



# BE THE CURATOR!

*Lesson Plan for High School, Visual Arts  
Prepared by WEM Staff*

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Has quarantine got you missing the Wharton Esherick Museum? Why not take this opportunity to give your students the tools to bring the Museum to them, whether at home or in the classroom! Encourage students to think like a curator as they create their own virtual (or physical) exhibit/exhibition!

*Note, although the present lesson is designed to promote engagement with and appreciation of visual arts, it can be easily modified to serve a variety of subject areas. Ask students to design an exhibit/exhibition to inform their peers about any curriculum specific topic!*

*Additionally, please note that while the subject student project is hereinafter described as an "exhibit" students are welcome to create smaller exhibits or to plan larger scale exhibitions.*

## EDUCATION STANDARDS

1. Standard - 9.1.12.C  
Integrate and apply advanced vocabulary to the arts forms.
2. Standard - 9.2.12.C  
Relate works in the arts to varying styles and genre and to the periods in which they were created (e.g., Bronze Age, Ming Dynasty, Renaissance, Classical, Modern, Post-Modern, Contemporary, Futuristic, others).
3. Standard - 9.2.12.D  
Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.
4. Standard - 9.2.12.L  
Identify, explain and analyze common themes, forms and techniques from works in the arts (e.g., Copland and Graham's *Appalachian Spring* and Millet's *The Gleaners*).

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to;

1. Analyze works of art for historical, cultural, and/or artistic significance, and
2. Apply said knowledge to the development of a small virtual or physical exhibit of their own.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Internet Ready Computers (with software to create a presentation or some form of virtual exhibit, if applicable)
2. Lots of art to choose from! (Hint-Our [Collection Highlights](#) and our [Online Resources for Educators](#) provide great places to start.)
3. *Optional:* Paper, Poster Board, Scissors, Pens/Pencils, Colored Pencils, etc. (or anything students may have at home, for creation of a physical exhibit).

## VOCABULARY

Accession- The process by which an object is formally added to a museum's collection.

Craft- A type of art which often involves natural or raw materials in the assembly of utilitarian handmade goods.

Curator- An employee of a Museum or culture institution who performs regular research and manages the collection of the institution. They also regularly organize exhibitions.

Exhibit- The public display of an object/small collection of objects.

Exhibition- The public display of a large collection of objects, often unified by theme.

Gallery- A room (or building) in which works of art are displayed.

Tombstone Information- A term that refers to the basic set of information a label may contain, including names, dates, media, and accession.

Wall Text- A term curator's use to describe supplemental information in an exhibition. This may include labels and/or various wall panels that include supplemental text about movements, artists, or pieces exhibited.

## ACTIVITY

### *Introduction*

If technology allows, start with a classwide discussion. Alternatively, ask students to submit a written response to a warm-up question in which they reflect on their experiences in museums. Ask them to discuss themes and layouts of exhibits they have seen. Discussion questions may include; *Why do you think the works were chosen?, How did that impact your experience?, Is there anything you wish was different to make the experience more engaging for you?,* etc.

Now, introduce the task at hand. Introduce the above vocabulary and/or add your own!

### *Developmental Activities*

Encourage students to (virtually) travel the country through our [Collection Highlights](#) and our [Online Resources for Educators](#) and explore Museums with Esherick in their collections.

Then, they should select a theme for an original exhibit (i.e. stools, chairs, an artistic/historical movement such as German Expressionism, etc.) and pieces with which to populate said exhibit. Finished products can take any format, virtual or physical. If technology allows, it could be an interactive online experience. It could be a simple presentation utilizing still photos and/or videos. It could also be a poster, a diorama, or anything you or your students want it to be! Regardless of format, all pieces should have a corresponding label which identifies the piece and connects said piece to the selected theme.

### *Closure*

If possible, students should share their exhibits with their peers. If not, they can simply describe them. If time allows, ask students to reflect on the process of creating this project. *What worked? What didn't? Given the chance, what might you do differently?* Finally, allow students to share comments and questions.

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on the level of understanding and creativity displayed in their exhibits. Thorough research should be evident. Presentations should clearly and thoroughly explain same.

## DIFFERENTIATION OPTIONS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

### *Advanced Learners*

The present lesson is designed to provide flexibility and self-assessment. These ideas can be further developed for advanced students. For instance, advanced students may wish to explore more abstract themes for their exhibits. They can create a gallery map (see attached [Wharton Esherick Studio drawings](#), as an example). Said map should evidence consideration of geographic placement of pieces as it relates to visitor experience. *What will visitors look at first? Second? Third? Why?* Students familiar with design software may wish to utilize some to create a virtual gallery. Don't forget to consider scale! Further, exhibits may cross subject areas, and delve into history or science, as well as art. Encourage advanced learners who finish their projects early to reflect, review, and edit. Finally, advanced learners should be encouraged to use advanced vocabulary. We have assembled an [Advanced Vocabulary List](#) to help with that!

### *Learners with Special Needs*

Apply more structure to the current plan for learners with special needs. Deliver systematic instruction on museum exhibits and offer examples. Consider offering students a selected list of themes and resources to choose from (i.e. a theme may be "Chairs" and a suggested piece may be the [Ladder Back Chair](#)). Labels should be written at each student's comfort level and may simply identify pieces. If technology allows, provide assistance (and/or encourage frequent check-ins) throughout the process. Finally, whenever possible, technology or other assistance (whether provided virtually, by teacher or in person, by a family member) should be made available to students with physical limitations in completing this process.

### *English Language Learners ("ELLs")*

While the present plan may involve a great deal of language, in research and production of labels, all can and should be translated, as needed. Activity can be modeled and/or supplemented with guided notes. Entering or Emerging ELLs may produce labels with names and dates for pieces where Expanding and Bridging ELLs may be able to further develop tombstone information and/or wall text, with support.