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INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS THROUGH WORKS OF ART

An Interdisciplinary Museum Experience

In October 1994, participants in Special Tours for Young People, a Saturday-held youth program at the **Amon Carter Museum** in Fort Worth, explored themes and approaches by artists in the exhibit *American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915*.

The exhibit, which compared the work of two important turn-of-the-century movements in American art, was organized by three broad categories: the country, the city, and the home. As the work of both groups of artists reflected the life and sentiments of the time, the exhibit offered a natural opportunity for the investigation of the work through social studies connections.

Student Activities for the Youth Program

One of the three special tours offered focused on the paintings in the sections of the exhibit devoted to the home. In this tour, students compared and contrasted artists' views of home life from the perspective of both Impressionist and Realist artists.

With **John Sloan's** *A Woman's Work*, the artist's view from his window of a woman hanging laundry from lines strung high between buildings, participants examined (and hefted) an antique cast metal iron. They discussed women's roles and the realities of washing, hanging, and ironing clothes without conveniences such as running water and electricity.

Students examined period photographs of children living on the streets at the time and compared them with both images in the paintings and contemporary life of homeless people. Connections were made between each work of art and notable occurrences during the year it was painted (such as the first sale of Henry Ford's Model A in 1903, and the introduction of the Oreo Cookie in 1912).

In addition to other activities, the youthful participants also viewed period clothing, dressed in reproductions of hats and clothing depicted in the paintings, and posed for photographs. Especially intriguing was a corset designed to create an eighteen-inch waist. Corsets determined the feminine silhouette of the time and were worn by females as young as age ten.

Through this account details only a few of the student activities developed in conjunction with this exhibit, it serves as an example of the holistic learning possible in both museums and schools when study is centered upon works of art and logical and natural interdisciplinary connections are investigated.

Texas Mandated Educational Objectives

The Texas Essential Elements (EEs), state-mandated educational objectives that specify the content of instruction for all subjects, are useful to illustrate interdisciplinary connections through works of art. Though many of the EE's for Social Studies relate to the museum activities described, some of the most pertinent include requirements that students be provided opportunities to:

- discuss and interpret visuals;
- recognize how societal values affect individual beliefs and attitudes;
- compare and contrast opposing viewpoints;
- recognize the value and dignity of work;

- identify basic needs and wants;
- sequence events on a timeline;
- identify the contributions of various cultures to the American way of life.

The interconnected concepts of different subject disciplines work together to provide students with exemplary learning experiences when works of art are central to the curriculum.

This diagram illustrates some of the many interdisciplinary connections possible and appropriate between the study of works of art and certain subject areas. This diagram is presented as one suggested model; it includes art, social studies, writing, and science. Other subject areas and objectives could be substituted.

In the diagram, the work of art is at the center, signifying its importance. Through in-depth investigation of a work of art, concepts and objectives from other disciplines will extend and interweave, as exemplified in the overlapping rectangles in the diagram. The fact that the rectangles are all the same size indicates that the subject areas are considered to be equal in value.

This issue of the **NTIEVA Newsletter** continues the focus of the Winter issue on interdisciplinary connections. Throughout this issue will be found other teacher-developed approaches to making invaluable cross-curricular connections.

Nancy Walkup (walkup@art.unt.edu)



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NTIEVA TO PRESENT BOTH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY 1995 SUMMER INSTITUTES

For the first time, NTIEVA will offer both elementary and secondary summer institutes in 1995. Both will be open to participants from consortium member school districts (Dallas ISD, Denton ISD, Forth Worth ISD, Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD, Pilot Point ISD, and Plano ISD). The elementary institute is open on a tuition basis for other participants from around the state; the secondary institute has a limited number of spaces available for participants from outside the consortium.

1995 NTIEVA Elementary Summer Institute

The 1995 NTIEVA Elementary Summer Institute will be held June 5 - 16, as five simultaneous institutes meeting primarily in each of the consortium school districts (Denton ISD and Pilot Point ISD will again work as a combined group).

Tuition based participants will also meet in Denton. Though most districts will visit only the **art museums** in their immediate area, the Denton/Pilot Point/Tuition-Based Institute will include visits to all five consortium museums in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.

All five institutes will meet together on the opening day at **D.C. James Learning Center**, 1718 Robert B. Cullum Blvd., next to Fair Park in Dallas. During the morning of the opening day all groups will meet together at D.C. James; in the afternoon each institute will meet individually for activities at one of the adjacent museums in Fair Park.

