

WILLIAMS COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART EDUCATORS' GUIDE

FRAMES OF REFERENCE: BEYOND DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

October 1 - December 5, 2008

February 24 - April 15, 2009



Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels

WILLIAMS
COLLEGE
MUSEUM
OF ART

encounter art.

Front image:

August Sander (German, 1876–1964)

Straßenarbeiter. Ruhrgebiet (from Menschen des 20er Jahrhunderts)*

ca. 1928–1929, printed by Gerd Sander in 1990

gelatin silver print

Museum purchase, Wachenheim Family Fund

M2006.10.4

© Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur - August Sander Archiv, Cologne;

ARS, New York, 2008

*Road workers. Ruhrgebiet. (from The People of the Twentieth Century)

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OVERVIEW

We look forward to your visit to the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA). We hope that this educators' guide will help you integrate your experience at the museum into your classroom teaching before and after your visit.

The Tour:

Designed for elementary, middle, and high school audiences, the **Frames of Reference: Beyond Documentary Photography** tour takes students through three exhibitions: **Beyond the Familiar: Photography and the Construction of Community**, **Fiona Tan: Countenance**, and **Liu Zheng: The Chinese**.

Spanning the history of photography and representing artists from around the world, this trio of exhibitions presents photography and video projects that document the daily lives of different types of people, exploring issues of identity in the context of social groups. These artworks create a frame of reference for looking at different cultures and, ultimately, raise questions about how we define others, see ourselves, and form stereotypes.

The exhibition **Beyond the Familiar: Photography and the Construction of Community** traces the impulse to document people—who they are and how they live—throughout the history of photography and in 10 different artists projects from around the world. **Fiona Tan: Countenance** is a film that presents a contemporary reading of the historical work by August Sander that is on view in **Beyond the Familiar**. **Liu Zheng: The Chinese** presents 120 photographs, newly acquired by the museum, which document contemporary China from the artist's perspective.

Tours chart a path through these exhibitions to focus on selected artists' projects that are particularly resonant for different age groups and themes. Students will discuss issues of identity and explore the power of point of view in hands-on photography and writing activities. Students will build an understanding of photography and visual literacy skills: They will learn how photographers approach their projects, how photographs communicate, and how we "read" photographs—including what we can and can't learn through the visual image.

Please discuss the shape of your tour and its themes with the Education Department. If you would like to reserve time for further viewing in the galleries, please let us know ahead of time and be aware that we require one chaperone for every ten students.

Before and After Your Visit:

To help you use this material in your teaching, this guide contains:

- Introduction to what is on view in the exhibitions
- Background Information on the artists, their projects, and photography
- Making Connections – suggestions for using art to make connections to different disciplines, meet standards, and build literacy skills
- Pre- and Post-visit Activities with lesson plans for discussion, writing, and art-making activities
- Recommended Resources for further exploration

The Frames of Reference pre- and post-visit activities are designed to be integrated with art, **English and history/social studies** curricula. Educators can adapt these project suggestions to their students' level. Activities are designed with the national and Massachusetts state standards in mind; educators who would like assistance in matching standards to their projects are invited to contact us.

Should you have any questions or wish to share any of the creative work your students complete using this education material, we would love to hear from you.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITIONS

These four exhibitions, linked by a common theme, explore the power of photography and film to evoke the complexity of culture while also questioning the implications of representing identity.



Zwelethu Mthethwa (South African, b. 1960)
Untitled (from Sugar Cane series), 2007
chromogenic print
76 1/2 x 59 in.
Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, NY

BEYOND THE FAMILIAR: PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY

September 20, 2008–March 8, 2009

This exhibition draws together the work of 10 artists from throughout the history of photography who have endeavored to reveal the character of an entire population through images of representative individuals. Projects are defined broadly to include entire nations or more narrowly based on race, gender, class, occupation, or neighborhood. Included is work from the 19th century by Felice Beato and Peter Henry Emerson; from the 20th century by Edward Curtis, Robert Frank, David Goldblatt, Barbara Norfleet, August Sander, and Aaron Siskind; and recent work by Tina Barney and Zwelethu Mthethwa.

FIONA TAN: COUNTENANCE

September 20, 2008–February 11, 2009

Fiona Tan's multi-channel film installation, *Countenance*, is both an homage to and a critique of August Sander's *People of the Twentieth Century*, in which he attempted to photograph and characterize the German people. Tan created film portraits of several hundred contemporary Berlin residents from a range of social, economic, and professional backgrounds. The viewer, saturated by these flashing images, is asked to consider how one might "read" the individual faces, their personal identities, and national character. Tan is Indonesian and currently resides in Amsterdam.

LIU ZHENG: THE CHINESE

November 15, 2008–April 26, 2009

The Chinese features 120 photographs taken over a seven-year period of people from all walks of life. In a style that combines the ambition of August Sander with the vision of Diane Arbus, Chinese photographer Liu Zheng captures a country and people at a time of momentous change. Recently acquired by the museum, *The Chinese* includes images of homeless children, coal miners, monks, transvestite performers, and the emerging middle class, among others.

**MEDIA FIELD:
INDEPENDENT FILM AND ETHNOGRAPHY
September 20, 2008–March 8, 2009**

This series surveys a variety of independent films that range from pure ethnography to critiques of the ethnographic impulse. Included are films from Robert Flaherty's 1922 *Nanook of the North* to Ruben Ortiz Torres's 1995 *Frontierland / Fronterilandia*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ARTISTS' PROJECTS (chronological order)

Following is a description of key aspects of each artist's project—their intention, technique, and approach. Each photographer in this exhibition determined the parameters of the project, with the goal of identifying and visually describing salient characteristics of individuals in the context of a discrete population. These projects most often were disseminated in the form of a publication, an album, book, or portfolio. Public and critical reception of these projects varied by project and over time.

Felice Beato, Views of Japan, ca. 1870, hand-colored albumen prints

6 Felice Beato (Italian, ca 1825 -?) created portraits of “various local ‘types’ representing the four social levels of pre-Meiji Japan – warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants – but also the fringes of society – the laborers, courtesans, mendicants, and street performers.”¹ Although identified most often by trade, the subjects were also engaged in daily activities such as a family sharing a meal. Beato produced these images using glass-plate negatives and then hand-colored the prints. Every photograph was accompanied by an English caption describing the subject by trade or activity. The albums were then bound for each customer. Beato worked on this project during the Restoration of the Meiji period (1868-1912). The rapid change in Japan at this time brought about feelings of uncertainty and a rise in interest in photography of pre-Restoration Japan within the ruling class,² showing the way things used to be. For this reason, Beato's albums were very popular at the time.

