WHAT IS "LEARNING TO LOOK ?"

"Learning to Look" is an art appreciation program for children beginning at the kindergarten level and continuing through the elementary grades. It is more than mere Art History. "Learning to Look" is a way of looking not only at art, but at the total environment. It is a teaching method which seeks the basic elements of design found not only in art, but all-around us. These include: color, light, line, texture, shape, space... The focus is on these elements and how the artist uses them to communicate his ideas and feelings. An awareness of this process enhances the child's aesthetic sensibilities.

To involve children in looking actively, lecturing is never used. Instead looking at art is approached as an adventure. Very specific questions are used to guide this discovery and engage the student in a discussion of what he sees and how he feels about it. This is called the Inquiry Method. An artist's use of texture, color and shape may be explored by using special activities and "gallery games" that establish a fun atmosphere and enhance sensory perceptions. Often stories are shared about the artist himself and the world in which he lives. Sometimes music of the period is introduced.

At each of the monthly classes Reproductions of masterpieces are examined from a specific area of the Metropolitan Museum of Art such as: the Andre Meyer Nineteenth Century European Painting and Sculpture Galleries, the American Wing, or Old Masters from the European paintings collection. Within each period the categories of portrait, landscape, still life, sculpture, historic and genre are explored in depth. During the course of a year, these artworks become "old friends" which the children are excited to see when each class visits the Metropolitan in the spring. This class trip is a highlight for all. Seeing how a reproduction differs from an original is fascinating to the students.

This visual approach to art provides a balance to the Making of Art which is the focus of most of our school art programs. The National Art Education Association supports four main objectives in carrying out an effective, quality art program at the elementary level:

1. The seeing and feeling of visual relationships.
2. The making of art.
3. The study of works of art.
4. The critical evaluation of art.

Yet today in most schools the time constraints and production demands on the art teacher make it almost impossible for them to develop such a comprehensive program.

"Learning to Look" was founded and initiated by Sue Massey at Greenwich Academy in 1981. The following year she was joined by Diane Darst and together they have gradually expanded the program to include the entire lower school. " Learning to Look" courses were offered at the Bruce Museum and Greenwich Country Day School last year. They have contracted with the Brunswick School for 1985-86 to train a group of volunteers who will use their methods, course materials and syllabus to teach "Learning to Look" at the Brunswick School in grades one through eight.

THE INQUIRY METHOD

Instead of presenting the student with the facts or conventional interpretations of happenings, the inquiry method poses problems for the student and lets him do his own thinking. Advantages of approaching learning in this manner are many. It is more fun for the teacher and the student (actually, the teacher is a student). In a day and age where persons are urged more and more to be passive observers and consumers, this method encourages participation and hopefully, instills the idea that one does have some input or control over his/her life experiences. This method provides practice in productive or divergent thinking. This method makes learning relevant to the student and encourages students to think, imagine and create.

"We should not make the mistake of believing that when a child is exposed to the products of other people's imagination he is necessarily encouraged or taught to use his own imagination. The average unimaginative high school graduate is reported to have completed 10,800 hours of schooling... and to have watched 15,000 hours of television. Only sleeping has taken up more of his time... Television and comicbook fantasy can hardly be expected to cultivate the imagination, because it is already completely formed, on the screen or on the page. Nothing is left for the child to do but absorb it. The experience of the child is passive. It is not HIS imagination that is being exercised." (de Mille, PP.17,18)(1)

The inquiry method of teaching can help keep an energetic, exploring four-year-old open to experiencing and growing into a fully functioning adult. It can encourage older students to begin thinking and creating again.

"The inquiry method is very much a product of our electric age. It makes the syllabus obsolete; students generate their own stories by becoming involved in the method of learning. Where the older school environment has asked, "Who discovered America," the inquiry method asks, "How do you discover who discovered America ?" The older school environments stressed that learning is being told what happened. The inquiry environment stresses that learning is a happening in itself." (Postman and Weingartner, p.29)(2) More and more we are learning that there are very few "right" answers in "real life."

John Dewey stressed that the role an individual is assigned in an environment --what he is permitted to do -- is what the individual learns, or, in other words, "we learn what we do."

We urge you, as volunteers in Learning To Look to:

Use the inquiry method.

Ask some questions each day to which you do not know the answers.

Do not give "the answer" to all student's questions.

Edward L. Matil stated that the most difficult task of education is to keep "perception open and to help it develop both sensitively and selectively." (Linderman and Herberholz, p.vii) (3)

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(1) de Mille, Richard, Put Your Mother on the Ceiling, The Viking Press New York, 1955.

(2) Postman, Neil and Weingartner, Charles, Teaching as a Subversive Activity, Delta Books, Dell Publishing Co. New York, 1969.

