Story Theme: Shaken & Stirred
Subject: Scott Snibbe
Discipline: Visual Arts (Installation/New Media)
SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME
Shaken and Stirred

SUBJECT
Scott Snibbe

GRADE RANGES
K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Visual Arts, Language Arts

OBJECTIVE
To introduce students to installation and interactive art and their underlying concepts through the works of Scott Snibbe

STORY SYNOPSIS
SPARK follows Scott Snibbe at work on an installation piece Blow Up at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, and through his studio as he discusses his installation, interactive, and net art projects and some of the ideas underlying them.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Individual and group research
Individual and group exercises
Written research materials
Group discussions

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
To acquaint students with the expression of ideas in the installation and interactive art
To provide a forum for students to consider the role of the art spectator as an important participant and aspect of creative artwork
To encourage students to think about the role of spirituality and philosophical concepts expressed through Conceptual art

EQUIPMENT NEEDED
SPARK story about Scott Snibbe on DVD or VHS and necessary equipment
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer
Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

MATERIALS NEEDED
Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
Pencils, pens, and paper

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED
Linguistic - syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics
Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects
Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems
Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.
SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Since the mid-1990s, Scott Snibbe has been fusing interactive computer technology with Eastern philosophy to create artworks that are at once technologically sophisticated and hauntingly lyrical. In “Human Interface,” SPARK takes a look at some of Snibbe’s recent work, including his latest piece, the large scale interactive sculpture Blow Up.

Each of Snibbe’s works depends upon the participation of its audience. Using a digital projector, a camera, a loop recorder and Snibbe’s own recognition software, several of Snibbe’s pieces produce different forms of video based on the actions of the participants. His piece Depletion enables audience members to produce projected silhouettes that trace their own movements, while in Shy, a projected geometrical form timidly withdraws when participants approach.

Snibbe attends several classes a week at the Tse Chen Ling Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies in San Francisco and many of his ideas are rooted in Buddhist philosophy. Snibbe’s concept of interactivity is closely related to the Buddhist belief that the central delusion of human existence is that each of us exists independently of everything around us. Snibbe’s interactive works demonstrate that all things are connected since their very existence is dependent on the input of participants.

Snibbe’s Blow Up was designed specifically for San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Although it is his first large scale sculptural piece, it is conceptually continuous with the works that came before it. In this piece, participants blow into a set of sensors, which then activate a corresponding grid of industrial fans. Through the movement of the fans, the participant’s breath is audibly represented and amplified. Blow Up links the human breath to the wind, connecting the personal with larger natural world and the inside of the body with the world around it.

Snibbe’s work has been shown at international venues including the InterCommunications Center, Tokyo; Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria; Eyebeam, New York City; New Langton Arts, San Francisco; ICA, London; and The Kitchen, New York City. He holds Bachelor’s degrees in Computer Science and Fine Art, and a Master’s in Computer Science from Brown University. Snibbe studied experimental animation at the Rhode Island School of Design and has taught media art and experimental film at Brown University, RISD and UC Berkeley. He has held research positions at Adobe Systems Inc. and Interval Research.

THE BIG PICTURE

Scott Snibbe is one of many artists working in the rapidly expanding field of digital art, which is characterized by the use of computers in film, video, and photography. Digital or new media artists also produce virtual reality art - net.art – as well as automated and/or robotic art.

Although the use of digital media in art is receiving more and more attention in the last decade, the relationship between the two is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, the marriage of science and art happened almost immediately after the scientific
method had been established in the Renaissance. Really since the first persons made images and fashioned sculptural objects, artists have develop, used, and adapted new technologies. What is new are the ways in which art has struggled in recent years with its existence in what is often called the “information society,” a world in which the primary cultural, social, economic, and political mode is the organization and exchange of information rather than objects.

In a very direct way any work of art that incorporates new media is engaging with technologies that have come to shape our culture: electronic financial transactions facilitated by credit cards, global ATMs and online transfers; entertainment provided by DVDs, CDs, the Internet, and video on-demand; and communications with friends and colleagues via email, cell phone, and instant messaging. These interactions express the many forms that virtual and electronic products and environments are woven into our daily lives.

In one sense, these technologies connect us as individuals, forming new kinds of virtual and online communities. Snibbe emphasizes this aspect of the digital media in his work, underlining the new interconnectivity between us. By contrast, other new media artists represent these same technologies that connect us as also those that render us subjects of greater degrees of surveillance, as more and more of our financial, social, and cultural interactions are recorded, organized, and exchanged..

