MULVANE ART MUSEUM OUTREACH PROGRAM

TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET

Narrative Art

Artworks from the Mulvane Art Museum’s Collection

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Mulvane Art Museum
Barbara Yoder and Kandis Barker (2001)
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OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS

Objectives:

- To provide students with a general appreciation of art.
- To provide students with a basic understanding of art concepts.
- To provide students with knowledge of the Mulvane Art Museum’s collection.
- To provide students with knowledge of techniques used by artists.
- To provide students with the basis from which to analyze works of art.

Content:

- Images of works from the Mulvane’s permanent collection.
- Text to accompany each image.
- Glossary of art terms.
- Resources.

This unit meets the following Kansas Curricular Standards for Visual Arts:

*Standard #2:* Using knowledge of the Elements of Art and the Principles of Design.

*Standard #4:* Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

*Standard #5:* Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of art.

*Standard #6:* Making connections between the visual arts and other disciplines.
Narrative Art

Works of art from the Mulvane Art Museum Permanent Collection

Images

1. Romare Bearden
   The Train
   Etching, stencil, aquatint
   1960s

2. Ando Hiroshige
   Fifty-three Views of the Tokaido: View #2
   Woodcut
   ca. 1834

3. Thomas Huck
   Playland: The Sharkburger Shortage of ’95 (from the folio “Two Weeks in August”)
   Woodcut
   1996

4. Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton
   Cat in Refrigerator
   Colored pencil
   1978

5. Roger Shimomura
   Enter the Rice Cooker
   Oil on Canvas
   1994
Looking at Art: An Introduction

This Curriculum Guide is designed to offer you ways to begin a dialog with your students about art. Using a variety of questioning strategies, we offer you some basic bulleted questions that will help you engage your students in conversation and lead them to further thought and discussion.

There are many good reasons to study art. We can enjoy an aesthetic experience by being aware of art’s various properties. For example, we may notice the sensory properties – color, line, shape, space, value, and texture. Known also as the elements of art, these make up the basic vocabulary of the artist. While looking at art we may also note the formal properties, also called the principles of design. These refer to how the artist has used the elements of art and include the concepts of unity, repetition, contrast, balance, movement (or direction), and emphasis (or center of interest). Technical properties address the artist’s choice of medium and technique. For example, are we looking at a watercolor or a bronze sculpture? Did the artist use chisel or chalk? Lastly, expressive properties attend to the mood or meaning of the art based on the visual elements. What sort of feeling does the artwork create? What might the artist have intended to communicate? Attending to the properties of art - sensory, formal, technical, and expressive – helps viewers to experience works of art more completely.
Narrative Art

Narrative art has held various meanings throughout history, but today we describe works as narrative when they tell a story or imply an association. Some artists construct their works like cartoons with two or more panels suggesting a time line. Other artists place elements within a single panel. Often the meaning is unclear and the viewer must resolve the story or make connections between different elements.

Narrative art is found in Egyptian tomb paintings accompanied by hieroglyphics that document events. Greek vase paintings from the third century B.C.E. also display narratives that describe both mythological and actual events. In early Christian art, narrative works, such as the stained glass windows of cathedrals, visually told Bible stories. Later, artists used narrative art to portray historical events. In the early twentieth century, some artists turned to Social Realism, using narrative art to describe contemporary culture.

With the advent of abstraction, artists began to look at art as a means of personal expression rather than storytelling. With Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s and 1950s, artists struggled to express the idea of self in relation to the universe by using large gestural strokes on canvas. Movements and styles since that time – Pop Art, Op Art, Conceptual Art, and Earthworks – also avoided narration. However, in the 1970s, many artists returned to figurative work; that is, to art that explored the idea of a human presence within a particular space.

The works included in this unit provide examples of different approaches to narrative art, including art in series, narrative works within a single frame, works with no clear story line, and works that document an event or era.
Romare Bearden
1914 – 1988

- Born in North Carolina, Bearden moved with his family to Pittsburgh and then to Harlem in New York City.

- An active participant in the African American art community after World War II, Bearden’s images concentrate on issues of African American identity.

- Bearden studied at New York University and the Art Students League in New York City.

- Intrigued by all the arts, including literature, film, music, and poetry, Bearden witnessed the birth of the Harlem Renaissance, a significant twentieth-century African American cultural movement.

- Bearden felt that art ultimately served a social purpose. The civil rights movement served as a catalyst for the artist’s work, influencing Bearden to redefine the black artist’s role in the community and the world.

