HOMESCHOOL TEEN ART WORKSHOP
LESSON OUTLINE: OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING

WEBSITE DESCRIPTION:
Learn how to think like an artist while experimenting with different mediums through observation, dialogue, and practice in the Walters’ galleries and studios. During this monthly workshop, work with instructors during a single session to learn basic skills, or attend multiple sessions to develop expertise.

OBJECTIVES:
- Introduce students to the National Geographic Educator + Explorer Exchange Program and Dr. Andrianavalona’s work.
- Experiment with different observational drawing techniques.

MATERIALS:
- Charcoal pencils
- Color pencils
- Dr. Andrianavalona’s biography
- Drawing pencils
- Drawing paper
- Drawing boards
- Erasers
- Large butcher paper
- Mixed media materials
- Sharpeners
- Sticky notes
- Pre-folded paper for exquisite corpse
- Inquiry journals
- Reflection questions

VOCABULARY:
- Blind Contour: drawing the outline of an object while only looking at the object
- Chiaroscuro: the use of light and shadow to define a form
- Crosshatching: the addition of tone and shading through the use of intersecting parallel lines
- Inquiry: investigation
- Interpretation: the meaning of something
- Observation: utilization of the senses to gain information about a subject matter
- Stippling: a series of dots that represent the shades and tones that define an object

1:30 PM-2:00 PM INTRODUCTION IN THE CHAMBER OF WONDERS:
Activity: Exquisite Corpse- For the next several sessions we are going to focus on observation and interpretation. Let’s begin with a collaborative exercise that involves the objects in this room

Your first challenge is to draw a head on the first fold of your paper. Find a head in this room that you would like to draw. Keep in mind that your drawing doesn’t have to be a human head and could be a combination of a couple of different heads. Give students 5 minutes. Once they have finished, show them how to draw guidelines on the back of their paper. Instruct students to trade papers, face down, with someone else. Do not look at the head drawing the previous person drew on your paper.

Without knowing what the person before you drew, start at their guidelines and find a body or mid-section to draw (no legs or feet yet). Think creatively in terms of what to draw. For example, you can combine several features of different bodies that you see in the room for this drawing. Give students 5 minutes. Once they have finished, show them how to draw guidelines on the back side of their paper. Instruct students to trade their papers, face down, with someone else.

Again without knowing what the person before you drew, use their guidelines to draw an end to your collaborative creature. Find an object in this room to reference. An end can include feet, legs, tails; it is open to your interpretation. Give students 5 minutes. Once they have finished their drawings, instruct them to open their folds.
Discussion: Lay your creature creations on the floor for everyone to see. Make some general observations about the heads you notice in these drawings. Because this head drawing has this feature, what does it allow your creature to do? Today we will focus on observation, the action or process of looking carefully at something to gain information, and interpretation, the meaning behind your observations.

We are focusing on this because we are involved in a special collaboration that I would like to include you all in. It is called the National Geographic Educator + Explorer Exchange Program. It partners educators with National Geographic emerging explores to embark on new education initiatives in the classroom. We are partnered with Madagascar Paleontologist Dr. Harimalala Tsiory Andrianavalona. She uses observation and interpretation of the natural world to reconstruct environments of the past. Dr. Andrianavalona is preparing a video describing who she is, and what her research entails. We have an idea of what this partnership might look like, but are also excited to hear your ideas for it as they arise. Give students a copy of Dr. Andrianavalona’s biography to read and take with them.

2:00 PM-3:00 PM OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING IN THE CHAMBER OF WONDERS:
Activity: We are going to begin with inquiry journals. What does inquiry mean? I will take photographs of your journals and send them to Dr. Andrianavalona who may offer feedback and comments. These journals are also a place for experimentation and investigation.

To start, find something you are curious about in this gallery. While observing your object, we’ll practice the following techniques:

- 10 Minutes: Start with a blind contour drawing. Pretend your pencil is exploring and learning every texture and detail of your object. Go slow. The focus of the exercise is to learn more about your object through careful observation. Look only at your object.

- 5 Minutes: Spend time reflecting on what you observed by writing next to your blind contour drawing. Print paper with reflection questions for students to consider and respond to:
  - What surprised you about your object after this exercise?
  - What did you discover through careful observation?
  - What different textures did you observe?
  - What are you wondering about your object?

- 10 Minutes: Find a partner and sit in a portion of the gallery that is away from both of your objects. Keep your object a secret. Take turns describing your objects to each other without naming them. Similar to the game of charades, you are not allowed to tell your partner the name of your object, but only descriptive words about it. Describe the colors, textures, details and questions that came to mind while embarking on the blind contour and reflection activity.

Demonstrate different mark making techniques:
*Chiaroscuro
*Crosshatching
*Stippling

- 20 Minutes: Draw your object 3 different times using the techniques we discussed.
- 10 Reflection: Label the colors, shadows, and details in your drawings.

Discussion: What stood out to you while drawing your object several times? How did you respond to your reflection questions? What are you still wondering about your object? Trade journals with some one else in the class. Spend time reflecting and responding to something they wrote or drew using sticky notes. Avoid drawing or writing directly onto someone else’s journal.

3:00 PM-3:30 PM MIXED MEDIA COLLAGES IN THE CHAMBER OF WONDERS:
Activity: Give students two options for the next activity.

  Option 1: Using a large sheet of butcher paper, focus on a small section of the object and magnify it. Consider how what you choose to magnify might change someone else’s interpretation of what the object is.
Option 2: Use mixed media materials (cardboard, tape, tissue paper, cellophane etc.) to create a collage of your object using texture.

**CONCLUSION:**
Why do you think observation and interpretation are important to the creative process? Why are these elements also important for science and research? Which observational drawing technique helped you learn most about your object? What makes you say that? After learning briefly about the National Geographic partnership, what questions do you have for Dr. Andrianavalona? What might you want to learn from her?