

Thinking Through Art

a resource guide to using art and language in the classroom



Lesley Dill (American, b. 1950), *Hell Hell Hell/Heaven Heaven Heaven: Encountering Sister Gertrude and Revelation* (detail), 2010. Multimedia art installation, variable dimensions. © the artist. Photograph Scott Wallin

Teacher Resource Guide Oct. 12, 2012

October 12, 2012

Dear Educator,

This year we are looking forward to sharing exhibitions such as Lesley Dill's *Poetic Visions* and our education programs which focus on the integration of language arts and visual arts.

Today's in-service is a way for us to introduce you to a dynamic teaching strategy we are using called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). The education staff uses VTS in every school tour, program, class, and camp and it is a proven method that gives each child a rewarding experience investigating works of art. We are fortunate to have received a modest grant from the Oregon Arts Commission to create a pilot for training teachers in the area on VTS and have developed a program this year to provide teaching resources and field trip opportunities for you and your students.

Because Lesley Dill's work is narrative, it lends itself perfectly to the use of VTS. In addition, we find that her use of poetry and language will provide a wonderful opportunity for classroom connections.

The museum has a number of programs and resources available for you and we encourage you to visit our website often to learn about upcoming training sessions and materials, www.jsma.uoregon.edu

Thank you for spending your morning with us and discovering the wonders of the art museum!

With best regards,

Lisa Abia-Smith
JSMA Director of Education

Lauren Suveges
Museum Educator

Overview of VTS

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a visual arts program for K-12 school students and teachers that uses art to teach thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy. Growth is stimulated by three things: looking at art of increasing complexity, responding to developmentally-based questions, and participating in group discussions that are carefully facilitated by teachers.

VTS encourages...

- * a personal connection to art from diverse cultures, times and places
- * confidence in one's ability to construct meaning from art
- * active class discussions and group problem solving
- * development of thinking and communication skills
- * development of writing skills
- * transfer of these skills to other subject areas

Background

VTS is based on the work of cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen and veteran museum educator Philip Yenawine. Housen has been investigating the nature of aesthetic development and its role in education for over twenty years. As part of her doctoral work at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the late 1970's, she developed a measure and method for assessing aesthetic development. In 1983, she published her doctoral thesis "The Eye of the Beholder: Measuring Aesthetic Development," which includes her well-documented stage theory. Yenawine has directed education programs at many museums, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

Beginning their work together in 1988, Housen and Yenawine focused on studying the effects of specific treatments (such as VTS) on aesthetic development, and the relation of aesthetic thinking to cognition in general, using Housen's method and theory as the basis of further experimentation. Also influential in the development of VTS is the work of psychologists and educational theorists Rudolf Arnheim (in whose honor the curriculum is named), Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky's research concerning the relationship of language to thought, and his findings concerning growth that occurs from interaction with others are particularly influential. JSMA began using VTS in 1999 shortly after the arrival of JSMA director of education, Lisa Abia-Smith. The museum's docent program was restructured in 2000 to align VTS into the museum's tour and interpretive programs for K-12 students.

Field-tested since 1991 in the United States, Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, VTS is specifically designed to address the concerns and abilities of beginning viewers. It is easy for teachers to learn, inexpensive, and efficiently fits into school schedules. VTS creates partnerships between local schools and art museums, integrating museum visits into classroom studies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), is an elementary school curriculum that:

- * Uses a learner-centered method to examine and find meaning in visual art
- * Uses art to teach thinking, communication skills and visual literacy
- * Measurably increases observation skills, evidential reasoning, and speculative abilities, and the ability to find multiple solutions to complex problems
- * Uses facilitated discussion to practice respectful, democratic collaborative problem solving among students that transfers to other classroom interactions, and beyond
- * Uses eager, thoughtful participation to nurture verbal language skills, and writing assignments to assist transfer from oral to written ability
- * Uses the Web to develop independence and computer skills as well as to assist teacher preparation
- * Produces growth, including visual literacy and greatly enhanced verbal and thinking skills, in all students, from challenged and non-English language learners to high achievers

- * Encourages art museum visits to underscore connections to art and to integrate a community resource into students' lives

- * Meets state standards in art, language and social studies; improves test scores in reading and writing

- * Teachers paraphrase student responses, actively listening, validating individual views, demonstrating language use, reinforcing a range of ideas

- * Teachers facilitate student discussions, encouraging scaffolding of observations and interpretations

- * Students support opinions with evidence, listen and share information and ideas, to construct meanings together

- * Artworks become more complex as student facility grows

- * Web materials and writing assignments enhance learning

- * Museum visits expand the students' experience

Overview of teaching with VTS

VTS consists of ten lessons taught by classroom teachers (Kindergarten - Grade 5) spread over the school year. Each lesson lasts about an hour. Most lessons are conducted in classrooms.

