

## ANIMALS IN ART

**ARTIST:** Jason A. Wheatley (1973-- ) Bountiful/CA

**TITLE:** *Yellow Bluff* 1999

**MEDIA:** oil on board

**SIZE:** 42" x 46"

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jason Wheatley is young to be a successful artist--only 26. In fact, he had two galleries representing him before he even graduated from the University of Utah in 1998. What's more, his first solo exhibition, at the prestigious Coda Gallery in Palm Desert, California, sold out before it opened. As if that weren't enough, his painting *Yellow Bluff*, included in this packet, was chosen for purchase from the Springville Museum of Art's 1999 Spring Salon.

About the purchase of Wheatley's work, Dr. Vern G. Swanson, Director of the Museum, said "We couldn't ignore him. He is original, authentic, and has an aesthetic vision. His work is emphatic. It doesn't just sit on the wall and get soggy. Instead, viewers get whiplash if they try to walk by it too fast."

Wheatley says this is precisely how he hopes people will respond to his work: "When people view my paintings, I see them trying to observe and interpret them, and the mysterious nature of my work sends them for an endless loop. This is the state of mind I try to impose on the viewer--a place where you are intrigued enough to want to keep looking but not so frustrated you want to give up."

Influenced by the French Realist Gustave Courbet [1819-1877], Wheatley says, "I like his take on realism. Of course during Courbet's time what he painted was considered realism, but today it's not. I mean, how real is it to walk through the woods and paint two nude women in a forest?" Wheatley terms Courbet's art Fantastic Realism, and the same term could be applied to Wheatley's own work. After all, how real is it for animals such

as magpies and chickens to be sitting on kitchen tables or for a dog and a rabbit to sit together in what is obviously an interior scene, as shown in *Yellow Bluff*?

Jason Wheatley explains his paradoxical paintings when he expounds on his view of life. "It is my experience that life is humorously sad, awkwardly graceful, chaotically balanced, and painfully happy. I wholeheartedly accept this beautiful dichotomy; I have taken it as a means of interpreting my life and wish to relay it in what I paint. My favorite polarity to manipulate is 'absurdly beautiful' because this is how I personally interpret and process my life's experience to extrapolate meaning. At their best, my paintings are as layered as our lives."

Bonnie Gangelhoff, a writer for Southwest Art points out, "He [Wheatley] brings his own contemporary blend of tension, intrigue, humor, and beauty to his still-life canvases." She also asserts that "One of Wheatley's strengths as a painter is his ability to create tension in his works. He juxtaposes odd objects that wouldn't normally be grouped together and succeeds in getting the viewer to suspend disbelief. . . . Wheatley is fond of manipulating polarities [such as] serenity and tension."

While at the University of Utah, Wheatley studied with David Dornan, a Utah painter. Dornan claims "Jason is able to see the poetry in the ordinary." Although he wouldn't disagree, Wheatley says as a still-life painter, he often feels more like a stage director. His stage may consist of a board balanced on two storage bins, but his actors, the animals, can be as temperamental as any human actors. Wheatley recounts a time when he was using a live chicken, and the chicken, instead of looking bright and alert like Wheatley wanted, kept relaxing so much its bright red comb flopped over. He finally resorted to prodding the chicken under the chin with a stick whenever its comb drooped. However, Wheatley points out the chicken "sat much longer than some models, especially for a chicken. It didn't move for 30 minutes."

Instead of live animals, however, Wheatley mostly uses photographs or sketches he's made at local places like a bird sanctuary. He also has painted a number of animals so many times he no longer needs to look at the animal--it's in his memory. He does use other props in his still lifes, chosen from a wide variety of interesting objects he keeps in his studio: "wood treasure chests, green rubber galoshes, Buddhas, bowls, vases, vessels, chopsticks, teapots, shopping badges, piles of rocks."

He used to keep a parrot in the studio both for company and for use in his paintings, but the bird squawked too much and was too possessive. "He kept murmuring and attacking people who came in to see me," Wheatley says. These days a viewer is more likely to see pelicans in Wheatley work than a parrot; studying the graceful birds is his latest obsession. "I can keep painting them again and again," he says. "They keep revealing certain new aspects of what they are."

Like many artists, Wheatley includes an element of personal narrative in his best works--a struggle, a problem, a decision. In *Yellow Bluff*, the golden Whippet dog can represent aspects of himself, confronting a rabbit that is a personification of his hopes as

"Everything in my work relates to human emotions and experiences--to just being human," he says. Although personal, Wheatley doesn't want viewers to find his work to be an obtuse, complex maze. "Some artists become obsessed with completely personalized narratives accessible only to themselves. Their work is like a private diary," he says. "Well, no one wants to read a person's diary unless it's Anne Frank's."

Gangelhoff says that what Wheatley "does want is for his art to work on many levels-- first and foremost, for its beauty. As he puts it, 'I sort of dabble in the absurd and make it accessible and beautiful at the same time.' He also wants to invite viewers into his scenes, encouraging their own interpretations. In a Wheatley work, viewers often have the sense they are walking into a drama in the second act, and the mystery is perplexing. They don't know what happened before or what will transpire in the future, but their curiosity is piqued."

Wheatley doesn't like talking too explicitly about the meaning of individual works; he wants viewers to discover meaning for themselves. "I want people to feel like they have stumbled onto a riddle," he says. Each object is a metaphor or symbol and the soul of his work, "seems to be revealed in the eyes of the creature." Those creatures may be standing in for humans, expressing emotions and ideas he sees in himself and others. Wheatley says, "If I put passion into a painting and it becomes personal, that will ooze out onto the canvas and people will feel it. That's all that's important."

Wheatley's biggest fear is stagnation. To help avoid the problem, he takes a break every March and again in August to gain new energy and reflect on his work. During this time, he creates only one or two works instead of the usual four a month. In addition, he travels to Helper, where David Dornan, on an extended leave of absence from the university, has opened a kind of atelier there in a renovated hotel with living quarters and studios for visiting artists. Wheatley credits Dornan with showing him that still lifes can be about more than just "dead flowers and fruit" by pushing the idiom into new, expressive directions.

So far, Wheatley says he has never been blocked artistically. One painting leads to another like an extended dialogue. "Beginning a new work is much like beginning a conversation. You're not quite sure what you're going to say or where the conversation may end up. The dialog is an active process, and the painting leaves a record of this event," he says. "Paintings continue to come to me like an ongoing conversation in my own idiosyncratic world."

Jason Wheatley recently moved to California where he works for Coda Gallery and continues to paint.

Gangelhoff, Bonnie. "The Idiosyncratic World of Jason Wheatley." *Southwest Art*, December 1999: p. 40-44, 124

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## SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**ARTIST:** Jason A. Wheatley (1973-- ) Bountiful/CA

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### QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

Is this a real scene ? How can you tell? Why do you think the artist painted this scene and not a traditional still life? What function do the animals serve in this painting? (You may want to share some of the information from the Biography at this point--how the artist uses animals instead of people)

This piece is fairly tonal, meaning the colors are very similar to each other. How would the piece be different if the artist had used bright colors? How would that change the ideas the artist is conveying? Would you normally think of a painting of a dog and a rabbit as beautiful? What about this painting is beautiful?

This painting is realistic in some ways and not in others. What makes it realistic? What is not realistic? What would be a good name for this version of Realism? Is this painting better or worse than it would have been if it were strictly realistic? Why? How would you rate this painting as an artwork and why?

### ACTIVITIES

#### Language Arts

**Objective:** The student will write a poem in the voice of an animal.

Show the class the slides from this packet and discuss them briefly. Read the students several examples of poems written in the voice of an animal or about animals.

Have each student choose one of the animals from this packet or from other artworks featuring animals. Then they should write a poem in which the animal speaks, so the writing is from the animal's point of view. Have students share their poems with the class.

Exhibition: Have students mount their poems on colored construction paper and post the poems in an area of the school where other classes can read the poems. If possible, include some of the artworks which the children chose in the exhibition. You can scan the slides of the artworks into a computer, blow up the size, and print copies. (You may wish to do this for the activity.) Or, have the students draw their own version of the animal to accompany the poem.

[This activity has been used successfully in public schools by Springville poet Lance Larsen]

### **Theater**

**Objectives:** Kindergarten: Plan and imitate the sounds and movements of animals, create appropriate animal sounds for a familiar story; 1st Grade: pantomime changing from one animal to another, create animal-sounding dialogue; 2nd Grade: Improvise comic scenes of strange creatures meeting for the first time in a public place, talk like animals; 3rd Grade: Show characters experiencing tension.

Choose appropriate artworks from this packet for the particular activity you want to do. Any of them would do for the K-2nd activities. For the 3rd Grade activity, *Yellow Bluff* (dog and rabbit) and *Lizard Relay* (lizards and jaguarundi) are particularly well suited.

### **Theater**

**Objective:** Students will make connections among the arts by examining the use of animals in visual art and theater.

Show the class slides of whatever artworks fit the focus you have chosen. Discuss them briefly. (See QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING for the specific artworks.) Then read all or part of plays or theater productions that use animals. Some possibilities are "Cats," The animal choruses in Greek plays such as "The Frogs" and "The Birds" by Aristophanes. (The complete text of both these plays are available on the web at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/6681/aristoph.htm> Students could learn the animal sounds the choruses make and then make up their own sounds for the animals in the artworks. Or, if students are writing fairy tales, they can make up fun animal sounds to be used as a chorus or a repeating line for a character(s).

**Extension:** Students can also use the sounds they make up in a dance. (See dance activities)

### **Dance**

**Objectives:** Students will explore movement ideas from animals, make connections between dance and art, create a dance project from another dance form, or explore the universal language of dance. Students will create a dance pattern with a clear beginning and end. (From the state core, most grade levels)

This activity can be linked with either of the music activities.

Show the class the slides from this packet. Ask them how some of the animals might move, and if the students can, have them find words for how the animals might move. For example, elephants walk slowly, swaying from side to side, ponderously, while lions are graceful, they stretch and pounce, etc.

