

# **Mondays with MoMA**



**MoMA**

## Step 1 Look closely

### Questions

1. What do you notice about the setting?
2. What do you notice about the figures' poses and gestures?
3. What do you think is happening in the photo?

## Step 2 Learn more

Ming Smith is a photographer who was born in Detroit, Michigan and works in New York City. Smith was the first Black woman photographer whose work was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art. She is known for informal, action-filled portraits of Black cultural figures, such as Alvin Ailey, Nina Simone, and many jazz musicians. Her photos often capture the energy of a moment in time. She says, "Photography and dance are kindred because they both have rhythm and timing. Visually, there's a way to paint space with body movement. It's about lines and shapes."

*What kinds of lines and shapes are created by the movements in the photograph?*

This photo, *August Wilson Series: Two Pool Players, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*, is part of a series dedicated to the playwright August Wilson. The photos are all taken in the Hill District in Pittsburgh which was the setting of many of Wilson's plays. She wanted to capture in photographs the complexity and struggle of people she knew and the Black characters that Wilson wrote about.

## Step 3 Activity: Draw your memory

Materials: camera

1. Study the two figures in the photograph.
2. Try positioning your body to assume the pose, gesture, and expression of one of the figures. Hint: It often helps to have a friend or classmate guide you to make sure that your pose matches the image as closely as possible.
3. As you are posing, think about:
  - a. How does this pose feel?
  - b. What emotions and sensations are you experiencing?
  - c. What do you think might be the next natural movement or gesture after this pose? (What happens next?)
4. Take a photo of yourself in this pose.
5. Compare your photograph with Smith's photograph. How are the two photographs similar or different?

## Step 4 Share!

Share your photo with a classmate and ask them to imagine what your gesture may represent. Or, you can email it to us at MoMA: [schoolprograms@moma.org](mailto:schoolprograms@moma.org)



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Image: Ming Smith. *August Wilson Series: Two Pool Players, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*. 1990. Gelatin silver print: 19 5/16 x 13 3/8" (49 x 34 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Geraldine J. Murphy Fund. © 2021 Ming Smith