

People & Patterns: Exploring the Work of Ebony Bolt

Inspiration: Ebony Bolt (American, b. 1991). *Botanical Dreams in the Concrete Jungle* (detail below), 2017. Mixed media. Museum Purchase, 2018 ([2018.06](#)).

Ages: 5+ (through adult)

Duration: Open-ended

Materials needed: Paper and pencil; optional: colored pencils, markers, or crayons

Art, both the viewing and making, can be a tool for meditation, relaxation, and focused looking. To meditate means to engage in contemplation and reflection. When approached without a timeline or end goal, the purpose of producing art changes from achieving the final product to being immersed in the acts of observing and making.



Look

Take a close look at *Botanical Dreams in the Concrete Jungle*.

- What's going on in this work?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Think

- What is the impact of color on the work?
- How do you think the artist made the work?
- How does the title connect to the work itself?

Connect

Ebony Bolt is an artist and textile designer who is inspired by nineteenth-century [Victorian design](#), which is structured and ornamental. She contrasts this style with the messy nature of the urban life of New York City, pairing the two elements into something totally new. Finding beauty in everyday people, Bolt fills up her sketchbooks with images of weary passengers on the subway, often portrayed with their heads hung low or staring blankly off into space. These sketches are then integrated into her ornate, complex Victorian-esque patterns.

Do

1. Bolt's final product was not made in one sitting, but is instead a result of close-looking, sketching, and designing over time. Take a few moments to focus on one theme, either people, food, plants, or something else of your choosing, over a period of time (this could be one day, a few days, weeks, months, etc.).
2. Make sketches of your theme. The time taken to sit and observe is more important than the details of your sketch. The goal is to have small meditative moments spread throughout your day(s). Take your time looking and making marks on your paper. No rush!
3. When you have collected a satisfying number of sketches, begin to think about a way to arrange them in a pattern. Think about whether you will add additional elements to your pattern. For example, in this work, Bolt adds colorful flowers, leaves, and lines to her sketches of people. They connect with each other and with the portrait sketches, making a whole out of separate parts.
4. What elements can you add to connect your sketches? What emotions can you address in yourself and in a viewer through these elements?

Share

Take a photo of your work and post it to Instagram using the hashtags #EbonyBolt #MuseumFromHome, and tag @HudsonRiverMuseum.