You may have better luck getting the students to identify and dance qualities of movement as opposed to trying to pantomime movement if you have them first complete the art activity on page 51 about creating lines with the feeling of an animal. Then have the students choose an animal from the artworks and explore ways they can create the feeling of the animal's movement. Divide the class in three or four groups and have each group show the rest of the class their ideas. See if those watching can tell which animal each student choose.

To continue the activity, have the students divide into small groups. Each child should choose a way to begin that suits her animal, a pattern of movement, and a way to end. You may want to ask the students to have a part where they move, at least one time when they are still, and at least two levels. Suit these demands to the experience your class has had and their age. (See the state core for ideas on age- appropriate requirements. On the Web at USOE.)

Another possible continuation of the activity is to have the students divide into small groups but then choose one animal per group. All the students do not have to move the same, but all should be trying to create the feeling of that particular animal's movement. The group should then create a group dance that fits the specific criteria you have chosen such as having a clear beginning and ending, etc.

For music to move to, try one of the following ideas:

- choose several selections of music beforehand that suit different kinds of movement
- use a hand drum
- allow students to make their own sounds
- use music from the music activity
- use the ideas from the INSECT music activity.

If your students have made animal masks, they may want to wear the masks in their dances or use them to decorate the stage area.

### **Music**

**Objective:** Students will listen to music related to animals.

Although the following activity can be used alone, it will probably have more impact if used with a dance activity or an art activity.

Collect several pieces of music which feature animal or animal-inspired sounds or themes. The following list contains a few ideas:

I Bought Me a Cat--Copland  
Carnival of the Animals--Saint-Saens  
Malcolm Arnold supplementary work also called "Carnival of the Animals." It has cows, sheep, mice, elephants, and bats (and at least one other).  
Cuckoo-- Daquin  
The Birds--Messiaen  
Dancing Bear--Petronshka (one section of a piece)  
Pines of Rome--Respighi (Birds)  
The Trout Quintet--Schubert  
The Voice of the Whale-- Crumb  
And God Created Great--Whales Hovhaness  
(The Crumb and Hovhaness pieces are fun because one uses actual whale sounds mixed in with the orchestra sounds and the other uses only the orchestra to produce whale-like sounds.)

To find more whale music, search for **whale** on <http://www.cddb.com/>. I found 252 matches. You can also search for any other topic or by composer or album and it will give you a list of CDs that have those pieces.

You may have a parent or other teacher in your school who can help you find some appropriate pieces.

You can also look in Jennifer Goodenberger's SUBJECT GUIDE TO CLASSICAL INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, available in BYU'S Music Reference Library and, I'm sure, other large libraries. The call number: Mus Ref ML 128.165 G59 1989. The following is a list of some animal-related music from the section of solo and chamber music which was compiled for a library patron. (You will probably find other, easy-to-find selections in the symphony section.)

#### ANIMAL MUSIC

##### BEARS

Bartok, Bela. Bear dance, from Ten easy pieces. piano  
Villa, Lobos. The cotton bear, from Prole do bebe, v. 2. piano

##### ANIMALS

Bartok, Bela. Song of the Fox, and Dragon's dance, from Mikrokosmos, book 3. piano  
Copland, Aaron. The cat and the mouse. Piano  
Villa-Lobos, Heitor. Prole do bebe, v. 2: Little toy animals.  
9 movements, piano:  
1. Little paper bug 2. Cardboard cat 3. Toy mouse 4. Rubber dog 5. Wooden horse 6. Tin ox 7. Cloth bird 8. Cotton bear 9. Glass wolf  
Oliver Knussen's Songs  
hums of Winnie-the-Pooh

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"Walking the Dog" from Promenade--Gershwin

The Waltzing Cat--Leroy Anderson

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INSECT MUSIC

Britten: Two Insect Pieces CD Meridian 84119

A. Bryant: Insect Takeover (electronic music) CD CRI 699

Shewan: Of Animals and Insects CD Albany 149

Crumb: Black Angels (Images I) for Electric String Quartet: first part and finale "Night of the Electric Insects"

ANT

Fowler: Ants Can Count CD Terra Nova 9002

Shostakovich: 2 Fables by Krylov, Op.4: The Dragonfly & the Ant (soprano & orch)

BEE

Arlen: A Sleepin' Bee (song) CD New World 272

Pasculli: Le api (the bees) for oboe & piano CD Accord 149 042

Nyman: Where the Bee Dances CD Argo 433 847

Couperin: Les Abeilles (Bees) harpsichord LP MHS 766

Berlin: The Apple Tree and the Bumble Bee (early song) CD Oakton 01

Gershwin: Buzzin' the Bee (piano roll) CD Nonesuch 79370

BEETLE

Mussorgsky: The Nursery: The Beetle

BUTTERFLY

Ketelbey: Sunbeams and Butterflies CD Pearl 9968

Grieg: Symphony in c, Op.43 No.1: adagio molto "Butterfly"

Hubbell: Poor Butterfly (Kreisler, Prihoda) CD Prompt 50090

Herbert: Butterfly Waltz CD Newport 85572

Nordgren: Butterflies Op.39 for guitar CD BIS 207

Martinu: The Butterfly that Stamped (Ballet in one act) CD Supraphon 11 0380-2031

