

Gabriel Dawe

FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

1. Have students try their hand at creating spirals on paper.

2. Students should use only straight lines to create a series of rhythmic designs that may resemble spirals or other curved shapes, much like those designed by Gabriel Dawe in his Plexus sculptures.

3. Using a variety of colored pencils, pens, or markers will add another layer of dimension to students' work.

For more resources on spirals in nature and connections to mathematics and science, see the link below.

TheHelpfulArtTeacher.blogspot.com/2012/01/spiral.

Artist Gabriel Dawe was born in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1973. He is a Dallas-based artist who has lived and worked in Mexico, Canada, and the United States. Active since the late 1990s, Dawe's body of work revolves mostly around large-scale sculptural pieces.

All of Dawe's works are site specific, and aim to speak both to and with the space in which they are installed. The artist plans the size, shape, and color of each work based on the space in which it will be created, using computers to aid in his visualization. Dawe's sculptures are created using miles of conventional sewing thread in a variety of bright, rainbow colors. The sculptures are completely handmade and require several days of painstakingly stretching lengths of thread across the space, often with the aid of a telescoping rod.

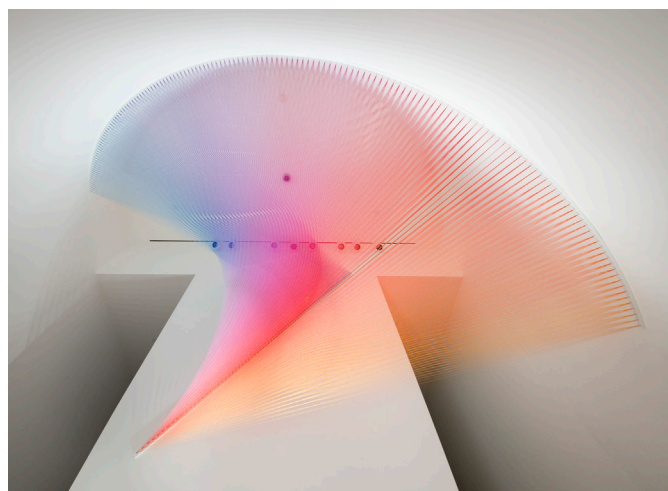
While the rainbow color palette is typically associated with the LGBTQ rights movement as a political symbol, Dawe asserts that for him, "a rainbow represents light," and "the idea that everything is one, and inclusion and unity."¹ His inspiration for these installations was born of an early fascination with the art of embroidery, a skill his sisters learned from their grandmother, but Dawe himself was not permitted to practice because embroidery was considered a "feminine" craft. As a result of the exclusion he felt as a child, Dawe set out in college to explore traditional textile crafts, expanding on those techniques to create his massive sculptures.

In doing so, he is "creating environments that deal with notions of social constructions and their relation to evolutionary theory and the self-organizing force of nature."² By working in a traditionally female-dominated medium on such a large scale, Dawe makes a bold artistic statement that questions the ideals of machismo that permeate Mexican culture.

Created as a commission for Crystal Bridges' *State of the Art* exhibition (September 2014 through January 2015), *Plexus No. 27* is installed in the stairwell connecting the Museum's Upper and Lower North Exhibition Galleries.

The *Plexus* series is titled to reference the network of nerves, veins, and arteries that traverse the human body. *Plexus No. 27* can be viewed from above as well as below. This allows viewers to interact with the work in a variety of ways depending on their physical relationship to it.

Each sculpture "comes to life when you move around it." The sculpture is stationary, but as a viewer moves back and forth, around, or under it, the color and placement of the threads seem to shift and morph, creating a deeply kinetic experience that has the power to distort perception and immerse the viewer into their own unique, personal experience with *No. 27*.



**Crystal Bridges
Museum of American Art**

Educator Programs are sponsored by
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Gabriel Dawe, *Plexus No. 27*, 2014,
thread and steel, 120 in. x 132 in. x 20 ft.
Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

¹smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/artist-gabriel-dawe-used-60-miles-embroider-thread-make-rainbow

²conduitgallery.com/artists/gabriel-dawe

³news.artnet.com/art-world/bold-thread-installation-takes-over-crystal-bridges-115318