(3) Linderman, Earl, and Herberholz, Donald W., Developing Artistic and Perceptual Awareness, Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers, Dubuque Iowa. 1972.

GENERAL DIALOGUE SUGGESTIONS

Improvisation and inquiry are alternatives to the traditional lecture-oriented, fact-loaded, gallery gallop. A dialogue approach is intended to help students to become involved, to look actively, and think about art, by offering them the chance to discuss and explore ideas, to raise questions, to express their owns thoughts and opinions, to learn about art by learning new ways to see it.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when getting ready for and guiding a dialogue class:

1. Be prepared. "Know" the children you will be guiding by reading about the developmental level of the age group. Know your subject area. Acquaint yourself as thoroughly as possible with all the background material needed for your class. Review your lesson plan outlines and tour theme information. Think about some of the questions you may want to ask, and some ideas you will want to try with the children. It may be helpful to write a simple outline.

2. Ask yourself, "How can I accomplish the learning goals for this class?" You may feel comfortable using all the suggestions and activities in the lesson plan outline; you may wish to exclude some questions or activities and add some of your own.

3. Ask yourself, "What is worth knowing?" about each artwork you will discuss. The items worth knowing should reinforce your theme and learning goals; they should help your students to think and question. What can I say to them or do that will help them to discover things on their own ?

4. Be prepared to learn from the children... If your students ask questions not directly related to your tour theme, this is okay. Allow time to follow their interests.

5. Be ready to have a good time. SMILE.

6. Be enthusiastic - It is catching.

7. Be positive in your approach to each child and his questions and his ideas. Make each child feel that his responses and ideas are good ones.

8. Be an explorer with your group. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know !" Discuss ways to find the needed information and make arrangements for you and the child or the group to search out the answer and get back in touch with each other.

9. Make your questions clear, concise, simple and to the point.
   "What do you think it is?"
   "How do you think it was made?"
   "What do you think it was used for?"
   "Why do you say it was used that way?"
   "Could it have been used another way?"

10. Avoid questions that can easily be answered by "yes and no." They do not elicit creative responses.

11. Don't be too eager to tell all you know about an exhibition or object you are looking at -- you may inadvertently destroy an exciting thought from a student. Avoid "lecturing" in every instance !

12. Don't be too quick to give the "right" answer. What may be "right" to you may not appear logically "right" to the student. With many questions under discussion, your comment is only one interpretation of the issue. Children's responses can be surprising and it's best to have your approach follow rather than to pursue a pre-conceived line of reasoning.

13. Don't ask questions that require factual answers (unless it is a common/general knowledge question that is used as a springboard for a personal response question).

14. As soon as possible after the class, record student responses that were particularly interesting or perceptive. This will be helpful to you in future presentations.

MORE DIALOGUE IDEAS

The following set of questions were devised by an educator to stimulate new ideas. We have found these applicable to our program of looking creatively at paintings, sculpture, and the decorative arts:

What would happen if we made it larger? (Magnification)

What would happen if we made it smaller? (Minification)

What could we add? (Addition)

What could happen if we took away something? (Subtraction)

What would happen if we took something away and put something else in its place? (Substitution)

What would happen if we took it apart? (Division)

How could we rearrange it? (Rearrangement)

What would happen if we multiplied it? (Multiplication)

What would happen if we changed its position? (Reversal)

What would happen if we made it out of a different kind of material? (Material)

What would happen if we gave it motion? (Motion)

What would happen if we gave it odor? (Odor)

What would happen if we gave it light? (Light)

What would happen if we gave it sound? (Sound)

What would happen if we changed the color? (Color)

What would happen if we changed the shape? (Shape)

What would happen if we made it stronger? (Adaptation)

What would happen if we put it to other uses? (Other Uses)

DIALOGUE FOR PORTRAITURE

PORTRAIT: An artistic representation of a person as rendered in painting, sculpture or photography.

Art styles change -- customs change, each artist's style is different and often quite distinctive, fashion changes, materials change, and each historic time differs from another. All these things affect the portrait, in addition to the role the sitter played. The person whose portrait was painted may have had a large say in how he/she was shown. Perhaps the portrait was commissioned. Perhaps not. Take all these points into consideration when discussing a portrait.

LOOKING AT PORTRAITS:

Have you had your picture taken by camera or painted?

What would you choose to wear if you were having a portrait done?

Why do you think a person has his portrait done?

What would you want in the background to say something special about you?

Did you ever see a portrait that you thought was a good likeness..and hear that person say it didn't look like him? Why does this happen?

Discuss the image people sometimes have of themselves compared to how they really appear.

