

## BAM AT HOME ARTISTS OF IDAHO

### DISCUSSION: Collaboration: Art + Science

**Note:** Students can be partnered in advance to connect via online platforms, or this discussion can be with members of students' households as partners. Alternatively, teachers can discuss the activity one-on-one with students remotely, or ask students to respond in writing. Please adapt lessons as appropriate.

#### Supplies

-images (included)

Take a close look at a sculpture in *The 2020 Idaho Triennial* (larger image, pg. 5)



Look closely at the smaller parts...and at the sculpture as a whole.  
You can zoom in and out to see details.

- What details do you notice?
- What does this sculpture remind you of?
- What do you observe that makes you think that?

## DISCUSSION: Collaboration: Art + Science

These two images show us the differences between **abstract** and **realistic** artwork.

### **abstract**

relating to general ideas or qualities rather than specific people, things, or actions



Caroline Earley, *Stasis VII*, 2019, ceramic, 7x10x5.5

### **realistic/representational**

true to life or nature



James Cook, *Windfalls - Old Fire Site*, 1988, oil on canvas, 36x70

**Abstract** artwork relates to general ideas or qualities.

**Realistic** artwork is about true life or nature.

- Is the artwork **realistic** or **abstract**? What do you observe that makes you think that?

#### realistic

- looks like barnacles
- looks like shells

#### abstract

- simplified
- lines + forms
- cannot identify a known object that it represents

This is considered an **abstract** artwork because it is not meant to look exactly like something that is real.

The artist's name is Joe Casey Doyle, and the **medium** of this sculpture is porcelain. We can say the **medium**— the matter from which a thing is or can be made — is porcelain. This is a type of clay. It is very soft, white, and smooth.

### **medium/media**

the matter from which a thing is or can be made; facts, information, or ideas for use in creating



Porcelain gives artworks a smooth appearance. While it is gentle on the artist's hands, it can be slippery and fragile to work with. However, once it is fired, it is a very strong material. When artists are selecting materials, these are some factors they think about that can influence their choices. This artist intentionally chose a clay that would be smooth, white, and strong.

## DISCUSSION: Collaboration: Art + Science

- Can you find something in your home that is made of porcelain?
  - Check the bottom of small objects—they will be smooth and white in color.
  - Usually sinks and toilets are made of porcelain.

Joe Casey Doyle lives in Moscow, ID, and is a professor at the University of Idaho. Sometimes artists collaborate with others in their communities. This sculpture is an example of a collaboration. Joe Casey Doyle collaborated with Bryn Martin, a professor of Biological Engineering.

- Have you ever worked together with other people to make an artwork?
- What did you make?
- What was it like to create something together? What was easy? What was challenging?
- How was creating together similar or different from creating independently?

### [elementary school]

The sculpture is titled, *Nebulous*, and shows an enlarged version of the optic nerve and globe, parts of the eyeball that communicate with the brain. Professor Martin is researching astronauts and how their travel in outer space affects their eyes. Professor Martin uses MRI machines to see astronauts' optic nerves. MRI images look like this (see below) – which helps us understand why the artist chose to use multiple, small pieces to make the sculpture.

### [middle + high school]

The sculpture is titled, *Nebulous*, and shows an enlarged representation of the optic nerve and globe sliced into pieces, based on MRI imaging. At U of I, researchers are investigating Visual Impairment Intracranial Pressure Syndrome (VIIP) in astronauts. Professor Martin uses MRI machines to see astronauts' optic nerves. MRI images look like this (see below) – which helps us understand why the artist chose to use multiple small pieces to make the sculpture.

