



BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY

Bermuda National Gallery

Docent Training Manual

BNG Mission: To promote, benefit and advance the visual arts in Bermuda.

The BNG Education Department operates with these mission and objectives:

- To facilitate exposure to the world of art
- To enrich aesthetic experience
- To stimulate artistic enquiry

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1. Introduction:

Visual literacy, the ability to comprehend the visual world in which we live, is forever being redefined. In our hectic world of eight-second sound bites, video games, and other distractions of a multimedia world, we are at risk of losing some of our visual thinking abilities. These exhibitions in conjunction with our educational programming - a critical component of which is the docent-led tours - allow visitors an opportunity to slow down their consumption of visual imagery.

We encourage visitors to: focus on the diverse images in this show so that they can recall and reflect on the images at a later time; seek out the deeper implications of the images; and take the time to look, allowing viewing to be an active form of relaxation.

When leading a group of individuals through the Gallery, do not try to review all the art in the Gallery. Choose the pieces that you are interested in and share this interest with your group. People will pay much more attention to someone who has a passion for his/her subject and are more likely to reflect upon their visit to the BNG as a positive one.

2. Being a BNG Docent

Role of the BNG Docent Guide

- ❖ To welcome groups coming to the gallery.
- ❖ To help them understand what a museum is.
- ❖ To make them feel at ease and not overwhelmed.
- ❖ To give them a comfortable and enjoyable experience.
- ❖ To help them to see and discover things for themselves.
- ❖ To inspire them to want to return.

Requirements to be a guide

- ❖ To be a member of the BNG.
- ❖ A desire to work with children and or adults.
- ❖ A commitment to be available during your self-designated time.
- ❖ A responsibility to come when you have said you would.
- ❖ Flexibility, a willingness to modify your tour and presentation to accommodate various interests and types of groups, remembering that no two groups are the same.
- ❖ Diplomacy, warmth, and tact in dealing with the public
- ❖ A capacity to develop a keen enthusiasm for the subject matter.
- ❖ An ability to learn and to interpret to others.
- ❖ Continued self-education in the field.
- ❖ A sense of enjoyment in what you do. We feel it is important that you get personal satisfaction and pleasure from this work.

Special Privileges

- ❖ An opportunity to provide valuable community service at a museum.
- ❖ Membership in a professional museum organisation.
- ❖ Professional orientation and training.
- ❖ Access to a volunteer computer space and the Internet for tour research.
- ❖ Free admission to all BNG educational events.
- ❖ Camaraderie that comes with the gallery guide team.
- ❖ Invitations to openings, lectures, special functions
- ❖ 20% discount on museum merchandise.

3. Hints for Great Tours

Docent Procedures for a Bermuda National Gallery tour

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before your scheduled tour time.
- Greet teachers and students at the door outside of the gallery.
- Introduce yourself and the exhibition they are about to view.
- Take a moment to review rules in an art gallery.

To Feel at Ease and Relaxed

- Know your material.
- Attend the training lectures.
- Look analytically at the objects under discussion and think how you would help someone else "see" them.
- Make an outline of the tour you plan to give - which artwork do you want to spend time discussing.
- Remember that people are here to have a happy experience at the Gallery - putting the artwork into a context that they will enjoy does not mean you have to be an art expert.

Conversations about art: Questioning Strategies

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ⊙ Keep questions focused. | ⊙ Ask challenging questions. |
| ⊙ Wait for answers your question. | ⊙ Use questions and answers to direct your questions. |
| ⊙ Be specific when asking a question. | ⊙ Vary the difficulty of questions. |
| ⊙ Ask for information. | ⊙ Allow students to contribute. |
| ⊙ Ask for opinions. | ⊙ Vary the length of questions. |
| ⊙ Ask students to make observations. | |

Suggestions for giving an effective tour

- Make visitors feel special and important. When you greet them, you might ask them if they've been here before. If you know that they have, let them know that you do, and give them a chance to elaborate a bit.
- Gear your level of communication to the group. Use words they understand, but do not talk down to them.
- Look at the group. Talk to the group not the artwork.
- Allow the group to see the artwork, be sure not block their view.
- Listen to the group. Make them feel that their observations are good ones and that they could develop them. Be flexible enough in your approach to incorporate their thoughts and observations into your tour.
- Be aware of factors of behaviour like their physical comfort and time of day.
- Pace your presentation to meet group needs. If you must hurry them, explain why.
- Anticipate special interest areas. Capitalize on your own knowledge of the museum as a learning environment to create a mood of discovery.
- Be spontaneous. If the group shows a definite interest in something, follow it through.
- Relate the material to their own experiences. Most learn best and are most interested when what is being presented is something close to them. If the concepts, information or objects you are presenting are distant, build upon observed data and comparisons.

