

Art Assignment

Teaching & Learning
with FAM's Collection

January 3 - April 7, 2024

Opening Reception

Friday, February 9, 5-7 p.m.

Flaten Art Museum
Center for Art & Dance

For Faculty: Teaching with Art Across the Curriculum

Tuesday, March 5, 8:30-9:45 a.m.
Center for Art & Dance Link

 **ST. OLAF FLATEN ART MUSEUM**

LOCATED IN THE CENTER FOR ART AND DANCE • ST. OLAF COLLEGE
MTWTF 10 am – 5 pm | Th 10 am – 8 pm | S-S 12 – 4 pm | stolaf.edu/flatten

Exhibition Teaching Guide

This guide is designed to facilitate classroom conversations before or during a museum tour or on self-guided visits. It introduces the exhibition's main themes and contains images and discussion prompts. Conversations begin with close looking and description, with more complex questions to follow. The content is designed to be customized to align with your course objectives and for your particular students.



About the Flaten Art Museum

Flaten Art Museum advances excellence in the liberal arts through exploration of values and vocation, inclusive programming, and global engagement – hallmarks of a St. Olaf College education. It engages campus, local, and worldwide audiences in creative and critical thinking through encounters with art that the museum collects, interprets, exhibits, publishes, and preserves.

Why Teach with Art?

Object-based learning fosters critical thinking, creative expression, writing, public speaking, and the understanding of alternative perspectives through group discussion and visual literacy. The Flaten Art Museum works with faculty across academic disciplines to customize class visits and design assignments that align with course objectives. Museum staff make object-based learning approachable and enriching with a learner-centered method of talking about art called Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS).

Student engagement can happen during a single class period or a sequence or related visits. Resulting projects may include conversation in a foreign language, creative writing, research papers, soundscapes, dance, musical performance, drawings, personal reflections, exhibition labels, blog posts, and more. If you are interested in teaching with the Flaten Art Museum, please email museum director Jane Becker Nelson at beckerj@stolaf.edu.

About the Exhibition

[Art Assignment: Teaching and Learning with FAM's Collection](#)

January 3–April 7, 2024 (Closed January 31–February 6; March 23–April 1)

Works of art are portals, critiques, appetizers, mirrors, salves, and time machines. *Art Assignment: Teaching and Learning with FAM's Collection* highlights the ways St. Olaf faculty enrich their curriculum with artwork from the museum's permanent collection. This exhibition features six salient themes that resonate across the college curriculum, offering a springboard for creative and critical exploration across academic disciplines.

- Photography and Power
- Technical Art History
- Korean Material Culture
- Visualizing Mathematics
- Sensing Abstraction
- Gender and Propaganda

This exhibition is generously supported by the Glen H. and Shirley Beito Gronlund Annual Exhibition Series Fund at St. Olaf College.

Programs

Opening Reception

Friday, February 9, 5–7 p.m.

Flaten Art Museum

This event is free and open to all

Teaching with Art Across the Curriculum

Tuesday, March 5, 8:30 – 9:45 a.m.

CAD Link

This event is for St. Olaf faculty and staff, co-presented by the Flaten Art Museum and the Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts (CILA). [RSVP to attend.](#)

Visual Thinking Strategy

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a teaching method that provides an excellent first step for encountering art. This student-centered facilitation method fosters inclusive discussions and encourages viewers to identify what is visibly present on the surface before going deeper, to be aware of what is known—and unknown—about the artwork, and to establish a basis for analysis and interpretation.

For use in your own classes, start by posing the three primary questions below. As a student answers, point to the elements the student is identifying to bring others along, then re-cap the student's observations for the class.

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

Photography and Power



©Cara Romero, Courtesy the artist and Bockley Gallery

Look closely at [Cara Romero's](#) photographic portrait "Julia," near the museum's entrance. Make a list or inventory of the items included in the portrait. What is the subject wearing? What do these things tell you about the individual? What do they tell you about the photographer?

Throughout history, non-native photographers have documented native peoples and culture. Look closely at the [Smithsonian's collection of photographs by photographer](#)

[Edward Curtis](#). Describe some of the details you are seeing. What do the portraits make you wonder about? How do these portraits make you feel? How has Curtis's work caused harm to the Native American people and communities he portrayed in his photographs? In light of Curtis's body of work, how can Romero's approach to making portraits be seen as recuperative?

