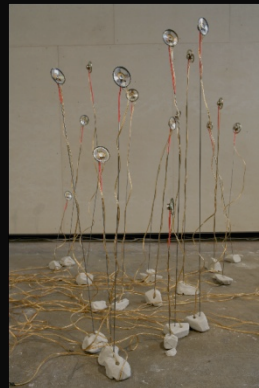


Mindstart: Thinking Through the Hands



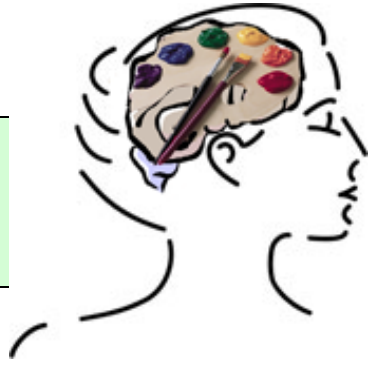
*“MAKING MOUNTAINS OUT OF METAPHORS: The
Work of Cynthia Camlin”*

*“BIRDS OF A FEATHER: The Sculptures of Craig
Langager and Susan Robb”*

ART EDUCATION CURRICULA FOR THE EXHIBIT:

Critical Messages: Contemporary Northwest Artists on the Environment

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Mindstart: Thinking Through the Hands

Mindstart: Thinking through the Hands is an art curricula designed to teach social issues through critical thinking. Presenting content that focuses on societal problems provides students with instruction that is relevant, contemporary, and meaningful. Such attributes not only engage students, but also teach them how to care about their community in order to become responsible, compassionate citizens. Social-issues based curricula also demonstrates the utilitarian nature of art to address social issues; a concept that is often ignored or misunderstood.

Addressing social issues is an approach that many contemporary artists have embraced in the past twenty years. Where art once dealt primarily with artistic technique and proficient use of media, a significant number of artists seek to illuminate and edify society by dealing with social issues such as the stereotypic representation of Hispanic women, the dehumanizing process of slavery, and the plight of women in Asian history. Indeed, there is no social issue--be it about gender, race, class, age or physical disability--that artists have ignored or failed to address.

Art educators have made similar strides in contemporizing curricula. Texts such as *Gender Issues in Art Education: Content, Contexts, and Strategies*, and *Celebrating Pluralism: Art Education and Cultural Diversity* are two books of many that have been published in the field to address social issues. The analysis of media imagery and the relationship between arts communities and the public are two examples of many topics addressed in contemporary Art Education curricula.

By incorporating critical thinking skills, behavioral dispositions, and characteristics into Art Education curricula, the arts can teach cognition. Higher-ordered thinking skills such as synthesis, revision, and metaphorical thinking are as crucial to art making as they are to scientific experimentation. Subsequently, each lesson focuses on:

- Problem solving whereby students follow the same strategies for creating art that professional artists use to create art by beginning with a problem that is solved through visual means
- Research activities that guide and inform the studio production

- Critical Thinking Skills, Behavioral Dispositions, and Characteristics that are woven into each curricular lesson (See chart that follows).

Finally, the two lessons included in this booklet are written to complement the exhibit—*Critical Messages: Contemporary Northwest Artists on the Environment*. This exhibit was curated by Sarah Clark-Langager, gallery director for Western Gallery at Western Washington University. The exhibit was held spring quarter 2010 and focused on issues related to the environment. The lessons are designed for upper elementary and middle school, but can be easily adapted for other grade levels. In addition to the following skills and dispositions, the lessons are designed to teach: Metaphorical thinking, experimentation, challenge of prevailing thought, and meaning within sociological context.

Critical Thinking Skills

Behavioral Dispositions

Analysis	Separating information into parts and examining the parts	Persistence	Achievement of goals regardless of obstacles
Interpretation	Deciphering meaning by analyzing information	Tolerance for Ambiguity	Ability to work without defined parameters with possible contradictions
Comparison and Contrast	Finding similarities and differences	Revision	Rethinking the studio process
Prediction	Foreseeing future based on body of information	Risk taking	Trying things that may incur ridicule and embarrassment
Multiple Solutions	Numerous unique responses to same problem	Objectivity	Recognizing alternative ways of thinking and many solutions to an artistic problem
Transference of Insight	Applying information to another context	Fluency	Capacity to generate many solutions to address
Imposition of Meaning	Creating artistic form from seemingly disparate elements	Uncertainty	Proceeding with information that is incomplete, contradictory, and/or unclear
Nonalgorithmic Thinking	Cognition that is not governed by step-to-step formulae	Flexibility	Changing course when deemed necessary
Interdisciplinary Connections	Recognizing relationships between many content areas	Self-regulation	Following one's own course of action based on personal beliefs, convictions, and intent