

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Subject: Wayne Thiebaud
Discipline: Visual Art (Painting)

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Wayne Thiebaud using his characteristic textured brushstrokes.
Still image from SPARK story, 2009 .

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

SUBJECT

Wayne Thiebaud

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts & Language Arts

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the development of personal works of art and their relationship to broader social themes and ideas, abstract concepts, and the history of art.
- Develop basic observational drawing and/or painting skills.
- Develop visual, written, listening and speaking skills through looking at, creating and talking about visual artworks.
- Develop an expressive visual vocabulary with which to address personal and/or social themes and ideas.
- Develop observational and representational skills by looking at and reproducing images of people, places and things accurately and thoughtfully.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Wayne Thiebaud is one of America's best-known painters. Originally making his mark as part of the Pop Art movement of the 1960s, Thiebaud's careful studies of everyday objects, figures, and haunting landscapes have come to be part of the art world vernacular. Spark checks in on Thiebaud as he reflects on a career that has spanned over more than seven decades.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing as a group
- Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance

- Hands-on individual projects in which students work independently
- Hands-on group projects in which students assist and support one another
- Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the life and career of world-renowned painter Wayne Thiebaud
- To provide context for the understanding of Pop Art and its connections to American Culture
- To inspire students to analyze and create their own works of art inspired by the Pop Art movement

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Spark story about Wayne Thiebaud on VHS or a computer with Internet access, streaming capability, navigation software, video projector, speakers and a sound card.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
- Pencils, pens, and paper
- Art materials such as paints, markers, etc.

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

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](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at
www.kqed.org/spark/education.

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Originally making his mark as part of the Pop Art movement of the 1960s, Wayne Thiebaud's careful studies of everyday objects, figures and landscapes have come to be part of the art world vernacular. Spark checks in on Thiebaud as he reflects on a career that has spanned more than seven decades.

Thiebaud began working in the commercial arts in the late 1930s, primarily as a cartoonist and designer. During World War II, he served as an artist for the U.S. Air Force. Upon his return to civilian life, he continued working as a commercial artist until enrolling in the master's program at Sacramento State College. After earning his M.A. in 1952, Thiebaud went on to teach at Sacramento City College, eventually landing a position at the University of California, Davis.

In the 1960s, Thiebaud took a leave of absence from UC Davis to spend some time in New York, where he met abstract expressionists Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline, along with then-emerging artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. Impressed with their work, Thiebaud began a series of small paintings showing food displayed in windows -- subject matter that he returned to again and again throughout his career. In fact, Thiebaud's subject matter forms a kind of record of the artist's life, as new experiences and environments brought new objects and views to represent.

Although Thiebaud may be best known for his everyday subject matter, his works are also painstaking examinations of the fundamental language of paint: light, color, space, composition and surface. Each canvas offers an investigation of a series of formal problems. A painting of a bowl of cherries might reveal a study of varied light effects, and a San Francisco cityscape could allow the opportunity to play with rational space.

Spark visits with Thiebaud in his studio as he prepares for a traveling retrospective of his work from the past 50 years, including more than a hundred paintings. Though many of the paintings were completed years before, Thiebaud tirelessly works and reworks aspects of images that he wants to change, often building up the surfaces of his backgrounds, resolving the image, then reopening it again.

Wayne Thiebaud's work has been shown internationally and is represented in nearly every major collection of modern and contemporary art in North America, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the de Young Museum. He is currently a professor emeritus of art at the University of California, Davis, where he continues to give pro bono lectures to students.

THE BIG PICTURE

The work of Wayne Thiebaud is most closely associated with the Pop Art movement, which refers to a wide range of practices that emerged in Great Britain and the United States in the 1950s. In Britain, Pop Art was popularized by artists such as Richard Hamilton, Peter Blake, and David Hockney. In America, Pop Art's best known practitioners include Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol.

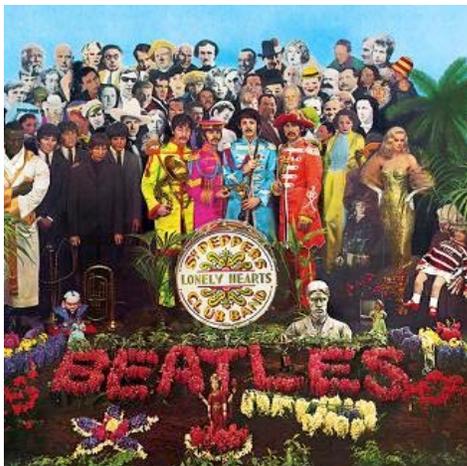
Though in the United States Pop Art is popularly thought of as a uniquely American phenomenon, the movement actually began in post-war Great Britain with the work of the Independent Group, a collective of painters, sculptors, architects, and writers who were interested in the visual strategies of mostly American advertising practices. Richard Hamilton's 1956 collage *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* is commonly heralded as the first important example of pop art. The work borrows from a variety of popular sources, including advertisements, comic books, fitness and "cheesecake" magazines.



