



TEACHER CURRICULUM GUIDE 2006-07



Lisa Nilsson



Laura Christensen



Debora Coombs

Curriculum activities relating to
Boxed Sets: Assembling Objects, Images and People
with Three Museum connections

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Boxed Sets: Assembling Objects, Images, and People

March 29 – September 3, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pre-K – 8th Grade

Section 1: Introduction

- Exhibition Overview 4 – 5
- Artist Statements 5 – 7
- Boxed Sets Programs 7 – 8
- Goals and Learner Outcomes 8 – 10

Section 2: Three Museum Semester Activities

- Overview 11
- Before Your 3M Semester Visits 12 – 14
- After Your 3M Semester Visits 15 – 21

Section 3: Teacher Resources

- 3M Learning Standards – MA 22 – 24
- 3M Learning Standards – VT 25 – 27

INTRODUCTION

Boxed Sets: Assembling Objects, Images and People

Featuring Lisa Nilsson, Debora Coombs, and
Laura Christensen

March 29 – September 3, 2007



(*Mitosis*, Laura Christensen)

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

In Spring 2007, three artists—Lisa Nilsson and Laura Christensen of North Adams, Massachusetts, and Debora Coombs of Readsboro, Vermont—will team up to create *Boxed Sets* (March 29 – September 3, 2007), an exhibition featuring their assemblage and stained glass artwork alongside new work they will create with North Berkshire and Stamford students. Lisa Nilsson creates wooden box assemblages, grids that are densely filled with a diversity of interesting artifacts found in town dumps, flea markets, and hardware stores, alongside miniature paintings and drawings to create humorous incongruities and exciting juxtapositions. Laura Christensen also makes small assemblages combining handcrafted wooden boxes, old photographic portraits, and unusual found objects that suggest memories, relics, and mystery. Debora Coombs is a stained glass artist partnering medieval artisanship with contemporary ideas and designs to create large, colorful narratives in glass and using wooden grids.

Boxed Sets will feature art that relies on boxes and grid-like containers, which are used to form compelling, intricate and colorful designs, as well as narratives using glass, found objects, and images. This exhibition will not only examine contemporary assemblage and stained glass, but also the varying influences upon the artistic process and how individuals can make an impact on others through mentoring. Also included in the exhibition will be “Brain Boxes”—display cases with objects and images reflecting the influences of the three artists, such as books, photographs, letters from their mentors, and images of other artists’ work.

Small groups of approximately 4 to 6 students (grade level to be determined) will be selected from the four North Berkshire, Massachusetts (Florida, Savoy, Clarksburg) and Stamford, Vermont schools to be mentored by the artists after

school during week-long residencies in their schools. (The artists will also conduct single-session workshops with each Pre-K – 8 grade class in the schools.) Using materials and processes similar to the artists, these students will collaborate with the artists to create one new piece per school for the exhibition. Each group will also create its own Brain Box for the exhibition. The small group will also conduct tours and facilitate art-making projects with the artists in Kidspace, mentoring their peers.

NEW THIS YEAR!

Your students will begin the school year visiting the Clark Art Institute, Williams College Museum of Art, and MASS MoCA as part of the Three Museum Semester. The themes to be addressed in their visits will connect to the spring Kidspace exhibition *Boxed Sets*—mentoring, inspiration, boxes, portraits, and assemblage.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Laura Christensen

My work consists of small assemblages constructed with handcrafted wooden boxes, old photographic portraits, and unusual found objects that suggest memories, relics, and mystery. Hand-painted illusions of sea or land blend with images of 19th century men, women, or children. Antique glass jars hold ashes or needles. Torn scraps of photograph seem to levitate in one door of a small triptych. LED's light up inner chambers of old cameras. In some assemblages, altered photographs or other objects are treated as precious. At other times, an antique snapshot, chain, vial, or cricket cage suggest old secrets to be unlocked and riddles to be solved.

My work intentionally walks the lines between sculpture, installation, and craft. I choose to work in craft media because of its evocative power. For me, the tricks of memory and family secrets are better conjured by the handmade, the keepsake, and an intimate scale than by giant video installations. I refer to recent art – to Joseph Cornell, for example – to disrupt the feeling of coziness inherent in traditional media (such as the wooden boxes I make myself). My intention in pairing these two ways of working is to make my objects unsettling and beautiful in equal measure.

