

Educator Guide

In January 2010 **Gallery Crawl** visited Michael Rosenthal Gallery in San Francisco to see Ohio artist Amy Casey's latest self-titled exhibition, then headed to Electric Works Gallery to interview photographer Katherine Westerhout and learn more about her new exhibition, **Rust Belt**. This guide provides resources for educators to support the utilization of this online virtual visit to the galleries to teach about contemporary art. The Gallery Crawl videos 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 *Amy Casey* and *Rust Belt* by *Katherine Westerhout*

Location Michael Rosenthal Gallery, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Electric Works Gallery, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Grades 6 - 12

Standards Addressed Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Aesthetic Valuing

The Exhibitions

In the latest episode of Gallery Crawl, Katherine Westerhout and her collaborator, digital printmaker Kris Lang, discuss the creation process behind the works in Westerhout's latest exhibition, **Rust Belt**. The artists work together to digitally finesse Westerhout's photographs, bringing forward subtle lighting details and other nuances. Known for exploring inaccessible territory, Westerhout's latest subjects are forgotten buildings in Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Detroit.

Amy Casey's latest series of paintings emphasize the support structures and webs that hold her massive clusters of tiny, detailed houses together. Casey explores swarms of perfect homes on the verge of crisis, and her paintings are partially inspired by a dream she had. She works with ideas of rebirth and community survival, giving the buildings she paints a relatable quality. Aesthetically reminiscent of architecture found in the Midwest landscape where she lives and works, her subjects navigate precarious situations, attempting to adapt and thrive despite their unsettled circumstances.

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. 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 activities can be used after viewing the Gallery Crawl Video, and/or after a school tour of **Electric Works Gallery** or **Rosenthal Gallery**.

➤ **Symmetry in Composition**

Symmetry is what occurs when one side of something balances out or mirrors the other. A symmetrical shape, often found in nature or geometry, has two identical sides, one reversing the other. In a piece of art, symmetry in composition is present in much the same way, when the elements within are in balance. Artists from various periods in history, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, and Josef Albers have used symmetry as a method to create strong and orderly compositions. Katherine Westerhout uses elements of symmetry in her photographs to create bold, organized and elegant compositions. The arrangement of the visual elements she uses; walls, doors, benches, arches and other architectural components, give her pieces a strong sense of order and repetition. Invite students to create a symmetrically balanced collage by using circles, triangles, rectangles and squares. Collaged shapes can overlap or be cut to create new shapes. Use up to four colors with a variety of textured papers. The composition must have a vertical or horizontal axis. Make the project as large as possible and encourage students to create patterns, designs and compositional rhythms with no reference to a subject matter. When the art making is complete, display each student's artwork for viewing and discuss the similarities and differences and how the placement or arrangement of shapes create visual rhythm and balance. For older students, this project can be modified by using paints and an expanded color palette.

➤ **Discussion Topic**

Amy Casey and Katherine Westerhout speak about the relationship between their artwork and their dreams. Amy Casey, has experienced apocalyptic dreams and creates her work as a means to find control over a world she often feels is out of control. Katherine Westerhout speaks of her images being made of the language of dreams. References to dreams in art, or dreams as art, have often been thought of as a representation of an artist's highest creative potential. Artists such as Marc Chagall and Salvador Dali have referred to dreams and a focus on the unconscious as having a major influence in their work. Discuss ways that dreams can influence and affect an artist and the work they create, and why dreams can be used as a powerful and effective means to communicate as a visual artist.

➤ **Photography**

Amy Casey and Katherine Westerhout both create art that has a strong human presence without the presence of humans in their work. Ask students to explore areas around their campus or community that are no longer occupied by humans; areas that may have been forgotten or abandoned. Using a digital, cell phone or disposable camera, invite students to create a photograph that conveys the presence of humans, making sure that the photograph is absent of humans. Encourage students to use the camera as a sketchpad or detective to uncover places overlooked or hidden. Also encourage students to look up and down to discover interesting angles and shapes that might not necessarily be seen when the camera is at eye level. Display the final images on a photo sharing website such as www.Flickr.com.

Have each student share and discuss their images and if possible print and display the photographs in the classroom, display case or other school location.

➤ **Free Journal Writing**

After viewing the Gallery Crawl video or the work of Amy Casey and Katherine Westerhout, invite students to address one or both of the questions below in a free writing journal exercise. Free writing is a timed exercise (10 and 20 minutes) where students write non-stop without making any corrections. Encourage students to write whatever comes to mind without self-censoring or judging their writing.

- Amy Casey's paintings reveal a connectedness, a sense of optimism and even playfulness in the midst of chaos and calamity. Her "created" world is her mechanism for coping with her feelings of nervousness about her "real" world. How are ways that you, as an artist, explore ideas of vulnerability and anxiety? Are there different artistic mediums such as dance, music or language that provide for you a tool to create with, explore your emotions, and/or encourage the process of self discovery?
- Katherine Westerhout has transformed abandoned buildings, often broken, vandalized and forgotten, into places that convey a sense of serenity, tranquility and beauty. How do objects, or places, which might be considered forgotten or frightening, become objects of beauty and peace? What tools can an artist use to convey a message through an object or place?

After the free writing exercise, invite students to share and discuss their responses, keeping in mind that journal writing can be kept private.

➤ **Sculpture**

Amy Casey's paintings depict houses and buildings that are precariously perched on delicate and fragile stilts and are often connected with a fine string. Invite students to create their own houses on stilts by using thin wooden dowels cut in various sizes, small wood pieces, and glue. Begin by securing the stilts (doweling) on a base made from Styrofoam, thick foam core or any other material that can be easily punctured by the wooden dowels. Secure the dowels at the base with glue. Encourage students to build high by gluing pieces of dowels together, and to add as many houses and buildings as possible. Houses can be constructed with small wood pieces attached to the doweling. After the sculptures are complete, encourage the students to paint and add detail to their structures. String can also be added to connect the buildings together. When the sculptures are complete, invite students to discuss their works, and share any challenges they encountered during the building or painting process. If possible display in a prominent school or classroom location.

➤ **Photoshop Inspiration**

Bonus Video: See more of the **Gallery Crawl** interview with Katherine Westerhout and Kris Lang. In this excerpt, the artists discuss how Photoshop played a part in the creation process of Westerhout's **Rust Belt** exhibition. Click [here](#) to watch the bonus video.

Direct link: <http://www.kqed.org/stream/anon/topics/arts/gallery-crawl/1001-gallerycrawl-west-ps.m4v>

Visiting the Galleries

Both Electric Works Gallery and Rosenthal Gallery are located in San Francisco, CA. Both Katherine Westerhout's **Rust Belt** exhibit Amy Casey's exhibit will be on view through February 27, 2010. For gallery hours and public transportation, visit the galleries' Web sites listed on the next page.

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

Electric Works Gallery <http://sfelectricworks.com/>

Katherine Westerhout's Web site <http://katwest.com>

Rosenthal Gallery <http://rosenthalgallery.com/>

Amy Casey's Web site <http://amycaseypainting.com>

The following [KQED Spark](#) documentaries and educators guides may be used for compare/contrast purposes and to extend learning about contemporary art:

KQED Spark documentary about photographer [Katherine Westerhout](#).

KQED Spark documentary about installation artist, painter and sculptor [Caleb Duarte](#).

KQED Spark documentary about stencil artist and painter [Adam 5-100](#).

KQED Spark documentary about painter [Robert Bechtle](#).

KQED Spark documentary about photographer [Roman Loranc](#).

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.