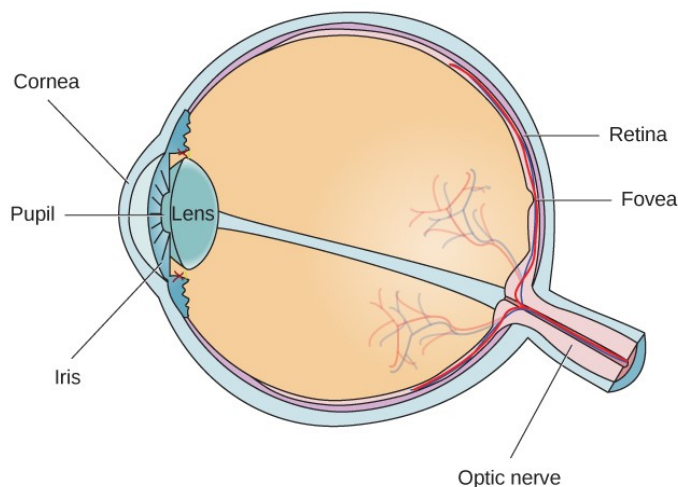
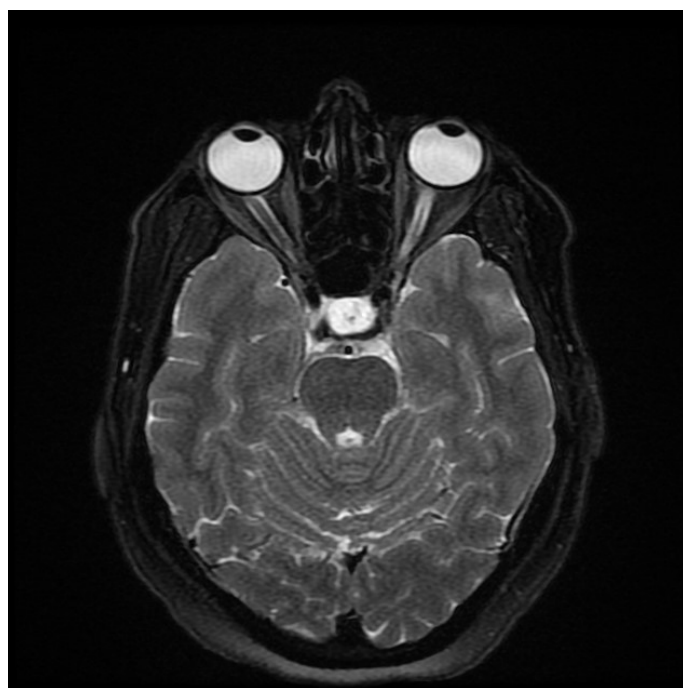


Diagram of the human eye.



MRI of the human skull, from above.

## DISCUSSION: Collaboration: Art + Science

This sculpture is an example of the ways in which artists collaborate and art connects with science and technology.

- After learning more about the collaboration inspiring this project, do you think this is an **realistic** or an **abstract** artwork? Why?

realistic

- looks like barnacles
- looks like shells
- MRI imaging

abstract

- simplified
- lines + forms
- cannot identify without more info.

both

- at first it seems abstract, but when you learn more, then you realize the artwork is representing something real; it is realistic
- simplified, lines + forms represent the MRI imaging, but the imaging is a part of the whole; it is abstract; artwork can still represent something else even if it is not realistic.

The artist calls the artwork *Nebulous*. Nebulous means not having a clear meaning or possibly having more than one meaning.

- Do you think the title connects to not necessarily being able to place the artwork clearly into the category of either realistic or abstract?

Observing and reflecting on an artwork with only your own experiences and ideas to guide your thoughts is one way to experience artwork. Adding additional information, like the artist's goals or process, can expand your thinking and understanding of the artwork and its significance. Both approaches are important.

- Did you imagine an artist was someone who collaborated with scientists to make their artwork?

In the next mini lesson, you will investigate a mixed-media installation.

Here is a sneak peek:





Joe Casey Doyle  
**Nebulous**, 2017  
Porcelain  
18" x 168" x 22.5"



Hear from the artist:

<http://www.boiseartmuseum.org/exhibition/the-2020-idaho-triennial-audio-guide/>

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boiseartmuseum.org