My recent installation, *River* (2005), in *Re[Collections]*, explores how geologic time can act as metaphor for all change. Lately I've been reading books, like Richard Dawkin's *Unweaving the Rainbow*, about evolution and genetics. I've been trying to

understand what scientists know about shifting tectonic plates, ice ages, and extinction. Learning how scientists understand history offers new perspectives on our current brief and fortunate existences. Change, in genetic, geologic, and personal time, and how individuals comprehend and respond to change, are the moving forces in my newest work.

- Laura Christensen, North Adams, Massachusetts, 2006

Debora Coombs

I explore the world in a wordless way, using drawing and collage to get a closer look. Searching around in the spaces behind language I find images of people and objects that have curious relationships to one another. I fix these assembled images into real time by making them into hand-painted stained glass. It's a curious process; translating non-verbal browsing into a medieval medium originally developed to illuminate the un-nameable.

The real world substance of glass, lead and paint is part of the allure. The sensual and tactile aspects are technically absorbing and help shut down my mental chatter. Craft provides a perfect counterpoint to the intellectual, scholarly side of making art.

I am fascinated by what it means to be consciously human and how this changes when we put our feelings into words. Perhaps, as Sue Savage Rumbaugh says in her book *Apes, Language, and the Human Mind*, "Language permits us to think that we know things that indeed we do not know." I want to explore the world that lies beyond the threshold of language.

I'm particularly interested in current research on emotion, in mental states that are difficult to pin down with words. Besides Rumbaugh's book, the other books on my nightstand include *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goldman and several by the neurologist Oliver Sacks. My current series of work explores the emotional complexity of 'maleness' from youth to old age, across cultural divides. This poetic, non-narrative work will be shown as a solo exhibition of stained glass panels and drawings called 'Menfolk' at the Cochrane Gallery in London, England in the Spring of 2008.

- Debora Coombs, Readsboro, Vermont, 2006

Lisa Nilsson

I'm attracted to sites of great material density and diversity. Town dumps, flea markets, natural history museums, hardware stores, Robert Rauschenberg's

combine paintings and Joseph Cornell's boxes are all loaded with humorous incongruities and exciting juxtapositions. The delight I take in the interconnectedness of individual elements in a complex world drives my art making.

I started making assembled pieces to satisfy a desire to include objects in my work (in addition to depictions of objects) and to interact with an unlimited range of materials within a given piece. I favor a macro-lensed view of the world, forgoing long looks at the forest for an intense study of the veins on the leaves on the trees. My current work motto is "do it all, do it small."

I think of my works as reliquaries; every worldly object is a relic of something-its maker or owner or material origin. I carve out and prepare spaces for dead bugs, wisdom teeth, chewed pieces of gum, turtle bones, balloon ends, the spines and skins of books. I install them, then seal them away behind glass forever and ever.

- Lisa Nilsson, North Adams, Massachusetts,
2006

BOXED SETS PROGRAMS

TEACHER WORKSHOPS

North Berkshire and Stamford teachers will be provided with three teacher workshops in your schools. The first workshop will involve preparing for the three museum semester and will introduce you to the theme of the year. The second teacher workshop will focus on the Kidspace curriculum activities and the artist residency. And the final teacher workshop will be an evaluation discussion about the entire year, both the three museum and Kidspace semesters.

An additional teacher workshop that we hope you will attend will take place on October 12th at 5:00pm in MASS MoCA's B-10 Theatre. Dr. Judith M. Burton, professor, Teachers College, will discuss how to look at children's artwork. This is a great opportunity to learn more about your students' developmental stages from a renowned scholar. This is a free workshop, however, tickets are required. Please contact Kidspace with the number of tickets your school will need.

Please mark the workshop dates on your calendar (you can find the dates in Section 2 of this curriculum).

KIDSPACE / THREE MUSEUM PROGRAMS

This curriculum provides you with classroom activities that you can do with your students before and after visits to Kidspace and the three museums. It is broken down into three curriculums: one for grades Pre-K – 1, one for grades 2 – 5, and one for grades 6 - 8. Activities can easily be adjusted to suit the needs and interests of your particular grade level. In certain cases, we offer different activities for the different grade levels.

