

Educator Guide

In April 2010, Gallery Crawl checked out the results of Sonny Smith's 100 Records exhibition project in which he created 100 fictional bands, recorded songs for them, and invited visual artists to create album covers. 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 *Sonny Smith: 100 Records*

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

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

Grades 9 - 12

Standards Addressed Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Aesthetic Valuing

* **NOTE:** Always remember to preview Gallery Crawl video content before sharing it with your students. Some references may not be appropriate for your classroom.

The Exhibitions

Gallery Crawl interviewed Sonny Smith to uncover the intentions behind his **100 Records** project, which began as a novel and evolved into an expansive music and art project with a staggering number of contributors including Chris Johanson, Esther Pearl Watson, Jo Jackson, William Wiley, Alika Cooper, Ed Ruscha, and Alice Shaw, to name a few. Sonny Smith has recorded solo projects as well as albums with his band, Sonny and the Sunsets. During a residency at Headlands Center for the Arts, he dreamed up the idea to create a number of fictional bands and record songs for each of them. Smith invited visual artists to design covers for these fictional 45s. The resulting songs can be played on a homemade jukebox in the gallery and prints of a selection of covers, and original music by Sonny Smith are available as a limited edition set, **100 Records, Vol.1**.

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 activity ideas may be used in the classroom after viewing the Gallery Crawl Video, **and/or** after a school tour of Gallery 16.

➤ **Create a Fictional Band**

Singer-songwriter Sonny Smith created 100 fictional bands for his project, 100 Records. The project is complete with music (two songs per band), album artwork (commissioned by 100 different artists), and biographies. Each biography that accompanies the album artwork is rich with humor and wit. Don Adora'e, for instance, recorded music from 1963-1967. He kept his identity a secret by wearing a mask when he performed. His given name was Don Adora'e, so the mask didn't keep anyone from knowing his true identity. Smith has given all of the musicians a story and a life of their own.

Working in small groups of four or five, ask students to create their own fictional band complete with names and written biographies. Encourage students to develop rich stories behind their bands' inspirations and motivations using humor, wit, misfortune and calamity. Ask students to describe the type of music their band plays and where their band might perform. Invite students to share their band names and bios with the group as well as their reflections on the process.

To extend learning, invite students to act out, or perform a scenario in the manner of their fictitious band. Examples for a scenario could be recording a song in a studio, shopping for new shoes, or ordering breakfast at a restaurant. Give students 5 to 10 minutes to prepare a sketch. After each group has performed their sketch, review the exercise as a group. Invite students to comment on the challenges of this activity. What might hold them back? What was effective and why?

➤ **Create Album Artwork**

Sonny Smith commissioned 100 different artists to create album artwork for his project, 100 Records. Smith provided each artist with a list of fictional bands and the names of their albums. Each artist then chose a band and illustrated an album cover while Sonny simultaneously wrote the music. William Wiley, Esther Pearl Watson, Chris Duncan, Chris Johanson, Paul Wackers and Jo Jackson are a few of the contributing artists involved in this project.

Invite students to conceive of their own fictional band. Ask students to design and illustrate an album cover that is their fantasy of what the album cover would look like. When their projects are complete, display the album artwork with band names in a prominent location and invite students to discuss the art making process, including how the album artwork relates to the band's character.

➤ **Painting the Music**

Prior to starting this activity, explain to your class that they will be creating a painting of music. Set up a large piece of paper for each student and a full color palette with tempera or water color paint. Before beginning the painting process, encourage your class to sit quietly with their eyes closed for one or two minutes to listen to the ambient sounds of the classroom environment. Encourage them to focus on the classroom sounds and to think about what images, ideas and feelings are evoked while they are sitting quietly. Next, play an instrumental piece of music. While keeping their eyes closed, encourage the students to imagine the sounds of the music as colors and shapes. Consider the following questions to help students get started:

- What colors are you seeing?
- Are the colors bright or dark?
- Are the shapes large or small?
- Do the shapes have straight lines or are they soft and wavy?
- Are the shapes and lines repetitive and do they create a pattern?

Invite students to notice the difference in their feelings, thoughts or the imagery evoked when the music was off, as compared to when the music was on. Continue playing the music and invite students to slowly open their eyes to begin the painting process. Encourage students to paint what they saw in their mind, interpreting the sounds of the music into abstract forms. Change the music every few minutes to provide a variety of tempos and musical styles. When the art making process is complete, display and review the works. Discuss the process and any challenges the students felt in completing this activity and why.

➤ **Exploring Divergent Thinking**

Divergent thinking is a thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions. Divergent thinking typically occurs in a spontaneous, free flowing manner so that many ideas are generated in a random, unorganized fashion. Multiple solutions are explored and often unexpected connections and relationships are drawn.

The Sonny Smith: 100 Records project is an example of the creativity and inspiration that occurs as a result of divergent thinking. The idea behind the 100 Records project began with a novel. Sonny Smith was inspired to write a book about fictitious bands and musicians. This project was eventually shelved after Sonny began to wonder what their album covers might look like, and what their music would sound like, eventually evolving into a collaborative effort involving nearly 100 artists and musicians. The depth of his creativity and inventiveness is evident in the 100 Records project, which bridges his interests in art, music and the dramatic form. Encourage students to stimulate divergent thinking techniques as a method of problem solving with the following activities.

Brainstorming: Create a list of ideas in a creative, unstructured manner, making the goal to list as many ideas in a short amount of time. During the brainstorming session, all ideas are recorded and reviewed and no ideas are discarded. Conduct a brainstorming session about the use of art materials. Questions to start the brainstorming session might include the following:

- What would be a good material for this artwork?
- Why is a material right or wrong?
- What would change in my ideas if a different material was used?
- How does a material reflect what is important to an artist?
- How do I select a material to communicate what is important to me?

Free Writing: Free writing is a timed exercise (normally 10 and 20 minutes) where participants write non-stop without making any corrections. The idea is to write down whatever comes to mind about a topic without self-censoring, proofing or revising. This can help generate a variety of thoughts about a topic in a short period of time. Thinking about their own artwork, invite students to address one or all of the questions below in a free writing exercise. Before starting this activity, discuss the motivations and inspirations behind the Sonny Smith: 100 Records project.

- How is my artwork different that anything I have ever seen done by other artists?
- What could I do to change the materials I use so they include a surprise?
- What would my work sound like as music? What instruments would it play?

Journal Writing: Journal writing is an effective way of recording spontaneous thoughts and ideas. People often have insights and ideas at unusual times and places. Journals can be an effective tool used to capture a spontaneous idea. Encourage students to use a journal to record ideas and thoughts that can later be used for inspirations and encouragement!

Subject Mapping: This is a method used to create a visual “map” of an idea or concept that shows the relationships between ideas. The map starts with a central idea or topic and draws branches off of the main topic. You can create a map of words, icons and images that can be expanded in any direction. Discuss the idea of subject mapping the Sonny Smith: 100 Records project as a way of visually diagramming his creative process. Invite students to create a subject map for an idea, problem or project of their own.

➤ **The Collaborative Process**

Collaboration is a team process where two or more people work together towards a common goal. Sharing knowledge, resources, skills, efforts and creativity can result in a greater sense of accomplishment, recognition and reward for all involved. Sonny Smith collaborated with many artists and musicians for his project. Despite the challenges involved in such a collaborative effort, great success was accomplished, as well as a sense

of excitement, enthusiasm and belonging. The classroom is an excellent place to develop collaboration and team-building skills. Invite students to participate in one or both of the following collaborative writing activities. When the activities are completed, invite students to share their work and discuss the benefits and challenges they encountered when working in a group.

- This project should be done in groups of 3 to 4 students. Give students the following fictitious scenario: The Downtown Level7 Gallery is preparing for an upcoming exhibition of 5 internationally known artists. The gallery is preparing a press release which would describe the exhibition in detail. Your team has been asked to prepare a 500 word description of the exhibition, including the artists. Three to five photographs can also be used to clarify the description. Have students work as a team to brainstorm, outline, draft, and revise the material that will be submitted to the Downtown Level7 Gallery.
- Comic books are often created in a team environment with an illustrator, writer and editor. Invite the team, made up of 4 to 5 students, to create a comic book. All members can create the story idea. The individual tasks of illustrator, writer and editor can then be divided up. Work as a team to create a comic book complete with cover, characters, illustrations and text.

Visiting the Gallery

The Sonny Smith: 100 Records exhibition is showing at Gallery 16 located in San Francisco, CA. The exhibition will be on view through May 14, 2010. For gallery hours, location and public transportation, visit the gallery Web site listed below.

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

Gallery 16 Web site

<http://www.gallery16.com/>

Gallery 16 blog

<http://www.gallery16.blogspot.com/>

Sonny Smith Web site

<http://www.sonnysmith.com>

Sonny and the Sunsets Web site

<http://www.myspace.com/sonnythesunsets>

100 Records blog

<http://turnuprecords.com/100records/>



a monthly video of the coolest art
in northern california's hottest galleries

KQED

education network

The following KQED Spark & Gallery Crawl documentaries and educator's guides may be used for compare/contrast purposes, and to extend learning about contemporary art:

KQED Spark documentary and educator guide about artist [Chris Johanson](#)

KQED Spark documentary about Crown Point Press and artist [William Wiley](#)

KQED Gallery Crawl documentary about artist [Paul Wackers](#)

[Sonny and the Sunsets](#) on the Bay Bridged music podcast on www.KQED.org/arts

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.