

Museum Advocacy Groups Showcase Yale Center for British Art's "Visual Literacy" Film

(NEW HAVEN) – The inspirational documentary *Visual Literacy: Rethinking the Role of Art in Education* takes viewers into a creative program that teaches students skills in thinking, communicating, and writing by using paintings, drawings, and sculptures as educational tools. The thirty-minute film follows students, teachers, coaches, and museum staff over the course of a school year as they work together to make literacy instruction come alive.

Linda Friedlaender, Senior Curator of Education, and Cyra Levenson, Associate Curator of Education, both at the Yale Center for British Art, developed the program through ten years of outreach, observation, and research with Connecticut public schools. In the program, students use works of art in the Center's collection as visual prompts to describe their thoughts, translating ideas into written words.

The National Art Education Association selected Levenson to present the full-length film at its 2015 spring conference from March 26 to 28, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference theme is "The Art of Design: Form, Function, and the Future of Visual Arts Education." The event offers workshops, panels, seminars, research reports, exhibits, and tours. World-renowned educators, artists, researchers, and scholars will provide keynote addresses. Visit arteducators.org/news/national-convention/national-convention for more information.

The American Alliance of Museums showcased a trailer of the film at its "Advocacy Day" on February 23-24, 2015, in Washington, DC. This event focused on helping museum professionals to develop standards and best practices, to further career goals, and to advocate for museums. Visit aam-us.org/advocacy/museums-advocacy-day.

According to Levenson, the film is an advocacy tool that outlines the challenges of teaching writing in the current educational climate. It addresses educational risks that occur if schools fail to make writing useful and meaningful. Using interviews with students, teachers, and medical professionals, the film shows how, through deep engagement with works of art, students can develop writing skills and their personal voices to communicate ideas and experiences. It also demonstrates the powerful role museums can play in supporting teachers and students.



“Vision is the most dominant of our senses and a primary way that we make sense of our world. Drawing, then, is a form of thinking that comes naturally to children. When we link looking and drawing to reading and writing, we’re tapping into skills that most children have in place when they come into school,” said Levenson. “By asking educators to help make a connection between their curriculum and a museum, we can become an extension of the classroom – a rich resource to teach a broader literacy.”



With support from the William Randolph Heart Foundation, the film was produced by Cyra Levenson and directed by Lisa Molomot. It features Darcy Hicks, a visual literacy coach and consultant to the Center; Marvin Chun, Professor of Psychology, Yale School of Medicine, Department of Neurology and Yale College Cognitive Sciences Programs; Elena Grigorenko, Emily Fraser Beede Professor in the Child Study Center and Professor of Epidemiology, Yale School of Medicine, Yale School of Public Health; Delores Garcia Blockers, Director of College and Career Pathways, New Haven Public Schools; and teachers and students from partnership schools.

DVDs of the film will be available upon request.

Although the Yale Center for British Art is closed to the public through spring 2016 for the conservation of its historic building, designed by Louis I. Kahn, it is continuing its visual literacy program in partnership with Connecticut area schools.



To see the Center’s program in action, watch the trailer online at vimeo.com/92872179.

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YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. Visit the institution online at britishart.yale.edu.

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Cyra Levenson, photo by Howard Shapiro (upper); Yale Center for British Art, photo by Richard Caspole (lower).