We purposefully choose exhibition themes that easily relate to topics you are working on in school or that are included in the MA Learning Frameworks. The goal of this curriculum is to demonstrate easy ways in which you can connect on-going classroom activities to themes addressed in Kidspace and three museum exhibitions and programs. You might already have in your curriculum classroom projects that can easily tie into Kidspace and the three museums, and we encourage you to plan this before the beginning of the semester. We will have time to discuss this further at our teacher workshops. **New this year:** We have added to the curriculum a section with pre- and post-visit activities relating to the Three Museum Semester. We hope these activities will help to strengthen connections between the themes to be addressed in Kidspace in the spring and the tours your students will experience in the three museums during the fall.

The artist residency program continues this year. Small groups of approximately 4 to 6 students (grade level to be determined) will be selected from the four North Berkshire, Massachusetts (Florida, Savoy, Clarksburg) and Stamford, Vermont schools to be mentored by the artists after school 3 days x 2 weeks during residencies in their schools. (The artists will also conduct single-session workshops with each Pre-K – 8 grade class in the schools.) Using materials and processes similar to the artists, these students will collaborate with the artists to create one new piece per school for the exhibition. Each group will also create its own Brain Box for the exhibition. The small group will also conduct tours and facilitate art-making projects with the artists in Kidspace, mentoring their peers. Artist residencies will take place in January and February. Tours of Kidspace begin in April with each class visiting the gallery once with the peer mentors and the artists.

KIDSPACE / THREE MUSEUM SEMESTER GOALS

- Art experiences can be used to sharpen student visual literacy skills which can be applied in many subject areas, including art, English language arts, science, math, and social studies.
- Interpreting and creating art can enhance students' critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- Art experiences can build students' self confidence in forming opinions and sharing ideas, and are significant means of expression.
- Interactions with professional artists help students to more fully understand the artistic problem-solving processes.
- Curriculum materials and teacher workshops can motivate classroom educators to make multiple curriculum connections via the arts.

LEARNER OUTCOMES

The *Boxed Sets* exhibition can be used to focus on a wide range of topics, including: assemblage sculpture, stained glass, mentoring, influences, communication and self expression. Through multiple activities at Kidspace and the three museums, and in the classroom, students will:

- discuss how artists use boxes and grids as containers for their work;
- recognize that many different people can influence their lives and in turn, that they can influence others;
- describe the objects, ideas, and people that have impacted their lives;
- describe how cultural information is transmitted through art;
- explain the difference between an abstract, non-representational work of art and that which has a narrative and is representational;
- demonstrate their understanding of assemblage sculpture, and compare to Kidspace and three museum exhibitions featuring art of different mediums (installation art, sculpture, photography);
- illustrate their points-of-views in art and writing activities.

YOUR FEEDBACK AND SHARING WITH OTHERS

An evaluation form can be found at the end of this curriculum. You will notice that we merged the Three Museum Semester evaluation into the one for Kidspace. Please fill this out as the year progresses and we will collect the form at our workshop in your school in May. **Your comments do make a difference.**

We hope that you will share your class projects with others in your school. Since each class in your school is involved with Kidspace, it would be interesting to see the different interpretations of the activities and the Kidspace experience. You might display your work throughout the school and meet with other classes to discuss the artists' work and Kidspace.

We would like to visit your school to document your students' work and to hear about the other projects that you develop on your own in conjunction with the exhibit. You may also send digital photographs, scanned work, or project ideas to kidspace@massmoca.org

We look forward to a successful collaboration!

Laura Thompson, Ed.D.
Director of Exhibitions and Education, Kidspace

Cynthia Way
Director of Education, WCMA

Laura Christensen
Visual Arts Coordinator, MASS MoCA

Danielle Steinmann
Associate Curator of Education, Clark Art Institute



Nine Lincolns, Hodgenville, Kentucky

THREE-MUSEUM SEMESTER

OVERVIEW

Your class will have the opportunity to visit one or more of the three collaborating museums (The Clark, MASS MoCA, or Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA)) as part of the Kidspace Three-Museum Semester this fall. These visits will enable teachers and students to continue to hone their art viewing and interpreting skills while examining the diverse collections and exhibitions in the different museums. New this year, at the three museums your students will be introduced to the themes to be addressed in the Kidspace spring exhibition *Boxed Sets*. The following activities will help to prepare your students for their three museum visits and to make connections to the Kidspace exhibition. They have been written for all grade levels; however, you may choose to adjust the activities to your specific grade level.