Look closely at the ceramic vessels near Romero's portrait of Julia. These pots are made by native women-identifying artists from pueblos in the southwest United States. Do you see any aesthetic similarities between the photograph and the clay pots? Why do you suppose it was important to the photographer (Romero) and sitter (Julia) to include these objects? What traditions, if any, are passed down through generations in your family or community?

Further reading: [*When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?* by Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie in *Photography's Other Histories* \(Durham: Duke University Press, 2003\), 40-52.](#)

Technical Art History



After Georgia O'Keeffe, *Orchid*, c. 1940, oil on canvas, 2010.158

Imagine you are an art investigator. A private client has hired you to research the painting "Orchid." Painted in the style of Georgia O'Keeffe, the painting came into the client's possession with an unverified attribution to O'Keeffe. Look closely at all sides of the painting. What clues can you find on the painting's verso (back)? What questions do these clues raise? How would you apply scientific analysis to advance your research? (E.g. collect submillimeter samples from the surface of the painting to test and date the pigments.) What else do you need to know to prove or disprove the painting's authenticity?

Helpful terms

- Attribution: "An attribution is an assessment of who was responsible for creating a particular work." [Attribution | Glossary | National Gallery, London](#)
- Authentication: a trio of tools are used to verify whether an artwork is authentic
 - Provenance (the ownership history of a piece of art, detailing past owners and providing a timeline of where it went from creation to current location)
 - Stylistic Analysis
 - Scientific Analysis
- Catalogue Raisonné: "A catalogue raisonné is a comprehensive, annotated listing of all the known works of an artist either in a particular medium or all media." [What is a Catalogue Raisonné? | The New York Public Library](#)

Gender and Propaganda

VOTRE FAMILLE SERA HEUREUSE!



TRAVAILLEZ EN ALLEMAGNE

RENSEIGNEZ-VOUS :

PARIS - 62, Avenue de Clichy (Métro: La Fourche)	PARIS - 75, Cours de Vincennes (Métro: Porte des Lilas)	PARIS - 100, Rue St-Antoine (Métro: St-Paul)
— " — 190 ^{ème} Avenue d'Italie (Métro: Porte d'Italie)	— " — 23-25, Quai d'Orsay (Métro: Chambre des Députés)	BOULOGNE - 216, B ^{te} Jean Jaurès (Métro: Marcel Sembat)
— " — CASERNE DE LA PÉPINIÈRE, 15, R. Laborde (Métro: St-Lazare)	— " — 129, Rue Lafayette (Métro: Gare du Nord)	COLOMBES - 10, Rue du Maréchal Joffre
	— " — 75, Rue de Romainville (Métro: Porte des Lilas)	COURBEVOIE - 200, B ^{te} St-Denis (Métro: Pont de Levallois)
	— " — 1, Rue Scribe (Métro: Opéra)	SAINT-DENIS - Mairie

Ouvert au public : Lundi à Vendredi de 9^h à 12^h et de 15^h à 18^h... Samedi de 9^h à 12^h... Dimanche de 10 à 12^h

André Deran, *Votre Famille Sera Heureuse! Travaillez en Allemagne* [Your Family Will Be Happy! Work in Germany], 1942, lithograph on paper

The *Tetlie Collection of World War II Propaganda Posters* contains 150 posters and broadsides from Nazi-occupied France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Soviet Union, and the Channel Islands. Some highlight resistance efforts, but the majority reveal Nazi efforts to radicalize racial ideology, foster distrust of the Allies, and rally occupied populations to the Nazi war effort.

Listen to episode two "[Dear Diana](#)" from [The Making Known](#) audio guide, produced by the Flaten Art Museum in 2021.

Look closely at a poster and notice the folds, cracks, and stains on its surface. Standing in the presence of a historical primary source reduces the gap between you and the period of time in which the thing was created. What does it feel like to put your body in proximity to these posters, the designers and printers who created them, and this history?