RESOURCES – TEXTS


RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Center for New Media @ UC Berkeley - http://cnm.berkeley.edu

Digital Art - A substantial online gallery of digital art - http://digitalart.org

Digital Art Center @ Stanford University - http://www.stanford.edu/dept/art/SUDAC

Net Art Review - An online magazine dedicated to Internet art - http://www.netartreview.net

Scott Snibbe’s Website - http://www.snibbe.com

Tate Gallery (London) – Section of the Web site dedicated to net art - http://www.tate.org.uk/netart

Tse Chen Ling Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies - http://www.tsechenling.org

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS
Exploratorium
3601 Lyon Street
San Francisco, CA 94123
415.EXPLORE
http://www.exploratorium.edu

The Tech Museum of Innovation
201 South Market Street
San Jose, CA 95113
408.294.TECH
http://www.thetech.org
Robotics - http://www.thetech.org/robotics/robotart

Tse Chen Ling Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies
399 Webster Street
San Francisco, CA 94117
415/621.4215
Email: office@tsechenling.org

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
701 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
415/978.ARTS (2787)
DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

**Amplified**
Greater than before, improved, better, enlarged

**Animation**
Series of drawings or images that are projected in rapid sequence such that they appear to move; the act of bringing to life

**Installation art**
The combining of elements into a singular artwork that is specifically located in one place; an artwork that only exists in the place it was/is installed, and is not able to be relocated like a painting.

**Artifact**
An object produced or shaped by human craft, especially a tool, weapon, or ornament of archaeological or historical interest.

**Artwork**
A work of creative production, usually visual in nature, such as a painting, drawing, print, photograph, video, sculpture, or installation

**Buddhist**
A follower of the Buddhist religion based on the teachings of Buddha who maintained that if one lives in the right way one can attain a life free from desire, suffering and pain

**Delusion**
False belief or opinion

**Dexterity**
Skill in using the hands, body or mind

**Dynamic**
Forceful, energetic

**Engage**
Take part, active involvement

**Intellect**
High mental ability, power of the mind

**Interaction**
A mutual or reciprocal action

**Interactivity**
The dialogue or interaction between a computer program and a human being

**Intrinsically**
Inherent, natural to, essential

**Karma**
A term from Buddhist and Hindu thought meaning fate, destiny, fortune or providence. Supposed to determine a person’s fate in the next stage of existence

**Reactive art experience**
Art only exists in relation to viewer response or interaction

**Recognition software**
Computer programs that recognize movements or responses from human beings

**Sensors**
Device for receiving and transmitting a physical stimulus, such as heat, light or pressure

**Social interaction**
The way people act together and relate to each other in a group or social situation

**Streamlined**
Efficient, smooth
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Exploring Interactivity in Art

Introduce the concept of interactivity to the group. It may be helpful to talk about different forms of human interaction first and then distinguish them. For instance, interactivity is a term used in relation to human interaction with technology. How is interactivity different from interpersonal communication – communication that occurs directly between two or more people? Challenge students to brainstorm a list of different forms of interactivity and to identify examples. Chart their ideas on a mind map on the board. For example:

- Voice-Activated Programs
- Touch Tone Phones
- DVD
- Motion Sensor Lights
- Video Games
- ATMs
- Numerical Locks

In their examples, ask the class to identify:
- main characteristics of the interaction
- purpose(s) of interactivity
- impact of technology on activity – Does the interaction change the activity? If so, how?
- how might these ideas apply to artwork?

Show the SPARK story on Scott Snibbe. Pause on each of the 4 artworks and ask students to respond to the following questions about each:
- In what way(s) is the piece interactive?
- What concept the artist exploring?
- What is the artist’s purpose or intention?
- Does human interaction change the piece?
- Does the piece work (or exist) without human engagement?
- Is the audience part of the piece?

Invite students to respond to these questions in small groups first, and then by writing a 300 word reflection. Then reconvene as a group and watch the Snibbe story again allowing time for students to think through their ideas - especially their thoughts on the last 3 points. Then discuss the student responses as a group.

RELATED STANDARDS
VISUAL ARTS

Grade 8
1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION
1.1 Use artistic terms when describing the intent and content of works of art.
4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
4.2 Develop a theory about the artist’s intent in a series of works of art, using reasoned statements to support personal opinions.
4.3 Construct an interpretation of a work of art based on the form and content of the work.

SPARKLERS:

- Robotic artist Ken Goldberg introduces new technologies into the production of art through inviting the public into social interaction and participation in the creative process. Invite students to visit his Web site at http://www.ieor.berkeley.edu/~goldberg/art/ or watch his story on SPARK at http://www.kqed.org/spark/artists-orgs/kengoldber.jsp. Ask students to write a comparison of Scott Snibbe and Ken Goldberg, discussing the similarities and differences in their work and their ideas about interactivity.