Peter Henry Emerson, Pictures of East Anglian Life, ca. 1880, photogravure prints

P.H. Emerson's (English, 1856-1936) photographs offer glimpses into English agrarian life at the turn of the century. For this project, Emerson created categories that defined people by the action they were carrying out, for example, basket-weaving, eel fishing, and so forth. The resulting book, *Pictures of East Anglian Life*, was met with harsh criticism upon its publication in the late 1880s because naturalism was seen as undesirable as an

1 Sebastian Dobson, “‘I Been To Keep Up My Position:’ Felice Beato in Japan, 1863-1877,” 36.

2 Haruko Iwasaki, “Western Images, Japanese Identities: Cultural Dialogue between East and West in Yokohama Photography,” p. 23.

artistic style. To make certain that his work in its entirety would survive as he intended them to be viewed, Emerson published his photographs in eight limited-edition books and destroyed the negatives.³

Edward C. Curtis, The North American Indian, ca. 1910, photogravure prints

Edward C. Curtis (American, 1868-1952) created an epic twenty-volume collection of photographs of the North American Indian types from 1907 to 1930. This exhibition presents the original photogravures, thereby showing them in the form in which they were first disseminated. Curtis was dedicated to researching, writing, and archiving these cultures. However, he did take artistic liberties when photographing his types, such as having them pose in clothing from other tribes and use props. Consequently, this project has always faced criticism for creating and perpetuating the stereotype of America's "vanishing race."

August Sander, People of the Twentieth Century, ca. 1904-1930, gelatin silver prints

August Sander (German, 1876-1964) ambitiously set out to chronicle a societal hierarchy that he observed in Germany for his magnum opus, the **uncompleted album**, *Menschen des 20er Jahrhunderts* (People of the Twentieth Century). The majority of the photographs were taken between 1904 and the 1930, amounting to over 650 prints. He organized the project largely based on people's occupations, which he further categorized into seven groups: The Farmer, The Skilled Tradesman, The Woman, Classes and Professions, The Artists, The City, and The Last People. Captions defined each type in the album. Sander sought truth in these classifications. In working on this project, Sander turned from professional portraiture and a pictorialist aesthetic to photographing these types with a documentary photography aesthetic called straight photography. This project has overtones of racial stereotyping, which is explored in case material. In addition, the installation by Fiona Tan in the adjacent gallery explores both the possibilities and limits of Sander's vision by exploring subjectivity and the relationship between photographer and subject.

Aaron Siskind, Harlem Document, 1937, gelatin silver prints

Aaron Siskind (American, 1903-1991) photographed Harlem in the 1930s at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. Siskind was an outsider to this

³ Ibid.

community—both geographically and racially. He depicts Harlem residents in a positive light, living with dignity in adverse conditions. The photographs primarily show public scenes rather than intimate interiors. Siskind later published his photographs in 1981 along with text from the New Deal program, the Federal Writers' Project, which supported writers in collecting and recording local histories. The resulting publication, *Harlem Document*, pairs Siskind's images of public scenes with text that expresses intimate moments by African American writers such as Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, and Richard Wright.

Robert Frank, *The Americans*, 1955, gelatin silver prints

Swiss-born photographer Robert Frank (American, b. 1924) created this seminal book project, *The Americans*, in 1955-56. Encouraged by his mentor Walker Evans and a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation, he traveled by car around the 48 United States to take 28,000 photographs. This corpus would be reduced to 83 published photographs entitled *The Americans*. Frank's goal, as he stated it, was to reveal truth in his own experiences. In his introduction to the book, writer Jack Kerouac extolled the poetry of Frank's vision.

David Goldblatt, *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, 1975, gelatin silver prints

David Goldblatt's (South African, b. 1930) *Some Afrikaners Photographed* from 1975 is the quintessential apartheid-era project. Starting in the mid-1960s, Goldblatt searched for what distinguished Afrikaners and their lives as a way of understanding South Africa. For Goldblatt, it was important to include the environment and landscapes that surround the people in his photographs. Goldblatt is of Lithuanian Jewish heritage.

Barbara Norfleet, *All the Right People*, 1986, gelatin silver prints

Barbara Norfleet (American, b. 1926) conducted photographic research into the lives of the wealthy, merging the tools of social documentary with the personal expressiveness of post-1950s photography. For her 1986 book, *All the Right People*, Norfleet created photographs all along the east coast. She worked to capture the gestures, expressions, and trappings that revealed her sitters' status as members of the privileged upper class in the United States. Her intention was to not reduce her subjects to types; rather she finds something essential that projects individuality and shared experience.

Tina Barney, The Europeans, 2005, C-prints

Tina Barney's (American, b. 1945) project, *The Europeans*, focuses on continental aristocrats. Her monumental color photographs bring out the subtle but telling details of lives normally kept from view. Although her photographs suggest spontaneity, her use of a large format, 4-by-5 inch camera requires her to compose the scene. Moreover, their large scale references the tradition of European history painting.

Zwelethu Mthethewa, Informal housing, C-prints

Zwelethu Mthethewa's (South African, b. 1960) project focuses on how individuals decorate their living spaces as a form of self-expression. Mthethewa photographs people in their homes surrounded by telling objects and the repeated, mass-produced images that paper their walls. Mthethewa investigates homes of the laborers and the sites of labor: sugar canes and gold mines as post-apartheid hubs of exploitation. Mthethewa says, "I chose colour because it provides a greater emotional range. My aim is to show the pride of the people I photograph. I love the richness of the jumble of styles and the cheap materials used to decorate the houses."⁴

Case material:

Brief consideration will be given to the publications of Erna Lendvai-Dirksen, who pictured a "pure" German race for the Nazis. Both Sander and Lendvai-Dirksen used related ideas about the portrayal of representative types, but to very different ends: Sander sought to study individuals for clues into the condition of their lives; Lendvai-Dirksen set out to prove the existence of a racially superior population using the spurious tool of phrenology.

The exhibition will include a consideration of two major documentary book projects as a conceptual intermission between two galleries. This brief section contains *You Have Seen Their Faces* by Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by Walker Evans and James Agee. Despite their differences in style and approach, Bourke-White's and Evans's work of the mid-to-late 1930s brought to the fore the very issues that would come to define documentary mode.

4 "In Search of an Aesthetic," *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography*, Paris: Revue Noire, 1999, p. 304.

*Technical notes:

- **Albumen prints** were an early form of photographic print made with egg whites. These evolved with technological advancements to gelatin silver prints. In both cases, the egg white or gelatin is applied to the paper and serves as a surface to contain the silver salts that react to light and create the image.
- **C-prints** are color photographs. Color was not possible early on, which is why photographers such as Felice Beato added color by hand.
- **Photogravures** are prints on fine paper; they are made from a photographic image that is applied to acid-resist surface on a copper plate, enabling a high-quality reproduction of the image with rich tonal values on paper.

Source: Adapted from curatorial text by John. R. Stomberg and research summaries by Amanda Hawley Hellman, Class of 2008, Williams Graduate Program in the History of Art.

ART HISTORY

History of Photography

The artists' projects on view range across the history of photography and therefore illustrate various technological improvements and aesthetic movements. The exhibitions encompass a shift in intellectual perspectives: from a positivist ideology or the belief that the identity of the subject can be truthfully captured on film (e.g., the early work of Beato, Emerson, and Sander); to the establishment of a documentary photography aesthetic or the desire to record the world as it is and as the photographer sees it (even poetically) (e.g., Bourke-White, Evans, Frank, Siskind); finally to a more subjective view, a questioning of truth, and the complex relationship of the subject, the context, and the photographer's point of view (e.g., Goldblatt, Tan, Zheng, Norfleet, Barney, Mthewetha). Following is an abbreviated history of photography relating to the dates of images on view.

