Recharge, Reimagine, & Write!

Accessing your creativity to see your museum differently

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Practicing Creativity

- No matter what your role in your organization is, there is need for creativity.
- Taking time to participate in a creative activity, alone or in a group, can shake up your thinking and bring you new energy.

From [http://thereconstructionists.org/](http://thereconstructionists.org/)
How to Be an Explorer of the World

1. Always be looking. (Notice the ground beneath your feet.)
2. Consider everything alive and animate.
3. Everything is interesting. Look closer.
4. Alter your course often.
5. Observe for long durations (and short ones).
6. Notice the stories going on around you.
8. Document your findings (field notes) in a variety of ways.
9. Incorporate indeterminacy.
10. Observe movement.
11. Create a personal dialogue with your environment. Talk to it.
12. Trace things back to their origins.
13. Use all of the senses in your investigations.

From How to Be an Explorer of the World: Portable Art Life Museum by Keri Smith
What is Ekphrasis?

Art created in reaction to or inspired by another piece of art, frequently in a different form

(AKA fanfiction, fanart & the Renaissance)
About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.
Punk rock beauty headbangs in the desert
dares you to find its spikes and carapaces
as poetical as stars,
as if a drunk and rebel Spring
had left its traces
snapping in the wind like scrappy flags.

Published summer 2015, Window Cat Press  http://windowcatpress.weebly.com/summer-15.html
But I don’t write poetry!...yet
Poetry Forms for ‘Non-Poets’

- Found poetry
- Deeply detailed description using all senses
- Lists
- Comparisons
- Questions
- Dialogue/Personification
- Concrete to abstract
- Haiku
- Rhyme and meter are ‘black tie optional’
Longfellow’s Ekphrastic Poems (a few!)

- “A Dutch Picture” (painting)
- “The Four Princesses at Wilna” (photograph)
- “From my Arm-Chair” (furniture)
- “The Iron Pen” (commemorative historical object)
- “Sonnet on Mrs. Kemble's Reading from Shakespeare” (theater)
Your Task: Find Your Art

- Find 1-2 art works in your space (historic house, gallery, archive) that draw you in.
  - Any medium! Sculpture, furniture, and other decorative arts are as valid as paintings.
- Brainstorm a list of words and phrases provoked by each work.
- Take photos for future reference if you need/want.
- Bring your notes to your favorite thinking spot to write your poem draft(s).
- Revise as necessary and as it gives you pleasure.
How do we get there?

- Visual Thinking Strategies
  - What do you see?
  - What makes you say that?
  - What else?
- Be aware of your reactions, artists’ choices
Possible connections

- Theme
- Visual qualities
  - Tone
  - Texture
  - Composition
  - Color
  - Movement
- Emotional reaction
- Resonances (or dissonances!)
  - Personal memories
  - References to artistic/literary tradition
  - Historical context
  - Using one as metaphor/frame for the other
  - Timelines (cause & effect, before & after)
Your turn!

You will have 5 minutes to look at the following artwork, brainstorm, doodle, draft, and discover.

If you are interested in sharing some of your favorite phrases when the prompt session is done, please type them into the chat box.
Wind from the Sea (1947) captures a moment on a hot summer day when Andrew Wyeth opened the seldom used window in an attic room. The picture is eerily alive with movement as the wind blows the curtains into the room. The tattered, transparent fabric is light and airy, with small embroidered birds along the edges that seem ready to dart into the house. In contrast, the sun-bleached wooden window sill looks sturdy and solid. The interior of the room is dim, while the landscape beyond the open window is stark and bright.

The tree-lined view includes no figures, but as in so many other works by Wyeth, a strong sense of their presence is evident. Two well-worn tire tracks running across the dirt lead the viewer’s eye toward the sea in the distance. The close vantage point and the tightly cropped window frame at the edge of the painting create the illusion that the viewer is actually looking out a window.

Text and image from the National Gallery, Washington DC
Refining and Redirecting

- How do you get a better poem?
  - Practice
  - Conversation
  - The punchier word
  - The succinct phrase

- How does this help your daily museum practice?
  - Exhibit labels
  - Program ideas & descriptions
  - Tours & visitor interactions
  - Marketing language
  - Why you went into museums in the first place
Poetry with Visitors

- Programs for various audiences, collaborative or individual
  - Student groups
  - Intergenerational groups
  - Adult learners
- Label invitations & interactive elements
- Evaluation & feedback
THE 'MORE POETRY FOR CHILDREN' CAMPAIGN PRESENTS:

TRANSFORMERS 4: POETIC JUSTICE
THE DECEPTICONS ARE DEFEATED AND IT IS ALL THANKS TO YOU, EMILY DICKINSON.

SEAMUS HEANEY VISITS PEPPA PIG
A SOUL RAINIFYING AND FOREVER SILENT, BEYOND SILENCE LISTENED FOR.

CRIMEFIGHTING WITH SPIDERMAN & GINSBERG
I’LL CATCH THE CROOKS IN MY WEB, THEN YOU BLOW THEIR MINDS WITH A POEM.

Results & Reactions?
Further Reading

Poetry
- “Shirt” by Robert Pinsky
- “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning
- “Some Questions You Might Ask” by Mary Oliver
- “American Sonnet” by Billy Collins
- “Anne Hathaway” by Carol Ann Duffy
- “California Prodigal” by Maya Angelou

Articles
- “Everybody Should Write Poetry” by Peggy Rosenthal
- “Reading a Poem: 20 Strategies” by Mark Yakich
Thank you!

Things I’ve written about creative writing & museums:
• “Art Heists for Art’s Sake”
  https://allthesins.co.uk/2017/02/16/art-heists-for-arts-sake/
• “5 Tips on Using Museums for Inspiration”
  https://allthesins.co.uk/2017/03/02/5-tips-on-using-museums-for-inspiration/
• “And I must follow if I can”
  https://allthesins.co.uk/2017/04/06/and-i-must-follow-if-i-can/