

TAKE & MAKE

GRADES K-7

DIY ART PROJECTS
TO GO!

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The World from Above

Photographers use many tools to capture an image. Of course, you need a camera, sometimes different lenses, maybe a tripod. One photographer in particular named **Alex MacLean**, is a pilot AND a photographer. He uses an airplane to fly way up in the sky so he can photograph the world from above! This is sometimes called "aerial photography." You may be familiar with drone photography, which is similar, but airplanes can fly much higher than a drone, and the landscape below looks different depending on how close or far away you are from the ground.

Sometimes the landscape can surprise you when it is photographed from above. You can see things you can't see when you are standing on the ground. Shapes and colors in the landscape change when viewed from the air. Sometimes the landscape can look very abstract.*



Why does Alex MacLean choose to photograph from an airplane? He likes the experience of piloting himself through the sky. The views from his plane give him lots of new perspectives on the landscape below. He can use pathways, roads, borders, colors and shapes that he sees to make his photographs. These photographs allow him to tell a story from his view in the air about our natural and human made world on the ground.

From the air you can see how the landscape changes as you fly above it. You can see where houses are built, where trees have been forested, where fires have occurred. It can be much easier to see what humans are busy doing on the ground when you view their activity from above.

Don't forget to post and share!

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RESOURCES

WEBSITES

- Powers of Ten: <https://youtu.be/OfKBhvDjuy0>
- Alex MacLean's Website: <http://www.alexmaclean.com/>
- iPhone photography video: <https://youtu.be/9lCoRt0yr1w>

BOOKS

- *Alex MacLean: Over: the American landscape at the tipping point*
- *Photography for kids: The kids' guide to digital photography: how to shoot, save, play with & print your digital photos*

CRAFT OPTION 1: YOUR BACKYARD FROM ABOVE

MATERIALS

- Paper
- Pencil
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers

Can you visualize what your house and yard looks like from above, and make a drawing?

Time to create!

Step 1: Take your paper and pencil and start by drawing the outside boundaries of where you live.

Step 2: Estimate where your house is located within the boundaries. Look at the details of your house and think about what they look like from above. Do you have a deck on the back that sticks out? Is there a front porch that you could see from above? Is your house rectangular, square, or a combination?

Step 3: Now think about the other objects and structures in your yard like trees and small buildings. What do they look like from above? Where are they located in the yard? Add these objects to your drawing.



The Bascom front view



The Bascom aerial view



The Bascom site plan

Step 4: Now add color to your drawing. You just created an aerial image!

Step 5: Explore your yard for signs of human activity. Look for places where trees were cut, or dirt was moved. What has been added, and what has been removed? Find places where wildlife are living close to your house, and mark them on your drawing.



The Bascom site plan in color

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- Why does Alex MacLean choose to take pictures from the air?
- How do humans change the landscape?
- How has the area around your house been changed by the people that live there?
- How is the natural world around your house affected by the people that live there?

CRAFT OPTION 2: ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY WITH A SMART PHONE OR TABLET

MATERIALS

- Camera or mobile device with a camera
- Lots of creativity!

Have you heard the phrase: “a picture is worth a thousand words?” This is very true! Let’s think about what a photograph might be able to tell us. Carefully look at the photo below.



Alex MacLean, *Rolling Up Rows of Mulch Fabric*

- When you look at the picture, what does it make you think about?
- What is happening in the image?
- Where do you think it was taken?
- Why do you think the photographer took the picture?

Time to Create!

We want to take pictures that tell a story, but we want the picture to be “abstract”. When something is abstract, we can recognize some things in the image, and some things become a little more mysterious. One way to abstract an image is to photograph your subject from above, like Alex MacLean. Another way is to photograph something up close. This is called macro photography. See the examples below.



AERIAL
Alex MacLean, *Parking Lot Drift*

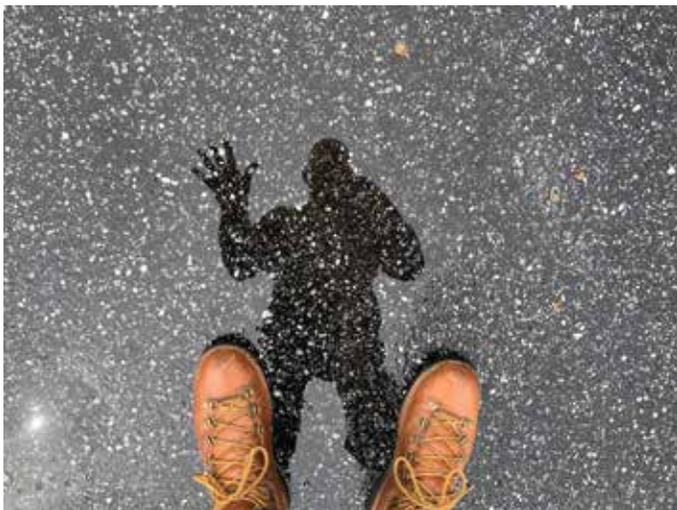


MACRO
Chameleon's Eye

Step 1: Using the camera app on a mobile device, take at least two photographs that tell a story. One should be taken from above (like an aerial photo), and the other should be taken really up close (macro).

Step 2: Experiment with the filters on your camera app. Maybe your abstract aerial photo tells your story better in black and white, or maybe with brighter colors.

Step 3: Write a paragraph that tells your story.



Aerial in color



Aerial with black and white filter



Macro in original color



Macro with more saturation

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Think about something that makes you happy, and use that to begin your story.
- Do you have a pet? Tell a story about what your pet does when you're not home.
- If you were a pilot, what adventure might you go on?
- Take a photo that tells a story about one of your friends or family members.

Ideas for photographing from above:

- Photograph from a deck or porch.
- Stand on a chair or a ladder (be careful!).
- Photograph from the top of playground equipment.
- Get an adult to lift you on their shoulders.

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

- Name two ways that you can abstract the landscape with photography.
- How are your two photos different from each other? How are they similar?
- Why is telling a story through photographs useful? ! !

Vocabulary:

- Aerial photography: Photography taken from an aircraft or other flying object.
- Abstract: abstraction in art is a non-lifelike portrayal of the real world that are sometimes difficult for other people to recognize.
- Macro: photography that makes photographs of small items larger than life size.

ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

Learn more about the photographer, **Alex MacLean**

Since 1975, photographer and pilot Alex MacLean has flown his plane and documented the landscape. Trained as an architect at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, his work portrays the history and evolution of the land, recording changes brought about by human intervention and natural processes. His images provide clues to understanding the relationship between the natural and constructed environments. MacLean has a studio and lives in Lincoln, Massachusetts.



Visit The Bascom!

Come see Alex MacLean's exhibit, *Curious Terrain: WNC from above*, on display through January 9, 2020

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Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm. **Entry is free!**

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