



Picture shows a presentation that took place during the Beginning Teacher Milestone Programme (Module 2 — Guided Inquiry: Looking and Talking about Art Meaningfully)

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# DEVELOPMENT OF 21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES THROUGH ART IN SINGAPORE SCHOOLS: RE-ASSESSING SINGAPORE ART TEACHING

► Mr Lim Kok Boon, Programme Director (Art), STAR for art research team

This short article summarises the findings from a two-year research study carried out by PESTA and STAR on Physical Education, Art and Music teaching. It provides a frame to subsequent feature articles that would appear in STAR POST (Art), as a prelude to the full report that would be published in 2015. The findings presented here are most salient, and interested readers should read the full report for a more comprehensive presentation of research findings.

## Research Premise

The Ministry of Education (MOE) Singapore has identified competencies that will better prepare students for a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous future. According to the literature from the field, Art teaching provides a suitable platform to develop students' values, affective competencies, critical thinking, imagination, and communication skills. Student-centred teaching beliefs and strategies are necessary conditions to inculcate 21st century skills. While the Framework for 21st Century Competencies (21CC) and Student Outcomes clearly articulate these desired competencies, little research exists in the field in relation to the benefits of art teaching to foster 21st Century Competencies in the context of Singapore Art classrooms.

The research subject team examined:

1. What, why and how do Art pedagogical practices and principles contribute to effective fostering of 21CC and student outcomes?
2. What resultant 21CC and student outcomes are observed in the Art classroom?

## Methods

The research takes the form of a case study approach defined by a collection of 12 cases, involving 12 art teachers from a mix of Singapore Primary and Secondary Schools. Data collection spanned multiple sources, including classroom lesson observations, interviews with teachers and students, questionnaires for teachers, and artefacts such as lesson plans and student-artworks. These were collected and analysed over three intervals in the span of the two-year research period. The data analysis followed an inductive process, beginning with individual cases to a cross-case analysis, following a pattern-matching logic. The data analysis process was iterative, shifting between categorising, connecting and contextualising strategies. The presence of an international panel, consisting of overseas and local pedagogues external to the research team, ensured an expert consensus and validation of the findings.

## Findings

The data suggests that when art is well taught, it lends itself strongest to nurture students' Critical and Inventive Thinking, and inspiring students to communicate and express themselves visually. Four distinctive and effective art teaching practices were identified to foster emerging 21CC:

- Encouraging ideas generation and conceptualising artistic work;
- Creating a lively, visually inspiring art learning environment;
- Documenting teaching and learning as part of an artistic cycle; and
- Planning for group learning and collaborative art making.

Three broad categories of teaching concepts were identified as foundational, from which effective art teaching practices were built upon:

- Understand learners and learning well;
- Understand the curriculum and content well; and
- Understanding the need for a pedagogical repertoire.

Examples of teaching strategies that **encouraged ideas generation and conceptualising artistic work** include:

- Using sketchbooks, designing worksheets and other strategies (e.g. questioning strategies) to generate ideas;
- Designing activities for peer interaction and learning;
- Incorporating "serious play" as a way of setting the stage for creative thinking;
- Providing multiple entry points to build students' understanding of an art form;
- Used themes, big ideas, questions, metaphors, "problems" and concerns to frame investigations;
- Allowing time for exploration of and experimentation with materials in order to generate ideas;
- Used art demonstrations and made prototypes;
- Developed and used questions to probe thinking;
- Used knowledge from other content areas or research to deepen understanding of the concept, theme or idea; and
- Orchestrated in-process peer feedback.



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Examples of teaching strategies that **created a lively, visually inspiring art learning environment** include:

- Creating a safe environment for learning and risk-taking by employing strategies such as the use of classroom management routines, establishing strong student rapport, mutual respect, positive tone of voice and body language, and spending time knowing about students' background, interests and learning styles;
- Treating the art classroom like an art studio or art laboratory, where creative teaching and learning happens. Lesson structures mirror how artists learnt and worked, such as art demonstrations, art-making, art discussions and exhibitions; and
- Using available space creatively, and often re-arranged classroom furniture to facilitate individual or group learning.

Examples of teaching strategies that **documented teaching and learning as part of an artistic cycle**:

- Using observing and noticing as an active part of instruction and on-going assessment in the classroom;
- Used students' writing process and writings to formulate thinking and record thinking;
- Used student photographs to record instances of an artistic process as part of formative assessment strategy;
- Used student visual journals to encourage documentation of art learning; and
- Used worksheets with thinking routines, and other thought provocative questions related to the learning activity to document student-reflection.

Examples of teaching strategies that **encouraged group learning and collaborative art making** include:

- Allocated time and space for students to interact, learn with and from each other through talk, discussion, questioning, critique and working on the same task; and
- Planned art tasks, or art-making and presentations that benefited from group learning and group perspectives.

The data also suggests that art learning has distinctive contributions to the development of 21CC in these areas:

- Making art with a suitable theme and focus in mind, lends itself well to bring out students' awareness of themselves;
- Students learnt about their peers and showed respect for different viewpoints by responding appropriately to peer comments. By responding appropriately to existential questions and essential questions on art, student could gain greater self-awareness and social awareness;
- Students learnt about art from around the world, and through that, learnt cultural associations affiliated to images;
- Art-making when well guided, is a natural platform to develop artistic habits of mind which fosters critical and inventive thinking;
- Group learning and creating and communicating about artistic work provide opportunities for students to foster visual literacy and communication, collaboration and information skills.



By designing lessons that challenge students' thinking, through authentic inquiry and personal engagement in art, students can become more confident, self-directed in learning and empathetic towards social and cultural issues.

## Discussion

Art when well taught, offers a unique platform for students to develop 21CC. Strong student-centric teaching practices are more likely to provide opportunities to nurture 21CC. In general, these opportunities are provided across many lesson units over time. Teachers need to see themselves as connectors to help students make connections between different domains of knowledge. There is a need to embrace complexity and ambiguity. Teachers also need to see themselves as instigators, setting high expectations and challenging students to take things further (Marshall, 2005).

Based on research observations and STAR's brief professional development interventions with teachers, the following factors relate to pedagogical change and improvement:

- Professional development should focus on shifting teacher-centred educational beliefs to learner-centred educational beliefs;
- Applied practice, evidence, and experience over time is likely to change the way teachers view and think about effective art classroom teaching; and
- Establishing a common language to describe effective art teaching could contribute to networked learning, reflection and how constructive feedback should be given.

## Conclusion

To help teachers design more effective and engaging art lessons, they must be exposed to compelling pedagogical principles and strategies, and illustrative lesson design exemplars. Teachers must personally experience incremental transformation of their practices by taking steps to revamp their scheme of work and approach to lesson design. To develop 21st Century Competencies effectively through pedagogies, opportunities need to be created for students to collaborate, to be empowered to make meaningful artistic responses and decisions, to think critically and creatively. By designing lessons that challenge students' thinking, through authentic inquiry and personal engagement in art, students can become more confident, self-directed in learning and empathetic towards social and cultural issues.

There should be a common understanding that achieving emerging 21CC outcomes should not be limited to art classes, but should be an endeavour that permeates the school's culture and all subject disciplines. Likewise, the aims and purposes of art education should be honoured instead of pursuing only 21CC student outcomes.