Richard Hamilton, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, 1956.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Richard_Hamilton_-_Just_What_Is_It...png

The original line-up of the Independent Group testifies to the English manifestation of Pop Art's ability to cross disciplines. The artist Peter Blake, for example, while being a widely recognized fine artist, is best known for his album cover of the Beatles' seminal 1967 release *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. This indelible imprint of the Pop Art on pop music was felt in other, more fundamental ways as well. Several of the bands to emerge in Britain in the 1960s were deeply influenced by Pop Art, including The Who, whose 1967 album featured fake advertisements for consumer products interspersed across the record, creating a slippage between single and jingle.



Sir Peter Blake, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967.
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/6/67/Pepper%27s.jpg>

In the United States, Pop Art was more associated with an embrace of popular American culture rather than an examination of it. Where the abstract

expressionism that came before shunned any reference beyond the material reality of paint and canvas, Pop Art drew directly from the ubiquitous and universally recognized icons of popular culture: comics, celebrity photographs, consumer products, and advertisement.



Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Can*, 1964.

http://jssgallery.org/Other_Artists/Andy_Warhol/Campbells_Soup_Can.htm

American Pop Art is virtually synonymous with the work of Andy Warhol. Like Thiebaud, Warhol got his start as a commercial artist and designer, making advertisements for magazines. He eventually landed a job with RCA records, designing album covers. While Warhol came to be best known for his silkscreens of celebrities and consumer products (such as 1968's *Campbell's Soup*), he worked in a wide range of media, including happenings and films.

Though Wayne Thiebaud is closely associated with Pop Art due to his mass culture subject matter, many of his best known paintings were created just before the dawn of the Pop Art movement. Thiebaud's brushwork tends to be heavier than other classic Pop artists', and his focus seems to lean more towards the act of painting rather than his notions of consumerism and popular culture.

RESOURCES – TEXTS

Harrison, Sylvia. *Pop Art and the Origins of Post-Modernism*. Cambridge University Press, 2001

Hebdige, Dick. *Hiding in the Light*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Lippard, Lucy R. *Pop Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1985.

RESOURCES – TEXTS (continued)

McCarthy, David. *Pop Art*. London: Tate Gallery, 2005.

Nash, Steven A., Adam Gopnik and Wayne Thiebaud. *Wayne Thiebaud: A Paintings Retrospective*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Delicious: The Art and Life of Wayne Thiebaud*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2007.

Thiebaud, Wayne, Constance Glenn and Jack Glenn. *Drawings: The Artist's Sketchbook*. New York: Abrams, 1987.

Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*. New York: Harvest Books, 1977.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Wikipedia entry for Wayne Thiebaud:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayne_Thiebaud

Interview with Wayne Thiebaud for the Smithsonian:
<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/thieba01.htm>

2002 interview with Wayne Thiebaud from CBS Sunday Morning:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vI_QJ5D9Om8

Video interview with Roy Lichtenstein from New York's WNET, circa 1962:
<http://www.boingboing.net/2008/11/03/interview-with-roy-l.html>

1966 video interview with Andy Warhol on WNET:
<http://www.thirteen.org/artsandculture/happy-80th-birthday-andy-warhol>

Wikipedia entry for Pop Art:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pop_art

Wikipedia entry on the Independent Group:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_Group

VIDEO RESOURCES

ANDY WARHOL: A DOCUMENTARY FILM.
Dir. Ric Burns, PBS Paramount, 2006.
www.PBS.org/AmericanMasters
Available in PBS online shop: www.shopPBS.org

The following KQED Spark videos may be used for compare/contrast purposes:

Spark video on Mel Ramos
<http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=22452>

Spark video on Christopher Brown
<http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=7680>
An Educator Guide accompanies this video

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

SFMOMA
151 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
415 357 4000
Open: Thursday-Tuesday
<http://www.sfmoma.org/pages/visit>

de Young Museum
50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Drive
Golden Gate Park
San Francisco, CA 94103
<http://www.famsf.org>
*Thiebaud's paintings are included in the de Young's permanent collection and are currently on view.