Chopin: Etude in G flat Op.25 No.9 "Le Papillon"

Faure: Papillon (cello, piano)

Faure: Le papillon et la fleur (Sutherland, Bonyngge) LP London 13132

Yannatos: Prayers from the Ark: Priere du papillon LP Sonory 4628-1

CRICKET

Josquin des Pres: El grillo (cricket)

Ravel: Histores Naturelles: Le Grillon MacKenzie: Overture to the Cricket on the Hearth Op.62 CD Hyperion 66764

Prokofiev: 10 pieces for piano from Cinderella: Crickets and Dragonflies

DRAGONFLY

Josef Strauss: Die Liebelle (Dragonfly) Polka

GRASSHOPPER

Prokofiev: Music for Children Op.65: Grasshopper's Parade

MOSQUITO

Donald H. White: Five Miniatures: Mosquito Dance (Boston Pops) Time-Life 0013

MOTH

Johann Strauss: The Moth CD Dorian 80102

Ravel: Miroirs: Noctuelles (night moths) piano

SPIDER

Roussel: Le Festin de l'ariagnee Op.17 (The Spider's Feast)

## FOLK SONGS

Nick Seeger: Bed Bug (gtr/voice)

Eric Anderson: Bumblebee LP Vanguard 7/8

Jim Kweskin: Never Swat a Fly LP Vanguard 13/14

Big Bill Broonzy: Black Widow Spider (1930s blues)

Steven Titra: Be Nice to Spiders (Roxanne & Dan Keding)

## Music

**Objective:** Students will explore sound and rhythm by creating an "Animal Sound Orchestra" of animal sounds with varying rhythms. Students will also learn about entrances and exits and about volume by conducting the orchestra and by responding to conductors' directions.

Show the class the slides of artworks from this packet and allow students to comment on the artists' varied representations of animals. If you have not done the preceding music activity, play one or two short excerpts from musical selections featuring animal sounds or themes.

Then divide students into five groups and help each group find an animal-type or animal-inspired sound and figure out a pattern. Each group needs to choose different sounds. Have sounds that vary in pitch, beat, and length. Have each group practice until they can make their sound and make it against the other sounds. Now invite student conductors to take turns conducting the "Animal Sounds Orchestra." Conductors should indicate when a specific group enters and when it exits and should indicate when separate parts should get louder or softer.

**Variation:** Collect and/or make with the students' help, instruments that have the feel of animal sounds. Ideas: String together some short lengths of vinyl blind pieces--bird wing sounds. Coconut halves--hoof beats. Can also generate sounds with mouths and bodies. This activity can be used as an extension of the previous music activity, alone, or in conjunction with the dance activity.

## Music

**Objective:** The students will sing and learn folk songs of various cultures that talk about animals.

Show the class the slides of the artworks from this packet and introduce the idea of animals in various kinds of art. Then sing a folk song that is about an animal(s) to the students. If the song is familiar, have them sing with you. If the song is new to most of the students, sing a verse, then go back and sing one phrase or line several times, encouraging the students to join in as soon as they can. Go through the whole song. Some of the folk songs are also simple games or naturally use gestures.

To make the activity more than just a fun time, choose a simple concept from the song(s) and after the students have learned the song, teach them what the music concept is. To do more than hit and miss, you will need to work out a logical progression of concepts to teach the students. If you do not have a music background, you can learn along with the students, get someone with more experience to help, or use a text such as "The Kodaly Method" by Lois Choksy. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall 1988 (There may be a more recent edition) This method of music instruction is based on learning music concepts through folk songs. The book is available at BYU Bookstore, Text Department; or it can be ordered through most bookstores or on the Web. The name is pronounced Co-di' e, all long vowels.

The following are folk songs found in a quick look through one book. Any folk song book should have many songs from different cultures to choose from.

I Bought me a Cat  
I had me a Bird (a version of the same song)  
The Cat Came Back  
The Tailor Had a Mouse  
Mr. Rabbit  
The Snake Baked a Hoecake  
The Fox Went Out  
The Birds' Courting Song  
Fiddle-Dee-De  
The Squirrel  
Who Killed Cock Robin  
Big-Eyed Rabbit  
A Kangaroo Sat on an Oak  
The Frog Went a Courtin'  
Chicken on a Fence Post  
Swapping Song  
Fed My Horse in a Poplar Trough  
Goodby Old Paint  
Shanghai Chicken  
The Farmer in the Dell  
Old Gray Goose  
The Old Gray Mare  
The Old Sow Died with the Measles in the Spring

### **Art History--Realism in the 20th Century**

**Objective:** The students will learn how Realism is being adapted by contemporary artists and will demonstrate that knowledge by discussing, critiquing, writing a report, and/or making a presentation.