- Keep some information to yourself to allow students to discover it themselves.
- Through inquiry, encourage guests to hypothesise and draw their own conclusions.
- Work around wrong answers from the students instead of dismissing them.
- Say "I don't know" to a question if you don't know the answer. Do offer to find out any information that you don't know.
- Praise students for a good observation or good question but do try to vary your praise - repeating "good" over and over loses its meaning.

Questions to encourage LOOKING

The main purpose of the tour is "to look." Helping visitors' experience the works is your most important goal. Your own curiosity and enthusiasm should transmit to your group. The unique thing that you have to offer is the excitement of discovering a work of art. Emphasize the visual strategies: line, form, shape, composition, space, texture, volume. Books are available in the Education Centre if you want to research these elements.

Try to involve them by asking open-ended questions. Not questions that can be answered by a "yes" or "no." Try to relate the art to your group and their experiences - questions should foster the exploration of ideas and meanings so don't ask the obvious.

Encourage a sense of discovery - you might ask the children to put themselves in the painting, which person would they like to be? How does their person feel about what is happening in the painting.

Questions to ask (to be modified by age group):

How does it make you feel?

Responses could be:

I want to touch it
I want to live it
Frightened/happy/sad

How was it made?

Responses could be:

Paint brushes or palette knife
Oil Paintings or watercolours, etc.
Carving or Casting

Why was it made?

Responses could be:

To record something (time, place)
To make us react (laugh, think, see)
To create an illusion,
To explain something, etc.
To worship
To show emotion
Because no one else has done/can do it

4. Special Tips for School Groups

Rules to share with students

- Do not touch any of the artwork.
- Raise your hand to answer questions and listen not only to teachers and tour guides but also your peers who are answering questions. **Remind them that all the rules that they follow in school still apply here.
- No school bags are allowed into the gallery. Direct students to put bags in a row in the education space.
- No running.