1880's—Technological Advancements: The Dry Plate and the Hand-Held Camera

In 1879, experiments resulted in the dry plate, a glass negative plate with

a dried gelatin emulsion. Dry plates could be stored for a period of time. Photographers no longer needed the cumbersome and time-consuming portable darkroom. In fact, photographers began hiring technicians to develop their photographs, and the art of photo finishing was born. In addition, dry processes absorbed light quickly—so rapidly in fact that the tripod could be stored in the closet and the camera held in the hand. With the speed of the film and the influx of hand-held cameras, action shots became more feasible.

In 1888, George Eastman, a dry plate manufacturer in Rochester, NY, invented the Kodak camera. For \$22.00 an amateur could purchase a camera with enough film for 100 shots. After use, it was sent back to the company, which then processed it. The ad slogan read, “You press the button, we do the rest.” A year later, the delicate paper film was changed to a plastic base, so that photographers could do their own processing.

The Turn of the Century—Pictorialism & Straight Photography

Many photographers were interested solely in the aesthetic possibilities of the medium. Pictorialists, such as Gertrude Kasebier and Alvin Langdon Coburn, took photographs that imitated the style of paintings. Using symbols, shimmering light, and soft focus to create impressionistic dots and streaks, pictorialists depicted a world that was one step removed from reality.

Alfred Steiglitz, a New York-based photographer, was actively involved in writing, editing, lecturing, photographing, and organizing gallery shows to establish the reputation of photography as a fine art, from Pictorialism to avant-garde methods. Finally in 1924, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston collected Steiglitz’s photographs; it was the first time that photographs were collected in a museum in the United States.

At the same time, many photographers became interested in photography as a tool to record customs and manners, the facets of their culture that they felt were disappearing at the turn of the century. With Kodak hand-held cameras and rolls of gelatin films, photojournalists burst onto the scene. They felt compelled to record life as it unfolded before their eyes, to bear witness to the world and their place in it.

1920s and 1930s—Experimentation

In 1925, the invention of the Leica camera liberated photographers. Because

the Leica was small, light, and quick, they were now able to capture the activity of street life with greater accuracy and imagination. In responding to the momentous changes in the world around them, photographers experimented with different means of expression and techniques, such as surrealism, color, montage and F/64 straight photography. FSA Photographers Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Marion Post Wolcott, and others, traveled through America during the Depression, creating a visual document powerful enough to influence the government to change social welfare laws. Editorial and advertising photography became important venues for photography. Margaret Bourke-White, whose work ranged from industrial photography to portraits of such figures as Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, created the cover photo for the first issue of Life Magazine in 1936.

1940s and 1950s—Photography & Publishing

Photography books of all kinds became popular. Henri Cartier-Bresson published *The Decisive Moment*; Robert Frank published *The Americans*. News magazines such as *Life* and *Look* helped to establish the importance of photography as a communication tool. During World War II, Robert Capa's historic photographs of the amphibious landing on D-Day brought news of the event home in unforgettable imagery. Roy deCarava's 1955 collaboration with Langston Hughes resulted in the publication, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*.

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1960s and 1970s—Photography Comes of Age

Photography began to be shown in galleries and museums, collected in auction houses, published in books and magazines, and taught in universities. In 1974, Cornell Capa founded The International Center of Photography as a place where socially concerned photographic work could be seen as a creative art form...

1980s — Contemporary Photography

Photographers use various techniques, including large-format Polaroid photography, advanced electronics, multi-media installations, and digital imaging, as well as early photographic processes and straight photography, to create works that question such topics as identity, society, issues of verity, combinations of image and text, and fact versus fiction.”

Source: Excerpt from Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide. Written by Cynthia Way for the International Center of Photography, 2006. Reproduced with permission from the International Center of

LOOKING CRITICALLY AT PHOTOGRAPHS

These exhibitions provide a wonderful opportunity for building visual literacy skills, which can be defined as an ability to decode the visual image—to understand the choices that artists make and to interpret the effects of these choices. This is an important skill for all students. Without it, we would not question the image and we would not read it as critically as we read texts, data, or information from other disciplines. Considering how visual information bombards us every day, the ability to look critically at the visual image is more important than ever before. Such critical analysis of the visual also helps students to develop skills required for close examination of the written word.

As educators, we guide students to look closely at the photograph, to study the visual elements, and consider how they all work together to create meaning—as well as how each of our interpretations are subjective and can differ.

Photographers make artistic choices when creating, editing, and producing their images in order to share their observations of the world around them. These choices can be said to form the language of photography. They include purely photographic elements such as lighting techniques, point of view/vantage point, framing, cropping, focus and blur, as well as elements that are common to other art forms such as composition, style, subject, and context.

Following are two short essays on visual literacy and elements of photography that you might consider when discussing photographs with students.

What is Visual Literacy?

As visually literate detectives, we detect, decode, and synthesize the information from the visual image as if within lies the solution to the puzzle. We ask ourselves what we are looking at, how the artist created the image, why the photographer made certain choices, what the photograph is saying. Our eye moves around the image, entranced by the relationships among forms. As we look at the picture, feelings rise, and we think of associations between the image and our experiences. We may be reminded of other artists or traditions in art history. We assemble clue after clue, looking thoughtfully and sensitively at the image, until finally we see.

There is delight in seeing: in revealing a mystery, considering a new perspective, discovering what was hidden. Ways of seeing are different for each individual. Seeing means coming to an understanding, and each of us does that differently. As artist Vik Muniz says, “The visual world is like a crossword puzzle; we all have the same puzzle but each of us stores it differently.”⁵

Visual literacy is the ability to decode visual symbols into meaning.⁶ Looking at art involves responding—to what we see in the artwork and how that connects to what we see in ourselves and in the world around us. Thinking about visual art transforms our personal responses into “visual literacy”—we construct a visual language so that we can “read” the visual information.⁷ When we read images, we are synthesizing our sensorial, emotional, and cognitive responses to the photograph into meaning. We also construct a visual dictionary, a mental store of images that serve as definitions when we compare and contrast images.⁸ As visual literacy advances, we make more sophisticated judgments about images based on what we see and what we remember seeing.

Literacy, when traditionally referring to verbal literacy, is the “ability to read, speak, listen, write, and think effectively.”⁹ Similarly, visual literacy includes the abilities to “read” or decode visual images; to articulate to others your perception of what the image communicates and listen to others’ responses; to create visual statements (e.g., to adjust the lighting and framing to communicate what you want to say or to edit a series of images); and to think through problems visually (e.g., to draw as you think, to compose images, and to stage elaborate studio shoots)... Building these visual literacy skills takes time and involves looking at images, discussing visual elements, creating images, and reflecting on both the process and the results. Reflecting and discussing are critical processes; posing questions that encourage thoughtful responses helps students to get more and more out of the image....

This is a natural process, one that connects art and life, and yet we must train ourselves to see. All too often our disposition is to race through a gallery just like we pass by a poster on the street, in both cases allowing our quick glance and hasty judgment to tell us what we need in order to make it from one place

5 Vik Muniz, *Seeing Is Believing* (New Mexico: Arena Editions, 1998), p. 25.

6 Howard Gardner, *Art Education and Human Development* (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts, 1990), p. 9.

7 Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

8 Harry S. Broudy, *The Role of Imagery in Learning* (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts, 1987), p. 18.

to another. However, to truly understand art, and for that understanding to have an impact upon our lives, education, or our own artwork, we need to take the time to see thoughtfully and intelligently. Reading images in this way unleashes their power.