Materials:

slides of artworks  
reproductions of artworks  
Research materials such as magazines, books, the internet

Background Information: Although Realism (A representation of real and existing things, usually non-idealized, although at certain time periods works often now labeled "realist" were romantic or idealized.) has been out of vogue at various times, it has never disappeared from the art world. Art historians and critics have been quick to point out that art's Realism tends to reflect the social and cultural life of the artists and not just the visual images. Therefore, it is not surprising that some contemporary artists are expanding the boundaries of Realism and creating their own interpretations of what is "real" in art. Sometimes, this realistic reproduction of objects is coupled with an approach which, while not quite "real" is not as strong as surreal, and often, more playful. Examples of this are Jason Wheatley's still-life paintings which depict animals in unnatural settings. Another such artist is Daniel Sprick, whose still lifes feature items like milk cartons, bones, and flowers, often with one of the flowers appearing to float in midair. These works have been labeled Magical or Ethereal Realism for their elements of fantasy. In addition to an air of fantasy, the paintings often contain thought-provoking juxtapositions and both overt and cryptic symbolism.

For more information on these two artists and on contemporary Western American Realism, see the following articles in *Southwest Art*. (I was able to obtain free back copies of the issues of *Southwest Art* by simply calling their offices.)

Gangelhoff, Bonnie. "The Nature of Beauty," *Southwest Art*. May 1999: p. 69-73, 149. (Other photos of Daniel Sprick's art appear in the contents and on pages 17 and 44.)

Gangelhoff, Bonnie. "The Idiosyncratic World of Jason Wheatley," *Southwest Art*. December 1999: p. 40-44, 124.

Other excellent articles are,  
Editors. "New Directions in Realism." *Southwest Art*, December 1999: pp. 52--59, 124

Gangelhoff, Bonnie. "Mystery and Resonance." *Southwest Art*, March 2000: pp. 112-117

Wesley Pulkka. " Contemporary Realism." *Southwest Art*, March 200: pp. 118-124

How in-depth your exploration is will be determined by your students' ages and the time you want to invest in this area of art history. The following activities are geared for several different age groups:

**For young children:** Show the class the slide of *Yellow Bluff* and discuss it with the class, using the QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING. If possible, show the class other reproductions or photos of Wheatley's work and that of Daniel Sprick. Have the children talk about what the artists may have tried to say or what they hoped viewers would think

about when viewing their art. Ask the students how these artworks may represent what is the "real world" to the artists, and how these artworks represent or relate to the students' lives.

**Extension:** Show the class several more traditional realist works and have the students compare and contrast the artworks. (If you have a copy of the Dec. 1999 Southwest Art, you can use art from the article "New Directions in Realism." From the SMA Elementary Poster series, Cyrus Dallin's sculptures, J. T. Harwood's *Boy and Cat*, Salisbury's *Riders of the Range*, and Young's *Factory Worker* are possibilities. Several of the artworks from the UMFA's Elementary Poster Series will work as will slides from past Evening for Educator packets.) Ask students to consider how each kind of realism may or may not represent the contemporary world--what is currently real.

**Criticism:** Lead the students in a critique of *Yellow Bluff* as a Realist artwork.

For young students, use the following model, or whatever you have been using in class.

### **AN ELEMENTARY WAY TO TALK ABOUT ART A Four-Step Critical Model**

The following is a list of four questions for discussing and evaluating art. These questions can be used by any grade level.

#### **1. What do you see?**

The students should tell you what they see in the artwork. For example: a yellow flower, a cowboy, lots of blue, geometric shapes, fuzzy lines.

Some of the responses will identify concrete objects like "a yellow flower." Ask the students questions that will help them realize the objects are represented by color, shape, form, etc., and are not really the objects. For example: Can you smell this flower? Why is it so flat? I've never seen a flower this flat. I've never seen a horse that stands this still. Is the horse dead?

You can have fun with the questions and comments as long as your tone is not critical or negative. Soon, you should be getting answers like "big black lines," etc.

#### **2. Who made it?**

Who is the artist? Give the students some biographical information and tell them anything interesting you know about the artist.

#### **3. How was the artwork made?**

Have the students tell you all they know or can guess about how the piece was made, For example, an oil painting on canvas or a bronze cast of a sculpture. Go into as much detail as seems appropriate. You may want to add to what the students know.

#### **4. Did you like the artwork? Why?**

The students can share their feelings about the meaning of the artwork. Encourage students to share not only their feelings and ideas but also to think about why they have a particular response.

The above questions will provide students of any age a framework for talking about art. If you use the questions several times during the year, the students will become familiar enough with the questions to use them on their own.

**For more advanced students**, the critique can be either a class discussion or can be written. For a written critique, start with a sentence that tells the artist's name, the title of the artwork, the date the artwork was completed, the media, and the size. The rest of the critique will consist of four paragraphs, one on each of the following topics:

**Description**--use vivid descriptive language including similes and metaphors. You can better convey the experience of viewing the art if your language evokes reactions in the reader. The aim is to convey the experience of viewing the artwork rather than just telling the reader where specific colors have been used or what shapes make up the object or painting.

**Analysis**--Use the elements and principles of art to analyze the formal elements of the work. Use all the ones which apply, usually most of them. Include what the effects of those elements and principles are. Again, use vivid language.

**Interpretation**--What can you find out about the artist and his or her work that tells you something about the intentions of the artist? How is the context the artwork was done in related to the artwork? How does this artwork relate to other artworks you're familiar with? Remember, a good interpretation tells the reader more about the artwork than about the writer.

**Informed preference**--Consider the following ideas when deciding on content and writing this section: What is well done in the artwork? How successful has the artist been at using the formal elements to create a unified work of art? What aesthetic theory or theories apply to the artwork and how? Does this artwork fit the standards of the theory even if you aren't particularly attracted to it? In addition, think about whether your examination of the artwork and the artist has changed or strengthened your initial reaction to the work. Remember that this section is about your "informed preference" and not just your gut reaction.

End a written critique with a summarizing or concluding sentence.

Variation: The same approach can be used for a class critique and can include comparisons with other artworks. One important point to remember is that an art critique is not just about how you instinctively react to a given artwork, it should include specific references to the artwork and should include decisions based on your knowledge of art as a subject.

**Aesthetics:** The Mimetic approach to aesthetics is based on the premise that art should look like, or mimic, what it is depicting. Value is assigned according to how well the artist has mimicked the look of what has been portrayed. If your students are not yet familiar with this approach to aesthetics, first explain what aesthetic approaches are-- ideas about what art should be like. Children, and adults, for that matter, are usually very comfortable with the mimetic approach because it is so prevalent in our society. When you are sure the students have grasped the idea, ask them to look at the slides from this packet. Have them, on a piece of paper, decide what percentage of each artwork fits the mimetic approach. When you have shown them all or several of the slides, go back to each slide and have students say what percentage they assigned to each work and why.

Next, ask the students to consider the pieces that are least mimetic. Are they less good than the other artworks? Should they be considered as not very good mimetic works, or should they be discussed and examined another way? Ask students to decide on an aesthetic approach that better includes the not-so-realistic artworks. Students must be specific about defining the approach and how it is judged.

The activity can end with this discussion, can switch to a production activity, or can result in a written response.

If you want to include a written critique as part of this assignment, do one of the following:

Have students write out a short response to one of the artworks used in the activity. They may choose to examine one of the artworks using the mimetic theory, specify why the mimetic theory is not the best way to look at a specific artwork, or they may write out a definition of a new aesthetic theory, justifying it in relationship to one of the artworks. Have students use whatever model you have used in class or use one from the activity on page \*\*.

**Art Production:** After finishing the Aesthetics activity, assign students to create a work of art that fits the new aesthetic approach that has been arrived at as a class or as individuals. Provide students with a variety of media. You may want to have still-life type items available as well as pictures of animals. When the artworks are finished, exhibit them with a short written statement by the student-artist, explaining how this artwork fits the new aesthetic approach.

**Variations:** Many of the other production activities can be focused on the idea of an

aesthetic approach.

### **Art Production**

**Objective:** The students will create a still-life incorporating at least one animal.

One of the interesting facets of Jason Wheatley's work is that he creates still-life paintings that incorporate animals, which aren't "still." In doing so, he includes both fantasy and also symbolism in his paintings. Show the class the slide of *Yellow Bluff* and discuss the possible ideas the painting could refer to or provoke. (See the BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION) for help.) If possible, show the class reproductions of some of his other artworks. See the following article:

Gangelhoff, Bonnie. "The Idiosyncratic World of Jason Wheatley," *Southwest Art*. December 1999, p. 40-44, 124.

Have photographs of various animals available as well as a variety of interesting objects the students can arrange for their still lifes. You may want the students to work in small groups, creating an arrangement each is pleased with. The students can choose to draw their still life from a number of views, each of which will result in different arrangements. In addition, their choice of what animal to include and where will make the finished artworks all different. Another possibility is for students to bring their own items to arrange or to supplement the class' items.

As students work on their arrangements, remind them of how Wheatley creates meaning in his artwork by what objects he pairs with the animals and how he arranges them. Ask them to try to create some meaning in their arrangements. (They may have a harder time creating meaning if they have to share arrangements, but it can be done.)

[It's a good idea to keep a variety of interesting items available for art projects. These can be found objects such as stones, small tree branches, shells, mechanical parts, old boxes or tins, items salvaged from the dump; also include plain cups, bowls, vases, and glasses as well as some with patterns; plants and flowers; etc. You can scrounge some of these, get others cheaply at garage sales or thrift shops, or you can ask the students to bring donated items from home--just make sure their parents know the items are being donated.]

When the arrangements have been made, have the students lightly sketch in the objects on their paper. They do not have to draw exactly what is there, but should use it as the basis for their work. When the students are pleased with the way the sketches look, they should firm up the contours of the objects and add shading, or, use color to finish the artwork.

### **Art Production**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of composition by making an artwork by arranging xeroxed items in an interesting composition.

Have magazines available for students to use, or xerox copies of a wide variety of items, including animals, for the students. After talking about composition, have the students cut out and arrange various items on a sheet of paper. The students should try several arrangements, checking their composition with questions such as the following:

1. Is the composition balanced?
2. Does the composition suggest movement?
3. Have I used proportion in an interesting way?
4. Do I have enough variety?
5. Does my use of the elements of art contribute the unity of the artwork?

When they are satisfied with their composition, they should use a glue stick or clear tape to attach the cutouts to a sheet of blank paper. Then the sheets are xeroxed onto sturdy paper. Have the students use colored pencils to finish the artworks. If your students are not familiar with layering color with colored pencils, demonstrate to them and have them try layering on scrap paper. Layering makes rich colors although it is also possible to choose to create simple colors by coloring with single pencils too. Choose the technique you want the students to develop or allow students to choose. Remind students to use short strokes, all in the same direction. If your class is more advanced, you may want to allow the students to experiment with or use cross hatched strokes or other kinds of lines.

Materials for collage:

- a wide variety of materials such as newspapers, magazines, old maps, music, photocopies of photographs, photocopies of animals, trees, plants, insects, etc. A good source for drawings and photographs to copy are old encyclopedias, family photos, old newspapers or magazines. The papers work best if they are fairly neutral, so you may want to limit magazine pages to black and white. The papers are more likely to be interesting and to have meaning as design elements and not just as the objects they are, if they are old and show wear or use. However, some students may decide new items fit their ideas or feelings better. In addition, paint, varnish or stains may be brushed on after the papers are attached to the backing to add interest and to emphasize parts of the arrangement.
- YES paste or acrylic painting medium to glue papers on with. (can be bought from craft stores, art supply stores, or from catalogs)
- inexpensive brushes for applying medium
- sturdy paper for the backing of the collage
- scissors
- cheap or scrap paper for planning

If you have not made collages yourself, make a couple so you are familiar with the techniques. Making a couple samples will help you understand the complexity of design possible and the unique characteristics of collage as well as giving you examples to show the class.

Give each student a piece of cheap paper and let them choose several items from the variety of media available. Student should plan out their collage by placing the individual pieces on the cheap paper, arranging and rearranging them until they have a composition they like. The items can be trimmed to whatever size or shape suits the design. Remind the students to create a sense of unity, or whatever else you are concentrating on, in their artwork. If you are having the students focus on other principles as well, put a list on the board and have students run through the list before attaching any pieces to the good paper. (Even if some activities have a specific focus, students should try to use everything they know about the elements and principles of design that apply to any given activity.)

When students have checked their designs, they can begin gluing. They should start with the undermost layers, and spread the paste on carefully or brush an even coating of medium across the backing, place the chosen item on the backing, smooth it carefully, and then brush a coating of medium over the item. (Students can make notes, and they can take the items off the planning paper one by one and place them face down on their desks, so they will be in reverse order.) After the items have been glued to the backing and allowed to dry partway, place plastic wrap and heavy items over the collages and allow them to dry overnight. Weighting the collages prevents severe buckling.

Have students critique their own artworks. Then display the artworks and have the class discuss the many ways the artworks show unity. Students should create an exhibit of the collages somewhere the whole school can see the works. Include a poster telling viewers about collage. The poster can explain what collage is and can incorporate comments from the students about their experience making collages.

**Extension:** For advanced students or for students who have created collages previously, show *Yellow Bluff* and discuss, using QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING and the BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION. Then have students create a multi-media artwork. You may choose to supply the makings or have students gather their own. The students can be asked to bring interesting items, some of which they plan on sharing, to increase the variety of materials available.

If possible, provide access to a few tools such as a drill, a band or jig saw, pliers, hammers, etc. These tools can increase the complexity and quality of student work. If you are not comfortable with the tools, you may have a parent or another teacher who can come help. Any object that is not too heavy can be attached to the work. Some possible additions to the items suggested for collage are the following:

- string, yarn, rope, thread, wire
- small plastic animals, cars, other toys
- nuts, bolts, nails
- wheels, handles, machinery or appliance parts
- dishes or other kitchen items
- dolls, doll clothes, army men, robot-type toys
- boxes, containers, packaging, cardboard tubes

- dried plants, plastic or silk plants and flowers
- small stones, branches, natural objects
- frames, art objects
- anything else you or the students can think of

Students should be given plenty of time to experiment with the items they choose and with the organization of the work. Encourage students to explore a wide range of possibilities and to be creative in attachment of materials. Multi-media works often are intricate and complex in meaning as well as in physical design. However, multi-media works can be abstract in nature. Display the finished works where other students can see the artworks. Include artist's statements with the artworks and have some kind of open house to invite the parents to. Students should be prepared to discuss their individual works with viewers at the open house.

**Variation:** Have magazines, newspapers, old cards, postcards, and old books that can be cut up, including pictures of animals. Give the students a sheet of sturdy paper for backing. Have the students compose collages. When they have achieved a composition they like, They should use the checklist above. (If you have too many students wanting to find one quick solution, you can specify that they have to make at least three, before they can choose one.) Have them make a quick sketch of the composition. Then they should take off the top layer and put it face down on a sheet of paper, and then the next layer and the next, until all the items are in opposite order on the extra sheet of paper.

To attach the items to the backing, have students spread a thin layer of acrylic medium over the backing, arrange the first layer of items, spread them with another thin coat of medium, and so on, until all the layers are attached. Each student should place a piece of plastic wrap over the collage and place a heavy book on it. Display the finished collages.

If desired, after the collage has dried, the students can use oil or acrylic paint to the collages. The paint works best if it is thinned so it creates a wash effect rather than being opaque.