Midwest Art Conservation Center Senior Paper Conservator Diana Clise uses the term "inherent vice" to describe the tendency of physical objects to deteriorate because of the fundamental instability of their material. Apply the concept of inherent vice to these posters in a more abstract way. If St. Olaf doesn't act to preserve these posters, they'll eventually crumble away. But consider: In addition to the posters themselves as material objects, what else is being conserved/preserved by maintaining these posters? Does preserving these posters somehow normalize the Nazi past? Does their preservation act to inoculate society against a similar future?

Consider the material hardships of the war and occupation, including occupation authorities' control over scarce resources, rationing, and illegal but flourishing black-market activity—all of which affected the supply of paper and ink. What impact would such an environment have on the creation and production of these posters?

Look closely at the portrayal of women in the WWII and Chinese posters. Note as many details as you can about the way the women are portrayed. What are they wearing? What are they doing? What are their expressions and postures? Do these depictions uphold or challenge traditional gender roles? How do these portrayals advance the posters' propagandistic messages? Where do you see similar tropes in the media today?

Additional resources: [Selections from the WWIIPP](#); [WWIIPP Teaching Guide](#).

Sensing Abstraction



Sol LeWitt, *Band of Lines in Four Directions*, 1993, woodcut on paper

Get comfortable in front of a work of art, then plug your ears. Imagine the work has a soundscape. Describe (or play/create/record) what you hear.

Sol Lewitt believed that the idea behind a work of art was more important than the handmade object itself. Famously, he wrote detailed instructions for large-scale wall drawings to be carried out by others. Listen to this [audio piece from WNYC](#) about LeWitt's drawing instructions. How did LeWitt challenge the notion of what art is? What are the underlying ideological structures of artistic production that he critiques? If you followed LeWitt's directions and made a wall drawing in your dorm room, would you own an original LeWitt?

Korean Material Culture



Artist unknown, Joseon dynasty (1392-1897 CE), Korea, stoneware with white slip (buncheong, 분청) and transparent glaze

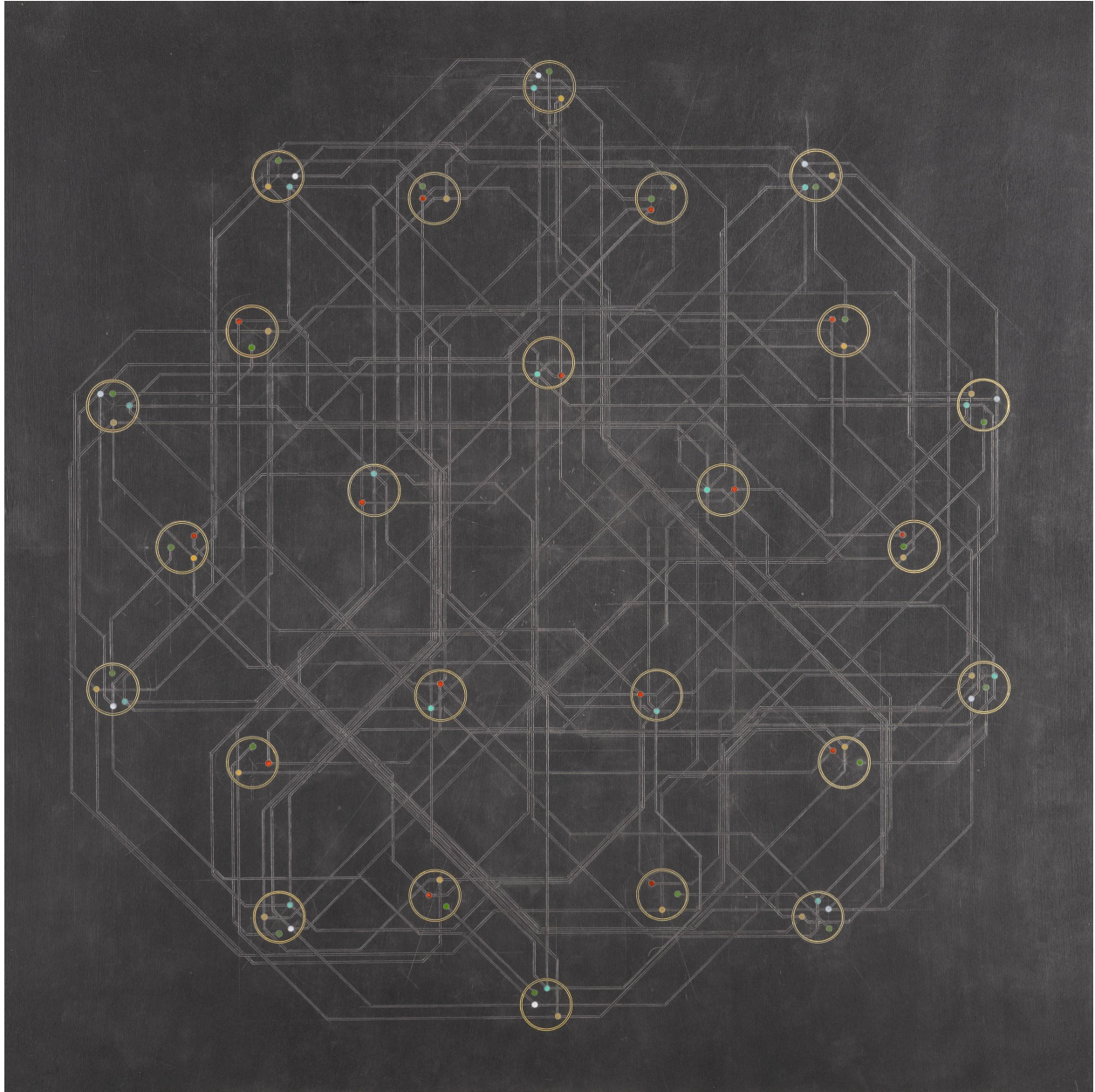
When museums discuss the legacies of colonialism they often refer to Western colonization. When teaching about Asia, it is important to acknowledge Japanese imperialism and colonial rule. Japan's colonial rule in Korea (1910-45) had a profound impact on collecting preferences and perceptions of value. Some of the Korean objects currently on view came into our collection misidentified, representing Japanese norms and customs rather than their true Korean context. It is important to acknowledge this fraught history in order to understand these objects and their connections to current global issues.