The Language of Photography

LIGHT

Light is the defining element of photography. Light literally brings the photograph to life, and the type and quality of light have the strongest effect on the resulting image. Often, photographers are inspired to create a photograph because the light is so lovely, casting on the subject a quality uniquely rendered by film.

Describe the type and quality of the light.

- Type/source: Is the light natural (e.g., from the sun) or artificial (e.g., from a lamp, flash, studio strobe)? How does the type/source of lighting affect the look of the image?
- Quality/direction: Is the lighting coming from above, below, the side? At what angle? Are there any shadows? Does the direction of the light create an effect of dimension?
- Quality/characteristics: Is the light soft or hard? Are the shadows thin or thick? Do light and shadow make a pattern?

Light and shadow, the light and dark tones in the image, often provide the most compelling patterns in a photograph.

- Look closely at the light and dark tones in the image.
- Find the shadows.
- Describe the pattern that light and shadow make.
- What kind of effect and mood do the light and shadow create?

POINT OF VIEW

Vantage point or point of view is the photographer's stance, both in terms of how the photographer is positioned when he or she takes the picture and what the photographer's attitude is toward the subject. How the photographer perceives the subject influences how the photographer chooses to position himself or herself in relation to the subject. This is similar to how your opinion

about something affects the tone of your voice and the language you use to communicate.

Point of view is one of the most important concepts to convey to young photographers because it shows that they have the creative control and power to reveal their perspective through the camera. An understanding of point of view encourages image makers to move around the subject and determine the most interesting and revealing approach.

- Where was the photographer when he or she took the picture?
- Was the photographer standing or crouching or lying on the ground?
- Did the photographer take the picture from above, below, or the side?
- Did the photographer tilt the camera or keep it parallel to the horizon?
- Can you guess what the photographer's attitude is toward the subject?
- How does the vantage point affect the way you look at the resulting picture? For example, a picture taken from above may give the impression of superiority, from below of inferiority, and a host of other interpretations.

FRAMING

Whenever photographers create a photograph, they are selecting a slice of the world as described through a frame. In terms of content, framing is like point of view: It presents the photographer's frame of reference with regard to the subject. Graphically, framing affects composition, because your eye follows the visual movement created by lines, shapes, and angles in the picture. In addition, the information that is included in the frame determines how we read the picture, just like how clues lead to the solution of a mystery.

- What is included in the frame, and what is excluded?
- Draw what you see in the frame, and draw what you imagine is outside of the frame.
- Hold an empty slide frame to your eye [or make a frame] and view your surroundings.
 - See how you can create images by framing.
 - Watch how the relationship of the forms changes as you move the frame to different places and tilt it at different angles
 - Look for "the decisive moment," when the forms come to a point

of harmony or look interesting to you.

CROPPING

Sometimes when photographers frame a photograph, they crop or exclude from the frame a portion of the subject, foreground, or background. The frame may cut off the man's hat, an arm, half of the chair. To make sense of the image, viewers don't need to see the whole person or object because there is enough information to imagine the rest beyond the frame. Cropping calls attention to the fact that you are looking at an artist's selection of a scene (as opposed to an unadulterated view of reality). Used effectively, cropping can add dynamism to the composition or make the photographic statement more concise. Used ineffectively, we may wonder what's missing, why the image looks awkward, its message unclear.

- What effect does cropping have on the graphic composition of the image?
- How does cropping help draw attention to what the photograph is saying?
- How does cropping affect your perception of the subject?
- Consider the use of cropping by photographers and other visual artists, especially after photography was introduced in the late nineteenth century (e.g., Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, and others). What have these painters learned from photography?

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FOCUS

The word focus means center of attention. This uniquely photographic attribute is created by both the focus and the aperture controls on the camera. The focus control centers on a part of the image, and when in focus the area is clear, sharp, and detailed, with distinctions between forms. When out of focus, the area is cloudy, indistinct, and vague, with blurriness between forms. The aperture control creates depth of field, the area that is in focus. Aperture measures the distance from the end of the focus area to the focal center (imagine the perimeter of a circle and its center). A shallow depth of field is in focus only to a small degree around the focal center.

- What can you see clearly in the picture?
- What is unclear?

- How does focus capture our attention? Can sharp focus capture our attention as well as blurry focus can?
- As a result of focus, does the subject gain or lose significance?
- Does the subject seem realistic or idealized?

STOP MOTION AND BLUR

In a photograph, motion can appear frozen in time and space or be described through blur. These effects are achieved mainly through the shutter control and the aperture. The shutter, triggered by your finger when you take the picture, opens and shuts like a blinking eye, letting in light. The aperture affects how much light comes into the camera; it works like the iris of an eye, widening in the dark to let in more light and narrowing in the bright sun to let in less light. In order to achieve a correct exposure—the right amount of light to make the picture, the aperture and shutter speed must have the right relationship. When there is a lot of light, the shutter speed is fast; and when there is little light, the shutter speed is slow. The faster the shutter, the more able the camera is to freeze motion, such that someone jumping could be forever suspended in mid-air. A slow shutter speed creates blur when figures are in motion. You can also create a sense of motion by moving the camera when you take the picture, called “panning” the camera, resulting in blur.

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COMPOSITION

Taken together, the shapes, lines, angles, colors and tones, patterns, and depth of the image create the composition. Figures and objects in the image are considered the “positive space” of the composition. Consider the “negative space,” too—this is the part of the image between the actual forms and the frame: the white sky or the gray floor, for example.

- Study how the composition keeps your eye busy with its shapes, lines, and angles. Where is your eye drawn?
- Look at the way the forms work together. Consider the shape that several forms, like three people in a triangular formation, make together. Is there a prominent shape or diagonal in the composition?
- What are the main elements of the composition? A pattern, figures, color? What are the complementary elements? Shadow, background?
- Overall, does the composition lead your attention to one thing or to many things?

- Does the composition “work,” effectively contributing to the meaning?”

Source: Excerpt from Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide. Written by Cynthia Way for the International Center of Photography, 2006. Reproduced with permission from the International Center of Photography. Entire resource available online at www.icp.org.

Portraiture and Documentary Photography

In these exhibitions, the artists’ projects share the intention of documenting people of a particular culture. Therefore, the photographers are using attributes of two important genres in photography: portraiture and documentary photography. Following are two essays on these genres, discussion questions for looking critically at photographs, and tips for photography projects.

Portraiture: A Tool for Reflection

Ever since the first portrait was created in 1839 on the mirrored surface of a Daguerreotype, portraiture has been one of the most popular, captivating uses of the medium. The excitement surrounding the first portraits was called Daguerreotypomania, describing the frenzy over the startling invention, its unlikely boxy tool, eager photographers, and customers seeking likenesses. Imagine seeing for the first time a near-permanent reflection of what you look like, the illusion in the mirror preserved and wrapped in a velvet frame. The essential kernel of this thrill continues today. Whether looking at a professional studio portrait or a photo-booth snapshot, there is the sensation of surprise as you assimilate your appearance in the picture with your self-image and inner identity. Looking at a self-portrait, you may think, “Is that what I really look like? Is that who I am?”