Looking at specific works of art:

What do you suppose he/she was like? (Invite broad speculation about the sitter's character, personality, his concerns about how he is depicted -- perhaps with objects that relate to his profession or his interests, his wealth, high rank, or poverty, etc.)

Do you think you would have liked this person? Why? Why not?

Which area of the face seems most expressive? Is the face seen frontally, in 3/4 view, as a profile? Can you have a psychological portrait in profile?

Do the sitter's clothes tell us anything about the period in which he lived?

Why do you think the artist showed him this way? Does the pose say something about the sitter? About the artist?

How does the placement of the sitter affect the mood ?

How has the artist used color, lighting, shapes and elements to say something about the sitter and/or affect the mood.

Is the portrait:
A. Descriptive
B. Flattering
C. Probing
D. Fantastic

What relationship does the artist establish between subject and viewer ?

Is this a commissioned or non-comissioned portrait ? If comissioned by someone other than the sitter, for what purpose ?

DIALOGUE FOR LANDSCAPE

LANDSCAPE: An artistic representation of the out-of-doors as rendered in painting, photography or sketches.

As in other art forms, styles change, materials change and one historic time differs from another. The weather, the seasons, the time of day and the development of civilization all effect the landscape. These plus the individual artist's interpretation are points to consider.

Looking at Landscapes:

What are some reasons an artist paints a landscape or takes a picture of one?

How would you choose a scene to paint?
- What would you include?
- How would you frame it?
- What would be your point of view?
- Would there be people in your landscape?

Looking at a specific work of art:

What is our viewpoint in this painting?
- Do you have a bird's eye view?
- An ant's eye view?
- Are you looking up from a manhole?

Could you walk into this scene?
- Where would you enter?
- Which part is closest to you? (foreground)
- Which part is farthest away? (background)

How does the artist make the foreground appear closer?
- Is it larger?, Clearer?, More detailed?, Positioned at the base of the canvas?

How does the artist create an impression of distance?
- Is it smaller?, Less detailed?, Blurred with haze of atmosphere?, or Extended by the use of lines to a vanishing point?

What is the weather?
- How does it effect this landscape?

What is the season?

Are people included?
- How do they relate to their surroundings?
- How important are they in relation to the landscape?

What is the time of day?, Morning?, Evening?, Afternoon?

Do you recognize the location?, by the architecture?, by the terrain?, by the climate?

DIALOGUE FOR STILL LIFE

Still Life - An artistic arrangement of inanimate objects as rendered in painting, photographs, or sketches. Usually the objects were once living such as food, fruit, wild game, flowers. Sometimes the objects are man made and develop a theme. Often it is a combination of both.

Without the narrative quality, the basic elements of art are usually emphasized and readily identified in a still life, especially colors, texture, shape, line and light.

Looking at Still-Life:

Why does an artist paint a still life?

What objects would you include in a still life to say something about you?

Would you arrange your still life inside?, or out of doors?

Would you include any animate objects?, people?, insects?, pets?

Looking at a specific work of art:

What objects did the artist include?

Do they have a common theme?

Do they create a mood?

Are they symbolic in that they have a meaning beyond their individual appearance - especially when associated with other objects?

Why was a specific object chosen?, for its color?, shape?, texture?

Which artistic elements are emphasized in the composition?

What is your point of view?, bird's eye?, ant's eye?, straight on?

Do the objects give any clues regarding the fads, customs, or styles of the time?

Do they reflect the personal taste of the artist?

If the objects were once living, how have they been altered?

Are they rendered realistically?

LOOKING AT ART / an approach

Objects we see and experience around us in our everyday environment are composed of a number of things -- color, light, line, shape, space, & texture. In our program we refer to these as the "Elements of Art". These elements are selected or put together by the individual artist to communicate an idea or feeling. We may see a painting, for instance, as a totality and "read" it for its immediately perceivable message or expression. We may take it in, therefore, first in its overall form, perceiving something of its entirety, as a COMPOSITION.

The work may have a particular effect on us, may make us feel a certain way. Why ? The answer, in part, may lie in the subject or ideas expressed and how we feel about them. But another part of the answer may lie in HOW it is presented or interpreted, that is, how the artist has used color, light, line, texture, shape, space and materials to make his statement. We may analyze an artwork by looking at how it is composed, how the artist has put it all together -- seeing that he has selected materials and a medium, used certain shapes and colors and lines in the composing of his painting or sculpture.

Still, many works defy analysis; some may seem to lose their magic when subjected to too many words. We must be sensitive to this danger. We must be aware, too, that engaging in the process of analysis does not mean that all the questions asked in the process will have answers. Far from it.