- Watch the Snibbe story, pausing on each of the 4 artworks featured. Talk about the materials used to create each one. Discuss why Snibbe chose those particular materials and/or equipment? The choice of materials based on concept is a defining characteristic of all Conceptual Art. Could other materials work the same way? Why or why not?
Creating an Interactive Sculptural Piece

Scott Snibbe’s work explores the ways the human body are connected to the physical world; how we are interdependent with other people, the environment, and the systems of living. In his 2003 artist statement, Snibbe writes “Many of my works do not function unless the viewer actively engages with them - by touching, breathing, moving, etc. The works present systems in which the viewer is an essential component […]”

Encourage students to work together as a group to create a collaborative artwork exploring the idea of connectedness. Begin with discussion, asking students to name examples of how humans are interconnected with each other and the world. If many ideas are generated, vote on the top 1 or 2 to use to develop artwork.

Once the idea(s) and the group(s) have been identified, brainstorm about the materials to build the piece. Begin by asking students what kinds of materials are appropriate to the idea.

As an additional challenge ask students to think about how they might make their sculptural piece interactive – how can they engage the viewer?

A useful approach to this activity might be to allocate roles to subgroups within the larger group. These subgroups could contribute different skills to the enterprise encouraging students to work on the area they most enjoy, for example:

- A **research** subgroup can identify artists who incorporate interactivity into their work to glean ideas from other sources
- A **materials** subgroup can take responsibility for assembling the materials
- A **design** group would draw the concept and develop proposals for the interactivity component
- A **publicity** subgroup plays to the strengths of students who enjoy writing. This group can work on a publicity statement or brochure about the sculptural piece to distribute throughout the school. It would include an invitation to preview the work or a special viewing date and should also include photographs of the piece.

Nominate a coordinator to ensure the sub-groups communicate regularly and share their ideas.

NOTE: The intention is to build human interaction into the creative process and the artwork should emerge from this cooperative and collective spirit – very much part of Scott Snibbe’s artistic mission.

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<td><strong>VISUAL ARTS</strong></td>
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<td>Grades 9-12 Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist’s distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work.</td>
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<td>1.5 Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.</td>
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<td>3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Identify and describe the role and influence of new technologies on contemporary works of art.</td>
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<td>Grades 9-12 Advanced</td>
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<td>2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION</td>
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<td>2.1 Create original works of art of increasing complexity and skill in a variety of media that reflect their feelings and points of view.</td>
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<td>2.3 Assemble and display objects or works of art as part of a public exhibition.</td>
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<td>2.5 Use innovative visual metaphors in creating works of art.</td>
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<td>4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING</td>
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<td>4.1 Describe the relationship involving the art maker (artist), the making (process), the artwork (product), and the viewer.</td>
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<td>4.2 Identify the intentions of artists creating contemporary works of art and explore the implications of those intentions.</td>
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<td>5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS</td>
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<td>5.1 Speculate on how advances in technology might change the definition and function of the visual arts.</td>
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Spirituality in Art
Talk about the concept of spirituality in visual art. Ask students what they think about expressing spiritual ideas, concepts or beliefs in visual artwork? In addition to Snibbe, introduce students to other contemporary Western artists who address spirituality in their work, such as Ann Hamilton, John Feodorov, Shahzia Sikander, and James Turrell. (NOTE: These artists are featured on PBS’s contemporary art program Art:21 in the program about “Spirituality & Contemporary Art” - See Resources.) Break students into small groups to write a short 300-500 word research paper on one of the artists, addressing the questions below and assembling images of the artworks that best illustrate their findings.

- How does the artist address or incorporate spiritual concepts or ideas in her/his work?
- Are the concepts or ideas related to a specific belief system or religion?
- Is spirituality present in all of her/his work?
- What materials communicate the ideas most directly?
- What is said about the artwork by museums, galleries, writers, and the public?
- What do they think about the work? Is it important? Does it change how they think about art? About spirituality?

Reassemble as a large group and share the answers to the questions from each group, noting them on the board. When all groups have presented, discuss the similarities and differences between how the artists express spirituality.

RELATED STANDARDS
LANGUAGE ARTS
Grades 9 & 10
1.0 LISTENING AND SPEAKING STRATEGIES
1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.
1.0 WRITING STRATEGIES
1.1 Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.
1.3 Use clear research questions and suitable research methods (e.g., library, electronic media, personal interview) to elicit and present evidence from primary and secondary sources.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at http://www.kqed.org/spark/education.

For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp.