



# Gallery Inquiry & Activity

Odili  
Donald  
Odita

ICA  
MIAMI



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## ABOUT THIS WORK

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Odili Donald Odita is an abstract painter whose work explores color both in the figurative historical context and in the sociopolitical sense. Odita's abstract paintings combine hard-edged bands of color with an earthy African palette, in patterns that also suggest West African textiles. "In my paintings, I am dealing with memory, the presence and absence of experiences removed; nostalgia for a lost past, and the hope for something new and better," he says. In installation works and digitally manipulated imagery from fashion advertisements, Odita critiques Western consumerism and the fashion industry's reductive representations of racial identity. His work also comments on social and political realities in his native Nigeria.

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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Students will explore how artist, Odili Donald Odita, uses symbolism to reflect on identity, culture and place.



Mamba Negra, 2019.  
Acrylic latex paint on wall  
Courtesy the Artist and the Jack Shainman Gallery, NYC

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# VOCABULARY TERMS

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## COLOR THEORY

The collection of rules and guidelines regarding the use of color in art and design, as developed to inform color schemes, visual aesthetic and effective communication on both visual and psychological level.

## SHAPE

An enclosed space, the boundaries of which are defined by other elements of art (i.e.: lines, colors, values, textures, etc.). Shapes are limited to two dimensions: length and width.

## MURAL

A large work of art painted or affixed directly on a wall or ceiling.

## BLACK MAMBAS

Species of mamba snake known for its large size, quickness, and extremely potent venom. Two drops of its venom can kill a person.

## SYMBOLISM

An implied meaning that is deeper or different from the literal meaning of an object, place, or idea. These meanings may represent ideas, qualities, or attitudes associated with an object.

## CONNOTATION

The various social overtones, cultural implications, or emotional meanings associated with a person, place, or thing.

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## ACTIVITY

### MONUMENTAL DRAWING

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Age Range: 6-12 years old

Activity Duration: 30 minutes

Odita's art reflects his interest in African artistic traditions, history and beliefs. He combines these influences to create a personal mythology — a visual language that expresses his thoughts through color and shapes.

Activity prompt: Create a drawing of an animal that represents you. Think about the colors and shapes you can use to capture the features of that animal. (Emphasize the physical and behavioral qualities of the animal)

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## ACTIVITY MATERIALS

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Roll of Brown or White paper



Colored Markers/ Color Pencil



Ruler

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## ACTIVITY

### SNAKE MURAL

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Age Range: 6-12 years old

Activity Duration: 30 minutes

Gather 3-5 various materials in your yard.



Look for leaves, rocks, and any outdoor materials you can find, including recycling.



You're going to need 3-5 containers to hold your materials as you gather them throughout the yard.



Before making the natural snakes: Think about what material you want to use for the snake body.  
(Eyes, Mouth, Belly and Tail)



Also, consider the scale and length of the snake. Think about rhythm within the patterns.



Once you have thought about these various ideas, you're ready to start your artwork inspired by artist Odili Donald Odita mural.

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# ACTIVITY

## BANYOKA

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This is a fun game played outdoors among the rocks and trees in Zambia and Zaire. The title of the game is from the African word meaning 'the snake'.

No. of players: Large groups (12+)

Time: 5-10 minutes

Equipment: an obstacle course.

Create an obstacle course by using household items such as chairs, boxes, tires, toys, etc.

Aim: To be the team to reach the finish line.

1. Find a play area that has trees or shrubs, rocks, or other obstacles. Alternatively, you can make up your obstacle course.
2. Divide the players into two groups of six or more children.
3. Each group forms itself into a snake (banyoka) by players sitting on the ground behind each other. The legs are spread apart, and arms are placed around the waist of the child in front of them.
4. Each 'snake' moves together by shuffling on the ground and moving side to side. They move around their obstacle course toward the finish line. The 'snake' must stay connected, so the children need to work together.
5. The winning team is the first to cross the finish line.