- Although early in his career he emphasized painting, by the 1960s, Bearden focused mainly on the medium of collage. He also worked with various print techniques, such as etching and aquatint.

- Bearden’s experiences in Harlem particularly influenced his work. He was one of the first artists to explore the relationship between music and painting, and in particular, to define links between painting and jazz.

- Although Bearden used his memories of North Carolina and Harlem as the basis of his work, he successfully transformed the humble scenes of everyday life into more universal themes of life and death.
The Train
1960s
Romare Bearden
Etching, stencil, aquatint

Cultural and Historical Information
From the 1960s on, Bearden’s images focused on African American identity issues. He called the train a chief icon of African American society: “A journeying thing, I used the train as a symbol of the other civilization, the white civilization and its encroachment on the lives of blacks. The train was always something that could take you away and could also bring you back to where you were. And in the little towns, it’s the black people who live near the trains.” (Exhibition Catalog: 75 Years, 75 Treasures. Mulvane Art Museum, Topeka, KS., 1999.)

Sensory Properties

- When we discuss the lightness or darkness of colors, we refer to their values (not how much they cost). Where do you see the darkest values in this picture? Where are the lightest?
- What kind of shapes do you see? Are they mostly organic or geometric?
- Name some ways that Bearden suggests texture in this work.

Formal Properties

- Other than the faces, what has Bearden repeated?
- The repetition of these elements helps hold the parts together, or helps unify it. Do you agree or disagree. Why?
- Look closely to see if Bearden has directed your eye to one area. How has he created emphasis, or a focal point?

Technical Properties

- The artist used several media to create The Train. We call this combination of materials collage. What might Bearden have used to make his collage?

Expressive Properties

- What words describe the mood or meaning of this picture?
- Where is the train in the work? Why is it so small compared with the faces?
Ando Hiroshige
1797 – 1858

• Hiroshige was a Japanese painter and printmaker and last great master of the *ukiyo-e* school of printmaking.

• He is best known for his colorful *woodcut* prints of Japanese landscapes.

• At age 15, he became a student of Utagawa Toyohira.

• Although images of beautiful women and actors were the specialty of the Utagawa School, Hiroshige focused on *landscapes*, creating images admired for their lyricism.

• He secured his position as top landscape artist by way of his success in the Hoeido edition of *Fifty-three Views of the Tokaido*, images of a highway that runs along the Pacific coast.

• *Fifty-three Views* consists of 53 prints made during the artist’s first trip along the highway in 1832.

• In 1832, the shogun (a military ruler) was still in power in Japan. He lived in Edo (present-day Tokyo) while the emperor lived in Kyoto, about 350 miles away. The Tokaido highway linked these two important cities.

• Each year, the shogun sent a number of horses to the emperor as a gift. Hiroshige was invited to go along in 1832 to make sketches of the scenery on the way. His traveling caravan stopped for the night at some of the 53 stations along the highway. These stations were little towns that catered to the needs of travelers.

• Hiroshige produced the series *Fifty-Three Views of the Tokaido* after his return to Edo. The series includes a view of the Nihonbashi Bridge in Edo at the beginning of the series, and a view of Kyoto at the end of the journey.
**Fifty-three Views of the Tokaido: View #2**

c. 1834
Ando Hiroshige
Woodcut

**Cultural and Historical Information**

Hiroshige achieved recognition almost overnight for his publication of the *Fifty-three Views of the Tokaido*, a series to which this print belongs. The artist traveled the Tokaido Highway, or Eastern Sea Route, with a group delivering horses to the emperor as a gift from the shogun. Hiroshige sketched the stations (or stopping points) along the way. Later, he used the sketches to make a series of 53 woodcuts, including this one from the Mulvane collection.

**Sensory Properties**

- Name the colors that you see. Are they mostly bright or dull colors?
- What kinds of lines do you see?
- Name the places you find vertical lines. Name the places you find horizontal lines.

**Formal Properties**

- Other than the people in the foreground, what has the artist repeated?
- When an artist repeats a shape over and over, it can create a pattern. Where do you see pattern?

**Technical Properties**

- Hiroshige first carved the image in reverse on a piece of wood before printing it on paper.
- How did printing enable many people to see this image?

**Expressive Properties**

- Does the scene seem hectic or calm? Why?
- What time of day does it appear to be?
Huck is a native of the small town of Potosi, located in rural Missouri.

Huck calls his art “rural satire” because it is based on personal observations of small town life.

Huck’s woodcuts tell the stories of the people and events of his region.

Huck’s preferred media is printmaking, specifically the woodcut.

He is influenced by an array of artists, including Albrecht Durer, the German Expressionists, and the late Frank Zappa.

In the mid-nineties, Huck produced a folio (series) of prints called Two Weeks in August: 14 Rural Absurdities. Each image depicts a day’s occurrence, while all images together describe a period of two weeks.

Currently, Huck lives and works in St. Louis, Missouri.
Playland: The Sharkburger Shortage of '95

Thomas Huck
Playland: The Great Sharkburger Shortage of ‘95
1996
Thomas Huck
Woodcut

Cultural and Historical Information

In this woodcut, Huck tells the story of the opening day of a new fast food restaurant in his small town. The citizens were so excited that they lined up outside the drive-through for several miles. Eventually, the restaurant ran out of food and it was forced to close.

Sensory Properties

• This composition contains a lot of lines, doesn’t it?
• Name some of the shapes and patterns created by the lines.

Formal Properties

• Besides lines, shapes, and patterns, what other things are repeated?
• What is the focal point, or emphasis of the work? In other words, where do your eyes go first?
• In what direction do your eyes travel around the woodcut? Why?

Technical Properties

• Although this is a woodcut, it appears quite different from Hiroshige’s woodcut, doesn’t it?
• In what ways did Huck use the medium differently than the Japanese artist?
• Does Huck’s cutting technique appear refined and painterly, or rough and sketchy?
• Do you think the artist worked painstakingly or do you think he worked quickly? Why?

Expressive Properties

• Describe the action in the scene. Is it calm or busy?
• Does the woodcut convey a feeling of danger or amusement?
Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton  
1909 – 1993

• A native Kansas, Layton began art classes at Ottawa University at age 68 in an effort to relieve her depression.

• At Ottawa University, she learned her favorite technique of contour drawing. Contour drawing is that act of drawing the “edges” that one sees. Those edges can include the lines of wrinkles, hair, outside and inside lines, and the edges of shapes. Contour drawings are often created in a continuous motion.

• Using instructions to “draw big and go to the edge,” Layton made self-portraits as a starting point to explore ideas and issues.

• Layton disregarded art world conventions. She used colored pencil on paper (instead of the more standard oil on canvas) and bought art materials at her local drugstore. She gave works away instead of selling them.

• Her drawings address issues of aging, AIDS, identity, feminism, dieting, world hunger, death, and capital punishment.

• Layton was featured in Life, People, Saturday Review, Art in America and on National Public Radio and Good Morning America.

• Layton worked only 13 years, producing 1,200 drawings.
*Cat in Refrigerator*

1978
Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton
Colored pencil

Cultural and Historical Information

Elizabeth Layton tells a true story in this drawing. One day, the family cat climbed into the refrigerator and the door was closed. When someone finally opened the door again, the cold cat had eaten the goodies, including a box of chocolates, pictured on the right. Layton reported that the cat had a “wickedly satisfied expression” on its face, and she tried to capture this in her drawing.

Sensory Properties

- Besides blue, what **colors** do you see?
- Are the colors mostly cool or warm?
- Describe the way Layton used **lines** in the work.

Formal Properties

- How did Elizabeth Layton achieve **balance** in this drawing? Is it symmetrically balanced or asymmetrically balanced?

Technical Properties

- Do you think the artist used the blind contour **technique** of drawing (see glossary of terms) or do you think she looked at the paper as she drew? Why?

Expressive Properties

- It’s unusual to find a cat in the refrigerator, isn’t it? Do you find this drawing funny or strange? What other words can you use to describe its **mood**?
- What **meaning** might lie behind this work?
Roger Shimomura  
b. 1939

- Raised in Seattle, the son of a Japanese-American pharmacist, Shimomura enjoyed a middle-class lifestyle until World War II.

- During the war, Shimomura and his family were forced to live in an internment camp with other Japanese-Americans in Idaho.

- Racially stigmatized, many Japanese-Americans lost fortunes, homes, and possessions during their internment.

- Shimomura uses his experiences and those of his grandmother to describe the difficulty of being of Japanese descent in contemporary American culture.

- As a child, the artist loved comic books. His art often reflects this interest, using likenesses of Mickey Mouse, Superman and Donald Duck.

- Now a professor of art at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Shimomura creates images that show us the conflicts and stereotypes encountered by members of minority cultures.

- The artist’s narrative works – paintings, installations, and performance pieces – use images of Japanese rice cookers and samurai in contrast to American middle class icons.
Cultural and Historical Information

In his art, Shimomura comments on issues of culture and belonging:

“My culture is not Japanese culture, it’s this culture... I don’t live in Japan, I live in Kansas, but I don’t live in Midwestern culture either; there are very few Asian Americans there. You could take it to the point where there is no culture... Anyone who isn’t like everyone else is seen as invasive; you live and die with that sense as a person of color in this country.”


Sensory Properties

- Name the shapes and patterns created by lines in the painting.
- Describe the variety of lines you see.

Formal Properties

- Describe the interaction between the two figures. What is their connection? Or is there a connection at all?
- How does the placement of the figures help to create a focal point?

Technical Properties

- How might the artist have made perfectly straight lines?
- Besides paints and brushes, what materials did Shimomura use to create the painting?

Expressive Properties

- Describe the mood of each of the figures. Which symbolizes America? Which symbolizes Japan? Why?
- What might the screen between the two figures suggest?
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Geography of the Plains*

*Multicultural Art*

*Narrative Art*

**abstract** – Having little or no reference to the appearance of natural objects, but instead a generalized form based on reality.

**aesthetics** – Visual properties by which a work is critiqued.

**alla prima** – Italian term meaning “at first.” A technique of painting directly onto a surface without using under-painting or under-drawing.

**aquatint** – A form of intaglio printing in which the artist uses resin dust to resist the biting action of the acid. Works well for producing tonal areas.

**armature** – Framework made of materials such as wood, wire, etc. to support material being modeled.

**Art Students League, NYC** – Founded in 1875. First independent art school in the U.S. and a major force in 20th century art movements.

**assemblage** – Technique of creating 3-dimensional works of art by combining a variety of elements, such as found objects, into a compositional whole.

**balance** – A visual feeling of weight.

**B.C.E.** – Before the Common Era.

**blind contour method** – A process for drawing that requires artists to focus solely on the subject rather than the surface on which they work.

**C.E.** – Common Era.

**chiaroscuro** – Italian, meaning “light/dark.” Refers to the use of value contrasts to represent light and shadow.
circa/ca. – About/around.

collage – An artistic composition made up of various materials (e.g., printed matter, photographs, and cloth) attached to a flat surface.

color – The character of a surface that is the result of the response of vision to the wavelength of light reflected from that surface. A visual phenomenon that is made of light and depends on light.

composition – In an artwork, the arrangement of the elements of art using the principles of design.

conte – Crayon-like drawing material; pigment suspended in wax.

contrast – An abrupt change such as one sees when placing two dissimilar colors or objects side by side. Contrast creates variety within a work of art. Some examples of contrasts are large/small, rough/smooth, cool/warm, and opaque/transparent.

cross-hatching – A system of parallel or perpendicular lines drawn to create tonality.

elements of art – Line, shape, color, value, texture, and space. Also called “sensory properties.”

emphasis – That which directs attention to a particular part of a work. This may be the focal point, or center of interest. There may be several areas of emphasis in one artwork.

etching – A printmaking process in which a metal plate is covered with an acid-resistant substance called “ground.” The surface of the ground is removed where the point of the scribe makes contact with the plate. The image is drawn into the ground. The plate is then immersed in an acid bath and the acid cuts, or “bites” the image onto the plate. Because the acid etch creates a clear and precise cut in the plate, the image that results after the plate is inked and run through the press is a sharply defined line.

expressive properties – The mood or meaning of a work of art.

focal point – (See “emphasis.”)
formal properties – Principles or properties by which artists use the elements of art. These include balance repetition/rhythm, movement, contrast, emphasis, unity. Also called “principles of design.”

gouache – An opaque water-soluble medium.

Harlem Renaissance – A significant 20th century African American cultural movement in Harlem, New York City.

icon – An image or symbolic representation that frequently has sacred significance.

impasto – An Italian word meaning “in paste.” In impasto, oil paint is applied thickly to a surface to create texture.

intaglio – Any printmaking technique in which lines and areas to be inked and transferred to paper are recessed below the surface of the printing plate. For example, etching, engraving, drypoint and aquatint are intaglio processes.

landscape – The depiction of an outdoor scene.

line – A mark created by a pointed tool such as a pencil, pen, or brush moving across a surface.

lithography – A printing process that does not involve engraving. Instead, a crayon or other greasy medium is used to draw on a smooth surface such as a stone or plate. Lithography is based on the fact that grease and water repel one another.

medium/media (singular/plural) – The material with which an artist works such as ink, bronze, oil paint, or watercolor.

montage – A composition made up of pictures or parts of pictures previously drawn, painted, or photographed.

movement – The direction the viewer’s eyes take when looking at a work of art. Sometimes it refers to the depiction of actual movement or action within the work.

organic shape – An organic shape is one that is natural or derived from nature (in contrast to a geometric shape).
**patron** – A supporter of an artist. Patrons might commission an artist to create a work especially for them.