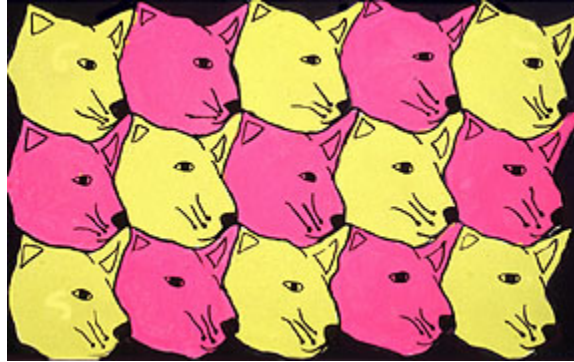
1995 NTIEVA Secondary Summer Institute

NTIEVA will host its first secondary institute in Denton at the University of North Texas from July 10 -21, 1995. Participants from consortium districts and from around Texas will work in the studio with instructors from UNT's School of Visual Arts, visit the five Dallas/Fort Worth consortium museums, and investigate a comprehensive approach to **art education** on the secondary level.

Interested individuals from NTIEVA's consortium districts should contact their district art coordinator. Other individuals from around Texas may contact NTIEVA at UNT P.O. Box 5098, Denton, TX 76203, (817) 565-3986, or walkup@art.unt.edu via InterNet.

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TESSELLATIONS AND MATHEMATICS: A LOGICAL CONNECTION



Forth grade student work from
Burton Hills Elementary, Fort Worth, Texas

Tessellations, patterns made from one or more shapes that interconnect without gaps or overlaps, have intrigued artists *and* mathematicians for centuries. Derived from the Latin word "tessella," this art form traces its origins to the Sumerians who created geometric mosaics as early as 4000 B.C. Archimedes (c. 287-212 B.C.) studied the characteristics of combinations of polygons as the shapes tessellated across a surface.

Today we most frequently associate tessellations with Islamic artists and artisans. Because of religious beliefs forbidding representation of people, animals, or lifelike objects in their artwork, Moorish artisans in about the year 700 began to create calligraphic, linear, and geometric designs. These intricate works have since been translated into complex tessellations used as functional and decorative parts of architecture and art objects.

Contemporary artists such as M.C. Escher, Bridget Riley, and Victor Vasarely have interpreted tessellations into modern art. Escher, a Dutch artist who often worked with printmaking, created tessellations that metamorphosize from one shape into another. Both Riley, a British artist, and Vasarely, a Hungarian artist, used tiling patterns in some of their paintings to create an optical tessellating effect.

Objective

Students will create a tessellation after exploring Islamic and Western interpretations of the art form.

Materials

- Tagboard cut into 3" x 3" squares
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Drawing paper
- Tempera paint
- Paint brushes
- Containers for water

Motivation for Production Activity

After discussing the history of tessellations and observing examples of tessellations from Islamic and western art, demonstrate how a square can be changed into a complicated tessellating shape.

Demonstration

1. Along the left edge of the square draw a simple, curved line that starts at the top corner, extends slightly into the square, and ends at the bottom left corner.
2. Cut along the line that was drawn.
3. Move the cut-out shape to the right edge of the square, directly opposite where the shape was originally cut out.
4. Carefully place the straight edge of the shape along the right edge of the square. Do *not* allow the shape to overlap the square.
5. Tape the shape to the square.
6. Along the bottom edge of the square, repeat the drawing and cutting procedure.
7. Along the top edge of the square, repeat the taping procedure.

Procedure

Distribute pre-cut tagboard squares to students. Instruct them to alter the shape of the square following the directions given. After each student has changed a square to a more interesting shape, distribute the drawing paper. Placing the transformed shape in the upper left corner of the paper, trace lightly around it with pencil. After the first shape is traced, move the tagboard template to the right so that it fits without overlapping, but adjacent to, the original traced shape. Moving across the page and keeping the shapes in a straight row, repeat the process until the entire paper is filled with the tessellating design. Using tempera paint, add color to the design in an alternating, checkerboard fashion.

Extensions

Interdisciplinary connections with tessellations can be readily made. Can students locate tessellations in their own community? Tile floors, parquet flooring, and wallpaper designs are in many homes, offices, and public buildings.

What angles are created in the student's own tessellations when the shapes are repeated across a page? If using only two colors, how much of each will be used? How many shapes will be one color, how many the other color?

How are the works of M.C. Escher, Bridget Riley, and Victor Vasarely similar and different from Islamic tessellations? Create a Venn diagram to contrast and compare one of the modern artist's tessellations to that of an Islamic tessellation. Write a summary about the similarities and differences. Display the Venn diagrams, summaries, and examples of the works of art together.

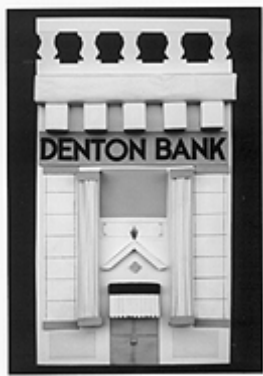
Resources

Seymour, Dale and Jill Britton. *Introduction to Tessellations*.

Britton, Jill and Walter. *Teaching Tessellating Art*.

(Both are from Dale Seymour Publications 800/872-1100)

Article by: **Pam Stephens**



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AUDACIOUS ARCHITECTURE: ART CLUB IN ACTION

Art clubs provide excellent opportunities for students to work in small groups and do creative problem-solving activities. The art club at Wilson Elementary School in Denton, Texas, meets two times each week for 30 minutes at the end of the day. The club consists of students who want to learn about art in addition to their regularly scheduled art class.

Art club students do not need to possess a special talent but only a special *interest* in art. Lessons that art teachers sometimes feel that they would like to teach only if they had smaller classes can be taught during art club.

Our club recently worked on a challenging and rewarding architectural project. Students made a replica of a building that was originally the Denton County National Bank and learned the historical background of the building. Students learned **architectural vocabulary** as they made decisions about the types of common materials that would be best to represent the various parts.

To begin a construction of the bank replica, a student brought a box to be used for the building and covered it with poster board. The balustrade was cut from poster board and glued to the top.

Small boxes were painted and used for the details. Straws were glued together to develop the columns while small pieces of poster board were creased and glued to represent the capitals.

Pilasters were made from paper. The pediment was created by cutting and gluing poster board so that it would be three-dimensional. A tile represented the decorative part of this area. Ice-cream sticks were glued together and slanted to form the awning over the door. Doors and windows were cut from paper.

The people who coordinate the exhibits at the Denton County Historical Museum are planning to display the art club's replica of the bank along with their historical collection pertaining to banks.

Art club students gained historical knowledge while working on the architectural project. Students were inventive in using common materials as they solved problems creating the three-dimensional building.

Manipulative skills developed as students were challenged in arranging the various parts to achieve unity. Through vocabulary and production, the young "architects" have a better visual perception when they look at buildings as they are more aware of their architectural environment.

Resources for historical background:

- (1) Clark, Frank. The Denton Review.
- (2) Denton, Texas: The Historical Society of Denton County, Fall 1990.

by Berniece Patterson - Art Teacher, Woodrow Wilson Elementary, Denton, Texas

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STILL LIFE IN A LANDSCAPE

Pablo Picasso, Spanish, 1881-1973 1915, Oil on Canvas, 24 1/2 x 29 1/4 inches The Algur Meadows Collection, Meadows Museum, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas

About the Artist

Few artists have lived as long as **Pablo Picasso**, and probably none have produced as many works in as many styles. He enjoyed success early in his lifetime, and, except for periods of time when he was short of money, he lived well, enjoying travel and friends. He produced paintings, sculptures, prints, murals, and ceramics.

Picasso's paintings are often classified into "periods." Images from the Blue Period often expressed poverty and sorrow, and the Rose Period included paintings of circus performers and acrobats.

During his Cubist period, Picasso and his friend Georges Braque produced works that had impact on many of the artists who were a part of their circle of friends in Paris. Picasso's work not only influenced the artists of his time but also generations of artists who came after him. Art historians sometimes state that Picasso did more than any other artist to change the course of art in the 20th century.

About the Art

This painting presents to the viewer a still life on a table top with a landscape seen through and around the objects. In *Still Life in a Landscape* we see a stylized tabletop on which are arranged a fruit bowl, a mandolin, and a glass. Behind the table and seen between the "objects" is a landscape with areas of green mottled foliage, buildings, blue sky, and white clouds.

A geometrically stylized bunch of grapes rests in the fruit bowl. Some of the shapes are areas of pure color and others have dots of color. The viewer feels as if the mandolin can be seen from top, side, and bottom simultaneously. As you study this work, portions of the painting may appear to fold out or bend back into space.

In 1989, before this work was to be exhibited in a show at the **Dallas Museum of Art**, it was examined by a conservator at the **Kimball Museum in Fort Worth**. She discovered that this painting had been executed over another Cubist painting Picasso had created earlier. X-ray devices used by conservators can often tell us if artists have painted on top of previously painted works.

Additional Information

Cubism is a form of abstraction in which objects are broken up into angular facets; these facets are then methodically arranged into a composition. Cubism presents objects to the viewer as if they are being seen from a number of different angles at the same time. Cubist paintings are organizations of shapes and colors, sometimes in large, flat areas. Shapes seem to fit together like the pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle. Picasso and Georges Braque collaborated so closely for a time on works using this particular type of organization that one may have difficulty telling their work apart.

They sometimes glued paper to the surfaces of their canvases. The works that included pieces of paper are called "papier collé" (French for "pasted paper") and one can see pieces of newspaper,

tobacco wrappers, playing cards, and wallpaper that have been glued into place as parts of their paintings.

Works that include materials other than paper glued to the surface are called "collages." Depth was indicated in these works and in Cubist paintings by overlapping shapes to show which objects or figures are in-front-of or in-back-of others. Cubism influenced not only painting, but also sculpture and architecture throughout the world.

The work of Picasso and Braque up to 1912 is usually called *Analytical Cubism* because the forms were analyzed into geometrical facets with subdued colors. The second stage is called *Synthetic Cubism* when colors became stronger and the shapes more decorative. This phase grew out of the early papier collé works. *Rococo Cubism* is the third stage, and works in this style are even more decorative, with pointillistic dots painted onto some of the shapes.

About the Time and Place

The year that *Still Life in a Landscape* was completed, 1915, was a turbulent one in most of Europe. World War I was affecting the lives of most of the people there as Germany staged attacks on several ports and cities. The Germans began a blockade of Great Britain in February and used chlorine gas for the first time in April. A German submarine torpedoed the S.S. Lusitania in May, sinking the huge vessel in 18 minutes and killing 1,198 people. The United States would not enter the war until 1917, but Henry Ford chartered a ship, calling it the Peace Ship, and sailed for Europe on December 4 with a party of advisers in an attempt to "get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas."

Literary events of that year included the publication of W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, Edgar Lee Masters' *A Spoon River Anthology*, and Joseph Conrad's *Victory*.

The world's citizens were witnessing advances in science and technology as Albert Einstein presented his General Theory of Relativity. Henry Ford developed a farm tractor and produced his one-millionth automobile. The first transcontinental telephone call was made between Alexander Graham Bell in New York and Dr. Thomas A. Watson in San Francisco. The call took 23 minutes to go through and cost \$20.70.

References

Burke, Marcus. *A Selection of Spanish Masterworks*. 1986.

Gilbert, Rita, and William McCarter. *Living With Art, Second Edition*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1988.

Grun, Bernard. *The Timetables of History*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.

Trager, James. *The People's Chronology*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992.

Article by: [Kay Wilson](#)

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***LEARNING THROUGH ART* INTRODUCED BY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON**

Interdisciplinary Teaching Kits

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, has successfully completed a pilot program for its new art-based teaching kits, *Learning Through Art*. The interdisciplinary project uses art as the focus for instruction in language arts, social studies, science, and math, as well as in art.

The goal of this education initiative is to help teachers integrate art into elementary school curricula, and to help children learn more about other cultures--past and present--as well as their own, through art education.

A Focus on Works of Art

Two curriculum kits were designed, one for grades 1 through 3 and one for grades 4 through 6. *Learning Through Art* was designed for elementary school classrooms. The works of art are the focus of interdisciplinary lesson plans.

The teacher's guide shows teachers how to teach art and how to incorporate art in other subjects they teach. All units in *Learning Through Art* meet the essential elements mandated for specific subject areas by the Texas Education Agency.

The program was founded on the idea that works from the museum's encyclopedic collection of world art could be a major resource for instruction in art, social studies, science, language arts, and math.

The program motivates students to excel in all subjects by teaching them many facets of art and its importance in all areas of life and learning. *Learning Through Art* allows students to be creative, while emphasizing that the creation and interpretation of art are problem-solving activities.

Curriculum Kit Content

Each *Learning Through Art* kit contains 23" x 36" posters of the focus works of art and a teacher's guide that includes interdisciplinary lesson charts, illustrated art-making lessons, and essays on each focus work.

The kit also contains four short video programs that explain the art-making process by showing four Texas artists at work -- printmaker Karin Broker, photographer Keith Carter, sculptor Jesus Bautista Moroles, and painter Floyd Newsum, Jr. Each artist is represented in the MFA's permanent collection.

Available for Purchase or Loan

The *Learning Through Art* kits are available for purchase and for loan through the Resource Center of the Museum of Fine Arts. For more information on *Learning Through*

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NEW VIDEOS AVAILABLE FROM NTIEVA'S RESOURCE LIBRARY

Three new videos are now available for you to borrow from NTIEVA's Resource Library. They are all of excellent quality and content and we believe you would enjoy using them in your classroom. To borrow a video contact Kay Wilson at NTIEVA's office at (817) 565-4402. The videocassette will be mailed to you with a self-addressed, envelope to use when returning the video to our offices.

Public Sculpture: America's Legacy

Video (28 minutes) from the series *America Past and Present*, produced by the National Museum of American Art, **Smithsonian Institution**, Washington, D.C., 1994.

In this country our public memorials, statues, and outdoor sculpture reveal much about American History and the values of citizens and communities. A wide variety of public sculpture is presented from several locations: Arizona, Washington D.C., Cincinnati, Boston, and more. Much can be learned from our public sculpture about our history and various cultural influences. Teachers in Texas will especially enjoy the segment about Luis Jiménez.;

This video is especially appropriate for older elementary students, middle school, and high school students. Expressed in the film are many issues concerning community values and our ideals and expectations as a nation that will provide opportunities for valuable discussions in your classroom.

African-American Artists: Affirmation Today

Video (28 minutes) from the series *America Past and Present*, produced by the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1994.

This excellent video is a "conversation" with five African-American contemporary artists: Leroy Almon, Frederic Brown, Sam Gilliam, Lois Mailou Jones, and Keith Morrison. Each artist speaks from the heart discussing their backgrounds, their philosophies, their motivations, the problems they have encountered, and their triumphs.

Viewers hear and see each of these artists as they describe their life and their work and see examples of the work they are producing. This video would be an excellent way to present to your students five portraits of extraordinary individuals who believe in their work and in themselves. It is also appropriate for older elementary students, middle school, and high school students.

How to Visit an Art Museum

Video, 30 minutes, produced at the Art Institute of Chicago by Tellens, Inc.

This video is one of a few we have found that is designed for young people, but it would be beneficial for both students and teachers prior to a museum visit. Viewers are invited to "step around the room of someone else's imagination" by visiting a museum and seeing the objects housed there. Through works of art, visitors can enter a world different from their own. They are encouraged to approach works with a feeling of adventure in order to see the wide variety of ways in which artists communicate their ideas.

As viewers of this video we witness different ways of becoming involved with works of art. This video will help young people know that they can feel at home in a museum whether on their own, with a parent, or with a teacher.

Note:

All of these videos would be worthy additions to school libraries or art rooms. Both **Public Sculpture: America's Legacy** and **African-American Artists: Affirmation Today** are available for purchase from Crystal Productions (call 800-255-8629 for a free catalog) and are included in units along with comprehensive study guides, reference visuals, and a convenient storage case. **How to Visit an Art Museum** is available from Tellens, Inc., 2624-A Prairie Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201.



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**NTIEVA CO-SPONSORS SANTA FE SEMINAR WITH PLAZA
RESOLANA**

NTIEVA is co-sponsoring *Tres Culturas*, a Santa Fe Summer Seminar, with Plaza Resolana Study and Conference Center, July 17 - 23, 1995, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Plaza Resolana is conveniently located in Santa Fe, three blocks from the many museums, galleries, restaurants, and shops in the historic downtown Plaza.

Open to Institute participants, spouses, friends, and other interested individuals, this educational seminar will focus on the three rich and diverse dominant cultures of New Mexico: Pueblo Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo.

Seminar fees are \$400.00 per person and include six nights in Santa Fe in double occupancy rooms at Plaza Resolana, all meals, participant notebooks, and handouts, museum admissions, and guest speakers. Transportation to and from Santa Fe is not included, but Plaza Resolana vans will be used for daily travel.

To register or receive further information about *Tres Culturas*, write or call Plaza Resolana, 401 Old Taos Highway, Santa Fe, NM 87501; (800) 821-5145.

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RUTH HALVORSEN PROFESSIONAL

DEVELOPMENT FUNDS AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS

A new grant program for art educators, *The Ruth Halvorsen Professional Development Fund*, was recently announced by National Art Education Association (NAEA) President Mark Hansen.

The Fund is possible because of a bequest by NAEA's seventh president, Ruth E. Halvorsen. Her beneficent bequest enables the National Art Education Foundation to fulfill Ms. Halvorsen's lifetime wish that "NAEA be a voice speaking to all people of the role art education must play...a philosophy and applied science to be...explored and evolved."

Annual scholarships will be awarded in amounts up to \$1000 to selected art educators whose proposals focus on understanding, issues, and implementation specifically related to the *Visual Arts Standards* document. Scholarships may include tuition, room and board, and related study materials.

Applicants for the *Halvorsen Professional Development Fund* and other grant programs of NAEA will be available in April, 1995, by writing directly to the headquarters office at NAEA, 1916 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1590.