Because of the connection to identity, portraiture is one of the richest areas to explore with students. At a time in their lives when students are defining themselves, portraiture can serve as an important tool for self-reflection. Constructing a self-portrait empowers students to define and represent themselves. Discussing and writing about their portraits can reveal how they see themselves. Negotiating a portraiture session with a classmate reveals the limits of our ability to control how we are represented and perceived.

Part of the excitement comes from the opportunity to present the self in a photograph. Ultimately, the resulting image shows more than what was planned and less than who the person truly is. We can critique the shortcomings of the photograph, its inability to reveal the complete spectrum of our character, moods, and life story. We can also commend the photograph’s

ability to capture the essence of a person or a particular characteristic.

The following discussion questions and activities present ways to explore portraiture with students.

Discussion Questions: Interpreting Portraits

Every day we observe people, and from their expression, gestures, and actions, we interpret who they are and how they are feeling. When we study a portrait of someone, we use the same skills, assumptions, and acts of imagination to interpret the subject's identity and mood. A portrait provides us with a glimpse into someone's character and life. It is an opportunity to study who the person is, based on the visual description of that person at a certain place and time, and as interpreted by the photographer's sensibility and technique. A portrait provides a rare opportunity to stare and not be considered rude!

Look carefully at a portrait and discuss the following questions.

- Expression: Describe the person's expression. Can you guess what the person is feeling?
- Gesture: Describe what the person is doing with his or her hands. Can you guess what signals the person is giving? What habits or mannerisms does the person have?
- Pose: Describe how the person is standing. Can you guess what his or her attitude is?
- Action: What is the person doing?
- Motivation: Can you guess why the person is doing it?
- Clothing: Describe what the person is wearing. Does the clothing indicate the time period? Is the person wearing clothing for a particular type of activity? Can you guess what the person is like?
- Setting: The setting, the background, and the foreground often provide information about the person in the photograph. What details do you see in the setting? What does the setting add to your interpretation of the subject?
- Composition: Describe the composition. Do you see any prominent shapes, diagonals, patterns, or colors?
- Techniques: Consider the use of lighting and other techniques. Does the

lighting add to the atmosphere surrounding the subject?

- Point of view: From where did the photographer take the picture? (From above, below, the side, or at an angle?)
- Character: Consider the details in the picture, your observations, and the techniques used to create the photograph. If the person could speak, what would he or she say?

Portraiture Assignments

CREATE PORTRAITS! Self portraits, family portraits, portraits of others, portraits against a plain background, portraits in the environment, posed and candid portraits, portraits without showing the face using an object or symbol, portraits of the community...

- Consider the subject: What you want to say about them?
- What features do you want to highlight?
- Consider setting: Where do you want to take the portrait? Environmental portraits include details in the environment that reveal something about the subject. Do you want the setting to include details? Portraits against a plain background call more attention to the face and body of a person, to pure character unrelated to context. Do you want the setting to be a simple background: a wall, a color, or a pattern? You could also use a shallow depth of field or blur the background and keep the subject in focus.
- Consider lighting: How do you want to use lighting? Do you want the lighting to be soft or hard, natural or artificial? What features do you want the lighting to accentuate? Light on the forehead can make a person seem intellectual. Highlighting the lips can make a person seem sensual. Lighting on the side of a face can indicate two sides to a person, light and dark. Lighting that casts a triangle on the cheek is called Rembrandt lighting. Its quality of dimension can suggest a complex person.
- Consider framing and point of view: A portrait taken from above makes the subject look small, suggesting inferiority. A portrait taken from below makes a person look taller, suggesting superiority.

Types of portraits:

- Experiment with different types of lighting and points of view.

- Take one picture that is a close-up, one headshot, and one full-body portrait.

Source: Excerpt from Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide. Written by Cynthia Way for the International Center of Photography, 2006. Reproduced with permission from the International Center of Photography. Entire resource available online at www.icp.org.

Documentary Photography

Documentary photography, and its cousin photojournalism, are the great storytellers and spies of the medium. They endeavor to show things as they are. They call upon the aspect of the camera as observer, an objective eye pointed toward the world....

Bear in mind as you discuss images with students that there are many issues related to the ability of documentary photography and photojournalism to record "how things are." Each photographer has a different perspective, and, therefore, each will render a different photograph on the same topic. Because of photography's attributes of point of view, framing, and cropping, when we look at a photograph we see a selection, a slice of life, as seen through a particular photographer's lens. Documentary photographers use the aesthetics and techniques of photography to communicate; therefore, their visual statements, however objective they may seem, are still artful representations. Sometimes, because the image is so clear or truthful or emotionally compelling, we forget that it is a perspective and hold it as a fact.

Indeed photographic evidence has made dramatic and important changes in our lives... Lewis Hines's documentary photographs of child laborers indicted factories and influenced labor laws at the turn of the century. Dorothea Lange's photographs chronicled the effects of the New Deal in the 1930s. Robert Capa's photographs, such as documentation of D-Day during the Second World War, broadcast the horrors of war to the world in picture magazines.... Photographers' continuing contributions in this field (e.g., James Nachtwey's images of world conflict, Donna Ferrato's images of domestic violence, Joseph Rodriguez's images of gangs) remind us of the power...of the photograph to communicate. Even if now we don't expect a single photograph to change the world, documentary photography broadens our awareness of the world by its multiplicity of perspectives and its powerful, lasting memory.

Often people harbor the expectation that documentary photography and photojournalism should present an unadulterated vision of a particular

time, place, and reality. However, photographers are not invisible, and their presence influences the situation, in as much as we behave differently when we know that we are being watched or recorded by a camera. These are large issues in the field, and photographers have different standards and strategies regarding the way that they photograph in a community. All these issues need to be considered when teaching documentary photography...

Discussion Questions: Interpreting Documentary Photographs

1. Definitions

- What is documentary photography? What is photojournalism? (Consider this: Documentary photography is like a statement; photojournalism is like an explanation; fine art photography is like an expression.)
- What is a document?
- Are documentary or photojournalistic pictures the same as facts?
- If two photographers took a picture of the same thing, would they look the same or different? Why?
- What is point of view?

2. Issues in Documentary Photography

- What kind of impact do photographs have?
- Can photography be used to effect social change?
- How are photographic images used by the media?
- What is a stereotype? How are stereotypes perpetuated and broken by photography?
- How do you establish a connection to the community that you are photographing?
- How do you approach people when you photograph them?

3. Personal Projects

- How would you approach taking photographs of your community or another neighborhood?
- What kind of research would you do?
- How would you develop a rapport with your subject?

- How could you earn the trust of the people you photograph?
- What problems would you face? How could you overcome them?
- What is your responsibility to the subject?
- What artistic choices would you make?
- What techniques (e.g., lighting: flash or natural; film: color or black-and-white) are best for this subject matter?
- What style is most appropriate for this subject?
- What point of view best expresses your relationship to the subject?
- When editing the final pictures, which would you include to tell the story?"

Source: Excerpt from Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide. Written by Cynthia Way for the International Center of Photography, 2006. Reproduced with permission from the International Center of Photography. Entire resource available online at www.icp.org.

Making Connections

Following are some guidelines for making curriculum connections between the exhibitions and art, English language arts, or history/social studies. To illustrate how activities can meet standards, we have included examples from the Massachusetts State Standards. Educators who would like help working with standards for these or other activities are welcome to contact us.

Art

In its sweep across the history of photography, these exhibitions enable art students to see the way techniques and aesthetics in photography have changed over time and raise their awareness of artistic choices that they can make in their own work. Identity is an important theme in these exhibitions, and activities tapping into this theme are an excellent way to engage students in learning about art as well as other disciplines. A critical look at the photographs helps to discover the rich, complicated terrain in which the visual image relates to identity and operates in culture.

English Language Arts

This guide positions the photographic image as one that must be read. Through discussion, drawing, artmaking, and writing activities, students will read the image, think through artistic choices, and experience different points of view. At the same time, they will develop their descriptive, analytical, and creative writing skills. Using the image as a starting point for writing can often help students who have trouble accessing the writing process. Moreover, there are many books that connect to the historical settings of the photographs on view and the theme of identity. Students may also use

the exhibit as inspiration for poetry, fiction, or interviews with local people, workers, for example.

History/Social Studies

Each artist's project in these exhibitions explores a particular time, place, and culture, through the viewpoint of the photographer. These photographs serve as primary sources, as frames of reference into another culture, providing students with a glimpse into what life and work might have been like in England at the turn of the century or in Harlem in the 1930s, for example. However, it is important to question the photograph and to consider its possibilities and limitations. Does it function as a document? Does it reveal the whole truth? Does it reveal a different truth from other sources?

The pre- and post-visit activities in this guide are designed to help students look critically at photographs and develop their analytical, creating thinking, and writing skills. Educators can connect to history/social studies standards by selecting images for pre- and post-visit activities that are from the time period in history under study. For the tour, educators can select artist's projects that connect to areas of study; please let the Education Department know of your interest before your visit. For pre-K, Kindergarten, and grade 1, you might consider our new Storytime tour option, which incorporates stories and storytelling into the tour.

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STANDARDS

The following chart presents examples of standards that relate to the material and activities covered in the Frames of Reference tour. Pre- and Post-Visit Activities list the identification number of the Visual Arts and English standards outlined below.

Visual Art Pre-K-12 Standards

- 1** Methods, Materials, and Techniques. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the methods, materials, and techniques unique to the visual arts.
- 4** Drafting, Revising, and Exhibiting. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the processes of creating and exhibiting their own artwork: drafts, critique, self-assessment, refinement, and exhibit preparation.

- 5** Critical Response. Students will describe and analyze their own work and the work of others using appropriate visual arts vocabulary. When appropriate, students will connect their analysis to interpretation and evaluation.

English Language Arts

- 1** Discussion. Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
- 19** Writing. Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.
- 20** Consideration of Audience and Purpose. Students will write for different audiences and purposes.
- 22** Standard English Conventions. Students will use knowledge of standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing.

History/Social Studies

Pre-K and K: Living, Learning, and Working Together

Grade 1: True Stories and Folk Tales from Around the World

US History II

World History II

Pre-Visit Activities

Goals

- to prepare students for the museum visit and any curriculum connections
- to explore how photographs communicate
- to introduce the notion of point of view in visual art and writing

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Age/Class Level

Activities in this section can be adapted for elementary, middle, and high school audiences.

Preparing for the Museum Visit

Tours will focus on how photographers featured in these exhibitions defined their projects and used photographic techniques to express their point of view. We will also discuss how their projects were disseminated and received. Their images raise a lot of questions about identity. A major theme is what we can and cannot know about a person or a culture through a picture and a simple caption.

When discussing images, it is important to think about these three aspects: the creation of the image, the dissemination of the image, and the interpretations of the image. These exhibitions provide a wonderful opportunity for that discussion and for building visual literacy skills.

Tours include an artmaking activity that focuses on point of view. This is

one of the most important aspects of building visual literacy because it reinforces the notion that photographers make artistic choices. Pre-and post-visit activities are designed to use image making (both drawing and photography) and writing to continue to explore this concept.

Objectives

- To prepare students for the museum visit and any curriculum connections

Preparation and Discussion

- Review the description of the exhibitions and background material.
- Consider the possible curriculum connections and provide your students with relevant background before your visit.
- Inform students about what they will see and do at the museum. Remind them about how to conduct themselves in the museum (see confirmation letter).
- Let students know that they will view, discuss, and compare various photographic projects and that each artist has his or her own point of view.
- At the museum, students will have a chance to create Polaroid pictures and write captions.

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General Questions

- What is point of view?
- How does a writer have and express a point of view?
- How does an artist have and express a point of view?
- Show and discuss any examples of point of view that you have been studying.

Reading Photographs: What You Can See and What You Can't See

This series of activities builds students' understanding of the elements of photography and introduces the concept of point of view. The exercises focus on the notion that a photograph represents the photographer's viewpoint and choice of what to include in the picture and what not to include.

The first exercise uses drawing as a way of creatively reading and thinking about the image. The second uses writing to "read" the image and builds descriptive language skills. The third uses class discussion to review the elements of photography as a class. These activities can be used singly or sequentially.

1. Drawing Activity

Objective

- To use drawing to help students understand how photographers use composition and framing to express their point of view

Standards

Visual Arts 1, 5

Materials

Choose images with a person or people in it. Present images in a format that students can see well, e.g., on PowerPoint, computer stations, projection, printouts from the Internet for each student.

Note:

- Images from the exhibitions are available on our website: <http://www.wcma.org>. Go to PRESS/Exhibition Press Images.
- For other image sources, search our collection at WCMA ContentDM: <http://contentdm.williams.edu/wcma/> (Some images do have copyright restrictions. If you would like to use the images in any way beyond normal classroom use, please contact us.)
- Other suggested Internet sources for images include the collection database at www.metmuseum.org and images.google.com.

Procedure

1. Explain that whenever photographers take a picture, they decide what to include in the camera frame and what not to include. Ask students to look closely at the photograph. Look at what is in the frame. Look at the lines and shapes and angles.
2. Have students draw a box, or frame (or provide it on a worksheet).
3. In the box, draw the outlines of forms that they see in the photograph. Outside the box, draw what they imagine is outside of the frame.
4. Share and discuss the drawings:
 - Why did the photographer choose to include these elements in the picture?
 - How would the picture be different if it included other things?
 - What would you have included?

2. Writing Activity

Objective

- To build students' observation and descriptive language skills through close looking and a quick writing exercise

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Standards

Visual Arts 1, 5

English 19

Materials

Choose images with a person or people in it. Present images in a format that students can see well, e.g., on Power Point, computer stations, projection, printouts from the Internet for each student.

Procedure

1. Looking close and making notes:
 - Have students take out a piece of regular notebook paper and draw a line down the middle of the page, to make two columns. On the left column,

write: What I See; on the right column, write: What I Can't See.

- Instruct students to look at the image carefully and make descriptive lists. Tell students that they have two minutes to look and write what they see. Then, prompt them to spend two minutes writing what they can't see. Finally, announce two more minutes to see if they can find anything to add to either column.

2. Class discussion:

- Share the lists—either as a class or in small groups.
- Discuss how this shows how much you can discover just by looking close!

3. The next discussion is a bit of detective work relating to identity.

- Have students discuss who this person might be based on the information in the picture. Have them list the details that justify their answers.
- Can you guess their profession? Age? Where they live?
- Can you tell what they are feeling?
- Describe their expression, gesture, and pose. What do they tell you?
- Can you imagine what they might be thinking or what they dream of?
- If they could say speak, what would they say?

