

Teachers' Notes for School Program, Fall 2016

Picture Me

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Cover image: Unknown Artist, *Self-Portrait with Square Palette*, Around 1600, Oil on panel, Gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, 2014 (57-001.04)

Introduction

Our school programs challenge students to develop critical thinking skills. We ask questions and set tasks requiring students to:

Observe

Interpret

Describe

Create

These skills are used to support acquisition of flexible and imaginative thinking skills. They are paramount for student development and are an integral part of the 21st-century learning framework.

A recent study by the University of Arkansas found that art gallery field trips are valuable for the development of critical thinking skills, historical empathy and tolerance of other viewpoints.

For more about this study, see: www.educationnext.org/the-educational-value-of-field-trips/

The first half of the *Picture Me* program, which takes place in the gallery space, establishes key ideas. These ideas are developed in the second half of the visit through a creative hands-on project in the studio. We encourage you to use this booklet to prepare your students for their visit to the Agnes, and to extend the experience in your classroom.

Focus Exhibition Fall 2016

Singular Figures: Portraits and Character Studies in Northern Baroque Painting

In this exhibition, visitors are greeted by men and women, old and young, who share information about themselves through their clothing, attributes, facial expression, and carriage. Each poses questions: how do we engage with them, which do we favour, and why? Appropriately, a portrait of René Descartes, the philosopher whose dictum, “I think, therefore I am,” characterized the subjectivity of the seventeenth century, reinforces this examination of the individual experience of early modern life.

The exhibition includes an important recent gift from Drs Alfred and Isabel Bader, Rembrandt van Rijn’s *Portrait of a Man with Arms Akimbo* of 1658. The bold assertion of self in this portrait makes for a dynamic dialogue with other aspects of identity-fashioning on view in the exhibition.

Drawing primarily from The Bader Collection, this exhibit is co-curated by Dr. Stephanie S. Dickey, Bader Chair in Northern Baroque Art in the Department of Art History and Conservation, Queen’s University and Dr. Jacquelyn N. Coutré, Bader Curator/Researcher of European Art.

Program

Primary (Grade 1-3)

Picture Me

In this 90-minute program, students spend half the time in *Singular Figures* exhibition and half in the studio. Students will discuss three 17th-century Dutch portraits in *Singular Figures*, focusing on pose through costume activities, and colour. In the studio, they will create a painting that represents themselves through a favoured object.

We align our programs to the current Ontario Ministry of Education’s Curriculum documents, in order to support teachers in meeting curricular objectives.

The Agnes offers a two-part program delivery model for groups larger than 30 students. Half of the class begins in the gallery space and the other half begins in the studio; they switch places at the 45-minute mark.

Curriculum Connections:

Education in the arts is essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth and well-being. Experiences in the arts—in dance, drama, music, and visual arts—play a valuable role in helping students to achieve their potential as learners and to participate fully in their community and in society as a whole. The arts provide a natural vehicle through which students can explore and express themselves and through which they can discover and interpret the world around them. (Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2009)

Visual Art

Students will:

- Identify characteristics of portraits
- Describe how elements of design such as colour and value are used in the paintings
- Understand the concept of pose through two costume activities
- Create a painting of an object that represents themselves

Social Studies

Students will:

- Develop their understanding of global communities through discussion of life in the Netherlands in the 17th century

Before the Visit

The following are suggested discussion topics and activities to help prepare students for their visit.

Gallery Visit

Discuss the nature of a public art gallery with your class. Art galleries collect, research, protect, preserve and display original works of art for the benefit of current and future visitors. Ask your students if they have been to an art gallery before. What types of art did they see at the art gallery? Why is it important to visit original works of art, instead of viewing reproductions or images on the Internet?

Expectations

Discuss proper behaviour and gallery etiquette with your class. The three main rules to remember are: Do not touch the art because oils on our hands can contain salt that can damage the surface of works of art. No running, and no food or drinks (including gum) are permitted.

Please note: we ask that students wear name tags during the program.

Extending the Visit into the Classroom

Your visit to the Agnes can be extended to your classroom upon your return. Here are a few ideas to support extension:

Students will see these two paintings at the Agnes:



Attributed to Isaack Luttichuijs, London 1616–Amsterdam 1673, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, Around 1638, Oil on panel, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Alfred Bader, 1979 (22-062)

<http://agnes.queensu.ca/search-our-collections/detail.php?t=objects&type=all&f=&s=portrait+of+a+gentleman&record=4>

Language project:

Write a story about this gentleman. Give him a name. Give his dog a name. Why is he standing like that? What is he thinking? Where did he buy his boots? What can he smell or hear in that place? Where is he going?



Jan Albertsz. Rootius, Medemblik around 1615–Hoorn 1674, *Portrait of Five Sisters*, Around 1655, Oil on canvas, Gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, 1995 (38-007)

<http://agnes.queensu.ca/search-our-collections/detail.php?t=objects&type=all&f=&s=five+sisters&record=1>

Language project:

Write a conversation among the five sisters in *Portrait of Five Sisters*. How do they like posing for the painter? Are they tired? How do the older sisters keep the baby still? What would they rather be doing?

Works in Other Galleries and Museums:

There are many Dutch and Flemish paintings from this period available for viewing on their museum's websites. We highlight some here, with their themes:

Games:

Pieter Breugel the Elder, *Children's Games*, 1560, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
<http://bilddatenbank.khm.at/viewArtefact?id=321>

Name some of the games you can see that are familiar. There are 91 activities or objects associated with games, including hoops, headstands, dice, toy horses, tree climbing, leapfrog, stilts, bubble blowing, somersaulting, skipping rope, marbles, dolls, cards, balloons and drums. Students could discuss which games are still played today and why.

Art project: They could draw a portrait of themselves and their friends playing their favourite games.

Clothing:

Erasmus Quellinus, *Portrait of a Boy*, c. 1650, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp
http://www.kmska.be/web/en/collectie/highlights/Portret_jongetje.html

Govert Flinck, *Girl by a High Chair*, 1640, Mauritshuis, The Hague
<https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/explore/the-collection/artworks/girl-by-a-high-chair-676/detailgegevens/>

Children in the Dutch Baroque period dressed very differently from children today: young boys wore dresses and clothes were very elaborate. Of course, these portraits were commissioned by the wealthy. The portraits are very formal, especially compared to photographs we take of children today. However, some things are familiar, as the young boy is painted with his dogs, and the young girl is shown next to her high chair, although it looks very different from high chairs that we use today. She also has a rattle on a string around her neck and there is candy on the chair next to her hand.

Art Project: Students draw or paint a portrait of themselves in clothing that children would have worn in the Dutch Baroque period.

Family Portraits:

Anthony van Dyck, *James Stanley, Lord Strange, Later Seventh Earl of Derby, with His Wife, Charlotte, and Their Daughter*, ca. 1636, The Frick Collection, New York
[http://collections.frick.org/view/objects/asitem/items\\$0040:156](http://collections.frick.org/view/objects/asitem/items$0040:156)

Peter Paul Rubens, *Rubens, His Wife Helena Fourment (1614–1673), and Their Son Frans (1633–1678)* ca. 1635, Metropolitan Museum, New York
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437532>

Family portraits draw an interesting parallel between life then and now, especially in the clothing and poses. In the van Dyck portrait, everyone has a very stiff pose, while in the Rubens work the family looks more relaxed, as the mother and child interact. The child's dress has a string on the back, which the mother holds to keep him close.

Winter Sports:

Hendrick Avercamp, *Skaters*, c. 1610, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-A-1320>

In the 17th century, Dutch people skated and played hockey. The Dutch invented the type of skates we still use today. They also used sleds and went ice fishing.

Pets:

Jacob Ochtervelt, *Family Portrait*, 1663, Fogg Museum, Harvard University
<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/231807>

Jacob Gerritszoon Cuyp, *Portrait of a Child*, 17th c. Private Collection
<http://www.artnet.com/artists/jacob-gerritsz-cuyp/portrait-of-a-young-girl-wearing-a-coral-necklace-TKi2EGMyDszn-3qQesdQ4w2>

Children were often portrayed playing with animals, especially dogs. In the Ochtervelt painting, a girl teaches her dog to “shake paw” with a biscuit as a reward. In the Cuyp portrait, a child holds a pretzel in one hand and a leash for her dog in the other.

School:

Jan Steen, *A School for Boys and Girls*, c. 1670, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh
<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/s/artist/jan-steen/object/a-school-for-boys-and-girls-ng-2421>

A School for Boys and Girls is a humorous depiction of a classroom in the Dutch Baroque period. This is a great comparison for today's students. In the 17th century, children would only attend school for a few years, and only boys would get a full education. In the painting, we see the students misbehaving: they stand on tables and lie on the floor, they are seen making fun of their teacher, who ignores them, and everything is a mess.

Clothing for Adults:

Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Bearded Man with a Ruff*, 1625, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/49.7.34/>

The people who could afford to have a portrait painted in the Dutch Baroque period were generally wealthy, and their clothing reflects that. They wore fine fabrics like lace and silk, often brocaded. It is also possible to see fine jewellery in many of the portraits. Adults wore plain, often dark colours, while

children were permitted to wear more colourful clothing.

The ruff was a fashion in Europe from the 1550s to the 1660s, though the Dutch kept wearing it later than others. Men, women, and children all wore the ruff. It was worn separately from the wearer's clothing, which was convenient for washing, as it tended to acquire food stains.

More Visual Art Projects:

Symbolic Self-Portrait

Talk to the students about their hobbies and activities. Have them identify an object that represents themselves. This object is their symbol and they will include it in a self-portrait. Get each student to bring in a photograph of themselves from home. They will then change the background of the photograph by painting a new scene behind them and then incorporate their symbol into their painting.

Multi-Sensory Experience

Go over the five senses with your students and obtain a good reproduction of a representational painting, such as one of the examples on pages 4 to 6 of these Notes. Ask the students to pretend to step inside of the painting and imagine the different senses. What would you hear? Smell? Taste? See? Touch?

Reading Project

Locker, Thomas. *The Young Artist*. New York: Dial Books, 1989.

A children's novel that deals with painting and morals, this fictional story tells of a talented young artist, commanded to paint the king's courtiers, all of whom wish to be portrayed with improved appearances, as he struggles with his sense of integrity, which demands honest portraiture. Read it as a class and discuss some of the moral dilemmas faced by artists.

After reading the novel, the students write a story about one of the paintings they saw in the gallery. The student should write the story from the artist's point of view or the sitter's point of view.

Lighten Up

In the gallery, we spoke about the importance of lighting in a painting. Gather some flashlights and discuss the different effects light makes. Set up a still life, some artificial flowers or a fruit bowl, and turn out the lights. Have the students take turns shining the flashlight on the objects and discuss how the scene changes. Next, ask for a volunteer and shine the light on varying positions on their faces to show the different emotions that lighting can achieve. Get a good reproduction of a painting and discuss where the light is coming from and how it affects the scene, for example: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Man with Arms Akimbo*, 1658.

<http://agnes.queensu.ca/search-our-collections/detail.php?t=objects&type=browse&f=MAKER&s=Rembrandt+van+Rijn&record=3>

Resources

Agnes Etherington Art Centre

<http://agnes.queensu.ca/collections/european-historical/>

The Collections section of our website has many images of our European paintings.

National Gallery, Washington D.C.

Classroom Guide: Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: A Profile of the Seventeenth Century

http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/Education/learning-resources/teaching-packets/pdfs/dutch_classroom_guide.pdf

Teacher's Resource: Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: A Profile of the Seventeenth Century

http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/Education/learning-resources/teaching-packets/pdfs/dutch_painting.pdf

Although these two documents are intended for middle school students and up, they may be useful for providing concise relevant information on 17th-century Holland.

National Gallery, London, U.K.

Primary Teachers' Notes for *The Castle of Muiden in Winter* by Beerstraten

http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/media/13666/notes_beerstraaten-castle-muiden.pdf

Excellent guide for looking at a Dutch 17th-century landscape painting with young students.

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Good images and brief explanations for two paintings by Jan Steen, *The Merry Family* and *The Feast of Saint Nicholas*

<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/rijksstudio/artists/jan-havicksz-steen/objects#/SK-C-229,0>

<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/rijksstudio/works-of-art/daily-life-paintings/objects#/SK-A-385,2>