This activity can focus on composition or can be used to introduce students or to allow them to explore the possibilities of combining items in unusual ways so the relationships create symbols, prompt ideas, express ideas, and give meaning to the artwork. If you want your class to explore creating meaning, use the introductory part of the lesson on Contemporary Realism, focusing on the artists like Jason Wheatley and Daniel Sprick.

**Variation:** Include three dimensional items in the artworks such as small plastic animals, natural objects, etc. These can be assembled and attached to cardboard with hot glue, wire, etc. The way the items are attached can become part of the design. Or, arrange the items so they stand up on the cardboard or in some kind of shadow box.

## THE ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF ART

**The elements of art** are the basic visual symbols artists use to communicate. These elements are *line, shape, color, value, texture, and space*. \* (see VISUAL LANGUAGE: THE ELEMENTS OF ART, Evening for Educators packet, Sept 30, 1998)

**Line**--A mark drawn with a pointed moving tool or the path of a dot through space. Although lines can vary in appearance (they can have different lengths, widths, textures, directions, and degree of curve), they are considered one-dimensional and are measured by length. A line is used by an artist to control the viewer's eye movement and to create shapes. There are five kinds of lines: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved, and zigzag.

**Shape**--a two-dimensional area clearly designated in some way, generally by one or more of the other five visual elements. Although a form has depth, a shape has only width and height. Shapes are either geometric or free form(organic).

**Color**--what the eye sees when light is reflected off an object. The sensation of color is aroused in the brain by the eyes' response to different wavelengths of light. Color has three properties: hue, value, and intensity.

**Value**--the lightness or darkness of an object. Value depends on how much light a surface reflects. Value is also one of the three properties of color.

**Texture**--how things feel or look as if they might feel, if touched. Texture is perceived by touch and by sight. Objects can have innumerable versions of rough or smooth textures and matte or shiny surfaces.

**Space**--the emptiness or area between, around, above, below, or within objects. Shapes and form are defined by these spaces. Positive space is the area within an object and negative space is the area around the objects.

**The Principles of Art** are guides that govern or are descriptions of how artists organize the elements of art. These principles are *proportion, balance, variety, rhythm, emphasis, and unity*. \*

**Proportion**--principle of art concerned with the size relationships of one part to another or to the whole.

**Balance**--principle of design concerned with equalizing visual forces or elements in a work of art. If a work of art has visual balance, the viewer feels the elements have been arranged in a satisfying way. Visual imbalance makes the viewer feel the elements need to be rearranged. The two types of balance are called formal or symmetrical and informal or asymmetrical.

**Variety**--principle of design concerned with difference or contrast. Combining one or more elements of art to create interest by adding slight changes.

**Rhythm**--the principle of art that indicates movement by repetition of elements. Visual rhythm is perceived through the eyes and is created by positive spaces separated by negative spaces or by repetition of motifs. There are five types of rhythm: random, regular, alternating, flowing, and progressive.

**Emphasis**--principle of design that makes some parts of the work more powerful than other parts. The element noticed first is called dominant; the elements noticed later are called subordinate. A *Center of Interest* is created when one area of the artwork is clearly dominant.

**Unity**--the quality of wholeness or oneness that is achieved through the effective use of the elements and principles of art. Unity is created by simplicity, repetition, proximity and continuation.

\*Some textbooks and teachers use slightly different lists of elements and/or principles. However, the ideas are basically the same.

## **Bibliography**

Mittler, Gene, Rosalind Ragans, Jean Morman Unsworth, and Faye Scannell. Understanding Art. Woodland Hills: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 1992.

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Ragans, Rosalind. ARTTALK Mission Hills: Glencoe, 1995.

## **Theater**

**Objective:** Students will explore animated cartoons and will create an animated sequence on the computer or a flip book. (This activity requires access to the internet and computers that will run programs with movement in them. You can download Flashit and Shockwave for free.)

Show the class some clips from animated cartoons featuring animals. Discuss what makes particular cartoons effective. Then have students go to internet sites such as <http://members.tripod.com/~Toonhead/clip.html>, which have animated clips you can use. Although these clips are designed for web page design, they can be used for anything. Students will make their own short sequences. Share the shorts with each other.

For flip books, try <http://www.haring.com/master2.htm>

## **Literature/Writing**

**Objective:** The students will listen to one of the "Just So Stories" and will write their

own story featuring an animal dealing with the consequences of its actions.

Read one of the "Just So Stories" by Rudyard Kipling to the class. A good one for this assignment is The Elephant Child. Then show them the slides from this packet. Have them choose one animal from the artworks to write a story about. The story must say what the animal used to look like, how it was changed, and what it looks like now, and what it can do because it changed.

If you have talked about techniques and poetic/writing devices such as similes and metaphors, conflict, etc., have them incorporate those techniques into the stories. When the students are finished, allow students to share the stories with the class. You may want to display the stories in the library or another place where other students can read them.

**Art Extension:** Have the students draw the most dramatic point in their stories. Display the drawings with the stories.

**Extension:** If the children really enjoy the activity, you might consider copying the stories and illustrations and making your own book of stories. Have the class choose a title for the book.