VISIONARY ACTIVITIES
FOR THE CLASSROOM

American Visionary Art Museum • 800 Key Highway • Baltimore, MD 21230 • www.avam.org
LESSON 1:
TIME, SEASONS, CYCLES

OBJECTIVES:
• Students explore different kinds of calendars and time-keeping devices.
• Students research these tools, what purpose they serve and how important these calendars are.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS:
• How do other countries keep time?
• How have we kept time in the past?
• What are the pros / cons of how we keep time?
• How would you improve upon our calendar?
• Why is it important to keep time?

VISUAL REFERENCES:
Various Works by Robert Seven
Jewish Calendar by Rabbi Joanne Yocheved Heiligman
Sobriety Calendar by Anonymous
Seven Thousand Years of Human History by Josephus Farmer

ACTIVITIES:
1. Time Keeping
Visual Arts, Grades K-12
Show students examples of a variety of different calendars and time-pieces. Ask students to think about how they view time, months and what is important to them when they are keeping time. Depending on the age group and skill level either give students a template to create their own calendar or give them free rein. (Templates for a round calendar are included in the curriculum packet). Ask students to think carefully about what each month represents for them. Think about how the seasons change for them, but also how they may or may not change depending on where you live in the world. How do the seasons impact your view of time passing?

Alternate Project: Ask students to find a large cardboard box with a flat surface. Cut out one side of the box and on half of the flat surface paint an image that will represent your year / month. Create calendar pages for each month and staple them to the bottom half of your cardboard drawing. The pages can be torn off as each month / day passes. Students can decorate and illustrate each of the monthly / daily pages as well. If this is a collaborative project, students can be grouped by birthday months.

NA-VA.K-12.2, USING KNOWLEDGE OF STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS
NA-VA.K-12.3, CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS
NA-VA.K-12.4, UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES
LESSON 1:
TIME, SEASONS, CYCLES

2. Looking Out Your Window
Visual Arts, Grades K-12
Ask students to create a series of drawings that represent the view out of their window from a variety of different seasons or times of day. How does the view change? What changes?

Above and Beyond: Challenge students to create a narrative story to go along with each of these drawings. How does the narrative and story change depending on the time of the year? How do the activities change?

Above and Even Further Beyond: Assign students various parts of the world. Ask students to research their city/country. Imagine what it would be like to look out the window in that place. How does the weather change? What could be happening out the window? What activities take place in that country that are new or different than your country?

Above and the Furthest Beyond: Show students how to make an advent calendar. Think about what they would like to display behind the “windows.”

NA-VA.K-12.2, USING KNOWLEDGE OF STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS
NA-VA.K-12.3, CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS
NA-VA.K-12.4, UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES

Seven Thousand Years of Human History
by Josephus Farmer
Lesson 2: Invention

Objectives:
- Students research historical and current inventions and inventors.
- Students learn about the process of brainstorming and creation.
- Students use everyday objects as inspiration for imaginary inventions.
- Students work through the process of creating and inventing, thinking about details and how to communicate their vision.

Critical Questions:
- What does it mean to invent something?
- What inventions do you dream about creating?
- What inventors do you admire? What inventions do you wish you had thought of?

Visual References:
Various Works by Candy Cummings
Various Works by Charles Dellschau
Various Works by Jimmy Descant
Various Works by Vollis Simpson

Activities:

1. Random Creation Generator
   Visual Arts, Grades 3-12
   Have students choose three words from a hat (examples of words might be: goat, ice cube, lettuce, wing, bicycle, palm tree, mop, etc.). Students must create a series of drawings that illustrate an invention inspired by these three words. After detailed drawings are created, write a rich explanation of rationale and use of your invention. This explanation can be edited into a clear label for the drawings. They can show the invention from various angles, what it looks like when it is working or the product the invention produces. Think about if this project would be best for small groups in your classroom. Finally, think about how best to show the final products: in a classroom display, bound in a book, on a website, etc.

   Above and Beyond: Give students a prompt (ie. Create a Flying Invention, a Happiness Invention or an Invention that Makes your Life Easier). With this in mind students create a journal of ideas and drawings that work out the details of this invention. Show students other inventor's journals and the process of trial and error that comes with invention. Why is the process of planning / drawing and thinking through a problem important? Ask students what they learned through these drawings? Do they think their invention could actually be a reality? Think about having students work in small groups or pairs. Have students really experience the process of planning, problem solving with a variety of opinions.

   Above and Even More Beyond: Bring a guest inventor into the classroom. Have them share their process, inspiration, challenges and realities with the class.

NA-VA.K-12.5 REFLECTING UPON AND ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MERITS OF THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS
NA-VA.K-12.6 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

4753 SNA-0-BEL by Charles Dellschau
Lesson 2: Invention

2. At the Scene of the Invention
Language Arts // Social Science // Visual Arts, Grades 5-12

Ask students to research an invention that intrigues them. Inventions could be historical example (ie. the Wright brothers airplane, Leonardo DaVinci’s inventions, the telescope, etc.) or contemporary (ie. the iPhone, iPad, apps). Have students pretend they are a journalist at an event where this new invention is revealed. What is the reaction from the spectators/public? How did the inventor come up with the idea? What other inventions or technological break-throughs helped the inventor reach this point? Then have the student write an article with all of their findings. As a bonus, they could accompany their article with illustrations.

Above and Beyond: Ask students to explore real life journalism. Students can research a new invention to write about and review.

NA-VA.K-12.4 UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES
NA-VA.K-12.6 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES
NL-ENG.K-12.4 COMMUNICATION SKILLS
NL-ENG.K-12.5 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS
NSS-USH.9-12.10 ERA 10: CONTEMPORARY UNITED STATES (1968 TO THE PRESENT)
NS.5-12.5 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
NS.5-12.6 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

AVAM Whirligig by Vollis Simpson, Photo by Jack Hoffberger
Lesson 3: Memory, Ritual & Tradition

Objectives:
• Students reflect on what tradition, ritual and family mean to them and their lives.
• Students create projects to depict their views and stories.
• Students learn about tradition in a historical and cultural context and create artwork to reflect their research.

Critical Questions:
• Does your family have any specific traditions they follow?
• Are traditions important to you?
• Why do people have traditions?
• Have you ever lost someone that is important to you? What do you do to remember them?
• What are some examples of rituals? Why do people have rituals?

Visual References:
Various Huichol Yarn Paintings
Dream Catcher by Shane Ware
Australian Aboriginal Burial Pole by Anonymous

Activities:
1. Tradition Stories
Language Arts, Grades K-12
Think about what tradition means. Then brainstorm what traditions you and your family have. Are these traditions important to you? How did these traditions start? Are these traditions unique to your family or are they religious/cultural traditions? Write a short story about a tradition that you share with your family. Describe how this tradition started, what does everyone do as part of this tradition. Is there food involved? Is it tied to a specific date? holiday? religious ceremony? Bring in something to your class to share this tradition with your classmates, it could be some of the traditional food, photographs or clothing.

2. Family Fables
Fine Arts, Grades 7-12
Ask students to think about their family, the stories that are told over and over and the stories they would like to pass on. Brainstorm and share with students the ways that other people(s) have told the stories of their families. Challenge students to create a project (it could be a story, a painting, a quilt, an audio-recording, a song, a totem, etc.) that tells the story of their family. Ask students to think carefully about the medium they decide to use - it should both reflect their family and be a good fit for the story. Invite the students’ families for a presentation of these projects.

Anonymous Huichol Yarn Painting
Lesson 4:

RE-CYCLING AND RE-PURPOSING

Objectives:

• Students are challenged to think about recycling and everyday objects in a new way.
• Students use recycled objects to create something surprising.
• Students learn about the importance and benefits of recycling.
• Students learn about how to use recycled or everyday objects in an inventive way.

Critical Questions:

• What does it mean to recycle?
• In what ways can you recycle? (Other than putting out cans / plastics to be picked up like the trash?)
• Why is it important to recycle?
• What are some interesting things you could recycle and use in a new way?
• What would happen if no one recycled?
  What would happen if everyone recycled?

Visual References:

Various works by Gerald Hawkes
Throne by Mr. Imagination
30 Styrofoam Cups by Mark Swidler
Various works by Ray Materson
Various works by Hawkins Bolden
The Robot Family by Devon Smith
Various Works by Clarence and Grace Woolsley
Rolling Through The Bay by Scott Weaver
Paper Plate Mandala by Wacky Wendy Brackman

Activities:

1. Recycled Creature Feature
Visual Art, Grade K-12
Brainstorm various objects that could be recycled for other non-traditional uses. Introduce students to artists who use recycled materials in unusual and surprising ways. Ask each student to bring in something (clean!) that they might have just thrown away. Use this as a starting point to create an original creature. Provide students with other recycled objects (ie. jars, cans, cardboard, buttons, ribbon, etc.) and let them explore different ways to use these objects in creating something new and surprising.

NA-VA.K-12.1, UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING MEDIA, TECHNIQUES, AND PROCESSES
NA-VA.K-12.3, CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS

2. REsearch REcycled REcreators
Visual Art // Language Art, Grade 7-12
Research someone who uses an interesting object in a new and unusual way (ie. an artist, scientist, engineer, teacher, architect who might create hay bale houses, billboard bags, matchstick sculptures, etc.). What was their inspiration? How might the recycled object works better than something new? Work with a partner to create a podcast interview with your chosen recycler. Create a script with the questions would ask, how you think they would answer and how they will tell their story. Remember that there will be no visuals and listeners cannot see gestures so everything needs to be described very clearly.

NA-VA.K-12.3, CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS
NA-VA.K-12.5, REFLECTING UPON AND ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MERITS OF THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS
NA-VA.K-12.6, MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES
NL-ENG.K-12.7, EVALUATING DATA
NL-ENG.K-12.8, DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS
NL-ENG.K-12.12, APPLYING LANGUAGE SKILLS

(above) 30 Styrofoam Cups by Mark Swidler, (left) Throne by Gregory Warmack aka Mr. Imagination.
Lesson 4:
RE-CYLING AND RE-PURPOSING

3. Start with ONE recycled material
Visual Art, Grades 3-12
Many visionary artists are committed to the use of one specific recycled object in their work. Grandma Tressa Prisbrey (http://home.roadrunner.com/~echomatic/bv/index.html) used bottles to create at least 13 structures and even more sculptures, Clarence + Grace Woosley used bottle caps to create figures, a bicycle and cityscapes, Gerald Hawkes was committed to using matchsticks as the building blocks for his mind-boggling sculptures. Ask students to choose one recycled or found material to create a piece of art. Show students many examples of what visionary artists have created and how they have transformed everyday materials that others might just throw away. Challenge students to use something they have at their house and remind students to not only think big but also small. (There are many visionary artists who have worked in surprisingly small ways (Ben Wilson’s bubble gum paintings (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/world/europe/14muswell.html) and Dalton Ghetti’s pencil tip sculptures (http://www.daltonmghetti.com/index.asp)). Create a visionary environment where students can put their work on display.

NA-VA.9-12.1, UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING MEDIA, TECHNIQUES, AND PROCESSES
NA-VA.9-12.4, UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES
NA-VA.9-12.5, REFLECTING UPON AND ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MERITS OF THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS
LEcSON 5 :
SEEING, SIGHT AND
PERSPECTIVE

OBlECTIVES:
• Students think about how they use sight as a way to understand the world.
• Students gain an appreciation for the experience of people who are blind and sight-impaired.
• Students investigate how to improve the world around them and make it safer for people with a variety of disabilities.
• Students communicate ideas and thoughts by thorough explanation.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS:
• How important is sight to you?
• What could happen if you lost your sight?
• What sort of products or services can help people who are sight-impaired?
• Do you know anyone who is blind?

VISUAL REFERENCES:
Various Works by Hawkins Bolden
Self-Portrait by Anonymous

ACTIVITIES:
1. Seeing Beyond Sight
Visual Art, Grades 7-12
Ask students to work in pairs. Blind-fold one student in each pair. The blind-folded partner will be taking photographs (students can use digital cameras or phones). Give the blind-folded student a series of prompts about what to photograph (ie. something beautiful to you, something with texture, the source of an (un)pleasant odor, a small part of something much bigger, something that you love most about yourself, etc.) and also let them explore the campus, classroom, park or school. Then have students switch so that both partners have a turn. Start a flickr group for your class and have students choose a few photos to add to the flickr group. Have the students think carefully about the captions and to share something about the photograph or experience that happened because they were blind-folded. Have a discussion with the students about the experience and the photographs. How did they know what to photograph? What other senses did they depend on? How did the photographs turn out? Are students' photographs at all similar or very different? Were the photographers surprised with the result? Did the photographs turn out as anticipated?

This lesson is taken from Tony Deifell and his book Seeing Beyond Sight.

NA-VA.K-12.1, UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING MEDIA, TECHNIQUES, AND PROCESSES
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NA-VA.K-12.6, MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

Self-Portrait by Anonymous
Lesson 5: Seeing, Sight and Perspective

2. Touch Tour

Visual Art, Grades 3-12

Have students choose an artist to research for a presentation to give to the class. Challenge the students to prepare the presentation as if they were giving it to a class of students who are blind. Ask students to prepare a short but thorough description of the work. Have students think about describing the work of art to someone who was born blind, they may not have the same perception of color and visual references. Ask students to think carefully and thoughtfully about the descriptions. Also ask students to bring or create an object(s) that their classmates can touch to help aid their description of the work of art.

NA-VA.K-12.3, CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS

NA-VA.K-12.5, REFLECTING UPON AND ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MERITS OF THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS

3. Helping Inventions

Visual Art // Science, Grades 3-12

Ask students to think about their routine, their home and their life. What might change if they lost their sight or became disabled in another way? Have students brainstorm how their life would change. What would students need to continue to lead their lives and follow their dreams? Have students brainstorm products that would help them if they were disabled. Provide some examples for students of real-life inventions that help the disabled. Ask students to either build a model or create some drawings of their invention. Have students include a description of why this product is important and what exactly it does. Give students an opportunity to share their products with the class.

NA-VA.K-12.5, REFLECTING UPON AND ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MERITS OF THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS

NA-VA.K-12.6, MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

NA.K-12.5, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NS.K-12.6, PERSONAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES
TIME KEEPING TEMPLATE
FROM LESSON 1: ACTIVITY 1

Make 2 copies of this template for each student. Have student cut out the outer circle of one template and the inner circle (including the pie-piece) out of each piece of paper. Use this template to trace onto a piece of cardstock or cardboard and cut that out for use in the final project. On the larger circle have students write the twelve months in the cut-out pie shapes. The numbers for the month can be written around the larger circle. The two circles can be held together with a long brass fastener and the days of the month differentiated by a clothespin that marks the date.