# IDEAS GENERATION & CONCEPTUALISING ARTISTIC WORK

► Mdm Chun Wee San, Programme Manager (Art), STAR

The four distinctive and effective art teaching practices that foster emerging 21CC were identified in the aforementioned research. These four practices will serve as STAR POST's themes for 2015, and one theme will be featured in each issue's COVER STORY. For this issue, we will focus on teaching practices that encourage ideas generation and conceptualising artistic work.

Ideas generation is core to the artistic process. Throughout their careers, artists and designers are often relentless in the pursuit of novel, meaningful solutions to their artistic problems. Where artists and designers get their ideas is probably as perplexing as how they get them.

Ideas generation is also a process that art students will undertake as part of their art learning journey. However, it is not uncommon for teachers to hear students lament that they do not have ideas, they are stuck, and that their creative juices have, for a variety of reasons, stopped flowing. So how can teachers inspire creativity and encourage ideas to flourish? There are, of course, many ways to do so. Here are a few suggestions for teachers to help students jumpstart the ideas generation process.

## Design open-ended tasks and activities

- ▶ Set open-ended tasks that provide students with choices and enable a range of responses. An example of an open-ended art task is the Elegant Task. A thoughtfully designed elegant task is flexible and inclusive, it appeals to students of diverse age-groups and cultural backgrounds, and caters to a wide-ranging abilities. It stirs their imagination and evokes originality, allowing room for the personal voice to emerge.

## Use interesting and stimulating starting points

- ▶ Introduce students to a range of artists' processes/products, and tap on visual stimulus from a variety of sources (magazines, books, newspapers, websites etc). Show students how artists Engage and Persist<sup>1</sup>, and Stretch and Explore<sup>2</sup> during the artwork conceptualisation process.
- ▶ Provide students with a variety of materials and tools to stimulate curiosity and encourage creative exploration.
- ▶ Engage students in new experiences that could spark their imagination, for instance, go on a field-trip, visit the museums, watch a film, listen to music.

## Shift perspectives

- ▶ Encourage students to reframe the problem and change the situations to ignite creative responses. Students could use the Circle of Viewpoint<sup>3</sup> routine to gain new perspectives on a problem.
- ▶ Guide them to challenge conventions and own and others' assumptions.



An idea is our visual reaction to something seen – in real life, in our memory, in our imagination, in our dreams.

~ Anna Held Audette, *The Blank Canvas: Inviting the Muse*

<sup>1</sup> Engage and Persist, a Studio Habit of Mind in which students learn to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance, to develop focus conducive to working and persevering at tasks. <http://bit.ly/1EVGqGA>

<sup>2</sup> Stretch and Explore, a Studio Habit of Mind in which students learn to reach beyond one's capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from accidents and mistakes.

<sup>3</sup> Circle of Viewpoints: A routine for exploring diverse perspectives, by Visible Thinking@Harvard Project Zero, <http://bit.ly/1ru3fhc>

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Creative Questions: A routine for generating and transforming questions, by Visible Thinking@Harvard Project Zero, <http://bit.ly/1EoWRNN>

## Ask creative questions

- ▶ An imaginative answer begins with a creative question. Ask questions that foster divergent thinking, and invite students to dream up new possibilities. The following are examples of question starters to engender deeper thinking:
  - Why...?
  - What if...?
  - How would it be different if...?
  - What would change if...?
  - What if we knew...?
  - What is another way of looking at this...?
  - What would happen if...?
  - How many ways can you think of to...? What are they?
- ▶ Encourage students to formulate their own creative and unusual questions.

## Make connections, even with the unconnected

- ▶ Use a mind-map or concept map to see relationships between ideas and concepts.
- ▶ Explore possible connections between dissimilar ideas to create fresh or even surprising associations that did not exist previously. Create new meanings by using analogies and metaphors to combine things that don't connect. For instance:
  - If you were to represent school life with a type of tree, what tree would that be? Explain how they compare. Where and how would the tree grow? What makes you say that? OR How would you compare hiking to growing up as a teenager?

Kay, S. (2013). Designing elegant problems for creative thinking. *Creativity: Process, Product, Personality, Environment & Technology*, 28-36. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1FdMkWc>

Roukes, N. (1988). *Design synectics: Stimulating creativity in design*. Worcester, Mass.: Davis Publications.

## Reflect and critique

- ▶ Set aside time for students to reflect on their work during the conceptualising process.
- ▶ Ideas generation is seldom a linear process, they often go beyond the initial trigger that sparked the work, and constantly evolve throughout the art-making process. Artists have been known to be struck by an unexpected bolt of inspiration that totally changed the course of their works. Actively engaging in reflective thinking during the art experience not only stretches students' mental capabilities, it also helps to unleash the potential of the work.
- ▶ Organise a critique session at intervals for students to discuss their ideas, receive feedback from peers, spur new thoughts and inspire some 'a-ha' moments.

### Fancy some artful warm-up activities for brainstorming?

Are you more like Jackson Pollock or Salvador Dali? What makes you say so?

Cool or Warm? Portrait or Landscape?

Camera or Sketchbook?

Which do you prefer? Why?

Name an artwork. Think of 5 ways in which both of you are similar.

If you could be a famous museum, which would you choose to be and why?

If you could give an artist a gift, who would he/she be? What would you give?

Think of 20 unique uses of a paper clip.





# Facilitating Collaborative Brainstorming

Linus Pauling (US chemist & pacifist) has advised that “the best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas”. Few people will contest this, but how do we go about getting lots of ideas?

It is worth noting that ideas generation needs not be an isolated, individual endeavor; in fact, it is easy to hit a creative brick wall when one undertakes the venture alone. One of the best ways to have access to lots of ideas is when more people contribute to the idea bank. Teachers could encourage collaborative ideation where students build on the ideas of others and connect their imaginations. The following tips can help teachers with facilitating group brainstorming sessions.

**Develop a well-defined problem statement.** Be clear about what exactly the idea generation is for. The problem should have a focus, yet remain open-ended enough to encourage a range of possible solutions.

**Defer judgment.** Remind participants to withhold criticism and let ideas flow. Welcome wild ideas, you never know where they will lead you.

**Focus on one brief conversation at a time.** Practise active and respectful listening.

**Go for quantity.** Aim to reach a certain number of ideas by the end of the session, encourage participants to come up with as many solutions as possible.

**Make the ideas visible.** Fill the room with large pieces of paper and record the ideas, numbering each of them to help participants keep track. Sketch, draw, use diagrams, act it out etc, if they help communicate the ideas better.

**Build on others' ideas.** Suggest a variation, push the boundaries and expand the possibilities. Choose “Yes, then...” rather than “No, but...”

**Warm up before the brainstorming session.** For instance, organise simple icebreaker activities if participants have not worked with each other before, or assign some research work or reading related to the brainstorming topic prior to the meeting. This will help improve the quality of the ideas.

Above all, it is crucial to maintain a supportive and safe environment where everyone has a chance to be heard and is valued for his/her contribution. The brainstorming session should leave everybody enriched by the shared experience and excited about the immense possibilities.