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

Before Your Three-Museum Semester

1. Introduction to Three-Museum Semester and Kidspace Themes
2. Art / Language Arts: Looking at Assembled Influences

After Your Three-Museum Semester

1. Art / Language Arts: Special People – The Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute
2. Art / Social Studies: Inspired Paintings – MASS MoCA
3. Art / Social Studies: Historical Influences – MASS MoCA
4. Art: Self-Portraits in a Box – Williams College Museum of Art

BEFORE YOUR THREE-MUSEUM SEMESTER VISITS

Objectives

- Students will discuss the themes that will be explored at Kidspace in the spring while visiting the three collaborating museums (The Clark, WCMA, and MASS MoCA).
- Students will discuss images that they may see while at the three museums and connect them to the Kidspace theme.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY 1

Discussion: Introduction to Three-Museum Semester and Kidspace Themes

Explain to your students that this year's Kidspace semester will focus on three women artists who make assemblages, or assemble objects to create a work of art.

Assemblage is a form of sculpture comprised of "found" objects arranged in such a way that they create a piece. These objects can be anything organic or man-made. Scraps of wood, stones, old shoes, baked bean cans and a discarded baby buggy - or any of the other 84,000,000 items not here mentioned by name - all qualify for inclusion in an assemblage. Whatever catches the artist's eye, and fits properly in the composition to make a unified whole, is fair game. The important thing to know about assemblage is that it is "supposed" to be **three-dimensional** and different from collage, which is "supposed" to be two-dimensional (though both are similarly eclectic in nature and composition).

From arthistory.about.com

Explain to your students that *Boxed Sets* will feature assemblages by Laura Christensen and Lisa Nilsson and stained glass by Debora Coombs. Explain to your students that when creating their art, these three artists draw from numerous influences and inspirations in their life such as: other artists and artworks, teachers, friends and family, books, music, language, expression, etc. Ask your students to discuss their own influences and who they might influence in turn.

Tell your students that in January / February 2007, after their three-museum visits they will participate in a residency with one of the three artists in their school. During their Kidspace visit in the spring, they will have a tour of the exhibition with the artist that they worked with in their school and one of their peers. They will also have the opportunity to work on an art project.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY 2 – Review of Images

Art / Language Arts: Looking at Assembled Influences at the Three Museums

MA Learning Standards

- English Language Arts
 - Standard 2
- Visual Arts
 - Standards 3, 4.6, 5, 6, 7, 9,10

VT Learning Standards

- Arts and Literature
 - Standards 5.4, 5.22 – 5.26, 5.29
- Communication
 - Standards 1.13 – 1.16

Before visiting the three museums, review some of the images that you may see during your visit and connect them to the art of the three artists in the spring Kidspace exhibition.

Transparency Images and Questions for Three-Museum Semester

Image 1: *Portrait of Carolus-Duran* by John Singer Sargent, 1879, The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (Note: The inscription at the top left reads in French, “To my dear teacher, M. Carolus-Duran, your affectionate student, John S. Sargent.)

What does this painting tell us about the person being portrayed? (Note especially his clothes and accessories and the way he is sitting.) Why do you think the artist chose to paint a portrait of this person?

Images 2 and 3: *Rubens’ Lion Bites Rubens’ Horse* by Huang Yong Ping, 1986, MASS MoCA and *Lioness Seen from the Rear, Turning to the Left* by Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1613, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

What is happening in Ping’s picture? Why would Ping want to make a copy of Rubens’ lion? When looked at together, how are these two images similar? How are they different? Are there pictures that you like to make copies of? Why do you like to do this?

Image 4: *Nineteen Lincolns* by Greta Pratt, 2005, MASS MoCA

Who are the people in these pictures trying to look like? Why do you think these people are dressed up like Lincoln? Why do you think the artist wanted to photograph all of these impersonators?

Transparency Images and Questions for Three-Museum Semester con't.

Images 5 and 6: *Sun Box (front and back view)* by Joseph Cornell, no date, Williams College Museum of Art

What kinds of materials did the artist use to make this sculpture? Why do you think he chose these materials? Where do you think he found them? Why do you think the artist chose to organize these materials within a box?

Image 7: *Burn* by Laura Christensen

What kinds of materials did the artist use to make this sculpture? Why do you think she chose these materials? Where do you think she found them? Why do you think the artist chose to organize these materials within a box? What do we learn about the subject in the picture? What do you notice about the outside of the box?