Since a work of art is often a composite structure, with visual elements interrelated and fused, it is sometimes very difficult to separate or isolate one element from another. Thus, on the following question sheets for the various visual elements there are many overlapping areas. Some of the questions on light relate to color, to shapes, or to line, etc. Questions about rhythm may be found on several pages: when we speak of rhythm, we may see it occurring through the use of color, line, shape and so on. By studying the following pages carefully, this open-ended questioning technique will soon become natural to you when looking at a work of art... or in noticing the elements as they exist in the world around us.

COLOR

The word color brings certain visual images to mind for everyone, and evokes moods or feelings from the viewer. Color can be warm or cool, soft or hard, quiet or loud. Our personal responses to color affect many of our daily decisions. Consider the color appeal of our cars, clothing, hair, furnishings for our homes, and even works of art.

Color is the element of art children understand best and they particularly enjoy discussing it.

LOOKING AT COLOR:

What is your favorite color?
Purple still seems to be the all time favorite.

Which colors are warm?
Red, Yellow, Orange

Which are cool?
Blue, green, purple

When discussing why certain colors seem warm or cool, ask the children to think about what they see in nature or their environment that contains these colors.

Warm colors - -
The sun, fire, autumn leaves -- red, orange, yellow.

Cool colors --
A lake, pool, pasture, twilight, sky -- blue, green, purple.

Quiet vs. loud

What are colors you think of as quiet?
Usually pale or pastel shades.
Pink, Pale Blue or Light Green

What colors are loud?
Harsh bright colors.
Bright Orange,Red, Fuscia

Bouquet of Color:

Using an array of colored tissue or fabric squares have the students select a bouquet of strong, harsh, bright colors, and a separate bouquet of weak, soft, pastels. Then ask them to create a bouquet that is a mixture of both. Discuss the three different bouquets and the children's responses to them.

Color and Moods:

Have the students ever heard these expressions?
Angry enough to see red
Feeling blue
Green with envy
Yellow coward

What feelings or mood would they associate with these colors?
Yellow - happy? Blue - sad? Red - angry?
Green - restful? Purple - melancholy?

We often like or dislike things because of their color. How would you like green mashed potatoes, a yellow hamburger, or purple milk?

Primary Colors:

The three basic colors are red, yellow, and blue. All other colors can be mixed from a combination of these. Secondary colors are those which result from a combination of two primary colors. Show the students an artist's palette and demonstrate how an artist uses it to mix his paint and colors. The Adventure Of The Three Colors by Annette Tison and Talus Taylor is a good tool to illustrate the mixing of colors to young children without using paints.
Show the color wheel to the students and explain that the hues next to one another are called ANALOGOUS while those directly opposite each other are called COMPLEMENTARY

Analogous colors tend to relate to one another while complementary colors contrast.

What happens when complementary colors of the same intensity are placed next to each other?
Our eyes automatically blend the two colors causing a third color to appear. (This phenomenon is demonstrated in the paintings by Georges Seurat which we will see at the Met.)

Look at something red intently for a minute... then look away at a white surface. What color do you see?
Green, the complement of red which contains all the light rays that the red absorbed.

Color Symbolism:

Define or review the meaning of symbolism:
Something that represents an idea or stands for something else.

Colors have been used as symbols in many cultures for hundreds of years.

Examples:
Blue mantle on the Virgin Mary symbolizes heaven.
White symbolizes purity.
Purple + Gold symbolizes royalty.

Can you think of any color symbolism we use today?
When you are on a roadway what does red mean?
Stop
Green?
Go
When you see red and green together what season does it remind you of?
Christmas
Orange and Black?
Halloween

LOOKING AT A WORK OF ART:

Which colors do you see first in this painting? Why?
It's brighter or sharply contrasts with another color.

Is this color repeated?
Where?

Does your eye move to other colors?
In what direction or pattern does your eye move?

Is color used to balance the composition?

Does color draw our eyes to a particular object or a certain area of the painting?

Does color unify the composition by giving it a common denominator or overall tone?

Which colors seem to move closer to you?
Usually warm colors.

Which colors seem to stay in the background or recede?
Usually cool colors.

How does the intensity or depth of color differ from foreground to background?
Colors are usually paler in the background.

How does this combination of colors make you feel? What mood does it create?

LINES

Lines have direction. They go up and down (vertically), side to side (horizontally) and diagonally. Lines curve, criss-cross, zig zag, and join together to make shapes. Lines have a varied quality. They can be thick when applied as those applied with a palette knife or as fine as those applied with a few cat's wiskers. They can be precise or blurred. Lines made out of different materials produce a wide variety of visual effects. For example those made with oil paint, in the sky by a jet-stream, or by a pencil or pen have very different characteristics.

Lines are everywhere in our environment (both natural and man-made). An artist's use of line can convey a mood, point a direction or indicate movement and rhythm. They can also be used to create an illusion of depth, balance the work or to unify the composition.