Each lesson involves a discussion of carefully sequenced images chosen from many different cultures and times, and in various mediums. Students are first asked to look at an image without talking. Then the teacher/facilitator asks certain non-directive questions. ("What's going on in this picture?" "What more can we find?") These questions encourage students to examine what they see. Later more specific, probing and directed questions are added. From the beginning, students are also asked to back up interpretations with evidence; whenever they state an opinion, teachers ask them, "What do you see that makes you say that?"

The teacher ensures that every response is heard and acknowledged, by pointing to what is mentioned as students talk, and then paraphrasing what is said. As the discussion evolves, teachers link various related answers, helping to make students aware of their converging and diverging views, and of their developing skills at constructing shared, yet varied meanings.

Complexity of the images builds as students' interests and abilities grow. In the later grades, students are asked to perform writing assignments, preferably using computers and the Internet.

When questions are asked, students are first asked if they can figure out the answer by looking. If unable to do this, they then are asked where they might look to find the answer. Only as a last resort does the teacher give the answer.

Discussions of any given image generally last roughly twenty minutes—long enough for students to look carefully, develop opinions, express them, consider multiple viewpoints, speculate together, argue, debate and/or build on each other's ideas, and possibly revise their conclusions. All along, teachers are facilitators of the students' process, never the expert.

In Grades 3-5, writing assignments are used as a way for students to begin to apply as individuals the skills learned while discussing images as part of a group.

Writing assignments:

- * Help students to connect verbal and written experience
- * Are a useful and meaningful way to use computers and the internet
- * Are useful tools for teachers to assess student development
- * Allow students a choice of images

Overview of Student Assessment Process

VTS is designed to promote growth in thinking and communication skills, as well as aesthetic development. Standard measures of achievement have limited use in assessing these different but related streams of growth. VTS assessment measures are built into the technique itself: listening to students, paraphrasing, and linking what is said. Paraphrasing is the main tool for keeping track of individuals in terms of oral language abilities, kinds of thoughts and concerns, information retained, and methods of processing information and ideas. Linking connected thoughts helps teachers understand how thinking progresses during any given discussion, how individuals relate to the group, and how a given student changes over time. Written assignments collected throughout VTS lessons concretely augment what teachers hear and recall.

During training, teachers are frequently asked to step back and consider what learning behaviors are encouraged by VTS, how these are manifested, and how to track them. Teachers are asked to keep an ongoing record of what they observe during VTS classes. Each lesson includes suggestions for different sorts of reflections on student behaviors.

Overview of Outcomes

Over time, students grow from casual, random, idiosyncratic viewers to thorough, probing, reflective interpreters. They go from finding only personal connections – appropriate when they begin – to searching out the intentions of artists and dealing with elements of styles. They are first encouraged to find meaning based on past experiences (legitimizing what they know), and to become grounded storytellers. After a certain amount of experience – when they begin to become dissatisfied with their own limitations – they are asked to develop their own voices through writing about art, either using images provided with the curriculum or via the Internet. The process first depends on group interaction and works toward individual problem solving motivated by personal interests. As students develop their connection to art, they exercise a wide variety of cognitive skills that are useful in many contexts. Indeed, in all locations where VTS has been tested, both classroom and test performance has been seen to improve, and the effect in all cases has been attributable to VTS.

What teachers gain with VTS:

Teachers link various related answers, helping to make students aware of their converging and diverging views, and of their developing skills at constructing shared, yet varied meanings.

VTS *Visual Thinking Strategies*

Basic VTS at a Glance

By: Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine (May 2010)

Starting the Lesson (Getting Ready)

At the start of the first class, introduce VTS: it allows students to examine art, think, contribute observations and ideas, listen, and build understandings together.

Project the first image. Always give students a moment to look in silence before inviting them to speak.

Asking Questions

After they have examined the image, ask the question, *What's going on in this picture?*

Whenever students make an inference (comments drawing conclusions based on observations), respond first by paraphrasing, and then ask, *What do you see that makes you say that?*

In order to keep students searching for more observations, frequently ask, *What more can you find?*

Responding to Students' Comments

Listen carefully to students, making sure that you hear all of what they say and that you understand it accurately.