Hints on giving school tours

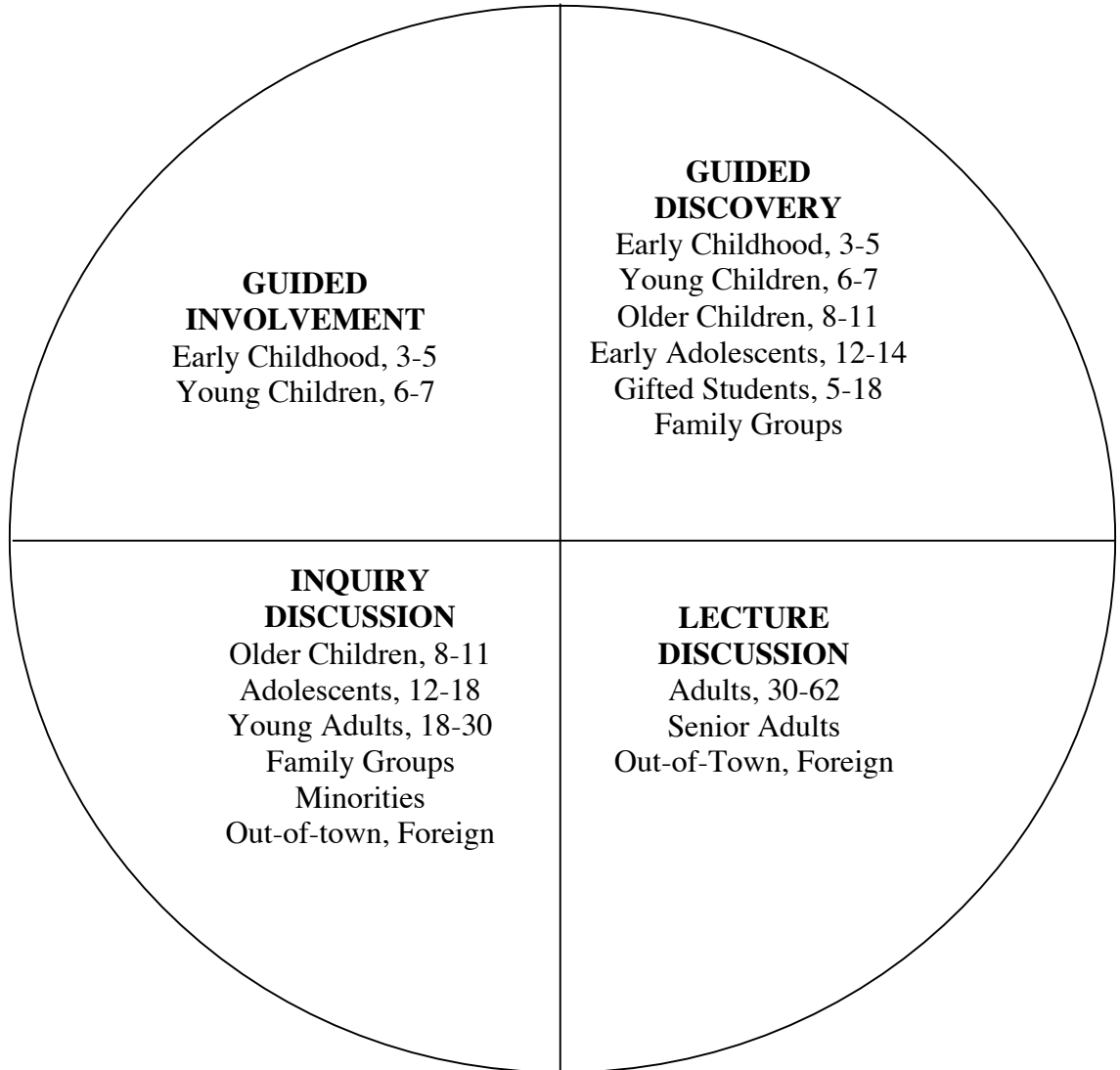
- Before the tour, ask a BNG staff member or the teacher if there is a specific focus for the tour.
- Begin your tour by leading the group into the gallery, put the door on the latch or ask a student to hold it for the others. The gallery guide needs to be in the front of the group to show them where to go.
- Have a plan in your mind where you will begin the tour, how you will move from piece to piece, and where you will end.
- Have students sit down at every opportunity, space permitting. This stops students wandering and getting distracted.
- Watch your time, the tour should be 40mins - 1 hour but not longer.
- Be aware of other tour groups in the gallery at the same time.
- Tell the group where you plan to go in the gallery and what they will see.
- Be flexible enough to change your tour plan if you see interest from the group in a piece of work.
- Keep control of your group. Ask them to sit properly, wait for them to be quiet, etc.
- At the end of the tour review the key points and the intent of the exhibitions. Find out what was most interesting to the students - this repetition of ideas will help reinforce what they have learned - and invite them to come back.
- When the tour is finished lead the group to the door and remind them to pick up any belongings.
- If a teacher seems reluctant to go or is waiting for the other half of her/his group to finish suggest that students can look around or do activities with the teacher.
- You are free to go.

5. Types of Tour Recommended

Age Characteristics

Age	Characteristics
3-5 years	Egocentric, curious, nondiscriminatory
6-7 years	Awareness of world, imaginative, refined motor skills
8-11 years	Socialized, allow interaction, literal minded
12-14 years	Emerging sense of self
14-18 years	Abstract thought like realism; Goals: to get through school, go to college, get a job
Young Adults 18-30 years	Independent interests, building a career, starting a family
Adults 30-62 years	Motivated by life's needs, curiosity, acquisition of knowledge
Senior Adults 62+ years	Similar to adults but may have some physical limitations
Out of Town, Foreign	Unfamiliar with area, may have specific interests

Types of Tour Recommended



Source: The Good Guide by Alison L.Grinder and E. Sue McCoy (available to read in the Education Centre)

Art Appreciation - Suggestions by Grade Level

Kindergarten or Primary 1

- Sensitive awareness in the young children is an evolving process and is the result of continuous aesthetic guidance by the teacher.
- Appreciation includes understanding as well as enjoyment of tasteful things.
- End result is to guide the children to discover, select and use items of good functional and decorative quality and to experience the joy of creating.
- They should become sensitive to the similarities as well as the differences in the things about them. Looking at paintings will help them develop **awareness of colours and shapes**, e.g. as red as a fire truck, as rough as tree bark, as blue as the sky, etc.

Grade 1 or Primary 2

- Children are curious about their environment.
- They develop appreciation as they discover, explore and become sensitive to their visual and tactile world.
- They become more aware of colour, line, form and the feel of things (texture).
- They enjoy looking at storybook pictures - use some from our library!
- They learn to listen and notice.

Grade 2 or Primary 3

- As children mature mentally and physically, the teacher guides their natural curiosity and help them discover, explore, observe and make selections.
- They become more aware of the beauty around them.
- Point out curved and straight lines.
- Let the child make comparisons.

Grade 3 or Primary 4

- The children will grow in appreciation by increased use of senses to learn about and to enjoy the world around them, developing sensitivity to everything; they are becoming "noticers."
- Increased awareness of beauty about them: colour, line, form in nature, in buildings, and other man-made forms.
- Understanding and appreciation of colour in dress, in nature, in the room, in the school, etc.
- Growing appreciation of their own creations and the art expressions of others.

Grade 4 or Primary 5

- Appreciation evolves from direct experience, working critically, thoughtfully and discriminatingly. Children must select, reject, enjoy, use and understand line, form, shape, colour and texture.
- Continue to develop awareness of beauty around them:
 - ❖ In design of space: plantings in parks, grouping of buildings, windows.
 - ❖ In line: wires criss-crossing, curbing, sidewalks, trees against the sky.

- ❖ In nature: curve of a shell, veins in a leaf, bi-symmetric design of butterfly.
- Continue to help children notice colours and textures in the clothing they wear, in the fabrics and materials they see, and in the environment surrounding them.
- They can realize that people have made us use their art, as shown by Oriental and African people.

Grade 5 or Primary 6

- Genuine art appreciation is emotional as well as intellectual. A sensitivity is acquired to all things by learning to judge, decide, and evaluate:
- Awareness of colour combined with texture, such as rocks, bark, fabrics.
- Responding to light and dark, lines and shapes, natural and man-made forms.
- Sensitivity to sounds and touch in relation to line, colour and rhythm.
- Understanding various types and ways of painting, and materials used.

Grade 6 or Primary 7/Middle 1

- Art education activities built into the school program are especially full of opportunities to foster creativity and build appreciation for other's creative efforts:
 - ❖ Insight into the arts, crafts, and architecture of past civilizations through knowledge gained in social studies.
 - ❖ Desire to take trips on their own initiative following the school-scheduled trips.
 - ❖ Sensitivity to attractive and functional arrangements in the desk, school, home.
 - ❖ Awareness of beauty created by light and shadow as changed by day, night, clouds and sunlight.
 - ❖ Feeling for texture related to surface, and three-dimensional form.
 - ❖ Knowledge of artists and the periods in which they belong in connection with social studies.
 - ❖ Enjoyment and satisfaction from their creative expressions as well as others, including expressions in two-dimensional and three-dimensional form.

6. Why art? Food for thought:

TEN LESSONS THE ARTS TEACH

by Elliot Eisner, Professor of Education, Stanford University

- ❖ The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.
- ❖ The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.
- ❖ The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.
- ❖ The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving, purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. Learning in the arts requires the ability and willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.
- ❖ The arts make vivid the fact that words do not, in their literal form or number, exhaust what we can know. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.
- ❖ The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties.
- ❖ The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.
- ❖ The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job.
- ❖ The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.
- ❖ The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolises to the young what adults believe is important.

7. Sample Plan for School Tours

Conceptual Framework

Tour Goal:

Provide a broad statement of what the tour is designed to promote

Tour Title:

Give the tour a name that helps describe what the tour is about (may be the name of the exhibition)

Exhibition title:

Grade: _____

Tour time: _____

Lesson Objectives - as a result of instruction students will be able to:

Provide statements of what students will be expected to do/know as a result of this tour.

1.

2.

Visual References:

This is the actual artwork. Name the pieces you will be focusing your tour on.

Vocabulary:

List any words that you think will need an explanation.