Isaksen, S., Dorval, K., & Treffinger, D. (2011). *Creative approaches to problem solving: A framework for innovation and change* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Kelley, T., & Littman, J. (2001). *The art of innovation: Lessons in creativity from IDEO, America's leading design firm*. New York: Currency/Doubleday.

# ANIMATING THE INANIMATE: STAR Champions Workshop with the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama

► Mdm Chun Wee San, Programme Manager (Art), STAR



At the start of February, the STAR Champions from both Primary and Secondary groups, led by Ms Chris Marfleet and Ms Bettina Reeves from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (RWCMD), embarked on an inquiry into the art of puppet-making, with a special focus on **ideas generation and conceptualising artistic work**. STAR enjoys a good working relationship with RWCMD, where senior lecturers from RWCMD come to STAR annually as part of the academy's Outstanding Educator in Residence scheme. This is the second year running for the two institutions to collaborate on teacher training.



### Inspiring ideas with visual stimuli

As many of the teachers were new to puppetry, Chris and Bettina piqued their interest and curiosity by showing examples of works by students from RWCMD, introducing the teachers to an exhilarating diversity of puppet forms and puppet-making techniques. The teachers were further wowed by the short but fascinating video clip of *The Sultan's Elephant*, the largest street theatrical event in London, featuring a gigantic puppet elephant and a girl. The introductory visual showcase opened up the exciting possibilities that puppetry offers, and set the stage for the art-making segment that soon followed.

The teachers were tasked to create 3-D sculptures/puppets from simple materials, in response to a stimulus, and in this case, it was a narrative poem about a girl, a cat, a bird and a dragonfly. After a brief discussion on the poem, visualising the images that the poem conjures, the teachers were then divided into groups and each group was given a set of images. According to Chris and Bettina, puppet designers often refer to different pictures, for instance, of flora and fauna to study shapes, textures, and colours; use the skeleton model for structure and form; and watch YouTube videos for ideas on movement and gesture.

### Playing with materials

With reference to the pictures of birds, cats, dragonfly etc, teachers then made expressive drawings using charcoal and ink, as well as non-standard drawing tools such as sticks. This was followed by another experimental drawing activity which challenged the teachers to draw with their non-dominant hands. The intent of these drawing tasks was to play with the materials and explore alternative drawing methods, expanding the idea of what drawing might mean. Much to the teachers' delight as well as surprise, the outcomes showed a wide variety of mark-making, ranging from sensitive line-work to broad, bold strokes. After the drawing exploration, Chris and Bettina led the teachers through a group discussion to collectively decide on the drawings for the puppet-making.



Interactive and exploration are key features of this workshop. Scaffolding and support was not 'forced upon' us nor given in an 'expert-style' manner, instead it was consultative. There is a strong sense of equality between trainers and participants.

– workshop participant

## Animating the inanimate

Imagine if ordinary everyday objects like broom, buckets, paper, pots and pans were to come alive, what would they do? If they have personalities and attitudes, what are they like? As part of material exploration, the STAR Champions were also challenged to breathe a new lease of life into everyday objects. With imagination and a dose of humor, narratives emerged, these found objects awoke from their deep slumbers and they worked, played and even squabbled, just like human beings do. Through this activity, teachers gained deeper insights into the wonders of puppetry, which is essentially about animating the inanimate.

## Transformative experiences

After the initial phase of ideas generation, the STAR Champions proceeded to design and construct simple puppets using ordinary materials such as paper, bamboo cane, cardboard, rope and tissue paper. Artists' relationship with materials can shape their artistic practices, the teachers spent much time experimenting with the materials, making sense of them and exploring ways to use them to suit intent. This was complemented with on-going discussion with group members on ideas and processes, and questions from the facilitators to provoke deeper thinking. Throughout the session, teachers were confronted with complex problems which required them to think critically and work collaboratively. As they refined their ideas and discovered new ones, the materials slowly transformed into puppets which came alive during a small celebratory procession at the end of their artistic inquiry. The workshops concluded with the reflection sessions, where the facilitators led the STAR Champions to reflect on the workshop experience and consider possibilities of adapting the workshop ideas for their students.



“ There are many effective arts teaching practices that foster emerging 21st CC. These have to be centred on first and foremost valuing every learners' voice, providing choices and opportunities to explore, encouraging personal sense-making, and empowerment of the learners to chart their own learning. The workshop provided a snapshot of the above. Kudos.

– workshop participant

“ Sharpens our thinking and decision-making skills. Focuses more on processes rather than how the artwork looks in the end.

– workshop participant

“ The hands-on experience was thought-provoking and I am figuring how I can customise and apply this inquiry-based learning to my students.

– workshop participant



# CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES in SCHOOLS... CAPS!

In conjunction with a...edge (an annual art teachers' exhibition), STAR organised a series of workshops from 3 to 14 November 2014 under the collective name of *CAPS!* (Contemporary Art Practices in Schools) offering art teachers the time and space to conceptualise and create artworks in response to the exhibition theme. Under the mentorship of seven local artists, 79 primary, secondary and junior college art teachers investigated themes, explored media and examined new ways of meaning making. For many of the participants, *CAPS!* has opened their minds to the wonders and infinite possibilities of contemporary art.

While pushing the limits of their creative boundaries, teachers also had to navigate the many unknowns. Along the way, many questions were asked: "What would happen if I try this technique?", "How else can I convey my ideas?", "Are there alternative ways of solving this problem?"; it was a journey that required them to take sensible risks and embraced failure. Palmer wrote in 'The Heart of a Teacher', "When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life — and when I cannot see them clearly I cannot teach them well". Indeed, teachers' personal arts practices can help them better understand themselves as artists and learners, and in turn, inform their pedagogical perspectives. It is through such authentic experiences where teachers walked in the learners' shoes that they better appreciate the struggles that their students may face in the art-making process. Being better informed, they can then explore ways to help students flourish in their artistic endeavours.

Interested in joining *CAPS!*? The next *CAPS!* workshops will run in first week of June. Registration details coming soon! Do look out for it!



## ARTIST-MENTORS

**Chua Boon Kee**, a prolific sculptor who commands a wealth of knowledge in sculpting techniques;

**Chua Chye Teck**, a photographer and sculptor passionate about collecting images, memories and spaces through his works;

**Loh Lik Kian**, ceramic artist known for his fine craftsmanship and experimental designs;

**Martin Constable**, a renowned artist who uses digital painting, effects and image manipulation to investigate the impact of technology on our culture and the role of the artist;

DesignSingapore Scholarship awardee **Tan Zi Xi** celebrated for her quirky yet beautiful and thought-provoking illustrations;

**Tang Mun Kit**, a mixed-media artist well-known for using ready-mades in his installations and assemblages;

**CS Tay**, filmmaker and cinematographer, who has worked on various local and international productions.

# THINKING CAPS!

► Miss Karen Yeh, Art Teacher, National Junior College

The four-day digital painting workshop with A/P Martin Constable has been an enriching experience. It expanded my prior narrow conception of digital painting as merely that of using digital brushes to simulate the effects of traditional paint, to encompass that of photo editing and compositing. Key skills of masking, clipping, using layer blends and curves, as well as understanding the possibilities of a digital brush, are acquired essentially through hands-on trials, practice and questioning.

