

## Educator Guide

In September 2008, Gallery Crawl visited Patricia Sweetow Gallery and Catharine Clark Gallery in downtown San Francisco to see new work by Bayeté Ross Smith, Jonathan Burstein, and Julie Heffernan. Each artist creates a different style of portraiture. This guide provides resources for educators to support the utilization of this online virtual visit to the galleries to teach about the art of making portraits. The Gallery Crawl video can be found at [www.KQED.org/gallerycrawl](http://www.KQED.org/gallerycrawl).

**Artists** Bayeté Ross Smith, Jonathan Burstein, Julie Heffernan

**Location** Patricia Sweetow Gallery, 77 Geary Street, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Catharine Clark Gallery, 150 Minna Street, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

**Grades** 9 - 12

**Standards Addressed** Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Aesthetic Valuing

## The Exhibitions

Bayeté Ross Smith's *Pomp and Circumstance* series documents teenagers attending the Prom, "a classic rite of passage" for American youth. Ross Smith's "documentary style captures high school students in Berkeley, East Oakland, San Francisco, and Richmond, California as they mark their ascension from childhood to adulthood through the celebratory Prom dance... Ross Smith gave his subjects the opportunity for extemporaneous posing as a commemorative marker. The photographs depict a vast array of identities – from the serious to playfully flamboyant."

In Jonathan Burstein's *Visage* series, collage and painterly methods are used to create portraits of the de Young Museum's security guards, and artists from Burstein's community. The guards' portraits are composed of cuttings from museum brochures, and the artists' portraits employ collage materials collected from art magazines such as *Art Forum* and *Art in America*. This experimentation with materials that were not intended to serve as an artist's medium allow for a multi-layered effect, both physically and conceptually.

At Catharine Clark gallery, Julie Heffernan's exhibition entitled *Broken Homes* features paintings that might be considered as conceptual self portraits. Though a solitary human figure is not always present in Heffernan's work, most of her painting's titles include the phrase "Self Portrait". According to her biography on Catharine Clark Gallery's Web site, Heffernan is "preoccupied with Baroque sensibilities and the interior spaces of her compositions often refer to grand ballrooms and ornate drawing rooms, while the figures are weighted by fantastical costumes overwrought with flora and fauna."

## The Art Form

Throughout history, portraits have been created to capture the image and personality of a person. A portrait often shows a person looking directly at the artist or audience in order to engage the subject with the viewer. The art of the portraiture flourished in Roman sculptures, where sitters demanded realistic portraits, even unflattering ones. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century, idealized portraits started to be favored over realistic ones. One of the best-known portraits in Western art is Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, a painting of an unidentified woman. Though portraiture as an art form had a simple and romantic beginning, contemporary portraiture is much more complex and multi-faceted.

## Teaching with Gallery Crawl

Using video in the classroom can breathe life and meaning into almost any lesson. In the arts, video can be particularly effective for introducing large concepts, aspects of the creative process, and key arts-related vocabulary to introduce students to discipline-based and concept-based study. Using media in the classroom helps connect students with faraway places and promotes critical viewing skills and media awareness. For more information about using media in the classroom download KQED's [Media Tips](#) teaching tool (a direct link is provided in the resource section of this guide).

Using a Gallery Crawl video in the classroom allows student to virtually view a local art exhibit, while listening to firsthand information about exhibitions from curators, gallerists, and artists. In order to present Gallery Crawl to your entire class, you will need a projector and computer with the capacity to stream video. Alternatively, assign students to watch the video on their own or in groups. After soliciting student responses to the video, continue the lesson by implementing hands-on or discussion activities to deepen the impact of the media – ideas are provided in this guide.

## Making the Most of your Virtual Visit

The following activity ideas may be used in the classroom after viewing the Gallery Crawl Video, **and/or** after a school tour of Patricia Sweetow Gallery and Catharine Clark gallery.

- ❖ Show students slides or photos of famous portraits, then have them split up into small groups. Each group will choose one of the portraits to examine and describe, including specific details about the props, dress, and decorative elements, color, mood, and settings used in the images. Ask students to focus on identifying symbols that are indicative of the portrait sitter's world.
  - How is the subject represented in the image? Does it look like it was the subject's choice to be portrayed in that manner, or the artist's choice?
  - Is the subject holding an object that implies something about their life or their occupation?
  - What other symbols are included in the portrait, and what might they represent?
  - Have the class reconvene and present their ideas to the rest of the class. Continue the discussion about portraits, and ask if the students in the audience agree with the group's presented ideas.

Some examples are: Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe*, Franz Hals' *Mallebabbe*, Francisco Goya's *Teresa Sureda*, Annie Liebovitz's *Muhammed Ali*, and Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon in his Study*.

- ❖ Challenge students to develop a portrait project using a specific place and a person or group of people, such as a classmate, another class at the school, a retirement center, a residential treatment facility, a hospital, a hospice, etc. Ask students to develop their approach to making the portrait in order to put the subjects at ease. If appropriate, consider using the portrait project as a starting point for an interview or project with the students, using photography as a way to document the subject. For instance, students take portraits of residents in a retirement community or other housing facility in the neighborhood. They could conduct an interview that is prepared and exhibited next to the image.

- ❖ Using traditional portraiture methods of studio photography, have students recreate themselves as characters from a different era. Ask students to pay close attention to the formal qualities of portraits taken over the past six decades. For inspiration, view the work of artists who have worked with non-traditional portraiture styles such as Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman, and Diane Arbus. Working in groups, ask students to select a decade they would like to mimic. Students will then recreate portraits of each other in that style. The final exhibition will include their original photographic references and their own work.

### Visiting the Galleries

Both Patricia Sweetow Gallery and Catharine Clark Gallery are located in Downtown San Francisco, CA. Bayeté Ross Smith and Jonathan Burstein's works will be on view through October 11, 2008 and Julie Heffernan's paintings will be on view through September 27, 2008. For gallery hours and public transportation information, visit the galleries' Web sites listed below.

### Resources to extend learning about the exhibits, the art form, and featured artists

Patricia Sweetow Gallery <http://www.patriciasweetowgallery.com/>

Catharine Clark Gallery <http://www.cclarkgallery.com/>

Web site for the [Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery](#), including Educator Guides on portraiture.

Wikipedia entry on [Portraits](#).

The following KQED Spark documentaries may be used for compare/contrast purposes and to extend learning about contemporary portraiture:

KQED Spark documentary about painter [Hung Liu](#).

An in-depth Spark Educator Guide accompanies this video.

KQED Spark documentary about photographer [Todd Hido](#).

An in-depth Spark Educator Guide accompanies this video.

KQED Spark documentary about mixed-media portrait artist [Jason Mecier](#).

Visit the KQED Spark Web site for additional Educator Guides and videos about local contemporary artists at [www.KQED.org/spark](http://www.KQED.org/spark). Also available are educator resources on media literacy and production, using video in the classroom, standards-based arts instruction, program development, and more. For more information about KQED's Arts Education resources, send an email to [ArtsEd@KQED.org](mailto:ArtsEd@KQED.org) or call 800.723.3566.

### Direct Links

- Gallery Crawl: <http://www.kqed.org/arts/gallerycrawl/>
- KQED "Media Tips" Tool: <http://www.kqed.org/assets/pdf/arts/programs/spark/video.pdf>
- Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery: <http://www.npg.si.edu/>
- Hung Liu Spark video: <http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=4455>
- Todd Hido Spark video: <http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=6700>
- Jason Mecier Spark video: <http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=4461>
- Wikipedia entry on portraits: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portraits>