Point to what they observe in the image, pinpointing precisely, even if the observations are not new. Use encouraging body language and facial expressions to nurture participation.

Paraphrase each comment. Change the wording, but not the meaning of what is said. In rephrasing, demonstrate proper sentence structure and vocabulary to assist students with language development.

Accept each comment neutrally. Remember that this process emphasizes a useful pattern of thinking, not right answers. Students are learning to make detailed observations, sorting out and applying what they know. Articulating their thoughts leads to growth even when they make mistakes.

Link answers that relate, including both agreements and disagreements. Show how the students' thinking evolves, how some observations and ideas stimulate others, how opinions change and build.

Concluding the Lesson

Thank students for their participation. Tell them what you particularly enjoyed. Encourage them to think of viewing art as an ongoing, open-ended process. Avoid summaries; linking throughout is enough to show how conversations build.



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VTS: *Visual Thinking Strategies*

Writing Sample

Student Name: _____ Teacher Name: _____

School Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

Date: ____/____/____ Lesson _____ Length: _____ minutes



Look closely at the projected image. Ask yourself:

- What's going on in this picture?**
- What do I see that makes me say that?**
- What more can I find?**

You have 15 to 20 minutes to write. Please use back and extra paper if necessary.

VTS: *Visual Thinking Strategies*

Paraphrasing Activity

Grade 3, Year 1, Lesson 4 video link:

<http://www.vtsweb.org/content/video-page-d2>



Comment 1

KEVIN: Uh, I think that it's in China, 'cause the lettering, the clothing. And I think that the woman is, like, waiting for something, and the man's telling her to come in.

Paraphrase:

Comment 2

AHMET: I think, I think somebody's taking a picture of them. And they are in a show. They are pretending.

Paraphrase:

Working on Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a key element in VTS facilitation for important reasons. For example, when you paraphrase comments consistently and well, you not only honor individual contributions to discussions but also set a supportive context to encourage full participation. You show that you not only hear but also understand what someone has said, and the boost this provides to confidence cannot be overestimated. You ensure everyone hears each comment signaling how important everyone's contribution is. You model language, including vocabulary a participant might be searching for, and data show the profound effects of this over time.

Given these reasons, when learning VTS, you want to pay attention to paraphrasing, and learn to do it as well as possible.

A tip that helps some: pay close attention to what participants say—hearing their words—but take a moment before paraphrasing to ask yourself:

What are they trying to say?

Take the time to think about the meaning of the comment, and words to rephrase it come more easily.

As you paraphrase, point to what was mentioned both to help you recall details and to make it clear visually that you understand.

Here are some questions to help you reflect on any paraphrase.

- Did you understand the idea(s) contained in the comment?
- Did you convey the overall idea(s) that the student was trying to express as well as the particulars?
- Did you express only what the student said and not add your own ideas?
- Was your paraphrase as well worded and succinct as you want it to be?
- Did you stay neutral?

JORDAN SCHNITZER **MUSEUM OF ART**

JSMA Mission Statement

The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art enhances the University of Oregon's academic mission and furthers the appreciation and enjoyment of the visual arts for the general public.

JSMA Arts Education Philosophy

Education is an integral component to the JSMA and is central to its vision. We believe that education should be included in the development and design of each tour, exhibition, and program we create. We value museums as learning environments in which curiosity, discovery, and contemplation are encouraged. Our aim for each visitor, regardless of age, background or ability, is to experience the museum with enthusiasm and success, empowered by new perspectives.

Our programs focus on family-centered learning, interdisciplinary connections, and the individual learning style of each visitor. We are committed to providing exceptional programs that promote museums as a source for life-long learning.

Alignment with State Standards for Visual and Language Arts

The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art is committed to aligning art curriculum with Oregon State and National Education Standards in relationship to other core curricular areas.

Access Standards by Design here:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/standards/sbd.aspx>

Intersections of Art and Language at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art

Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions: From *Shimmer* to *Sister Gertrude Morgan*

On view from September 29 – December 9, 2012

Lesley Dill is one of the most prominent American artists working at the intersection of language and fine art. Her elegant sculptures, art installations, mixed-media photographs, and evocative performances draw from both her travels abroad and profound interests in spirituality and the world's faith traditions. Exploring the power of words to cloak and reveal the psyche, Dill invests new meaning in the human form. Paper, wire, horsehair, photography, foil, bronze, and music comprise elements through which the artist conveys the complexities of communication. The often secret, indecipherable, and bold meanings of words emerge not only from hearing their sounds, but by feeling them—language is a visceral, bodily experience. Dill challenges the viewer to confront our linguistic relationships as well as perceptions of language itself.

Good Grief! A Selection of Original Art from 50 Years of Charles M. Schulz's *PEANUTS*

On view from September 1 – December 30, 2012

Charles M. Schulz's *PEANUTS* is not only the most successful newspaper comic strip in the history of the form; it also represents one of the more remarkable achievements in the history of twentieth-century artistic endeavor, in terms of qualitative consistency and sheer longevity. The strip debuted on October 2, 1950, and ran continuously for almost fifty years, with the last Sunday page appearing on February 13th, 2000. Schulz himself passed away only a day before this final strip saw print.

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Collections

Object rotations throughout the year

Gertrude Bass Warner, the founding director of the museum, began her love affair with Asian art while living in China, and her interests quickly broadened to include the arts of many other countries in Asia, including Japan, where she first visited in 1906. These works often feature the use of calligraphy and symbols, another way in which art and language intersect.

Other Resources offered by the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art

Art and Culture Outreach Kits and Free Curriculum Downloads

http://jsma.uoregon.edu/programs/k12-teachers-students.aspx#Teacher_Center

The museum offer art and culture outreach kits free to loan for up to four weeks. These kits include a complete curriculum guide and art and culture objects to enhance hands-on learning.

Access our collection online!

<http://jsmacollection.uoregon.edu/main.php?module=objects>

Interested in exploring art in the classroom? Search our database of over 3,000 images of 2D and 3D art from our permanent collection. Search by artist, time period, culture, date, and more.

Family ArtPacks

Family ArtPacks are a new initiative of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art to engage families visiting the museum in an exploration of the senses. Through sight, sound, smell, touch, and music, children and adults can investigate the artwork in different and meaningful ways. ArtPacks are available to borrow from the admissions desk and are free to use. As a special incentive, families that borrow ArtPacks receive free admission to the museum and the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their experience.

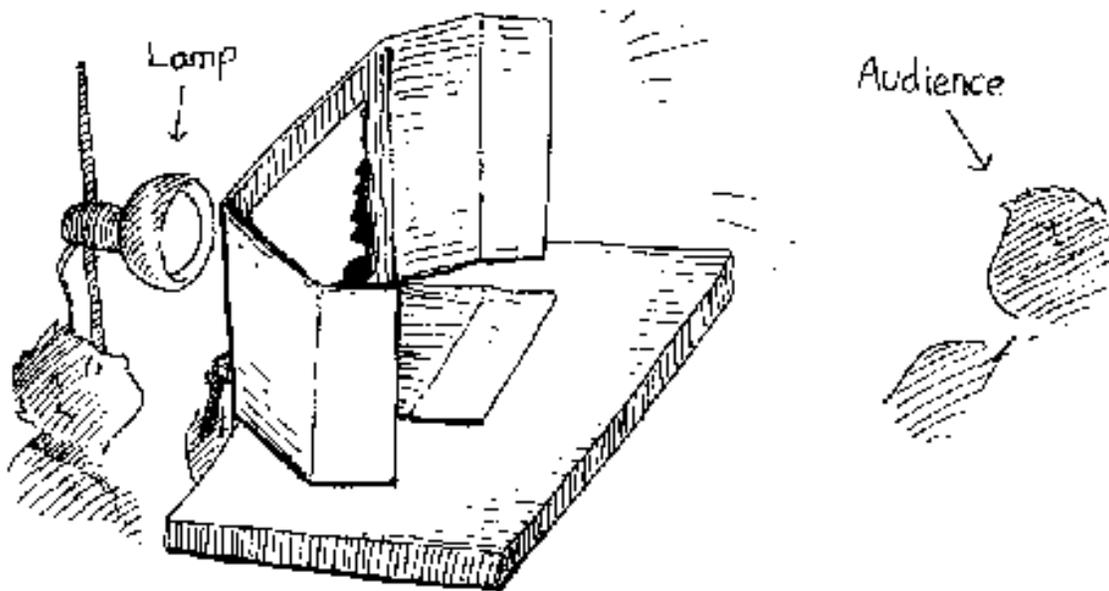
Guided Tours

Contact jsmatour@uoregon.edu for more information or access our website here:

<http://jsma.uoregon.edu/programs/k12-teachers-students.aspx#Guided>

Sample Lesson Plan and Curriculum Resources

Shadow Puppet Theatre



Lesson Overview

Inspired by the shadowy figures and characters lining the walls of Lesley Dill's Poetic Visions exhibition, this series of lesson plans incorporate the visual arts, language arts, and theater arts through puppet design. Whether it is working on character development in creative writing or studying the arts and culture of Bali, puppets are a fantastic vehicle for layering art, language, and action.

Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Identify adjectives to describe their characters
2. Draw and assemble their own shadow puppet
3. Present their puppet and its characteristics to the classroom

Materials

Cardstock or recycled file folders
Puppet templates (or students can create their own)
Scissors
Hole punch
Brads
Popsicle sticks, twigs, or bamboo skewers
Pencils and markers

Lesson Steps

1. Use this lesson in conjunction with a language arts lesson on poetry, storytelling, character development, etc.
2. Choose template or create original puppet with basic shapes.
3. The students cut out the head and body shape. It is fun to use the different wavy edged scissors to get special effects.
4. The students create the face by folding the head down and cutting two half circles or half ovals for the eyes.
5. The students then fold the head sideways, the eyes lining up with each other, and cut out half a nose and mouth. The face is very important as this gives the puppet its character.
6. With the construction paper scraps left from the body the students fashion legs and arms and attach them using paper fasteners or glue sticks.
7. Ideas for decorations: Glue tissue paper over the eyes, nose and mouth for color. Use a glue stick. Cut out shapes and patterns in the body using paper punches. Attach feathers by weaving them into two punched holes. Use pipe cleaners for arms, legs, hats, hair, etc.
8. Break off point of a bamboo skewer and using clear packing tape attach the stick from the head down through the body and off the puppet so that the student can hold and move the puppet.
9. Have the students use the puppets to retell a story or poem that has been studied in class.
10. Create screen. See diagram above.

Resources

Websites for Shadow Puppet Lesson Plans, Templates, and Information:

<http://www.jamboree.freedom-in-education.co.uk/w's%20craft%20corner/shadow%20puppets.htm>

<http://discover-indo.tierranet.com/wayang.html>

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-6-8/Shadows_and_Light.aspx

<http://www.karagoz.net/english/shadowplay.htm>

<http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/focus/shadow-puppetry.htm>

Artists using text and language

Pablo Picasso

Juan Gris

Hannah Hoch

René Magritte

Lesley Dill

Ed Ruscha

Jenny Holzer

Barbara Kruger

Martin Firrell

Mel Bochner

Roy Lichtenstein

And more.....

Puppet Performances

Let the Dragon Puppet Theatre inspire art and language in you classroom!

The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art's Dragon Theatre Puppet Group brings ancient and modern tales from around the world to life with colorful puppet shows. The group performs with hand-crafted, authentically costumed puppets for both K-12 classrooms and community groups.



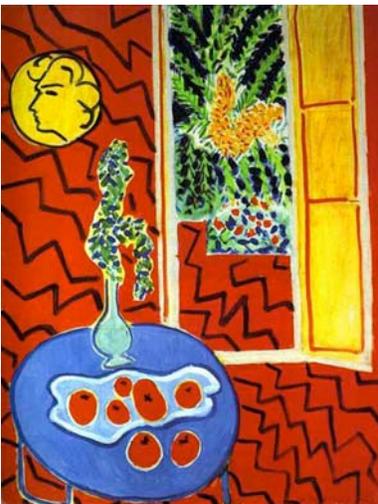
Raven and Petrel

This is one of the many stories the Northwest Native Americans have that features Raven, a character who can be either benevolent or tricky, or both. In our story Petrel is greedily hoarding all earth's fresh water. Raven steals it from Petrel and in the process changes from white to black.



Kintaro

A small boy and his mother are exiled to the forest. The boy's only friends are the animals. From them he gains the strength and courage needed when chosen to become a Samurai. Kintaro is a historic figure who is held up as a model to small boys in Japan.



The Vanishing Matisse

Dr. Albert Dreistein has created a machine to collect rare elements from black holes in space. Unfortunately for his Matisse Painting the machine can't tell earth elements from space elements. An artist comes to the rescue.

How to schedule a performance:

Puppet performances cost \$1/attendee for private performances or \$75/show for public performances. If you are interested in scheduling a puppet show, please request a performance or call the education department at (541) 346-0910.