4. Follow up:

This exercise is an excellent primer for a writing exercise. For example, students might use words from their lists in descriptive writing to create a “word picture”—using clear precise language to describe what you can see. You can assign creative writing—to create a short story about the person in the image using descriptive words from their list. Nonfiction writing might take the form of an essay about what life is like at this time based on the information in the picture and what they are studying in class.

3. Discussion Activity

Objective:

- To introduce students to elements of photography and to the concept of point of view through close looking and a guided discussion

Standards

Visual Arts 1, 5

English 1

Materials

Choose images with a person or people in it. Present images in a format that students can see well, e.g., on Power Point, computer stations, projection, printouts from the Internet for each student.

Procedure

1. Present images for class discussion. Allow a process of discovery to take place in your discussion so that students make meaning out of the photograph based on what they know, what they question, what they discover, and what you prompt them to notice.

2. Try posing the following questions (adapted from the Visual Thinking Strategies method). Paraphrase students' responses, and pose more follow-up questions. These questions also cover the "language" of photography, that is, elements such as framing, point of view, light and shadow, focus, and composition. They are in no particular order and can be posed when students seem interested in different aspects.

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General:

- What do you see in this picture?
- Can you describe it more?
- What else do you see?
- What is going on in this picture?
- What information in the picture makes you say that?

Composition:

- What shapes do you see in the photograph?
- Shapes and angles make up the composition. What other shapes do you see? What patterns do you notice?
- What colors or tones of grey do you see?

Photographic attributes:

- What areas are light and dark? Can you find shadows? Why are there shadows?
- Where was the light coming from? What effect does this have?
- Can you guess where the photographer was standing when he or she took the picture? Above the subject, looking down, or below the subject, looking up? This is called point of view.
- What is included in the picture frame? What is not included? This is called framing.
- Is this photograph clear or blurry, in focus or out of focus? What effect does that have?

Interpretations:

- How does this picture make you feel? Why?
- What does it make you think of? Why?
- What choices do you think the photographer made? Why do you think the photographer made these choices?
- What is the photograph saying?

3. Address the theme of identity using images on view in the exhibition. Each photographic project tells us a lot about the people living in that particular time and place – through the eyes of the photographer. It is through this frame of reference that students will learn about these cultures.

- Discuss one of the images from the exhibition using the questions above.
- Sometimes the photographer included a caption, e.g, The Baker. It is interesting to think about how the text works with the images. Does it limit or direct how we see the person in the picture?

Relate this back to students:

- If you were going to be the subject of a photography project, what would you want the photographer to show? What would you wear? How would you pose?

- How do you define who you are? As a group, how do we define who we are? Are there different ways to think about how we define ourselves individually and as a group?
 - How do some artists and writers that you have studied show us who people are and address issues of identity?
 - List all the words that you can think of that describe who you are. For example, you could be a student, a soccer player, an artist, a cat person, an ice cream lover.
 - Can you imagine what kind of image you would want to portray who you are?
 - What kind of caption would you choose to write?
4. Make a curriculum connection: Educators are encouraged to continue this discussion activity with other images selected that connect to the subject area or theme.

Worksheet: The Choices Photographers Make

This worksheet can be used to build students' knowledge of the elements of photography. It can be used anytime: before or after the discussion or in relation to other activities in this guide.

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Objective

To help students build their knowledge of photographic elements and how photographers use these elements to communicate

Standards

Visual Arts 1, 5

Materials

Worksheet; images that students can look at up close, e.g., postcards

Procedure

Have students select a favorite image and complete the following worksheet.

The Choices That Photographers Make

Goal

To learn that photographers make choices to create their image and communicate a message

Worksheet

COMPOSITION: Describe the shapes, lines, and patterns in the picture.

FOCUS: What information is clear in the picture? What is blurry?

FRAMING: What is included in the frame and what isn't? Is anything cropped?

BACKGROUND: What information is in back of the subject?

FOREGROUND: What information is in front of the subject?

SUBJECT: What do you know about the subject based on the information that you see in the picture?

PEOPLE: Clothing: What are they wearing? What does their clothing tell about their interests, identity, or social group?

POSE: Are they standing or sitting? What kind of body language and attitude do they have?

EXPRESSION: Describe their expression. What might they be feeling or thinking?

ACTION: What are they doing? Can you guess why?

LIGHTING: Is the lighting bright or dark? Are there any shadows? Is the lighting coming from above, below, or the side? What does the lighting draw your attention to?

TECHNIQUES: What photographic techniques were used? What effects do they have? (Color or black-and-white film? A 35mm or large-format camera?)

POINT OF VIEW: From where did the photographer take the shot? (From above, below, the side, or an angle?) This is also called the vantage point. How does the vantage point affect the way you read the picture?

MEANING: Why did the photographer make these choices? What was the photographer trying to say?

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Post-Visit Activities

Goals

- to reinforce concepts introduced during the tour through hands-on art activities and writing exercises
- to continue to explore the notion of point of view in visual art and writing
- to explore issues of identity in response to the exhibitions

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Age/Class Level

Activities in this section can be adapted for elementary, middle, and high school audiences.

A Curatorial Point of View: Create Your Own Exhibition

In this activity, students will build upon the art project they completed at the museum.

Objectives

- To reflect on their responses to the exhibitions and their artwork
- To take the project to a higher level by looking for themes across the portraits and shaping an exhibition—learning about the curator’s point of view

- To build analytical, critical thinking, and writing skills

Standards

Visual Art 1, 4, 5

English 1, 19, 20, 22

Materials

The Polaroid images with captions that were created at the museum; large colorful poster board; tape or glue sticks

Procedure

1. Have students discuss their responses to the exhibitions as a group:

- What do you remember from your visit to WCMA?
- Which photographer's project did you like the best? Why? What did you like about it?
- What did you think of the exhibitions overall? A curator is someone who selects and arranges all the artwork in the exhibition; in making these choices, the curator has a point of view. What do you think the curator of these exhibitions was trying to show?
- Let them know that in this activity, they will be the curators!

2. Have each student take out the portraits with captions that they made at the museum.

- Have each student talk about how they approached creating the image and caption.
- How did they work out ideas of pose, gesture, and expression?
- How does the text work with the image? Is it surprising or funny? Does it say something the class didn't know about the person?
- Have students talk about how this does or does not look like the way they typically appear or the way they see themselves. Invite responses from peers (respectfully).

3. Now begin to shape your exhibition through class discussion of themes.

- What are some commonalities among the portraits?
- Begin to write some categories on the board as you look at and discuss the photographs.
- Become a curator! Curators find ways to organize artwork to make a statement – to share their point of view in the exhibition.
- Have group discussions about what the exhibition could be. What are the main themes? What are the categories? What would you like your exhibition to show? That is the curatorial point of view, and it shapes how you organize the artwork on the wall.

