

Educator Guide

In July 2010 **Gallery Crawl** visited John Berggruen and Altman Siegel Galleries in San Francisco to view the collaborative exhibition, *They Knew What They Wanted*, and interview guest curators Shannon Ebner and Robert Bechtle. 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 *They Knew What They Wanted*

Location Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco [Google Map](#)

Grades 9 - 12

Standards Addressed Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Aesthetic Valuing

The Exhibitions

In July 2010, **Gallery Crawl** interviewed LA-based photographer Shannon Ebner and Bay Area painter Robert Bechtle about their selections for **They Knew What They Wanted**. Both were inspired by the work of American photographer Lee Friedlander, among other artists, ideas, and themes. The exhibition was spread across four San Francisco galleries: John Berggruen, Altman Siegel, and Fraenkel Galleries in San Francisco's Union Square, and Ratio 3 in the Mission District. Artists Jordan Kantor and Katy Grannan were also featured curators.

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 **Altman Siegel** or **Berggruen Galleries**.

➤ **Curate an Exhibition**

San Francisco-based photorealist painter Robert Bechtle was selected to curate the collaborative exhibition, *They Knew What They Wanted*, at the John Berggruen Gallery. Bechtle, known for his representational paintings of specific places, people and things, selected the work for the exhibition with much of the same motivation, creating an exhibition with a broad theme of everyday life. His addition of abstract art to the exhibition provides contrast to what Bechtle might call "formality of the ordinary" (http://www.berggruen.com/#/exhibitions/2010-07-01_they-knew-what-they-wanted/). Using old magazines, newspapers, books or other recycled materials, invite students to "curate" a series of photographic images of people, places and things that represent ordinary life. Keeping in mind the circumstances of their own everyday world, discuss the idea that ordinary will be, and should be different for each student, creating an exhibition that is central in theme, but provides contrast and unexpected results. Talk about the difference between selecting images that fit within a theme, and selecting images purely on aesthetic value. Discuss which provides a more cohesive aesthetic experience, keeping in mind that all ideas and opinions are acceptable.

➤ **Create a Class Collection**

Discuss the notion of collecting and the different reasons that people collect. If there are collectors in the class, invite these students to bring in samples of their collections. Discuss the reasons for collecting, including the why, where, and how students support their collection "habit."

Suggest that students create their own class collection. In small groups of two to three students, ask groups to decide what types of objects will be collected and why. Invite each group to purpose an idea for the collection by asking them to research their choice, explore the significance of their choice as well as the historical and financial background of the objects or artwork. Each group should then make their "pitch" to the group, making their case as to why the class should invest in their objects/artwork. After each group has presented their case, take a silent vote.

Plan a visit to a local museum or collection and if possible, arrange for a tour or visit with the curator or person involved with the collection. Discuss what is and what is not on view at the museum, and who makes the decisions regarding what is exhibited at any given time. Discuss with the class if the collection represents a particular theme or idea or if the collection was selected based on the personal taste of the collector or institution.

➤ **Create a Collage from Collected Items**

Invite students to create collages from collected items. To begin, brainstorm with the class ideas or themes to use as a guide. Examples might include pets, vacations, houses, family, sports, etc. List the ideas on the board or other location visible to students. Provide old magazines, newspapers, brochures, drawings, maps, packaging, wrapping paper or other recycled items. Students can also use items from home that can be incorporated into the

collage. When the gluing is completed, coat the collage with a heavier gel or gloss medium to secure and seal the collaged items to ensure that all items remain in place. When the art making process is complete, exhibit the collection collages in a prominent location and discuss similarities and differences and the significance of the collage items that were chosen.

➤ **Camera as Sketchbook**

Many artists use a sketchbook to record information about what attracts them to the people and places they observe. Photorealist painter, Robert Bechtle, uses his camera “like a sketchbook,” walking around his neighborhood and taking photos of the spaces, objects, shapes, lights and colors that attract him. He uses his camera to document any information that might change regarding light, space and form.

Consider the different methods that artists use to record information they observe, and discuss the significance of Bechtle using a camera as a sketchbook. Various methods used by artists to record information might include sketching, writing, photographing and videoing. Ask students to choose a favorite place (a park, their street, their home, etc.) and to explore and record their ideas or images using at least two of these methods. Invite students to share their recordings with the class and discuss which method was more effective in recording their image or place of interest.

➤ **Exploring Language, Letters and Text in Art**

Los Angeles artist Shannon Ebner was selected to curate the collaborative exhibition *They Knew What They Wanted*, at the Altman Siegel Gallery. Ebner, identifying herself both as both artist and poet, is known for her multi-layered and often unexpected use of language, repeated patterns, and text (<http://www.altmansiegel.com/sebner/sebnerpress2.pdf>). Invite students to view Ebner’s work (see the “Resources to Extend Learning” section in this guide), and engage in a discussion about the exploration and use of language, text and symbols in artwork.

Ask students to select a word, phrase or group of words that represent an important idea, concept or belief. Students may also use graphic symbols, such as a strike (a symbol frequently used in Ebner’s work), or ampersand (a symbol used by Ebner and exhibiting artist Sam Gordon), to convey and represent information. Using a variety of mixed media, encourage students to create their own symbols and graphics by cutting out letters from magazines or newsprint or creating letters and/or symbols with found objects. Incorporate symbols in drawings, paintings, collages or use as sculpture.

When the art making is complete, display students’ artwork for viewing and discuss the significance of language in art and the ways that artists can use signs and symbols to convey information, as well as develop communication systems.

Visiting the Galleries

The four galleries participating in the exhibition *They Knew What They Wanted*, are located in San Francisco, CA. The exhibition opens at all galleries on July 1, 2010 and ends on July 21, 2010 at the Fraenkel Gallery, July 31, 2010 at the John Berggruen Gallery, August 7, 2010 at the Altman Siegel Gallery and August 13, 2010 at Ratio 3. 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:

John Berggruen Gallery Web site

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

Fraenkel Gallery Web site

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

Altman Siegel Gallery Web site

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

Ratio 3 Web site

<http://www.ratio3.org/>

Robert Bechtle - Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Bechtle/

Shannon Ebner

<http://www.altmansiegel.com/main.php?p=artists&a=sebner>

Selected press Shannon Ebner

<http://www.altmansiegel.com/sebner/sebnerpress1.pdf>

<http://www.altmansiegel.com/sebner/sebnerpress2.pdf>

Jordan Kantor

<http://www.ratio3.org/artists/jordan-kantor/>

Katy Grannan's Web site

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

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

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

KQED Spark documentary about the [Rene di Rosa](#)

KQED Spark documentary about Mail Art collector [John Held Jr.](#)

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.