Image 8: *Menfolk Study 1 (work in progress)* by Debora Coombs

Who do you think these people are? Do you think the artist knows the people being portrayed? How do you know? How do you think these people feel? Where would you see artwork like this? How is Deb's work similar to the painting by John Singer Sargent (**Image #1**)?

Image 9: *Marco Polo (detail)* by Lisa Nilsson

What kinds of materials did the artist use to make this sculpture? Why do you think she chose these materials? Where do you think she found them? Why do you think the artist chose to organize these materials within a box? How is this work similar to the work of Joseph Cornell (**Images #5 and #6**)?

AFTER YOUR THREE-MUSEUM VISITS

Objectives

- Students will further explore the influences in their lives to create stories and artwork.
- Students will create reproductions of their favorite images with their own style.
- Students will photograph themselves as historical personalities and create a classroom mural.
- Students will explore the use of found objects to create a Joseph Cornell-inspired artwork.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY 1 – Clark Art Institute

Art / Language Arts: Special People

(Materials: computer or overhead projector, CD-ROMs or transparencies, paper, crayons, markers)

MA Learning Standards

- Visual Arts
 - Standards 1.1, 1.5, 3, 4.6, 5, 6, 7
- Language Arts
 - Standard 19

VT Learning Standards

- Visual Arts
 - Standards 5.4, 5.22 – 5.26, 5.29, 5.30
- Language Arts
 - Standard 1.9

When visiting the Clark you may have seen many paintings that illustrated how the artists' lives were influenced by people, events, or objects. Remind your students that when they visit Kidspace they will see work by three artists whose work has been influenced by many different people and events. They also influenced each other as artists and friends, often finding time to discuss their art and art-making process.

Review *Portrait of Carolus-Duran* by John Singer Sargent (**Image #1**) with your students. This is a portrait of the artist's teacher and was done at the end of his work at Carolus-Duran's studio. This 'final exam' illustrates what Sargent had learned from Carolus-Duran during his time there. Ask your student who they like to draw pictures of: their friends and family or other influential people in their life (teachers, scout leaders, principals, church leaders, etc.). How are these people special to them? What have they learned from them?

Ask your students to write a description of a teacher or someone who has influenced their life in some way. They should describe what he/she looks like and his/her interests, as well as what your students learned from him/her. Ask your students to trade stories with a partner, and have the other person draw a portrait of that person based on the description of him/her.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY 2 – MASS MoCA

Art / Social Studies: Inspired Paintings

(Materials: computer or overhead projector, CD ROMs or overhead transparencies, paper, markers or crayons)

MA Learning Standards

- History and Social Science
 - Skills and Concepts 2 (3rd grade), 4 (7th grade)
 - Standards Pre-K-K.8, 1.3, 2.10, 4.3
- Visual Arts
 - Standards 1.1, 1.5, 3, 4.6, 5, 6, 7, 10

VT Learning Standards

- Civic and Social Responsibility
 - Standards 4.3, 4.6
- Communication
 - Standards 1.13 – 1.16
- History and Social Science
 - Standards 6.3 – 6.6
- Visual Arts
 - Standards 5.4, 5.22 – 5.26, 5.29, 5.30

As a class, review your visit to MASS MoCA and discuss some of the artwork you saw. Ask your students to remember the painting *Rubens' Lion Bites Rubens' Horse* by Huang Yong Ping (**Image #2**). Explain to your students that Ping uses influences from history when he is creating his work. In *Rubens' Lion Bites Rubens' Horse*, Ping is referencing a traditional European practice of making a master copy to study someone else's art. However, instead of trying to precisely mimic the marks of Rubens' drawing, he replicates the European image using a traditional Chinese style of large black and red calligraphic brush strokes.

Ask your students to discuss some of the images they looked at before visiting the three museums. Did they have a favorite? Why was this painting their favorite? Ask your students to create their own copy of one of the paintings, but individualize it in some way. Your students can add their own style by using different colors, adding drawings of things that are special to them, or adding collage materials.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY 3 – MASS MoCA

Art / Social Studies: Historical Influences

(Materials: computer or overhead projector, CD ROMs or overhead transparencies, mural paper, markers, glue, digital, Polaroid, or disposable cameras)

MA Learning Standards

- History and Social Science
 - Skills and Concepts 2, (3rd grade), 1 and 2 (5th grade), 4 (7th grade)
 - Standards Pre-K-K.1, 1,8, 2.10, 3.7, 4.15, ,
- Visual Arts
 - Standards 1.1, 1.5, 3, 4.6, 5, 6, 7, 10

VT Learning Standards

- Civic and Social Responsibility
 - Standards 4.5, 4.6
- Communication
 - Standards 1.13 – 1.16
- History and Social Science
 - Standards 6.3 – 6.6
- Visual Arts
 - Standards 5.4, 5.22 – 5.26, 5.29, 5.30

As a class, review your visit to MASS MoCA and discuss some of the artwork you saw. Ask your students to recall *Nineteen Lincolns* by Greta Pratt (**Image #4**). Greta Pratt creates photographs that recreate historical events and present historical impersonators. In doing this, she says that it helps her to understand history and how a society is held together by the creation of history and historical figures. (See below for more information on Greta Pratt's *Nineteen Lincolns* project.) Ask your students to think about why people dress up as impersonators. Have they ever dressed up as someone from history before?

Depending on what you are studying and how it fits into your curriculum, have your students dress up as an influential person from history (Martin Luther King, Jr., George Washington, Betsy Ross, Pablo Picasso). Ask them to think about clothing, hairstyles, and other accessories the person would have had (such as Lincoln's hat). Using a digital, disposable, or Polaroid camera, have your students take each other's portraits dressed up as the historical figure. They should think about how their influential person might pose in their portrait. What other things would they choose to be in the picture with them? Why would they choose these items?

Print out the images and have your students choose the ones they like the best. Arrange them as a class mural. Divide mural paper into enough squares for your class. Glue the photos of your students onto the mural paper, filling in each box, similar to Greta Pratt's piece. Ask your students to discuss the final piece. How did it feel to be dressed like this person?

Explain to your students that when they visit Kidspace, the artwork they will see incorporates the artists' many influences from their lives. They may see photographs, objects, books, and much more. These things have helped or encouraged the artists in making the artwork your students will see.

About Greta Pratt's *Nineteen Lincolns*

Abraham Lincoln is one of America's most esteemed presidents. Every school child learns about his modest upbringing in a humble log cabin and how he walked miles to borrow a book, and read by the light of a kerosene lantern. Physically Lincoln was an awkward man, tall and gangly, with a hollow face and wild hair. Yet in spite of his lack of formal education, modest means, and physical awkwardness, Lincoln rose to the highest office in the land. Lincoln is revered because he embodies one of America's most cherished tenets, that the common man, through sheer hard work and determination, can elevate his status in society.

These men all belong to The Association of Lincoln Presenters. They are passionate about Lincoln and spend time studying, reading and performing for school groups, community celebrations, and senior citizen centers. Each one started this unusual occupation for a different reason, but all became completely immersed in the ideals of Abraham Lincoln.

I photographed the men singly to allow each the opportunity to portray their idea of Lincoln. I asked them to write a brief statement about why they choose to portray Lincoln. Here are the words of Lincoln Number Six:

Lincoln brings out the best in me. He challenges me to love and understand my wife and children. His example encourages me to trust my savior Jesus, when I can't see how anything good can come out of a seemingly impossible situation. He teaches me it is possible to defeat my enemies by befriending them. He probes the patriotism of each of us by reminding us of the willingness of our predecessors to risk everything on behalf of a country with great promise but a precarious future.

The portraits share a muted palette of colors that binds them together as a group suggesting a communal identity. The background, a softly focused landscape, references historic portrait painting and connects the Lincolns to the vast American wilderness where the common man was able to build a new life.

These photographs are a continuation of my quest to understand how I, and we, remember history. My intention is to comment on the way a society, composed of individuals, is held together through the creation of its history and heroic figures. (from <http://www.gretapratt.com>)

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY 4 – Williams College Museum of Art

Art: Self-Portraits in a Box

(Materials: paper, markers or crayons, shoe boxes, glue, scissors, found objects)

MA Learning Standards

- Visual Arts
 - Standards 1.1, 1.5, 3, 4.6, 5, 6, 7

VT Learning Standards

- Visual Arts
 - Standards 5.4, 5.22 – 5.26, 5.29, 5.30

As a class, review your visit to Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) and discuss the paintings that you saw. Ask your students what their favorite artwork was and ask them to describe why that was their favorite. The artwork that was viewed at WCMA was selected by the Kidspace artists because they found something in the art that influences and inspires them. The Kidspace artists chose a range of artwork from large sculptures to small boxes filled with ordinary objects that took on greater symbolic value because of the way they were arranged and presented. Artists can find inspiration everywhere – in the world around them, in their lives, and in artwork from the past and the present. Ask your students to discuss what inspires them or who they look up to.

This activity was inspired by the Joseph Cornell boxes. (See below for information about Joseph Cornell.) You might show your students the image of the Cornell piece (**Images #5 and #6**) to refresh their memory. In this activity, students will make a self-portrait in a box. Like Joseph Cornell and the Kidspace artists, they will collect objects and arrange them in a box that they will decorate on all sides. Their boxes will be self-portraits because the objects and decorations they select will express who they are and what they like.

Begin by asking your students to list some of their favorite things (color, food, artists, artwork, activities, sports, places). As a homework assignment, ask your students look for three small objects or images that they can use in their artwork. Remind your students that they will be gluing these items to their artwork so make sure that it is something that won't mind giving up for this project. Tell your students to make sure the objects are small enough to fit in a shoe box.

In class, have students work in pairs and show each other the objects that they brought in and discuss why they selected these objects. Next, have students go through magazines and newspapers to find images and text about their favorite things. This will be an important part of their self-portrait and will be used to decorate the box.

Distribute boxes you have collected, and explain that they will be bases for their artwork. Have students decorate all sides of their box. They can use images and text from the cut-up magazines, newspapers, and pieces of construction paper. Ask students to pay attention to the colors and shapes as they glue these items on the box. Remind them that the Cornell boxes were designed to be viewed from all sides. (At the museum you had to look in a mirror to see the back.) Suggestion: you might want your students to lay out where they want their images to be placed before they glue them down.

Now have students place their found objects and other colorful objects such as buttons, cards, shells, or toys in the box. Arrange the objects so that they make an interesting composition. Pay attention to the forms of the objects and how the shapes and colors look next to one another. When the composition is just right, glue all the pieces together. Add the finishing touches: Students can draw or write around their self-portraits, too.

Arrange the “Self-Portraits in a Box” around the classroom. As you come to each piece, first have other students guess what might be the artist’s favorite colors and favorite things. Then have the artist discuss the choices they made in subject matter, symbols, color, and composition. What can you learn about someone from their self-portrait? What can’t you know?

About Joseph Cornell's *Sun Box*

Joseph Cornell often found inspiration walking along the streets of New York in the 1930s peering into window displays. He visited dime stores where he purchased the objects that he put into his art boxes, and he organized collections of feathers, key chains, rings, and other objects in cartons in his studio. To make his artwork, he first made the boxes out of wood. Each one measured 18 inches high, 12 inches wide, and 4 inches deep. He set objects inside the box, sometimes along with collaged text, and in so doing isolated the objects and created a way for us to look carefully at the arrangement and think about what the objects mean. He called his boxes "museums," "pharmacies," "hotels," or "cabinets of curiosities." Sometimes his compositions paid homage to artists that he admired such as surrealist Max Ernst. Beginning with the artist's personal connection to the selected objects, the resulting artwork takes on new life as viewers interpret it. As Williams graduate student Hannah Blumenthal ('06) notes in her essay, "The visual poetry of Cornell's work resides in the arrangement and juxtaposition of objects within a structured, enclosed space and the associations these objects and arrangements spark in the mind of the viewer."

THREE-MUSEUM: BOXED SETS ***MASSACHUSETTS LEARNING STANDARDS***

Arts

Students will:

- Use a variety of materials and media and understand how to use them to produce different visual effects (MA Standard 1.1, Visual Arts).
- Expand their repertoire of 2D and 3D art processes, techniques, and materials with a focus on the range of effects possible within each medium. (MA Standard 1.5, Visual Arts).
- Demonstrate their knowledge of observation, abstraction, invention, and expression in a variety of media, materials, and techniques (MA Standard 3, Visual Arts).

- Demonstrate the ability to articulate criteria for artistic work, describe personal style, assess and reflect on work orally and in writing, and to revise work based on criteria developed in the classroom (MA Standard 4.6, Visual Arts).
- Describe and analyze their own work and the work of others using appropriate visual arts vocabulary. When appropriate, students will connect their analysis to interpretation and evaluation (MA Standard 5, Visual Arts).
- Describe the purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meaning (MA Standard 6, Visual Arts).
- Describe the role of artists, patrons, cultural organizations, and arts institutions in societies of the past and present (MA Standard 7, Visual Arts).
- Apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of the English language arts, history and social science, and science and technology (MA Standard 10, Visual Arts).

English Language Arts

Students will:

- Pose questions [about works of art and literature], listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions and interviews in order to acquire new knowledge (derived from MA Standard 2).

History and Social Sciences

Students will:

- Identify and describe the events or people celebrated during United States national holidays and why we celebrate them (MA Standard Pre-K-K.1)
- Give examples of different kinds of jobs that people do (such as artists), including the work they do at home (MA Standard Pre-K-K.8)

- Identify and explain the meaning of American national symbols (MA Standard 1.3).
- After reading or listening to stories about famous Americans or different ethnic groups, faiths, and historical periods describe their qualities or distinctive traits (MA Standard 1.8)
- After reading or listening to a variety of true stories about individuals recognized for their achievements, describe and compare different ways people have achieved great distinction (e.g. scientific, professional, political, religious, commercial, military, athletic, or artistic) (MA Standard 2.10).
- After reading a biography of a person from Massachusetts, summarize the person's life and achievements (MA Standard 3.7).
- Observe visual sources such as historic paintings, photographs, or illustrations that accompany historical narratives, and describe details such as clothing, setting, or action (3rd Grade, Skills and Concepts #2)
- Describe the ideographic writing system used by the Chinese (characters, which are symbols for concepts/ideas) and how it differs from an alphabetic writing system (MA Standard 4.3).
- After visiting a museum, listening to a museum educator in school, or conducting research in the library, describe an animal, person, building, or design depicted in an ancient Chinese work of art. (MA Standard 4.7)
- Identify some of the major leaders and groups responsible for the founding of the original colonies in North America (MA Standard 5.7).
- Describe the diverse nature of the American people by identifying distinctive contributions to American culture (MA Standard 4.15).
- Describe the life and achievements of important leaders during the Revolution and early years of the United States (MA Standard 5.18).

- Interpret timelines of events studied (5th Grade, Skills and Concepts #2).
- Identify different ways of dating historical narratives (5th Grade, Skills and Concepts #1).
- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources and describe how each kind of source is used in interpreting history (7th Grade, Skills and Concepts # 4).

THREE MUSEUM: BOXED SETS

VERMONT LEARNING STANDARDS

Arts, Language, and Literature

Students will:

- Form aesthetic judgment using appropriate vocabulary and background knowledge to critique their own work and the work of others, and to support their perception of work in the arts, language, and literature (VT Standard 5.4).
- Demonstrate knowledge of the artistic process (VT Standards 5.22 – 5.26).
- Use the elements and principals of two- and three-dimensional design in the visual arts, including line, color, shape, and texture, in creating, viewing, and critiquing (VT Standard 5.29).
- Students use a variety of visual arts media (e.g., clay, tempera, watercolor, paper mache, animation, computer-aided design, video) to show an understanding of the different properties each possesses. (VT Standard 5.30).

Civic and Social Responsibility

Students will:

- Students demonstrate understanding of the cultural expressions that are characteristic of particular groups (VT Standard 4.3).
- Students understand continuity and change (VT Standard 4.5).
- Students demonstrate understanding of the relationship between their local environment and community heritage and how each shapes their lives (VT Standard 4.6).

Communication

Students will:

- Listen actively and respond to communications (VT Standard 1.13).

- Critique what they have heard (VT Standard 1.14).
- Use verbal and nonverbal skills to express themselves effectively (VT Standard 1.15).
- Use a variety of forms, such as dance, music, theatre, and visual arts to create projects that are appropriate in terms of skill development, reflection and critique, making connections, and approach to work (VT Standard 1.16).

History and Social Sciences

Students will:

- Students analyze knowledge as a collection of selected facts and interpretations based on a particular historical or social setting (VT Standard 6.3).
- Students identify major historical eras and analyze periods of transition in various times in their local community, in Vermont, in the United States, and in various locations worldwide to understand the past, the present, and the relationship between the two (VT Standard 6.4).
- Students investigate both the traditional and the social histories of the people, places, and cultures under study, including those of indigenous Peoples (VT Standard 6.5).
- Students use historical methodology to make interpretations concerning history, change, and continuity (VT Standard 6.6).

Reasoning and Problem Solving

Students will:

- Ask a variety of questions (VT Standard 2.1).
- Use reasoning strategies, knowledge, and common sense to solve complex problems related to all fields of knowledge (VT Standard 2.2).