

CURRICULUM PACKET SPRING 2005

Art + Craft

Over + Over: Passion for Process

Classic Modern: Art Deco Silver from the Collection
of John P. Axelrod
(on view through July 31)



Elizabeth or Mehetable Foxcroft, *The Arms of Foxcroft and Coney*, c. 1740-50, silk, gold, and silver metallic threads, beads, and paint on silk, 31 1/2 in. x 28 1/2 in., Addison Gallery of American Art, gift of C. Lloyd Thomas



©Tom Friedman, *Loop*, 1993, spaghetti, 12 in. diameter, collection Tom Peters, Los Angeles exhibition copy, courtesy of the artist and Feature Inc., New York

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USING THE CURRICULUM PACKET

This packet is designed to help you connect the Addison Gallery's spring 2005 exhibitions with your classroom curricula and the **Massachusetts Department of Education's Curriculum Frameworks**. Museum visits and related activities developed for this packet address numerous subject areas that are often cross-disciplinary and therefore can combine two or more frameworks.

The Addison Education Department is glad to assist you in matching exhibition content with the frameworks listed below or others you may wish to use. We can also help you organize your museum visit and pre- or post-visit activities to correspond with your grade level and current classroom topics in **English & language arts, sciences, history & social studies, politics, foreign languages, and the visual & performing arts**.

How to Arrange a Class Visit

- Decide which exhibition(s) is/are most relevant for your class or group to see based on this packet, viewing the exhibitions, and/or talking with education department staff.
- Select several possible dates and times to bring your class to the gallery. (Tuesdays through Fridays, 8 AM - 4 PM). Visits, ranging from 45 -90 minutes, may be accompanied by an art making or creative writing activity. Up to 50 students can be accommodated in the museum at one time.
- At least two weeks in advance, contact **Rachel Schiller** at **(978) 749-4037** or **rschiller@andover.edu** to schedule the visit and discuss ideas for guided tours and related activities that are particularly suited to your group.

How to prepare your class for a visit to the Addison

- Discuss the visit with your class before you come. This packet and a pre-visit to the museum can help you inform students about what they will see and do on their trip.
- Reproductions (photographs, slides, catalogues) are often available for you to look at with your class beforehand. Students love to see images they recognize at the museum!
- Additional information about the artists and exhibitions is always available on request.
- In-class visits (usually including slide presentation and discussion) can be arranged.
- Mention that students will need to keep in mind: stay with the group, raise hands to ask or answer questions, no touching the artwork or the walls, no running, no food or gum.

What to expect when you are at the museum

- When you come in the front door of the gallery, one of us will greet you and direct students where to hang their coats and gather.
- After a brief introduction in the lobby, your guide will bring students through the exhibition(s) of your choice. Students will be asked to discuss, interact with, and raise questions about the artwork that they see. We strongly encourage teachers to engage in the discussion to strengthen the connection between classroom and museum learning.
- If arranged in advance, the visit can conclude with an art making or writing activity.

Making the most of your visit

- Pre- and post-visit activities are the best way to get the most out of your museum visit.
- Project and discussion ideas provided at the end of this packet will help you determine the best approach for the grade and subject of your class. (If this packet does not include information relevant to your class, we can help you make connections.)
We are pleased to assist you in developing and executing extended projects in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITIONS

The Addison's spring exhibitions, *Art + Craft*, *Classic Modern: Art Deco Silver from the Collection of John P. Axelrod*, and *Over + Over: Passion for Process* present fascinating perspectives on the intersections of fine art, craft, and material culture. Exploring an ever expansive and adventurous definition of "what is art," works are as diverse as eighteenth century embroidery by school-age girls, silver by revolutionary hero Paul Revere, icons of commercial design from the Art Deco period, and contemporary wall installations made from wire, tire, and twist-ties. Each historic and contemporary work can be seen as a product of its time, while the exhibitions together provide a glimpse into the history and culture of America.

Art + Craft features a broad selection of fine and decorative arts from the Addison's collection, dating from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century. Presenting furniture, silver, textiles, prints, and paintings, the exhibition helps us understand the many roles and forms art held in the lives of early settlers, whether as a keystone for a school girl's education, a symbol of ritual, or an expression of property ownership for the expanding middle class. The two- and three-dimensional objects were made by a variety of makers – celebrated and anonymous, old and young, male and female – and all helped define the ethics of industry, self-reliance, and ownership that characterize the rise of the United States.

Masterpieces of Art Deco silver on view in the exhibition, *Classic Modern: Art Deco Silver from the Collection of John P. Axelrod*, found their design origins in the fast-changing culture of the early twentieth century in the United States and abroad. During the 1920s and 1930s, American silversmiths and industrial designers produced numerous objects of arresting novelty. These designs, drawn from sources ranging from Classical mythology to the urban skyline, sought to capture the vitality and optimism of the modern world. The book ends, tea sets, plates, cocktail shakers, toy train, vanity set, etc. range from the refinement of Tiffany sterling silver to low cost silver-plated nickel and copper and effectively brought modern design into consumer households, even during the Depression. Complementing this exhibition are photographs from the Addison's collection that demonstrate the period's fascination with emerging cities, celebrities, and technology.

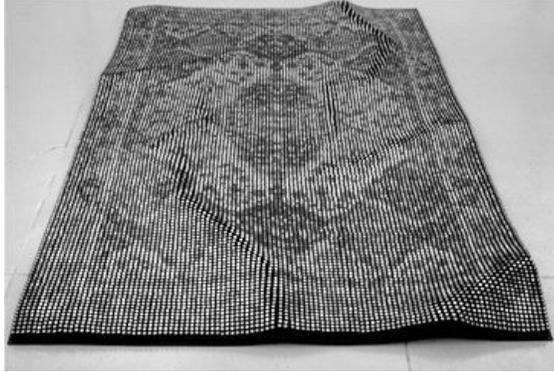
It is today's mass-produced materials from which the contemporary artists in *Over + Over: Passion for Process* create their work. Many of the artists' tactile processes originate in traditional craft methods, such as weaving, collage, beading, and quilting. However, they transform the "stuff of our lives" – such as thousands of plastic cups, twist-ties, mail catalogues, and tire scraps – with meticulous repetition and precision more closely resembling the skills of the computer than the human hand. Formal properties, such as the shape, color, material, texture, and size of these mundane objects determine the artists' process and final product, and in their care, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

With every object in the three exhibitions leading us down multiple paths into history, culture, and art making, this Curriculum Packet asks the essential questions: How do we see, learn, and create objects? The following questions are structured to help students of any age observe and appreciate objects for their visual qualities, their method of creation, their maker, their purpose, and their context. In addition to the perspectives taken in this packet, we are happy to assist you in matching specific content curricula in various subjects to the exhibitions.

OBJECT-BASED LOOKING QUESTIONS

Question One:

What do you see that could help you understand how and from what material the object was made?



Devorah Sperber, *Lie Like a Rug*, 2000-2001, Letreset marker caps, canvas, rubber edging, 99 x 63 x 4 inches, collection of the artist, courtesy McKenzie Fine Art, New York

An artist's process is often just as interesting and essential to the final art object that you see. Using 18,000 magic marker caps to create *Lie Like a Rug*, Devorah Sperber transforms the pattern of her family's oriental rug by scanning it into a computer program and creating color pixels. The pixels on the computer were used to determine the exact placement and tone of each marker cap. She transforms the marker caps to serve a purpose other than their original use: they are blocks integrated into a pixelated pattern, which brings awareness to how we have come to see many things since the mid-twentieth century – such as newspapers, billboards, photographs, and images on the television and computer.

Discussion:

What comparisons can you make between woven threads and the pixels that form the image on your computer screen?

What other processes do you see artists in *Over + Over* using in their work? Do they share any techniques with makers you see in *Art + Craft*?

Question Two:

What do you see that can help you understand who made this object and what artistic choices she made?



Elizabeth or Mehetable Foxcroft, *The Arms of Foxcroft and Coney*, c. 1740-50, silk, gold, and silver metallic threads, beads, and paint on silk, 31 1/2 in. x 28 1/2 in.), Addison Gallery of American Art, gift of C. Lloyd Thomas

Dated to the 1740s, the Foxcroft and Coney coat of arms is a stunning example of armorial embroideries by wealthy New England girls in the eighteenth century. Needlework was a central component of schoolgirl education in early America. Fabricated by the young Foxcroft girl, this elegant and prestigious piece was hung “in the best Room” of the family mansion in Cambridge,

Massachusetts. The spectacular perfection with which the gilded threads are woven and appliquéd display Ms. Foxcroft's refined level of education and the wealth and lineage of the Foxcroft-Coney family. The importance of the families is heightened by the use of gold thread and the effective composition that presents the iconic animals and symbols of both families.

Discussion

How did Elizabeth draw attention to her family symbols while expressing her own artistry?

How long do you think it took her to make this work? What comparisons can you make between her needlework and artists' processes in *Over + Over*, or something that you do at home or in school?

Question Three:
What do you see that could help you understand this object's purpose?



Anonymous, *He that by the plough would thrive—Himself must either hold or drive*, c. 1825–50, oil on canvas, 34 3/4 x 84 1/8 in. purchased as the gift of Mrs. Evelyn L. Roberts

When looking for an object's purpose, use, or utility, you can look to see how the form and imagery demonstrate its function. Measuring seven feet across and not picturing any recognizable individuals, the rectangular canvas would most likely have been too large for a domestic interior and was probably created for a town hall or other public setting. Through the visual and written text, the work carries a moral instruction to settlers in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Each family member fulfills their proper task, such as the young girl milking the cow and the men tilling the fields and clearing the land. *He that by the Plough Would Thrive – Himself Must Either Hold or Drive*, a proverb from Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*, was a reminder to settlers that they must remain self-reliant and work to maintain the land.

Discussion:

Look for objects that repeat themselves in the exhibition, such as the teapots. Do they all have the same form? How many variations in shape and decoration can you find?

In what ways do the artists make their purpose visible to the viewer?

Question Four:
What do you see that could help you understand who this object was made for?



Anonymous, *Levi Johnson*, c. 1830–1835 oil on canvas, 38 1/8 x 25 1/8 in., Addison Gallery of American Art, museum purchase



Anonymous *Mrs. Levi Johnson*, c. 1830–1835 oil on canvas, 38 1/8 x 25 in., Addison Gallery of American Art, museum purchase

Commissioned by the couple on the occasion of their engagement, Mr. and Mrs. Levi Johnson's paired portraits were made by itinerant painters, or limners, in the nineteenth century. These moderately priced portraits appealed to the expanding middle class who were eager to record their appearance for prosperity, to celebrate family, and to affirm their social status. Mrs. Johnson's off shoulder dress, *friendship* necklace, and braided hair reflect women's fashion of the 1830s. She also holds the New Testament, showing her literacy and family role as the moral instructor. Also highly fashionable, Mr. Levi holds a book titled *Coke's Instituts*, an incredibly difficult law book, depicting him as a learned man and prominent lawyer.

Discussion

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, portraiture held widespread popular appeal in America. What variations and similarities do you find amongst the portraits in the exhibitions? What different locations, professions, and personalities do you find and how are these communicated?

How do different artworks interact with you, the viewer? Consider all different possibilities, such as the artists' use of space, forms, symbols, text, focal points, as well as how the sitter is positioned and how they address the viewer.

Question Five:

What do you see that could help you understand an object within its cultural/ historical context?



Daniel Henchman (1730–1775) *Tankard*, 1759, silver, Addison Gallery of American Art, museum purchase



Gene Theobald, Manufactured by Wilcox Silver Plate Company, a division of International Silver Company, Meriden, CT, *Diamond Tea Service*, c. 1928, silver-plated nickel silver and bakelite, Collection of John P. Axelrod



Lisa Hoke, *The Gravity of Color* (detail), 2005, paper and plastic cups, paint, hardware, dimensions vary, Courtesy Elizabeth Harris Gallery, New York

With all of these three object's sharing the function of drinking vessels, we can place each one within their cultural context. The silver Tankard (a lidded drinking cup, 1757) designed by silversmith Daniel Henchman, reflects the role drinking played in social ritual during the colonial period. The adorned thumb piece, scroll finial (the top decoration on the lid), sweeping arm, and solid form all followed popular design of the time, which allotted for simple but restrained decoration. The silver functioned as an enduring material, as well as an assurance of savings and wealth.

The tea set is a classic piece of silver from the Art Deco movement showing the period's use of modern forms and materials. The set resembles a sky scraper with the two shorter, square accessories flanking the towering teapot in the center. Designed by Gene Theobald and manufactured by the Wilcox Silver Plate Company, the silver plated nickel body with black plastic handles, the teaset was specially produced to make art deco silver more accessible to the American middle class during the Depression and was available for purchase in department stores.

Contemporary artist Lisa Hoke constructs entire installations from thousands of mass-produced paper and plastic cups. Transforming the "throw away" cups into relished objects of color and luminosity, Hoke organizes them into stunning three-dimensional patterns and shapes. Her artwork reflects increasing use of found, recycled, or alternative resources as mediums for artwork, as well as the

interplay between beauty, banality, and the sheer volume of inexpensive objects we produce, use, and discard in today's industrial and material culture.

Discussion

What relationships can you make between the historical objects and portrait paintings and photographs in *Art + Craft* and *Over + Over*? Likewise, what relationships can you make between the artwork in *Over + Over* and people today?

How do artists and objects both articulate, perpetuate, or even foreshadow cultural values, and what evidence can you find for this in the exhibitions?

ART AND WRITING ACTIVITIES FOR THE MUSEUM OR CLASSROOM

- 1) Choose an object and a portrait from the same era and create either a drawing or a story that together illustrate a day in the life of the person or thing.
Option: Try imagining the point of view from the object itself!
- 2) Make a descriptive list of the properties of an object, such as their shape, material, texture, translucence, opacity, etc., that are used by an artist in *Over + Over*. How do the artists showcase and manipulate these properties in their work?
Option: Make an observation for your own object in preparation to make an artwork from this material.
- 3) Create a class "found" box where you bring in discarded objects and papers that you find interesting. Use these found objects as source material for stories or art projects.
Option: Brainstorm the most common items your class throws away, and save these in a collection bin for group and/or individual art projects.
- 4) Create an artwork or a poem that is inspired by the form of something you see in your world, much like the skyscraper influenced Art Deco designers.
- 5) Take inspiration from the silver engravings and coat of arms in *Art + Craft* to create your own emblem design. You may make these into rubber stamps and apply your emblem to your favorite possessions.
- 6) Write a diary entry imagining how any of the artists in the exhibitions made their work, imagining their thoughts, accomplishments, and frustrations throughout the process.
- 7) Write and research your own "object lesson," choosing either an artwork from the Addison or an everyday object to compose a paper on its cultural and/or historical relevance.

RESOURCES

Addison Gallery of American Art: 65 Years (Andover, MA: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1996). Provides images and text for many of the works in the collection, an excellent starting point for learning about a particular work or artist.

Alvarado, Amy and Patricia Herr, *Inquiry-Based Learning Using Everyday Objects: Hands-On Instructional Strategies That Promote Active Learning in Grades 3-8* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2003). Guide to teaching strategies of object-based learning.

Clair, Jean, ed., *The 1920s Age of the Metropolis* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1991). Colorful study of the culture and artwork of the 1920s in the US and Europe.

- Craven, Wayne, *American Art: History and Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002).
In depth look at American art and artists in the context of their time.
- Daston, Lorraine, *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2004). Daston closely studies nine objects varying in use, discipline, location, and time, and analyzes how they “speak” for their culture.
- Duggan, Ginger and Judith Hoos Fox, *Over + Over: Passion for Process* (Washington: University of Washington Press; Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005). Exhibition catalogue with essays by the curators on artists’ processes.
- Duncan, Alistair, *American Art Deco* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986). Comprehensive catalogue on American Art Deco in decorative arts, architecture, painting, and sculpture.
- Lewis, Nancy and W.E.B. Lewis, *American Characters: Selections from the National Portrait Gallery, Accompanied by Literary Portraits* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).
A look at America’s famous figures through visual and verbal portraits.
- Kane, Patricia and Charles Montgomery, ed., *American Art 1750-1800: Towards Independence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976). Traces the development of silver, furniture, textiles, painting, and sculpture in early American art and culture.
- Pohl, Frances K., *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002). Stretching from pre-colonial Native Americans through contemporary artists, this survey correlates history, art, and changing American culture.