4. When you have arrived at your theme and categories, start grouping the images based on the categories.

- Working in small groups for each category, arrange the images on large colorful posterboard. Discuss which color posterboard you would like to use. Even the color choice is a curatorial one. Curators think carefully about the color of the wall in the gallery and what color is best for the art.
- As the group arranges the images on the posterboard, have them discuss how the images work together. Curators look at the images individually and collectively, both aesthetically (e.g., composition) and topically (relationships among subject matter). Look at the composition—the shapes and angles, light and dark areas, and where they draw your eye in each image. How does one image relate to the images that are next to it? Create an arrangement on the poster board that looks good to your curatorial eye.
- Affix the images to the poster board. Mount them around the classroom.

5. Each group can work together to write curatorial wall text.

- The group wall label should describe the title of their grouping, why they chose the category, and how the pictures fit that category. This label should be 200 words.
- The class can work on introductory wall text to describe the overall project. This text should be 250 words.
- Print the text (choosing a font you like—curators think about that too!). Mount it next to each grouping, with the introductory wall text placed in

the most visible spot for viewers coming in to your exhibition.

- Don't forget to make a title for your exhibition. And, be sure to have an opening with refreshments!

Detective Story

In this activity, students will study elements of portraiture closely and use their observations to build a story.

Objectives

- To build visual literacy and writing skills
- To explore issues of identity through visual analysis and writing

Standards

Visual Art 1, 5

English 1, 19, 20, 22

Materials

Postcards, writing materials

41

Procedure

1. Distribute a set of postcards with pictures of people in them. You can either have students choose an image they like, or you can put them in a hat and have them draw one by luck.

2. Have students imagine that they are detectives trying to identify the person in the picture and what the person was doing in that time and place.

3. First, students will be visual detectives. Have students write about the person based on the information they find in the picture.

- List 10 details about this picture, from the person to the setting.
- Describe what the person looks like, from head to toe.
- Can you guess the person's profession? Age? Where he or she lives? What in the picture makes you say that?

- Can you tell what they are feeling? Describe their expression.
- What is the person doing? Describe their gesture and pose.

4. Now start brainstorming the potential story:

- Paying attention to the “before” and “after” gives rise to plot. Think about what might have happened before this picture was taken, what is happening in the picture, and what might happen next.
- As detective writers, students will follow the character and solve a mystery. Can you think of a secret the character may have?

5. Write the story

- Write the story from the point of view of a detective.
- Use plenty of descriptive details from the picture; these are your clues.

Another option:

Create a fiction story from the point of view of the person in the picture.

- If this person could speak, what would he or she say?
- What might the person be thinking about? Hoping for? Dreaming about?
- What does the person want? Will the person get what he or she wants in the story, or not?
- Use the “before” and “after” notes to make your plot. Throw some obstacles in the way of what your character wants to achieve!

6. Discussion

- Have students share their photo and story/stories.
- Read some of the descriptive words and discuss how they give rise to a type of person.
- Read some of the narrative and discuss how the stories make the person unique.

Making and Breaking Stereotypes

In this activity, students will explore the dangers of stereotypes and will discuss how they can use image and text to break stereotypes.

Objectives

- To build visual literacy, photography, and writing skills
- To explore issues of identity and point of view

Standards

Visual Art 1, 4, 5

English 1, 19, 20, 22

Materials

Postcards with people in it, writing materials; digital cameras and means to make four prints per student, art paper for mounting the prints (or you can print it out on regular 8 1/2 x 11 printer paper.)

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Procedure

1. Begin with a discussion of what a “type” is.

- In the exhibitions, students saw different photographers’ approaches to creating images of types. What types do they remember? Profession (e.g., Sander); activity (e.g., Beato and Emerson); place where they live (e.g., Siskind, Goldsmith, Mthewethwa); or class (e.g., Norfleet and Barney)?
- How do we categorize people? On the board, list some different ways we categorize people. Who are we? How do we define ourselves?
- Why do we do this? Does it make things seem manageable or understandable in some way? What are the dangers of such categories and types?

2. Writing Activity

- Pass out images with people in it. Call out a category from the list on the board (e.g., profession), and have students write a caption that defines this person by a category. Now call out another category. Keep moving down the list.
- Now have students look at the photo and list of captions and pick one. This is the “type” they are going to work with. Discuss how difficult it is to categorize a person who already is definable in so many ways into one type.
- Have students write a first-person narrative from the point of view of the photographer looking at this type. What do they see? How do they see it? What choices are they going to make as a photographer to capture this type?
- Next, have students write a first-person narrative from the point of view of the person in the picture. What is the person thinking about as he or she is being photographed? Who is this person? What did he or she have for breakfast? What is the person worrying about or hoping for in life? Write about their secrets.
- Share the stories and pictures in small groups. Discuss how stereotypes are formed and broken by images and text.

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3. Art Activity

- Now, create your own portraits!
- Brainstorm the theme: Who are we? Who am I? Go back to your list of categories and discuss how you can represent these qualities visually.
- Break into small groups based on types you have made.
- Using digital cameras, have students take turns playing the role of photographer and subject.
- Consider elements of photography and make choices for
 - Setting
 - Lighting
 - Framing
 - Point of view
 - Composition

- Pose
- Gesture
- Expression

(Note: See Background Information section in this guide for tips on portraiture.)

- Have students make two sets of photographs: in one, the photographer makes all the above choices and tells the subject what to do; in the other, the subject has input on every choice and negotiates the session. Make two copies of each print, so each student has four images to work with: two in which they are the subject and two in which they are the photographer. (Note: you can make 4 x 6 prints on photographic-quality paper and mount them on good-quality art paper, or you can print it out on regular 8 1/2 x 11 printer paper, leaving space around the image for writing.)
- After the session, have students write journal entries about the experience of the photo shoot in each role, as photographer and as subject.
- Working individually, have students mount each photograph on paper and use text in any arrangement to define – or break – the type.

4. Present these four images in small groups and discuss them as a class.

- How do image and text work together to define a person? What can we know and what can't we know? What are some of the issues in creating photographs of people? Does this exercise change the way students read photographs?

Recommended Resources

Websites

Williams College Museum of Art

www.wcma.org

International Center of Photography

www.icp.org

www.icp.org/site/?c=dnJGKJNsFqG&b=2017177

The entire resource *Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide*, written by Cynthia Way for the International Center of Photography, 2006.

Images from the exhibitions are available on our website: <http://www.wcma.org>. Go to PRESS/Exhibition Press Images.

For other image sources, search our collection at WCMA ContentDM: <http://contentdm.williams.edu/wcma/> (Some images do have copyright restrictions. If you would like to use the images in any way beyond normal classroom use, please contact us.)

Other suggested Internet sources for images include the collection database at www.metmuseum.org and images.google.com.

Education Programs

At the Williams College Museum of Art, we invite you to explore art with us, express your ideas and creativity, and consider the connections between art and our lives.

Offered to pre-K – 12 school groups, community centers, and families, our education programs include: interactive guided tours, curriculum guides, teachers' workshops, multi-session programs, family programs, and more.

Through looking closely at art objects, exchanging ideas, and creating art, participants investigate art history, artistic practices, and the issues raised by the artwork. Our goals are to build participants' knowledge of art, visual literacy and creative thinking skills, and confidence in expressing their point of view.

As a teaching museum, we are committed to finding innovative approaches to teaching and learning through art, making connections across disciplines, and using literacy strategies. We work closely with teachers and community members to shape our programs and we'd love to hear from you. Let's explore the possibilities.

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free admission

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