

Educator Guide

In September 2009, Gallery Crawl checked out two new exhibits: The Date Farmers' **Strange Fruit** at Fifty24SF Gallery, and Mel Kadel's **Echo Test** at Fecal Face Dot Gallery, both in San Francisco. This guide provides resources for educators to support the utilization of this online virtual visit to the gallery to teach about contemporary art. The Gallery Crawl video can be found at www.KQED.org/gallerycrawl. Information about taking your students to the galleries can be found at the bottom of this guide.

Exhibitions *Strange Fruit* and *Echo Test*

Location Fifty24SF, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Fecal Face Dot Gallery, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Grades 6 - 12

Standards Addressed Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Aesthetic Valuing

The Exhibitions

Strange Fruit at Fifty24SF Gallery features mixed media wall pieces, sculptures, and video created by Carlos Ramirez and Armando Lerma, collectively known as The Date Farmers. Growing up in the desert town of Indio, California, The Date Farmers weren't surrounded by an artist community, but they recognized each other as creative types and began making work together under a name that referenced a job they held before becoming professional artists. Found objects, Mexican and American cultures, and folk art influences drive the aesthetics of their work, which touches on issues of social injustice. The exhibition's title **Strange Fruit** refers not only to dates (the fruit) but also to Billie Holiday's famous song of the same title, which was recorded in 1939 and condemned racism in America, particularly the inhumane treatment and lynching of African Americans in the South.

Echo Test at Fecal Face Dot Gallery features the intricate artwork of L.A. artist Mel Kadel. Kadel incorporates vintage-inspired patterns, yellowed paper, and a persevering heroine in many of her works, which illustrate an allegorical narrative open to interpretation. Originally from Pennsylvania, Kadel creates imagery partly inspired by her childhood. For example, the flower patterns in her work are reminiscent of linen patterns that were popular in the 1970s, which give her drawings a mysterious, yet familiar quality for some viewers. She employs a muted color palate and a recurring female character of an indeterminable background to construct a narrative of human struggles intertwined with positive forces. Working with pens no thicker than an eyelash, Kadel focuses her art practice on intricate detail and metaphorical scenes. In her new exhibit, Kadel experimented with creating both color and black-and-white versions of similar drawings, allowing them to mirror (or echo) one another.

Both The Date Farmers and Mel Kadel create work that is rich with fine detail. When showing this Gallery Crawl video to your students, press "pause" often. Take time to identify and clarify what students are watching. Clarify new vocabulary as it is used, and focus on specific images of the artwork to practice critical viewing. Let students ask for a PAUSE to allow for immediate feedback to their personal interests and comments.

Teaching with Gallery Crawl

Using video in the classroom can breathe life and meaning into 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 artists 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. Gallery Crawl is also available as a free video podcast on iTunes and YouTube. 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 Fifty24SF Gallery or Fecal Face Dot Gallery.

➤ Make a Zine

Mel Kadel spends time creating zines so that her artwork will be accessible for a larger number of people. Zines are self-published magazines that come in many forms, most of which are very affordable (just a few dollars) and sold at independent art and music shops. Invite students to publish their own zines. Working in groups, they should first decide what will be featured in their zines – drawings, photographs, and poetry are just a few examples of what they might include. Students will then work together over several class periods to create a layout of their zine, keeping in mind that each page will be photo-copied to create duplicate zines. Invite students to make enough copies of their zine to share with classmates. For inspiration, check out the young adult publication, "Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine?" by artists and zine-creators Esther Pearl Watson and Mark Todd (Available on [Amazon.com](#)) as well as this instructional video from The Pinky Show:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5oD8EyZHOU&feature=channel_page

➤ Studying Strange Fruit

"Southern trees bear strange fruit...blood on the leaves and blood at the root." These are the opening words to one of the world's most famous protest songs. Its music and lyrics were written by Abel Meeropol (pen name Lewis Allan), a Bronx public school teacher but are often attributed to Billie Holiday, who first sang **Strange Fruit** in 1939 at Café Society, New York's first integrated nightclub. A documentary about the history of **Strange Fruit** can be purchased by educators from [California Newsreel](#). After screening selections from the documentary and the Date Farmer's Gallery Crawl episode, initiate a discussion about Billie Holiday's lyrics, comparing and contrasting with the themes in The Date Farmers artwork. For more lesson plans supplementing the **Strange Fruit** documentary, visit KQED's lesson plan database. Curriculum guides are available on the following topics: [Analyzing the Lyrics](#), [History of Strange Fruit](#), [Lynching in America](#) and [Reconstruction to Jim Crow](#).

