Artist's Words:

"This is one where my gaze is looking onto the world around me and choosing and cropping moments of tenderness, of love, of fear, of gesture. And in the painting of "Lean," I couldn't help but see this little boy's hands or child's hands on the back of their parents pants, that it felt (it's possible that I was homesick myself in that moment or that day), but I felt a real sense of tenderness and connection to that moment and I thought that the potential of representing that in a canvas frame would mean that all of us would have an opportunity to kind of see that moment again and reflect on what it means to hold on tight to those that we love, what it means to see our reflection, whether it's the subway mirror, or window that you see ...the person's hood is on, so we have no real sense of who these people are specifically, but there's a feeling that is transformed, or translated to the viewer that is universal...And I love that it can say "Do not lean on the door" and we're leaning on the people around us, another body, someone bigger, maybe someone stronger, someone we feel vulnerable and safe with."

– **Jordan Casteel Audio Guide for *Lean* (2018)**

LOOK AROUND

Practice seeing and emphasizing different details in the space around you by using one or more of these readymade view finding tools:

- Make an "L" shapes with your thumbs and index fingers. Flip one "L" on its side to make a square, like a window frame you can see through. What changes in the frame when you moving your hands closer and further away from your face?
- Look through cardboard tubes (or make rolled paper tubes). Compare how your view changes with different tube lengths.

MAKE ART

Let's create a viewfinder to **crop** a two-dimensional image, or a scene in the world around you, to make a new composition.

Materials

- One index card, or thin sheet of cardboard, or sturdy paper cut to 3x5 or 4x6 inches, a size that won't bend and can be held up comfortably with one hand
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Paper of larger than the index card (letter sized or larger)
- Colored pencils or crayons

- Images from magazines, newspapers, posters, and/or books

Making

1. Using your ruler, draw a one-inch square in the center of your cardboard.
2. Cut out the square. This is now your viewfinder.
3. Cut the sheet of paper where you will draw your image into a square. For example, if your paper is 8.5 inches x 11 inches, mark the long side at 8.5 inches and cut off the excess, leaving an 8.5 x 8.5-inch square. You can use your ruler to draw a straight line on the side that should be cut.
4. Sit in a place where you can draw comfortably. Look through your viewfinder and focus on an area around you. Move the viewfinder toward and away from your face to find different views. Frame an interesting, square composition.
5. Sketch your composition on your square paper. Draw what you see all the way to the edges, filling the frame. Use your viewfinder as you sketch to remember the composition you want to make.
6. Alternative: Place your cardboard viewfinder on a larger two-dimensional image from a book, magazine, poster, or newspaper. Move the viewfinder around the image to find a new composition. Crop the image so that your cropped version can tell a new story, emphasize a feeling, or express a new idea. Draw what's in the viewfinder at a larger scale on your paper.
7. Photograph your cropped drawings! Share on social media with **#NewMuseumKidsMenu**

REFLECTION

- What did you notice using the viewfinder?
- Does your drawing go all the way to the edges of the paper, filling the frame?
- What did your cropping leave out, and what did it include? Why did you make those choices?
- Does the composition express a story, a feeling, or something you want yourself and others to focus on in the picture?

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MUSEUM

IMAGE:

Jordan Casteel, *Lean*, 2018. Oil on canvas. 72 x 56 in (182.88 x 142.24 cm). Collection of Matt and Yasmine Johnson

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