I value this time for art-making extremely; it reminded me of the challenges and processes that artists and art students have to face: grappling with unfamiliar medium, struggles with the conception of ideas and their execution, deadlines, as well as judgment and criticisms from self and others. These are things that we as teachers are probably mindful of, but sometimes not able to empathise as deeply, until we immerse ourselves more fully as artists.

With regards to art practice, while I do not see myself as a digital artist like Glen Fabry, I could still see the immense possibilities of such newly founded skills: to aid in composition studies prior to painting, as a tie-in with photography in the likes of Andreas Gursky for instance, and for conceptualising mock-ups for 3D works. Students could be made cognizant to consider employing similar techniques and approaches in their various artistic projects and coursework. This again underscores the value of sustaining an art practice, which can give fodder to teaching. Thus, there is a constant feedback loop between teaching and art-making.

Looking ahead, the reference materials shared have been rich and I am definitely more confident to craft a digital painting module for my Year Four students with this experience. I do sincerely thank STAR for availing such precious opportunities to the fraternity.



▲ Miss Yeh happily at work during the Digital Painting workshop



► Ms Candy Lee, Art Teacher, Yishun Town Secondary School



▲ Ms Lee with her a...edge 2015 exhibit

The most compelling reason for me to attend CAPS! Ceramics workshop is to learn to develop interesting ceramic lessons for my students and help them create impactful works. Not only did the workshop meet my objective, it has also inspired me to go beyond what I can do with ceramics.

CAPS! Ceramics workshop gave me 5 fulfilling days for thinking, making, observing and lots of wondering. Instructor Mr Loh Lik Kian advised us to challenge the material and push the limits so that our works will be unique and invite people to respond to it. Therefore I spent a considerable amount of time thinking and conceptualising my art piece before making it.

With the help of Mr Loh, I discovered many new things in this art-making process. For example, it was my first time designing an art piece using doodling as a starting point. It was also the first time that I created a ceramic object which was not a functional vessel but a mixed media sculpture. Throughout the process, Mr Loh and his partner, Debbie, constantly gave useful tips on technical aspects of the art installation requirements, something which I never had to consider when I was making ceramic vessels.

This experience also made me learn about risk-taking, being open-minded and flexible. Sometimes a challenging art piece may involve taking more risks and require more knowledge than one knows. We need to be open-minded and seek advice from experts of other fields so as to advance our artistic creations. Our limited ability and knowledge about new art forms and artistic media should not hinder us from creating our work, but should push us to be more curious and resourceful.

Sharing my learning and Mr Loh's words "challenge the material, push the limits" with my students will no doubt help both my students and I to develop more exciting works in future.



# MUS·E·S

**museum education symposium 2015**

FEATURES

STAR ushered in 2015 with the inaugural Museum Education Symposium (MUS.E.S). Conceptualised and designed by STAR, MUS.E.S was organised in partnership with National Gallery Singapore, NUS Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore Tyler Print Institute and The Peranakan Museum, with the kind support from MOE and MCCY.

For three full days in January (15 to 17 January), teachers visited different museums/gallery, envisioning these places as alternative learning spaces to enhance students' learning. The MUS.E.S experience was further enriched by the artful conversations that teachers had with practicing artists, academics, museum education officers and docents, during the exciting line-up of gallery walks, workshops and lectures.

Museums hold immense pedagogical potential and contribute to students' repertoire of learning experiences by offering them the space for slowing down and looking closely at artworks/artefacts, as well as inspiring discovery and critical exploration. In this issue, STAR POST invites four MUS.E.S participants to share their thoughts on the symposium experience and museum-based learning.



# MUSING MUS.E.S

## ► Miss Oh Ji Ji, Art Teacher, Henderson Secondary School

For me, I found the “Understanding Thinking Routines” workshop by Mr Lim Kok Boon especially meaningful. It helped me to refine my teaching approaches and assessment methods. It also aided me in creating a learning environment for my students to think critically. Overall the workshop was refreshing to me as I rarely get to attend courses which touch on the topic of metacognition. I hope to have more opportunities to explore thinking routines in future courses.

Secondly, the museum visits were interesting as I was given the chance to visit the different local museums. During these visits I had an in-depth study of the works which helped to foster a greater appreciation of the artworks. I was able to understand how museum visits could fit into the art curriculum for my students. I was also appreciative of the fact that guided tours and student-centric museum-based programmes were already in place. I would like to highlight that the visit to the Singapore Tyler Print Institute was especially memorable due to the high level of professionalism and enthusiasm of the facilitators. It was my first visit to such a facility in Singapore.

Prior to MUS.E.S, I thought that museum visits were only applicable for more mature practitioners of art and would not value-add as much to students. Having gone through the visits myself, I have seen that it is possible to tailor the visits to provide meaningful learning experiences for my students.



▲ Miss Oh (2nd from right) learning silkscreen printing at the workshop by Singapore Tyler Print Institute

I am also grateful for the visit to Art Stage and the dialogue session with Ms Sarah Thorton. Her perspective as an art sociologist provided insights into the value of art today and the global art scene.

The chance to informally share teaching experiences and pedagogy with fellow colleagues and the staff of STAR is precious to me. It is a platform for us to explore future collaborations and also find like-minded peers who can help support one another's exhibitions or projects.

My 6 adjectives to describe my MUS.E.S experience: interactive, informative, art-centric, reflective, inspiring, enriching.

This course has stood out in its ability to excite me not just as an educator, but as an artist and art lover. Equally astounding is how my learning can be easily translated and imparted to my students. You have my sincerest thanks and appreciation for a course well organised.

► **Mr Ang Kok Yeow, Art Teacher, Zhenghua Primary School**

If I were to use six adjectives to describe my experience at the Museum Education Symposium (MUS.E.S) 2015, they would be rewarding, inspirational, interactive, thoughtful, remarkable and superb!

I am glad to have this opportunity to attend MUS.E.S, where I have gained a lot more insights about art education. Apart from teaching art and infusing the appreciation of art into my lessons, I always believe that my responsibility as an art teacher is also to inspire students towards the path of creativity. Throughout the three-day symposium, I felt I have been better equipped with useful knowledge and important key points that are helpful to my teaching.

Most people have this misconception that art is all about making craftwork, but what lies behind the art-making is a range of thinking processes, and many do not realise their importance. In the presentation by Mr Lim Kok Boon on "Understanding Thinking Routines", I learnt that using a thinking routine in the class can allow students to make connection between inquiry, visible thinking and learning about art. It also allows them to better understand their thoughts and relate them to the action during art-making. It can be as easy as asking simple questions to guide students to see, think and wonder, without making them feel overwhelmed by the artwork.

In the workshop conducted by artist Milenko Prvacki on "Artist Processes", we were tasked to do a collage with objects that are important to us. The intention of the project was not to determine the end product of the artwork, but rather to understand and breakdown the processes that our students may encounter when making their artwork. I think artist processes are essential parts of art because they allow students to explore, to have enough room for creativity, to make mistakes and to learn from them. I have enjoyed the session and it reinforced my belief about the importance of artist processes. Learning in Milenko Prvacki's studio also enhanced my art experience in MUS.E.S and it definitely made art learning more real.