➤ **Discussion Topic: Mel Kadel's Main Character**

Mel Kadel chooses to depict a character in her artwork whose ethnicity isn't identifiable. Why would the artist choose to render the heroine of her drawings this way? Would students react to the character differently if she fit into a specific category? How would the drawings be different if the character was wearing clothing related to a specific point in history? Invite students to think of and discuss other fictional characters on television or in movies who share qualities with the female character in Mel Kadel's drawings. Invite them to create sketches of their own neutral characters and ask them to explain each element of their character designs.

➤ **Discussion Topic: The Date Farmers' Symbols**

When viewing the Gallery Crawl episode with students, freeze the frame on popular images appropriated in The Date Farmers' artwork. Discuss the artists' treatment of these recognizable icons and encourage students to interpret The Date Farmers' intentions in including these pop icons in their work. Are they critiquing these icons, or paying tribute to them?

➤ **Collaboration and Working with Found Objects**

The Date Farmers work collaboratively as a team. They create pieces separately and together, but choose to exhibit their artwork under one name. Invite students to work in pairs on an art project and, in the style of The Date Farmers, require them to use found materials to create one collaborative piece. For older students, ask them to collect discarded items around school grounds or bring objects from home. For younger students, gather a collection of found objects ahead of time and let them choose one or two to work with. In the [Current TV](#) video on The Date Farmers listed below, students will see how they collect objects for use in their artwork – anything from cracked CDs to discarded toys.

Visiting the Galleries

Both Fifty24SF Gallery and Fecal Face Dot Gallery are located in San Francisco, CA. The Date Farmers' **Strange Fruit** exhibit will be on view through September 24th, 2009 and Mel Kadel's **Echo Test** exhibit will be on display through October 10th, 2009. For gallery hours and public transportation information, visit the galleries' Web sites listed below.

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

Fifty24SF Gallery <http://www.fifty24sf.com>

Fecal Face Dot Gallery <http://www.fecalface.com/gallery/>

Mel Kadel's Web site <http://www.melkadel.com>

The Date Farmers Web site <http://www.thedatefarmers.com>

Current TV video on the Date Farmers http://current.com/items/89063777_shaman-art-farmers.htm

Fecal Face Dot Com Q& A with Mel Kadel

http://www.fecalface.com/SF/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1674&Itemid=27

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

KQED Spark Documentary on [Caleb Duarte](#).

KQED Spark Documentary on [Viola Frey](#).

KQED Spark Documentary on painter [Kerry James Marshall](#).

KQED Spark Documentary on printmaker [Enrique Chagoya](#).

KQED Spark Documentary on glass artist [Jaime Guerrero](#).

Visit the KQED Spark Web site for additional Educator Guides and videos about local contemporary artists at 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 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>
- Viola Frey Spark video <http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=4954>
- Kerry James Marshall Spark Video <http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=24422>
- Caleb Duarte Spark video <http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=15440>
- Enrique Chagoya Spark Video
- California Newsreel purchase web site for **Strange Fruit**:
<http://www.newsreel.org/nav/title.asp?tc=CN0136&s=strange%20fruit>
- Analyzing the Lyrics Lesson Plan <http://uw.kqed.org/edresources/plan.php?id=274>
- History of Strange Fruit Lesson Plan <http://uw.kqed.org/edresources/plan.php?id=275>
- Lynching in America Lesson Plan <http://uw.kqed.org/edresources/plan.php?id=276>
- Reconstruction to Jim Crown Lesson Plan <http://uw.kqed.org/edresources/plan.php?id=277>
- Amazon.com link to "Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine" title: http://www.amazon.com/Whatcha-Mean-Whats-Esther-Watson/dp/0618563156/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1253059722&sr=8-1
- Google Map, Fifty24SF Gallery
http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&geocode=&q=248+fillmore+street+san+francisco&sl=37.775277,-122.422264&sspn=0.007734,0.013261&ie=UTF8&ll=37.773106,-122.428851&spn=0.007734,0.013261&z=16&iwloc=A
- Google Map, Fecal Face Dot Gallery
http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&q=66+Gough+St,+San+Francisco,+California+94102&sl=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=31.784549,54.316406&ie=UTF8&cd=1&geocode=FXdgQAIdBPyz-A&split=0&ll=37.775277,-122.422264&spn=0.007734,0.013261&z=16&iwloc=r0