**perspective** – The illusion of depth in a two-dimensional work.

**polychromatic** – Having many colors; random or intuitive use of color combinations.

**portrait** – A work of art showing a likeness of an individual.

**pre-Columbian** – Latin American art created before the 1492 arrival of Christopher Columbus in the western hemisphere.

**principles of design** – Principles by which artists use the elements of art. These include balance, repetition/rhythm, movement, contrast, emphasis, and unity. Also called “formal properties.”

**realism** – In art, the depiction of something as it appears in true life. In contrast to abstraction, realism closely resembles actual reality.

**repetition/rhythm** – A regular flow created by actual or implied connections between various parts of an artwork. Uniform rhythm results in a pattern while alternating patterns provide interest and help to move the viewer’s eye through the work.

**sensory properties** – Line, shape, color, value, texture, and space. Also called “elements of art.”

**serigraph** (also called “screen printing”) – A printmaking technique in which stencils are applied to a screen (fabric stretched across a frame). Paint or ink is forced with a squeegee through the unblocked portions of the screen onto paper or another surface beneath.

**shape/form** – Area contained between implied lines. (Shape refers to height and width. Form refers to height, width and depth.)

**space** – The interval between pre-established points.

**symbol** – An object or sign that stands for something else.

**technical properties** – The medium and technique used to create a work of art.
**terra cotta** – Italian for “baked earth.” A porous, reddish ceramic-ware fired at low temperatures; also called earthenware.

**texture** – The tactile or surface quality of an object or material.

**three-dimensional** – In art, this refers to a work in the round. For example, a sculpture is three-dimensional. It may be measured up and down (height), across (width), and front to back (depth). In some cases, viewers may walk all the way around a three-dimensional object.

**Tokaido** – A highway that runs along the Pacific coast of Japan. An especially significant transportation artery during the 19th century.


**unity** – That which makes all parts of an artwork work together to create a unified, harmonious composition.

**value** – The relative lightness or darkness of a surface created by the amount of light reflected from it.

**wash** – A highly diluted color used over a broad area.

**woodcut** – Oldest method of printmaking. Involves artists cutting away the surface of the block upon which they do not want the ink to adhere. The desired image remains as the printing surface.
RESOURCES

Some Resources for Art Materials:

United Art & Education
P.O. Box 9219
Ft. Wayne, IN  46899-9219
1-800-322-3247

Sax Art Education/School Specialty
P.O. Box 1579
Appleton, WI  54912-1579
1-888-388-3224

Triarco Arts & Crafts
2600 Fernbrook Lane, Suite 100
Plymouth, MN  55447
1-800-328-3360

Dick Blick Art Materials
P.O. Box 1267
Galesburg, IL  61402-1267
1-800-828-4548

Nasco Arts & Crafts
901 Janesville Ave.
Ft. Atkinson, WI  53538-0901
1-800-558-9595

Discount School Supply
P.O. Box 6013
Carol Stream, IL  60197-6013
1-800-627-2829
Some Resources for Posters and Reproductions:

Crystal Productions
P.O. Box 2159
Glenview, IL  60025
1-200-255-8629

Davis Publications
50 Portland St.
Worcester, MA  01608
1-800-533-2847

Shorewood Fine Arts Reproductions
129 Glover Ave.
Norwalk, CT  06850
1-800-677-6947

Some Resources for Periodicals:

Arts and Activity Magazine. (Series). Publishers Development Corp.

Scholastic Art Magazine. (Series.) Scholastic Publishing.

SchoolArts Magazine. (Series).Davis Publishing.

Some Web Resources:


ARTS EDGE


Education Place – Activity Search.


J. Paul Getty Museum/Resources for the Classroom.


The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/classroom.asp>. 
Some Books:


Teacher Questionnaire and Evaluation

1. Did you present all of the 5 works to your students or did you select from among them?

2. How would you evaluate your students’ interest in the presentation?

3. Which particular works of art most appealed to your students?

4. Which particular works of art least appealed to your students?

5. Did you find the glossary of terms helpful for your presentation of the materials?

6. What suggestions for change or modification do you have? (You may write on the back of this page.)

Please send completed questionnaire to:

Mulvane Art Museum, Education
1700 SW College
Topeka, KS  66621.