Modernism Gallery
685 Market Street, Suite 290
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.541.0461
<http://www.modernisminc.com/>

John Berggruen Gallery
228 Grant Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94108
<http://www.berggruen.com/>
415.781.4629

San Jose Museum of Art
110 South Market Street
San Jose, CA 95113
<http://www.sjmusart.org/>
Explore the museum's programs for students:
http://www.sjmusart.org/content/events/youth/gallery/event_list.phtml?typeID=gallery

Crocker Art Museum
216 O Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
<http://www.crockerartmuseum.org/>
Crocker Art Museum online space for students:
<http://www.crockerartmuseum.org/yard/>

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND WORDS AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Anthologize

To compile, publish or include in an anthology

Bemused

Confused, bewildered, mystified

Brute

Monstrous, like a beast or animal

Commercial

Profitable, business or money making

Conjure

Conjure up, summon or invoke

Critically Acclaimed

Praised by professional critics or people who are paid to give their opinion of art, music etc.

Eternal

Everlasting, timeless

Figurative

In relation to artwork, this refers to paintings and sculptures that are *representational*, that is derived from a realistic representation of objects or humans. "Figurative art" refers to art which represents the human form or animal figure.

Gleam

Sparkle, glisten, glimmer

Glint

Sparkle, shine, flash, twinkle

Horrendous

Awful, dreadful, terrible, horrific

Human Consciousness

The state of awareness of oneself and the environment, often distinguished from the

unconscious mind which can obscure rational thought processes.

Majestic

Regal, imposing, magnificent

Organic

Natural, unrefined

Pigment

Color, dye, tint

Pop Art

This art movement became important in Britain in the 1950s and reached the United States in the late 1950s and 1960s. It drew on popular culture, on advertising, comics and everyday objects found in supermarkets, and positioned itself as a challenge to elitist notions of art. Pop Art celebrated the mundane, the everyday of consumerist society, often utilizing irony to do so. Seen as a reaction to Abstract Expressionism, the prevailing orthodoxy after the war (World War II), Pop Art challenged the pretensions of "high art" and the ideas that informed this aesthetic movement.

Resolution

To make clearly visible

Retrospective

Exhibition of an artist's work over a span of years

Spiritual

Holy or religious, mystical or divine, unworldly

Starkness

Plainness, harshness, austere, severe

Tactile

Tangible, palpable, concrete

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Painting Cakes

Play the SPARK video about Wayne Thiebaud and ask students to focus on his paintings of pies and cakes, ice creams, hamburgers and hotdogs - ordinary everyday foods which are so much part of American culture. Replay the video and freeze the frame on the first image of *Cakes 1963*. Ask students to describe in as much detail as possible:

- What do they notice about Thiebaud's use of paint?
- How are the cakes represented? Do they look real?
- How is space used in the painting?
- What does the use of light and shadow add to the composition?
- Is this subject matter symbolic in any way – of what?

Discuss student responses.

Ask students to close their eyes and think of foods they love or loved when they were younger. Can they conjure up the images in their minds? The colors, shapes, texture? Can they recall the taste? Suggest that they share these memories with their neighbor.

Provide students with art materials such as art paper, pencils, markers or poster paint, and ask them to pick a dessert or cake that they've enjoyed. What did they like especially – cream, chocolate, frosting, cherries? Encourage them to sketch the outline of the dessert or cake, and then paint the rich, creamy colors to convey sweetness, texture and pleasure. Advise them to use vibrant, strong colors and to layer the paint extravagantly in the way Thiebaud demonstrates in the SPARK segment.

Post the paintings on the wall in the classroom and, as a group, choose a title for the collection.

SPARKLER*

For elementary and middle school students, see the lessons listed here:

http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/counting_on_art/lessons_thiebaud_int.shtm

For Grades 2 – 5, try the **Cake Maker** interactive activity:

<http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/interactive/cake.htm>

Pop Art

Wayne Thiebaud's work is associated with the Pop Art movement because he paints ordinary things such as household items, cakes and pies. Thiebaud discusses his inspiration and real-life experience working in a restaurant:

"Most of [the objects] are fragments of actual experience. For instance, I would really think of the bakery counter, of the way the counter was lit, where the pies were placed, but I wanted just a piece of the experience. From when I worked in restaurants, I can remember seeing rows of pies, or a tin of pie with one piece out of it and one pie sitting beside it. Those... fragmented circumstances were always poetic to me."