▲ Mr Ang with his proud creation at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute

Art education is never complete without learning in the museums. With each having its own richness and uniqueness; the Singapore Art Museum, NUS Museum and the Peranakan Museum conducted introductory talks about their education outreach programmes and workshops. I found it heartening to see strong support coming from our museums for our students and art education. From the sessions, I learnt more about engaging students through art in the museums as we appeal to their curiosity, senses, thoughts, feelings and prior experiences. By bringing students to these museums, we are extending their art boundaries, giving them new perspectives of art and empowering them to make meaning of their world.

From the three-day symposium, I have learnt to set a thinking routine in the class by first asking simple questions, to give my students sufficient time and space to think, internalise, process and transfer what they have learnt onto their artworks. For holistic learning to occur, exposing the students to different art forms and art environments will enhance their art learning as a whole.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank STAR for the thoughtful arrangement. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my school, Zhenghua Primary School, for being extremely supportive towards my participation in MUS.E.S.

► Ms Kong Mei Sing, Art Teacher, CHIJ Secondary School

The first day of the Museum Education Symposium 2015 started off with a presentation by STAR's Programme Director Mr Lim Kok Boon on "Frames of Mind: Understanding Thinking Routines", this was followed by presentations by 3 other art educators sharing the use of different questioning strategies in their art teaching. I believe many art teachers adopt these routines consciously or unconsciously while guiding their students to analyse works of art or during the process of coursework. The presentations reinforced the importance of a more concerted effort towards using questioning techniques, as we move towards a more student-centric approach in art teaching. I felt that it was a good reminder for me to reflect on how these strategies could be used to strengthen my teaching skills.

The lecture and panel discussion at NUS Museum allowed me to gain an understanding on the importance of structuring modules/lessons for museum-based learning. These approaches make use of the artworks in a museum setting in a more creative and integrated way, expanding theoretical knowledge with the Thinking Routines. I see the possibility of applying what I have learnt on students of different abilities, especially with the students in my school where there are three different streams.

Initially, I felt that the MUS.E.S programme consisting of visiting museums and art-making workshops was commonplace for art educators, since many of us were already trained in these art-making skills and have also visited museums for our own professional learning. What really impressed me was the presentations by museum educators on how they have been working with schools to facilitate school visits and integrate such visits into the curriculum. As an art teacher, I tend to confine my learning journeys to exhibitions at the Singapore Art Museum or the National Museum only. Visits to the Peranakan Museum or others are rare,

or never. The Symposium's visit to the Peranakan Museum and NUS Museum exposed me to how historical and cultural artefacts could also be art objects to tease out students' understanding on the fundamentals of art. These museums provide various educational programmes that target students of different levels in order to maximise learning. Art educators can now use the cultural, aesthetic and academic content supplied by the museums. Our students, therefore, will also be able to gain more information while seeing and investigating these real art objects, rather than merely viewing reproductions in books or through Power point presentation in class. Thus, museums are remarkable sites that allow students to become familiar with the diverse world of art that exists outside the classroom.

Hands-on workshops and interaction with local practicing artists on Day 2 was enriching. Milenko shared the use of the visual diary & collage as an alternative way of assessing students' learning. It inspired me to consider developing the use of collage into my lessons as an alternative to the 'traditional' Drawing and Painting. The presentation by sound artist, Zul Mahmod, and the experience of recording sounds around Singapore Art Museum was refreshing. It is rare that we can slow down our pace to let our ears listen intently to our surroundings. The workshops at STPI and the various museums rejuvenated my desire to make my own artwork, which I had stopped for quite some time. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, some of us are not able to try more experimental work. Through observing how the professional printmakers and other teachers work with their tools, I realised that there is always room for more creativity in my teaching and art-making processes.

As a whole, the symposium emphasised the use of museums for learning outside of the classroom context to enhance individual learning and encourage an inquiring mind. Based on this, I suggest

► Miss Shirley Toh, Art Teacher, Ang Mo Kio Primary School



▲ Miss Toh sharing on her artwork at the workshop by Singapore Art Museum



▲ Ms Kong (right) enjoying the exhibits at NUS Museum

(continue from p. 22)

that for the next symposium, it could be a valuable experience for the participants if they could 'play' the role of the students and the presenters as the 'teachers' using the Thinking Routines and questioning techniques to talk about art. This would make the learning experience more authentic for the participants.

During the few days, we heard from various art professionals, including artists, educators and writers whose sharings have enhanced our art appreciation and teaching practices. Overall the symposium has provided a platform where art educators are able to reflect on and rejuvenate their own learning and teaching of art. The experience was interesting, inspiring, interactive and enjoyable.

The three days experience at the Museum Education Symposium is rewarding, enriching and refreshing.

It was really good for me to get connected with the various museums' personnel on a personal basis. Through their sharings and the visits to their museums, I realised that there are really many avenues for us to connect our students to art appreciation.

It also expanded my knowledge and awareness of what various museums have to offer. Moreover, I am really excited to know that the programmes museums offer are student-centric and school-friendly. For example, the hands-on programme at STPI will be a good way to engage our young kinesthetic learners.

During these three precious days of workshops, we also got to meet and learn from the artists. Their generous sharing on how they went about their art-making process was really beneficial. They shared with us the art techniques they employed and we also got to have hands-on sessions with the artists! This friendly exchange of art meaning making was refreshing. We were learning from one another through the engagement.

Through the sharing session, I learnt that museum exposure can also open up students to inquiry. The first-hand experience that students have with the artworks at the museums also allow them to ponder, ask questions, think deeper, and learn to be more self-directed. The dedicated space museums offer for engagement is indeed non-replaceable.

To find out more about the museums and gallery, and stay abreast of upcoming events, please visit:

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/museum>

<http://www.nationalgallery.sg>

<http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg>

<http://www.stpi.com.sg>

<http://www.peranakanmuseum.org.sg>

# Guided Inquiry: Looking & Talking about Art Meaningfully

- ▶ Mdm Victoria Loy, Master Teacher (Art), STAR
- ▶ Mdm Ira Wati Sukaimi, Programme Manager (Art), STAR
- ▶ Mdm Chun Wee San, Programme Manager (Art), STAR

In the context of a museum setting,

- how do we get students to look at art carefully and respond to art?
- how do we select artworks for a group discussion?
- how do we lead an inquiry-based discussion on artworks?

These were some of the questions that the Beginning Teacher Milestone Programme (Module 2 — Guided Inquiry: Looking and Talking about Art Meaningfully) aimed to address. These were also the concerns that our Art Beginning Teachers (BT) raised when invited to share about the challenges of museum learning trips with students. Through experiencing a guided art discussion, facilitated by STAR Master Teacher and Programme Managers using core thinking routines, the BTs learnt useful questioning techniques which they could adapt to engage students in thoughtful conversations about artworks and embark on an insightful inquiry guided by the following principles:

- No single interpretation is exhaustive of the meaning of an artwork and there can be different, competing, and contradictory interpretations of the same artwork. Interpretations imply a world view.
- Feelings are guides to interpretations.
- An interpretation of an artwork need not match the artist's intent for the artwork.
- Good interpretations have coherence, correspondence, and inclusiveness.
- Interpretation is ultimately a communal endeavour (Parsons, 1987), and the community is eventually self-corrective.
- Good interpretations invite us to see for ourselves and to continue on our own (Eaton, 1988).

An effective art discussion begins with the selection of artworks. During the session, the BTs looked at and talked about artworks centred on the theme: SG50 (nation-building, relationships, identity). Besides the thematic selection, the choice of artworks could also be based on the following:

- Purpose and intent of lesson;
- Age group; general interests and experience levels of the students;
- Collection/exhibition highlights; docent's or facilitator's personal favourites; students' choice.

Throughout the session, there was a strong emphasis on maintaining an environment that supports personal and collective meaning making. An environment that is trusting, respectful and embraces multiplicity of voices. A successful art discussion should leave everyone inspired to do more art and talk more about art! A conducive environment certainly helps!

Barrett, T. (1994). Principles for Interpreting Art, *Art Education*, 47(5), 8-13.

Barrett, T. (2004). Improving student dialogue about art, *Teaching Artist Journal*, 2(2), 87-94.

Planning a museum-based lesson for you art students?

Check out these articles for some tips on organising meaningful museum visits!

Museum Etiquette Simplified by Mr Lim Kok Boon, <http://bit.ly/1xt2bjP>

Tour Planning Template and Checklist, recommended by Guggenheim Museum, <http://bit.ly/1CLJIUS>



# Lesson Ideas for Museum-based Learning

The following are examples of the artworks and facilitation strategies used for the BT guided inquiry session.



**ARTWORK:**

We Are Family (2014) by Vicente Delgado  
 Mixed media installation  
 Dimensions variable  
 Collection of the Artist  
 Singapore Art Museum commission (view artwork at <http://bit.ly/1Fw9Ujy>)

**UNDERSTANDING GOAL:**

How do artists convey the concept of identities (e.g. ideas of Singapore’s multiculturalism) in their artworks?

**FACILITATION STRATEGIES:**

LOOKING: FIVE TIMES TWO and CONNECT, EXTEND, CHALLENGE

**FACILITATOR:**

Mdm Victoria Loy

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
SEE (Quick 3 mins sketch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants to compare each other’s sketches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See which aspects did the participants focus on (Could be proportion, scale, details, zoom in to a specific part, quick gestural drawings etc.)</li> </ul>
SEE (5 times 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a close look at the artwork and list 5 words that describe what you see.</li> <li>Look at the artwork closely again and add another 5 different words to your list to describe what you see.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soft toys</li> <li>Colourful figurines of different shapes and sizes</li> <li>Smiling faces</li> <li>Overlapping/Juxtaposed forms</li> <li>Interactive work</li> </ul>
<p><b>FOCUSSED SEEING</b>                  Colors, Shapes, Lines                  What are they like?</p>	<p>Observe the artwork closely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What colours do you see? Describe them.</li> <li>What kinds of shapes do you see? Describe them.</li> <li>What kinds of lines do you see? Describe them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary colours and Green</li> <li>Bold; strong; vibrant; bright; colours evoke happy emotions</li> <li>Organic; irregular; different</li> <li>Curvy; interlocking</li> </ul>
<p>Materials</p> <p>Presentation/ Representation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What materials is the artwork made of? Describe the qualities of the materials. Do you think they are suitable? Why?</li> <li>How did the artist choose to present his artwork?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fabric; cloth; textile; soft materials</li> <li>Forms are huggable; appropriate for children and even adults</li> <li>The work allows for audience interaction</li> </ul>

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
<p><b>CONNECT</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose a kind of colour, shape, or line that you have listed earlier. How does it contribute to the artwork? (How does it help the artwork "work"?)</li> </ul> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it contribute to how the artwork feels?</li> <li>How does it contribute to the mood of the artwork?</li> <li>How does it contribute to how the artwork looks?</li> <li>How does it contribute to the story the artwork tells?</li> <li>How does it contribute to the ideas in the artwork?</li> <li>Think about what you see in the artwork. How are the ideas and information in the artwork connected to what you already knew?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symbolism/meaning of colours</li> <li>Varies according to context</li> <li>Happy, joyful, bright</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXTEND</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What could be a possible title for this piece of artwork?</li> </ul> <p>Teacher to disclose artist's statement to all to understand the artist's intent.</p> <p>Other Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would it be different if other colours/shapes/materials are being used? How would the artwork be different if it is of a different scale e.g. life size or bigger than life size? What if it is very small?</li> <li>Would there be a difference in meaning if this is placed in a different setting? Where would you display this artwork in your school compound? Why?</li> <li>What new ideas do you have about the artwork or topic that you didn't have before?</li> <li>If you were to represent this theme "We Are Family" in an artwork, how would you do so? What medium would you choose?</li> <li>How would you define "family" in the context of your class, school and other settings that you could think of?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children</li> <li>Happy Family</li> <li>Interlocking</li> <li>Unity in Diversity</li> <li>Togetherness</li> <li>Community Building</li> </ul>

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What challenges or puzzles/ questions have you come up with from what you saw in the artwork?</li> <li>• If you get to meet the artist, what questions do you have for him? Why do you ask these questions? (To probe further about the rationale behind such questions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the possible themes and possible representations?</li> <li>• What other mediums can be used?</li> </ul>
<p><b>POSSIBLE EXTENSION/ POST-MUSEUM VISIT ACTIVITY</b> Studio Practice (Art-making)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an artwork based on the theme "We Are Family". What medium would you choose? Why?</li> <li>• Create an artwork based on the theme "Singapore Identity/Identities". What medium would you choose? Why?</li> </ul>	



2

**ARTWORK:**

Cycle (2004 – 2008) by Sopheap Pich  
 Rattan and wire  
 420 x 25 x 90 cm  
 Singapore Art Museum collection (view artwork at <http://bit.ly/1wq0WAi>)

**UNDERSTANDING GOAL:**

How do artists refer to memories and personal experiences for inspiration in their artwork?

**FACILITATION STRATEGIES:**

LOOKING: TEN TIMES TWO and ALBER'S 5 QUESTIONS

**FACILITATOR:**

Mdm Ira Wati Sukaimi

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
<p><b>LOOKING: TEN TIMES TWO</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a minute to observe the artwork.</li> <li>• List 10 words that come to your mind as you look at this artwork.</li> <li>• Look at the work again and list another 10 words that is different from the previous list.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rattan</li> <li>• Brown</li> <li>• Suspended</li> <li>• Hollow</li> <li>• Light</li> <li>• Shadows</li> <li>• Organic</li> <li>• Huge</li> <li>• Flow</li> <li>• Thin</li> </ul>
<p><b>ALBER'S 5 QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>1. What do you think?</p> <p>2. Why do you think that?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now that you have heard from your friends and have understood what they observed, what do you think this artwork is about?</li> <li>• Give reasons based on what you see.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This artwork could be about the lifestyle or livelihood of people in villages as the sculptural form is reminiscent of the fish traps used in Asian countries.</li> <li>• The way the artwork is presented (being hung from the ceiling) makes it look light, reminiscent of clouds floating in the sky.</li> <li>• The material used to make the artwork is rattan, possibly suggesting the origin of the artist who is from SE Asia.</li> <li>• The artist seemed to have employed a grid-like pattern to create the form of the sculpture, short of weaving.</li> </ul>

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
3. How do you know this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The wall text suggests that the artist made references to the state of poverty in Cambodia during the war in the 70s, which he experienced as a child under the Khmer regime.</li> <li>How do you think the artist has depicted this life event through this artwork?</li> <li>What does the form remind you of?</li> <li>How do the forms which resemble "2 connected stomachs" convey the state of poverty in Cambodia?</li> <li>Why do you think rattan and wire was chosen as the material? How could that add meaning to the artwork?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The artist was probably saying that there was scarcity of food, and hunger was prevalent as the stomachs depicted are hollow, with holes, and that it is 'light' (which is why it could be hung), 'not compacted' with food.</li> <li>The artist was likely trying to depict the memories of undergoing hardship during the war, most felt through the impoverishment of the people (reflected by the stomach being chosen as the subject matter).</li> <li>The artist could be saying that despite hard times, it is pertinent to hold strong and true to one's culture and traditions, illustrated by his choice of materials.</li> </ul>
4. Can you tell me more?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using evidence from the artwork, what do you think are some of the sentiments that the artist is trying to convey?</li> <li>Substantiate your answer by illustrating with your own personal experience.</li> <li>Is there any part of this artwork that relates to your own experiences or someone else's that you know?</li> </ul> <p>Participants may also be prompted to study how the artist's use of material contributed to the meaning of the artwork.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants may share about memories of their own childhood or someone else's that was triggered by the artwork.</li> </ul>
5. What questions do you still have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the artist is here today, what questions would you like to ask him? Why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why does the artist want to express a bad memory in a light and almost ethereal manner?</li> </ul>
<b>POSSIBLE EXTENSION/ POST-MUSEUM VISIT ACTIVITY</b> <b>Studio Practice (Art-making)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This artwork has been created by the artist, Sopheap Pich from 2004 – 2008 to depict a memory he had of the 1970s.</li> <li>If you are now given a treasure box, what would you keep in it, so that you could draw upon it for an artwork twenty years later.</li> </ul>	



**ARTWORK:**

Constructing Construction #1 (2009) by Francis Ng  
 Photo print, edition 4/5  
 179.3 x 178.8 cm  
 Singapore Art Museum collection (view artwork at <http://bit.ly/1Fw9Ujy>)

**UNDERSTANDING GOAL:**

How do artists convey ideas in their artworks?

**FACILITATION STRATEGIES:**

SEE, THINK, WONDER and CIRCLE OF VIEWPOINTS

**FACILITATOR:**

Mdm Chun Wee San

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change refers to the process or result of something or someone becoming different.</li> <li>What are the words that you would associate with the term "CHANGE"? Create a list of five to ten words.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress and development</li> <li>Moving forward</li> <li>Technology</li> <li>Speed/Movement</li> <li>Positive feelings (e.g. hopeful, confidence, optimism, anticipation)</li> <li>Negative feelings (e.g. uncertainty, frustration, fear, anxiety, loss)</li> <li>Transition</li> </ul>
SEE THINK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a close look at the photograph and list the things you see that are associated with "CHANGE". Create a list of five to ten things.</li> <li>What are your thoughts about how the photographer depicted change? How would you have conveyed the idea of change if you were the photographer?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commuter bus is in rapid motion, suggesting the pace of change</li> <li>A half-finished highway, construction in progress</li> <li>Open space in the foreground suggests the anticipation of change ahead</li> <li>Road barriers, a common sight in construction sites, shows the process of change</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Now imagine that you could hear the sounds in the photograph. Listen intently to the sounds that you might hear if you were at the scene. What are these sounds? Describe them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noise from the construction site</li> <li>Sounds from residents in the houses (e.g. complaining about the inconvenience due to the construction, hopeful conversations about the new highway that is being constructed)</li> <li>Traffic noise</li> <li>Chattering from shop owners in nearby shops</li> </ul>

FACILITATION STRATEGIES	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
<p><b>COMPARE VIEWPOINTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe the photograph closely.</li> <li>As a result of the construction, the place is in a state of change — who are involved in the change? Who might care? Who might be affected? What might those affected say?</li> <li>Assume the role of someone who might be affected by the change here and respond to the following:</li> <li>I am thinking of “CHANGE” here from the point of view of _____.</li> <li>I think “CHANGE” here is _____. (Draw an image or a symbol that you feel best represents or captures the essence of that idea)</li> <li>A question I have with regards to “CHANGE” is: _____. (Draw an image or a symbol that you feel best represents or captures the essence of that question)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents</li> <li>Construction company/workers</li> <li>Road users (pedestrians, drivers)</li> <li>Urban planners/Government</li> </ul>
<p><b>POSSIBLE EXTENSION/ POST-MUSEUM VISIT ACTIVITY</b> Studio Practice (Art-making)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does this scene relate to your experience of the place around you? Have you encountered similar changes? What was the change like? How did you feel?</li> <li>Create an artwork that best represents the change and your response to it.</li> </ul>	



**I used to think** art appreciation is more on Principles/Elements of Art. **Now I think** it extends beyond that... to connecting to our experiences, thoughts, exploring how we relate to the artworks.

– workshop participant



**I used to think** that having strong content knowledge of artwork is more important than asking students good questions when guiding a gallery visit. **Now I think** a good facilitator with abundant strategies to question and engage students to respond to artworks is more important. **This requires** much thought and planning.

– workshop participant

I used to think... Now I think is a routine for reflecting on how and why our thinking has changed, by Visible Thinking©Harvard Project Zero, <http://bit.ly/1Hu5kPS>

# MY THOUGHTS & HOPES FOR THE NEW YEAR

► Mdm Victoria Loy, Master Teacher (Art), STAR



*A seed of artistic passion is sowed when we decided to teach art. I hope 2015 is the year they blossom into an inspiring vision for the future.*

2015 is the year the academy spends time to consolidate our engagement with the arts teaching fraternity. I look forward to exciting days ahead as we celebrate Singapore's Jubilee with a series of special programmes and projects. We hope to foster a greater sense of teacher agency and leadership in arts education. We believe that in nurturing a stronger identity in the arts teacher fraternity, the transformative values-based teaching practices will take root.

## Life-giving Arts

At STAR, we strongly believe that arts education is integral to the holistic development of every child. The arts is life-giving because it frees the human mind and recognises the potential of each individual for creative expressions. As arts educators, we are designers of artistic learning experiences and reflective practitioners who help students contextualise and deepen their meaningful arts learning. As a Master Teacher, I am often reminded of the need to inspire, mentor and coach others, inculcate a growth mindset towards professional learning, renew and transform teaching. I believe that STAR can continue to encourage and nurture teacher-leaders to step out to contribute and make a difference in building a strong arts fraternity.

## Highlights for 2015

We launched our inaugural Singapore Arts Pedagogy Seminars which took place from 3 to 14 Nov 2014. Designed as an enriching series of capacity building arts education seminars and studio workshops, we hosted 7 prolific artists and experts in the areas of digital art, photography, ceramics, sculptures, illustration, assemblage and film-making. They joyfully mentored teachers for our rebranded Contemporary Art Practices in Schools (CAPS!). CAPS! will continue to run for 2015. You can read about this on page 14.

At the start of 2015, we held our first Museum Education Symposium (MUS.E.S) from 15 to 17 Jan with all our museum education partners. They are: National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Art Museum, NUS Museum, Peranakan Museum, and Singapore Tyler Print Institute. Soon, we will also release our academy's pedagogical resource, STAR's Let's Talk about Art kit to facilitate student-centred art discussions in class.

From 13 to 22 March, we organised our 4th annual art teachers' exhibition at SOTA Art Gallery. This exhibition encourages art teachers to sustain and enhance the professional practice. The theme centres on the ellipsis (...), encouraging teachers to express thoughts and reflection on their individual or collective past, present and future. We also did not forget our pioneer generation art educators. We interviewed many Pioneer Art Teachers, and held a panel discussion to dialogue about art teaching then, now and tomorrow. I see ourselves inheriting the fruits of their labour. Art education in Singapore would be quite different without their perseverance and resourcefulness.

I am excited to see the academy put together a publication of 50 art lesson ideas to celebrate SG50. This is a grounds-up initiative, formalised after a meeting with Art Senior Teachers. This will complement the Lesson Design Toolkit we are preparing to support our art teachers in schools.

## Forging Ahead

As I recap these, there is indeed a lot of planning, writing and coordination to do. But I feel energised as I think these constitute meaningful work; gems to consolidate research and tacit knowledge with our fraternity. The academy strives to stay focussed on our big vision and mission.

We begin 2015 with small steady steps. There is a lot to learn on the job but learning keeps us young.



The value of teachers' reflective inquiry in their professional practice and learning cannot be overemphasised. According to Dewey (1933), reflection "emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity, it enables us to direct our activities with foresight and to plan according to ends-in-view or purposes of that we are aware, to act in deliberate and intentional fashion, to know what we are about when we act" (p. 17). Research has also shown that reflective thinking is the key to professional growth and a quality of effective teachers, and should therefore be part of a teacher's teaching and learning repertoire.

In this essay, Miss Lee Mun Yee reflects on how her past learning experiences influence the curriculum decisions and actions that she makes as an art teacher.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: D. C. Heath. (Original work published in 1910)

# Retrospective Reflection for Prospective Curriculum Actions

► Miss Lee Mun Yee, HOD (Aesthetics), Orchid Park Secondary School



"Do we (teachers) teach like our teachers?"

It's a question that has intrigued me for some years. A professor told me that this is a research question by some teacher education researchers in Canada. This question forms the basis of my reflective article. I have looked back at my approach to teaching over the years to find traces of my influencers. In this article, I would define the term 'teacher' loosely. They need not be teachers in school, but anyone who has given us guidance in some ways over a period of time.

## Case knowledge – something we have before we become teachers

Like many of my peers, I was given graduating classes without a mentor when I started teaching. In my first year as a full-fledge teacher, I put almost all my energy into grappling with guiding students on their art examination projects under the 6012 syllabus. This 'project' became know as 'coursework' under the 6009 syllabus. The syllabus also had an observation drawing/painting component and I had subconsciously drawn on my art learning experiences as a student to approach teaching it. I could recognize so much of my early teaching approach was modeled after my own art teachers in secondary school and junior college. My memories of my teachers' teaching methods are examples of case knowledge (Hargreaves, 2010).

Just like my broader definition of the term 'teacher', case knowledge is not confined to our knowledge of how former teachers had taught. Teaching by family members forms part of that knowledge pool. I attribute my development as a visual and kinesthetic learner to observing my grandmother's methodical food preparation and helping her in the process. This explains why I learnt new cooking recipes better by watching a cooking demonstration, rather than reading a cookbook. My secondary school art teacher reinforced the early case knowledge using a very similar model of teaching, as he would demonstrate drawing rather than explicating the methods of observation. I had a relatively easier time observing, analysing his demonstration, and

deconstructing his methods into steps, while several of my classmates took a much longer time to pick up the skills.

### The same 'shoe', so different the intentions

As a student I had done still life drawing with shoes as subject matter. I have taught similar drawing lessons, as a beginning teacher. If I were asked to name the purpose of the lesson then, I would probably offer a list of observation drawing skills and related learning outcomes. I was certainly looking at the purpose of the lesson through a set of 'apprenticeship' teaching lens (Pratt and Associates, 1998). I have known many art colleagues who have taught lessons with the same subject matter, but their intentions would certainly have differed. Let's consider a few possible curricular aims of my 'shoe-drawing lesson' then:

- A. I want students to recognise the proportions, perspective and texture of the shoe.
- B. They should know how to observe. A rite of passage before they can earn their 'O' level Art. A shoe is a standard subject matter.
- C. Students ought to explore various ways of drawing and think about how the contour lines of the shoe has the potential to create flow and visual energy.
- D. I hope to build my students' confidence through the shoe-drawing task.
- E. The shoe drawing is a just trigger exercise to think about globalization, market forces behind consumerism and possible exploitation of cheap labour when shoes are produced in third world countries.

You may identify with one or more of the above aims, or you may have held those aims when teaching similar observational drawing. If we look closely, they have vastly different intended outcomes, each undergirded by a different teaching philosophy.

The first operates in a transmission perspective, where the teacher's focus is fully committed to legitimized a set of given content, and all students are to learn the content with uniform understanding. For the second, the teacher sees his/her role as a role model in the tradition and practice of the art genre. Students are inducted into the tradition through observing the expert's demonstration. This is the apprenticeship perspective in which I have been taught at home and in my formative art lessons. The third, operates in a developmental perspective, focusing on the relationship between students and the content, and how students negotiate their understanding and thinking processes. The fourth does not focus on standards of performance but operates in the nurturing perspective, putting the learner's emotional well-being in the learning environment as priority. The fifth aim emanates from a social reform belief that is driven by certain social/moral values (ibid). Each focus has its just curricular intention, none more superior over another, but each will appeal to very different students.

### The past as a bridge to understand our present, and a lens to see the future

I have learnt that my early teaching from the apprenticeship perspective would have made learning easy for some but plausibly more difficult for others. Just like some of my classmates who struggled with my teacher's way of teaching observation drawing, students who were not interested to be identified with an art tradition and practice might have complied with the learning mechanisms, but would not had made deep personal resonance with the learning activity (Dewey, 1964). In analysing my professional evolution, I recognised that I have shifted towards the developmental perspective since teaching in my previous school. This is partially

a consequence of the development in my own art practice and also a subconscious attempt to move away from the apprenticeship model to reach students who saw themselves as non-artistic. In retrospect, I realized that students who would learn best in the transmission mode must have found learning in my class frustrating, because I had used less didactic teaching, favouring more self-discovery and experimentation.

I have constantly engaged in retrospective deconstruction and analysis of my curricula approach for the past 6 years, tracing the early influences from my teachers in school and at home, as a way to understand and question my past pedagogical practices. This heightens my sensitivity to current students' responses in learning. I have been consciously leveraging on strategies associated with each of the five teaching perspectives, while being cognizant of my own dominant perspectives. My professional self-inquiry has been very helpful in clarifying my professional identity as an art teacher. But more significantly, the current understanding of the past will give me both a wide angle and macro lens for my future curricular deliberation. Narrative inquiry is not just for retrospective reflection, but also for the purpose of prospective thought and action (Urzua and Vasquez, 2008).

If I were to teach a shoe-drawing lesson again, I would do it very differently. Not because I do not want to do the same thing twice, but because I now have various lenses to use when I design the task.

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