Lines can be set up to create a tense feeling, or one that is relaxed. They can indicate rapid motion or remain calm and still. They can depict an object, give the illusion of shadow as in cross-hatching, or they can be purely decorative.

Helping the students identify directional lines in the "Elements of Art Book" and then discussing the special properties of these lines gives them a vocabulary with which to recognize and discuss usage of lines in a work of art.

LOOKING AT LINES:

Can you lean on a vertical line?
Yes.

Can you lean on a horizontal line?
Not unless you are lying down.

Can you stand on a horizontal line?
Yes.

What kind of lines does your body make when you move? Walk? Run?
Diagonals.

What effect is created by strong horizontal lines?
Restful, peaceful.

Do curved lines or straight lines convey more movement?
Curved.

What kind of feelings are expressed with these lines:
Wavy -- rhythm
Diagonal -- action
Rough/jagged lines -- excitement or tension
Smooth -- quiet.

Where do we see lines?
All around us.

Where do we see more curved lines?
In nature or man-made objects?

Have the students look out the window and around the classroom.
Usually the response is "nature".

Where do we see more straight lines?
Usually in man-made objects.

LOOKING AT A WORK OF ART:

How has the artist used line in this work?

Do the lines point to a specific direction?
to a particular object?

Do any lines seem to lead you "into" the artwork?
the distance? or out of the artwork?

Are there repeated lines -- similar lines going in the same direction -- which create a pattern or rhythm?

What feeling is created by a work composed of predominantly straight; vertical lines? Compare to the visual verticals in skyscrapers, a row of trees, or telephone poles.
(stillness, strength, stability)

What is the quality of lines in this work?
Clean, sharp, precise?
or loose, thick, rough?

How did the artist's choice of tools or medium affect the line quality inherent in the work?

SHAPE

A shape is a line which encloses itself. Use a pipe cleaner to illustrate what happens when two ends of a line meet. A shape is created!

The younger children take great pride in recognizing and labeling the GEOMETRIC shapes we have illustrated in the "Elements of Art Book." However, shapes can look like nothing we've ever seen before. These types of shapes are known as FREE FORM. Some shapes are as solid and still as a rock or a house; or as subject to change as a cloud formation or a shadow. Shapes can be functional, decorative, practical or beautiful, each quality evoking a special feeling. They are all used to symbolize ideas in practically every culture. Repeated shapes often form a pattern. They can have rhythm or balance in their relationship to each other and they have infinite possibilities for form in both two and three dimensions.

Looking at Shapes:

Two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes:
(This concept is discussed in the sculpture class - see class six).

How is a picture different from a sculpture?

How is a billboard different from a tree?

What are the dimensions in two-dimensions?
(Length, width)

What are the dimensions in three-dimensions?
(Length, width, depth)

Free-form vs. Geometric:

After the students identify the geometric shapes in the "Elements of Art Book", ask if all shapes have specific names?

No Free-form shapes do not.

Where do you see more free-form shapes? In man made or natural shapes?

Are you a free-form or geometric shape?

Properties of Geometric Shapes:

Does a circle convey a sense of movement or stability?

Do squares or rectangles have more or less movement?

Does a triangle seem to have an energy thrust or seem to point in a direction? How about a square or circle?

Symbolism:

Shapes can also serve as symbols. A symbol is something that represents or stands for something else..

Can you think of shapes that serve as symbols today?
Do you know what these shapes represent?
A cross ?
Christianity
Star of David?
Judaism
Golden Arches?
McDonalds

Think about how shapes are used to communicate...to give directions. Ask the students if they have noticed the shape of stop signs or yield signs.
How many sides does a stop sign have?
Six
A yield sign?
Three

Form follows function:

Discuss designs of everyday objects in terms of their function:
Why is a glove shaped the way it is?
To fit our hands and fingers.
Why is a manhole cover round?
It is the only geometric shape that cannot fall inside itself.

LOOKING AT A WORK OF ART:

Is there a predominant shape in the work; or one that is varied in size or color and used frequently?

Do you see more geometric or free form shapes?

Are the shapes used in the work two or three-dimensional?

Do shapes overlap one another to create an illusion of space?

How do shapes affect the visual movement in the work?
Is your eye "led" out of the work?
(As can be done with a triangle?)
Do the shapes lead your eye to the center or other focal point?
Does the artist's use of shape evoke a feeling or mood?
Compare angular overlapping shapes or swirling circles to very geometrical shapes or balanced curving designs.
Which conveys a feeling of turbulence?
Of calm?

Do the shapes work to unify or balance the composition?

TEXTURE

Texture is the surface quality of an object, paint, metal, wood, stone, paper, plastic, fur, ... traffic, an electric guitar, a flute, drums, plane taking off, a Beethoven quartet, a dog's bark, ... all are examples of tactile, visual or audible textures.

Some visual textures generate auditory responses or cause you to associate touch sensations. Textures -- visual, audible and tactile -- can influence mood. An artist may use texture to give the impression of satin, lace, fur, marble, or a flower, or to convey texture itself without simulating texture usually associated with specific things. An artist may select his materials, his medium, for its texture (among other reasons).

Composers and musicians are aware of and use texture in music to help carry their musical ideas.

A writer or speaker may choose words for their texture in order to convey an image or evoke a particular feeling, to trigger a response.

Looking at Texture:

Texture is the surface quality of a thing. We know texture by feeling it. You can feel texture by touching something with your hand:

Ask the students to touch the texture examples in the "Elements of Art Book" and to give a descriptive word for each one. Encourage them to be as expressive with their words as possible.

The following is a good list of texture words:

Rough	sticky	fluffy	fuzzy
smooth	gummy	spongy	grainy
slippery	greasy	gritty	glassy
bumpy	furry	slimy	silky
nubby	slick	prickly	foamy

Compare these tactile textures or textures that we touch with visual textures (these that give the appearance of real texture) such as texture imitated by an artist in paint. We make this kind of comparison when we do the "Texture Bag Activity" (see activities section).

You can also experience texture by looking at something and imagining how it would feel.

If you caoud touch a cloud or a dog's fur, how would it feel?

Sounds can have texture, too!

Compare the sound of snoring with the sound of sawing wood or popping corn. Compare the sound of the word Gruff with the word Silver.

Words have texture. Try listening to the sounds of these words:
Crackle, crunchy, abracadabra, serendipity
Poets often select words for their special textures.

Foods have texture. How would you describe the texture of jello, a cracker, peanut butter, bubble gum?

LOOKING AT A WORK OF ART:

Compare the tactile texture of a painting with heavy impasto to one that has a different use of paint. How has the artist used texture to express his visual idea or to communicate a mood?

Look at a painting where the artist has tried to imitate the texture of a real object.

Was he sucessful?
How do you think he did it?

Why did the artist choose this particular material or medium for his work?
Could one reason be the texture?

Ask the students to look at a sculpture made of wood or a bronze and to think about its texture. Suppose it were made out of shiny chrome - or clear plastic?
How would it change the idea or feeling of the work?

Instead of imitating the texture of a real object, some artists have added the "real thing" to their work.

How does this make the work look?
What if the real textures had just been painted?
Would you like the work as well?
Would you like it better?

LIGHT

Light contains every color of the spectrum. Without light there is no perception of color. Light can vary in its intensity, source, direction and quality. Our visual perception is probably more dependent on light than any other element.

LOOKING AT LIGHT

What is natural light?
Light from the sun, or moon, and stars.

What is artificial light?
Man-made light.

What is the source of light from the room we are in?
Usually, a combination of natural and artificial.

When are we more aware of artificial light? Day or night?

When are we more aware of natural light? Day or night?

Discuss how things look in natural light compared with artificial light.

How does light affect the way we see color?

How do we see colors on a bright sunny day, compared to a cloudy grey day?

Think of how different the green of the trees look on a cloudy vs. a sunny day.

How do colors change from noon to dusk?

What makes a shadow?

Why do shadows change?

Discuss the relationship between the direction of a light source and the length and shape of shadows.

LOOKING AT A WORK OF ART:

Where does the light come from in painting?

Is the entire painting evenly lit by the artist, or does one figure or area seem to be spotlighted?

Compare the artist's use of light to direct our attention with a director's use of a spotlight on a stage.

How does the light act on the materials of the artwork? Think of the reflections on the surface of a bronze sculpture or the glow of light on a marble or wood sculpture.

How does light affect the surface of a highly glazed oil painting? Compare this to the way light strikes a pastel drawing or water color.

SPACE

We experience space through a complex series of relationships involving color, line, sound, intervals of time. A dancer moves in space; a movie director works with it; an architect organizes it. Everyone occupies space and people experience it differently. How do we experience space on a crowded downtown street, in an open field, or a canvas? An artist may use a flat surface but make you think you can move into it, back into the distance. Spaces are defined by some boundary. Take a pipe cleaner. Move the ends until they touch. You enclosed space within the shape just created. There is also space on the outside of the shape you just made.

Introducing positive and negative space: (See the class on sculpture) Some spaces seem "filled". These are called POSITIVE. Some spaces seem empty or void. These are called NEGATIVE. Ask the children to think about a doughnut (Positive) and the hole (Negative). Other examples could be a picket fence or the bars of a cage. A painting is usually two dimensional, only height and width - no depth. So the picture window effect is an illusion of space created by the artist.

PERSPECTIVE is a system for representing three dimensions (height, width, and depth) on a two dimensional surface. Artists lead us back into "deep" space by using PERSPECTIVE. There are several ways an artist can create the illusion:

1. Putting far-away objects above or higher then nearby objects.
2. Overlapping figures or shapes.
3. Making distant objects smaller in proportion to nearer ones.
4. Indicating shadow (light and shade).
5. Changing color (lighter or less intense in the "distance".)
6. Blurring the background with the "haze of atmosphere".
7. Making lines seem to disappear in the distance.
8. Bringing lines closer together in the distance.

LOOKING AT SPACE:

What shapes the space we are presently in?
Are spaces only things we can see?

What about space in time?
How much space in time have you lived?

What about space in music?
Make a sound with spaces between.
What is a pattern in sound called ?
Rhythm.

Look for patterns of visual space -- doorways, windows, a fence.

How do mirrors change space?
Think about reflections in mirrors, windows, ponds, glass buildings.

Note: Degas loved to alter the sense of space in his paintings by including mirrors and windows at odd angles.

LOOKING AT A WORK OF ART:

Does it look as if we could walk into the distance?

How do the objects in the background compare in size to the objects in the foreground?

Are things in the distance more or less clear?

How has the artist's use of light and shadow affected the sense of the depth?

Do you see any shapes that are overlapping?

How do the colors in the foreground compare to those in the distance?

(Most of this dialogue is covered in the class on Landscape.)

ACTIVITIES

Introduction

One of the keys to capturing and retaining a young child's interest in works of art is to involve him or her actively in the process of looking. Our "Learning to Look" program has developedor refined many hands-on activities to be done in the classroom or during museum tours. These techniques and "gallery games" help the child to discern the Elements of Art, to feel the mood of a painting or sculpture, to uncover its underlying structure, or to place it in its socio-cultural context. Students remember what they have seen better by associating the painting or sculpture with the various activities which we have done with them. All children are encouraged to participate. Looking at art thus becomes an exciting and enjoyable experience.

List of Activities

1. Eye Exercises

Every "Learning to Look" art class for students through the fifth grade begins with eye exercises which help to refresh the students' eyes and focus them on the task at hand. The exercises mark a beginning to the session and quiet the group in order to prepare them for concentrated looking.

a. Open your eyes wide like owls
b. Shut them tightly like mice
c. Look up to the ceiling, down to the floor, up to the ceiling, down to the floor. Do not move your head.
d. Look to the right, look to the left, right, left. Move only your eyes
e. Close your eyes and place your fingertips lightly on your eyelids. Relax. (During this time the teacher reveals the first work of art to be studied)
f. Open your eyes. You are now ready to look!

2. Texture Bag

To help children understand the meaning of texture and how various textures are recreated in paint, we make use of what we call a "texture bag." In it we place samples of all the textures which appear in a particular painting. The children reach in, pull out a texture, feel it, identify it, and match it to something in the painting. A variant of this activity is to have the children look first at the painting and identify the textures depicted in it and then match them with the objects in the texture bag. (For the younger children, it is often better for the teacher to hold on to the texture and walk from child to child.) This is a very exciting process which helps the children to describe better what they see and broaden their sensory perception. They notice, for example, whether the artist has tried to render the textures realistically or whether they are more difficult to identify.

3. Tracing with acetate paper

One excellent way to aid students in visualizing the underlying shapes and lines in a painting is to have them trace over a reproduction of the painting with clear acetate paper and an indelible magic marker. We give them very specific instructions as to what to trace according to what aspect of the painting's overall structure we wish to highlight. We might ask them to draw all the horizontal and vertical lines in a painting or follow any diagonals with their marking pens. Tracing over acetate also helps them see whether the lines in a painting are predominantly curved or straight and what this means in terms of the paintings overall impact on the viewer. We have each child do this activity in conjunction with their study of Cézanne's Gulf of Marseilles from L'Estague. Cézanne is a perfect painter with which to illustrate this point because he wished in his art to reduce nature to its simplest forms. This can be seen very clearly when we remove the acetate from the reproduction and observe the many triangles, rectangles and squares which emerge.

4. Posing

Another way in which to make the overall composition or structure of an artwork clear to children is to have them pose whatever work they are looking at. Everyone gets to participate and the children remember the painting or sculpture better by recalling their own part in posing it. The artwork comes alive to them. We use clothing and props in order to duplicate the effect of the original artwork. We ask the students which poses are easier to hold in order to point out to them how some paintings or sculpture create a feeling of motion while others give the impression of stasis.

5. Sketching

To reenforce the children's grasp of the Elements of Art, we also encourage them to sketch, not with the aim of creating a finished work to take home, but rather as artists themselves do, in order to analyze a composition or make preparatory studies. We ask the students, for example, to look out the window and sketch the landscape simply in terms of horizontal and vertical lines. Another exercise is to have them look at a painting and sketch it only according to its abstract forms and shapes.

6. Modeling with clay

Modeling with clay is an excellent way in which to help students understand some of the basic concepts of sculpture: its three-dimensionality, its need for a base or other form of support, its use of positive and negative space, and the difference between relief sculpture and sculpture in the round. Again as with sketching, the students are not necessarily expected to create a finished product. Rather, we give them specific instructions such as "make a snake and see how many different ways you can pose it," in order to illustrate a point. In this case, the students' work with clay has shown them the importance of a support if they wished to attain a wide variety of different positions.

7. Telescope

Another of our activities helps to isolate details and concentrate our looking. We ask the children to roll up a 4"x6" notecard into a telescope. Then we tell them to use it in order to find something in the painting. The direction and angle of the student's telescope tells us at a glance if he or she has focused in on the desired object. We also use the telescopes to identify objects in the classroom. For example, we might ask the students to find a still life in the room.

8. Comparison and Contrast

To illustrate the point that paintings and sculpture differ in style not only according to when they were created in history, but also that style varies from artist to artist and even within an artist's own lifetime, we compare and contrast different works of art. We ask the students to see how many ways two paintings or sculptures are alike and how they differ. Students must take into consideration all the elements of art as well as the overall appearance of the artwork, its time of creation and the feelings it generates within the viewer.

9. Recreate a Still Life

During our class on still life, we have the children attempt to recreate one of the paintings which we are examining together. We bring in props such as fruit, vegetables, flowers, a violin etc., according to the subject matter of the work we are studying. Each child is asked to identify an object and place it in its proper position so that our finished arrangement approximates as closely as possible to the original still life. This exercise enables the students to comprehend some of the basic concerns of a still life painter: the use of light, the concepts of balance and harmony, and the question of focus.

10. Rubberman

Rubberman is an excellent game to play when studying sculpture. The teacher chooses one child to pose. Each child in the class then is allowed to make one adjustment to the standing figure in order to duplicate the original sculpture. This same activity can also be done in pairs with each child getting a chance to be both the model and one who does the adjustment.

11. Frozen Statues

Another activity which aids students in visualizing sculpture as capturing a moment in time and space is the game frozen statues. We ask the children to spin around as we count to ten and then have them freeze in whatever position they are in at the time. This gives them the idea of sculpture as arrested motion. We ask some of the children to walk around the "frozen statues" so that they can see for themselves how sculpture-in-the round can be viewed from many different angles.

12. Magnification

The use of a magnifying glass can heighten the enjoyment of looking at certain paintings, especially those which are highly detailed. We might ask the children to count the number of miniscule people in a painting. We explain to them that certain painters, especially the early Flemish masters, used only a few cat's whiskers in order to paint the tiniest of details. Thus a magnifying glass enables us to appreciate their creation more thoroughly.

13. Music of the Period

To increase the students' awareness of art as an expression of a certain time in history, we play music of the period. We contrast a piece of music from the present with one composed at the time of the artwork's creation. We ask the children to see if they can guess which piece of music is contemporary with the artwork being studied. This helps the students to understand the concept of period style and how it changes over time.

14. Individual Art Notebooks

Several of our techniques involve classroom reenforcement. Every child makes a "Learning to Look" notebook in which he or she places postcards of many of the works we have studied together in class. After each "Learning to Look" session, the regular classroom teacher holds a review of the points discussed and the children attempt to recall what we had discovered about the artwork on view. Together with their classroom teacher, they write up a small composition and place it next to the appropriate postcard in their notebooks. At the end of each year the students get to take their notebooks home in order to share them with relatives and friends. Some children have used them to take their parents on a tour of the Met.

15. Classroom Artbook

Classroom teachers may also choose to keep a classroom Artbook. This is a larger version of the students' individual notebooks and is left out for all to see. For those students who are beginning to read, the large print and easy availability of the classroom artbook make it a valuable tool in encouraging children to read independently.

16. Art and Aesthetics Corner

We encourage classroom teachers to set aside a place in the classroom for an art and aesthetics corner. In it are kept the classroom artbook and the poster of the most recent artwork studied. In addition the children mey bring in objects from home which they find beautiful or aesthetically interesting. During a special art "show and tell" children may bring in something from home and discuss what artistic elements it contains. This spurs them to see art all around them and to carry over the ideas discussed in their "Learning to Look" classes to their other studies and to the world at large.