-Wayne Thiebaud

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/T/thiebaud.html>

Introduce students to paintings and sculptures of the **Pop Art** movement of the 1950s and 1960's by projecting selected images onto a screen in the classroom. To find images, search "Pop Art" into a search engine like Google, or visit the "Artchive" Web site:

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/pop_art.html

Discuss the images as a group. What were these artists trying to do or say? What do you notice about their work?

After exploring responses, ask students to work in small groups to research the Pop Art movement of the 1950s and 1960s, addressing the following questions:

- What was Pop Art aiming to do?
- Why did these artists choose ordinary everyday subjects?
- What was happening in England and America at the time?
- How did this movement reflect social and cultural changes?
- What impact did it have both in America and more widely on the Western world?

Ask students to choose one well-known Pop artist and write a short essay on the work and ideas of that artist. They should choose **one** of the following artists: Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselmann, or another artist of their choice.



Tom Wesselmann, *Still Life with Blowing Curtain (Yellow)*, 1999
http://www.rogallery.com/wesselmann_tom/w-421/wesselmann-yellow_curtain.html

Cityscapes, Landscapes & Art Criticism

Thiebaud is known for his paintings of cityscapes and landscapes - the vertiginous hills of San Francisco and the rich colorful landscapes of the Sacramento Valley in California. Play the **SPARK** video and freeze the frame on the cityscapes and delta scenes.

Introduce students to art criticism by challenging them to look closely at this work, and to analyze and interpret what they see. They should take clear and organized notes as they proceed.

Begin by asking students to describe what they see in the artwork as objectively as possible. Guide them to think about **formal properties** such as the **elements** and **principles** of painting. How is the subject matter arranged and presented? Look at the composition and visual organization of the canvases. Ask students to comment on **elements**, such as the use of line, shape, light, color, texture, and space and then look for **principles** such as the scale,

proportion, rhythm, and balance in the paintings. Allow time for them to note down their responses to each element and principle as they examine the canvas. Finally, talk about interpretation and invite students to share their thoughts. What is the artwork about? How would you support this interpretation? Is the artwork successful in your view? Share out students' ideas and discuss their thoughts and reasoning.

Light and Shadow

Begin by talking about Thiebaud's reflections on light - his notion of gradations of light or different kinds of light. Can students describe the difference between glint, gleam and glow?

Play the clip from the **SPARK** video that focuses on Thiebaud's use of light and shadow in his cityscapes. Freeze the frame on each painting. Ask students to describe where they see light and shadow in the paintings. Would the mood or atmosphere evoked by the paintings change if the light changed? If it was dark or overcast how would that impact the mood?

Arrange for students to visit a local art gallery (see field trips suggestions listed on page 5 of this guide) and explain to them that they will be looking for contemporary (Post-World War II, 1945 - present) paintings that depict street scenes or cityscapes and utilize light and shadow.

In small groups of three, students should choose **ONE** painting and take photographs of the piece (always ask for permission first). Alternatively, suggest they try to find a digital image on the internet to show the class. In their groups, ask them to take notes in response to the following questions, adding their own reflections at the end.

- Where is the light and shadow in this painting?
- Can they tell what is producing the shadow - people, buildings, sunlight, rain etc?
- How is mood evoked by the use of light and shadow?
- Comment on your responses to the work.

Allow time for students to write up their notes in a reflective paragraph, and then share their thoughts with the class. Conclude by comparing these reports on the use of shadow and light in the paintings they have studied to the techniques employed by Wayne Thiebaud.

RELATED STANDARDS - VISUAL ARTS

Grades 9-12, Proficient

- 1.0 Artistic Perception Impact of Media Choice
- 1.5 Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.

1.0 Artistic Perception

- Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design
- 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.
- 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
- 4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.

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/>.

RELATED STANDARDS -VISUAL ARTS

Grade 8

- 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
 - 1.1 Use artistic terms when describing the intent and content of works of art.
 - 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.
 - 4.4 Develop and apply a set of criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art.
 - 4.5 Present a reasoned argument about the artistic value of a work of art and respond to the arguments put forward by others within a classroom setting.

Grades 9-12, Advanced

- 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
 - 4.2 Identify the intentions of artists creating contemporary works of art and explore the implications of those intentions.
- 5.0 *Connection, Relations & Applications*
 - 5.2 Compare and contrast works of art, probing beyond the obvious and identifying psychological content found in the symbols and images.
- 1.0 Artistic Perception
 - 6 Describe the use of the elements of art to express mood in one or more of their works of art.