Look closely at the stoneware lion. How do you think this animal is feeling? What do you see that makes you say that? Notice how this white stoneware lion arches its back, puffs up its tail, and sticks its hair on end, just like a startled cat. Now imagine smoke emanating from its open mouth like a roar. Like all the Korean objects gathered here, the lion had a functional purpose. Lions were believed to be staunch protectors of Buddhism, and their ferocity is captured in ritual implements like this incense burner.

Note: There is a large Korean adoptee community in the Midwest and many international students from Asia study at St. Olaf. Utilizing Flaten Art Museum's Korean collection may provide opportunities to connect international students and Korean American students—including adoptees—to the cultural heritage of their birthplace.

Additional resources: [*How can we acknowledge histories of violence, racism, and colonialism when teaching about Asian art?* \(Minneapolis Institute of Arts Learning Resources\)](#)

Visualizing Mathematics



Satyan Devadoss and Owen Schuh, *Cartography of Treespace (underground)*, 2015, acrylic, graphite, and watercolor on panel

Look closely at the network of pathways in Owen Schuh and Satyan Devadoss's painting. Describe the pathways in as much detail as possible. What do you notice? What does it make you wonder about? These paintings visualize phylogenetic trees. Just as family trees diagram human lineage, phylogenetic trees diagram lines of evolutionary descent for species, organisms, and genes. Do you know about your family's lineage? How does it inform your understanding of yourself? How can we

reckon with missing human genetic lineage when it is unavailable due to adoption, slavery's forcible removal, or other ruptures in family systems?

Collaboration is at the center of Devadoss and Schuh's practice. Devadoss is a mathematician and Schuh is an artist. They each draw on their expertise to explore abstract questions. What do math and art have in common? What expertise do you bring to creative collaborations? How do you support others in making their ideas come to life, and how might they help you express your ideas?

Read more about the collaboration in an article [published in the journal *Leonardo* \(Vol. 52, No. 3\)](#). These paintings engage with abstract questions about genetic data, such as "How would the inhabitants of [the tree space for five species] get around their land?" and "How would different transportation systems exist and naturally interact with one another?" What does the data make you wonder about? How can visualization support mathematical concepts?

Follow this QR code to access the *Leonardo* article:

