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## Addressing Visual Literacy in the Survey: Balancing Transdisciplinary Competencies and Course Content

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### Cover Page Footnote

This article, included in a special issue of this journal, demonstrates one of a variety of research methodologies appropriate to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Art History. It is accompanied by a brief introduction by a SoTL mentor, who worked with the author in the project's development and publication.

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## **Addressing Visual Literacy in the Survey: Balancing Transdisciplinary Competencies and Course Content**

Method: Quasi-Experimental Design with Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

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Mentor: Marie Gasper-Hulvat, *Kent State University at Stark*

### **SoTL Mentor's Introduction**

In the following article, Sarah Archino describes a pilot SoTL study examining a single group of students in one art history course over a full semester. She employed quasi-experimental designs to evaluate her students' learning. As Cathy Bishop-Clark and Beth Dietz-Uhler note, most SoTL research is by necessity quasi-experimental, because the implementation of truly equal experimental groups of students is virtually impossible in most academic contexts.<sup>1</sup> Archino's design is "quasi" because it did not employ a control group; it could not, in full experimental fashion, compare results between students who received her pedagogical interventions and students who did not. Nonetheless, her single-group, pre- and post-test model represents an experimental design which resulted in the collection of significant data. Her analysis of this data indicated that desired student learning outcomes occurred. The lack of a control group precludes being able to determine if those learning outcomes were the result of her interventions, the evaluation process itself, or some other factor(s).

This study's approach to analyzing written student work represents an intersection between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Archino used a qualitative method of coding, or assigning categories to qualitative material (in this case, student's written responses to works of visual art). She employed a qualitative method in which her codes were derived from a theoretical understanding of the field rather than a grounded method in which codes emerged from analysis of the material. She then transformed this qualitative coding data into quantitative data by counting the number of incidences of each code in a given response to create a numerical evaluation of the overall quality of that response. Her comparison of the quantitative data obtained by these methods in pre- and post-test responses indicated significant learning gains. Archino also employed qualitative examples from written student reflections on the evaluation process to interpret her experimental findings. This mixed methods approach triangulates her results and gives greater credence to her conclusions drawn from the experimental data. This study represents an appropriate first step towards answering Archino's research question within the limited circumstances of a single semester's timeline.

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<sup>1</sup> Cathy Bishop-Clark and Beth Dietz-Uhler, *Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus, 2012) 57.

## Addressing Visual Literacy in the Survey: Balancing Transdisciplinary Competencies and Course Content

Sarah Archino, *Furman University*

### Introduction

The unconscious and continual process of seeing contributes directly to the dangerous, overly confident assumption that we are naturally capable, efficient, and critical observers. Despite research that demonstrates that “looking is a practice much like speaking, writing, or signing, it requires guided, intentional, and repeated practice,” the notion that decoding a visual source is simply an innate skill persists.<sup>1</sup> Thus, while textual literacy is an established cornerstone of the university education, analogous expectations for visual literacy do not exist. In the absence of a clearly articulated call for visual literacy, substantiated with data on student development, art history misses an opportunity to widely challenge the misconception “that language is paradigmatic for meaning and that images simply entertain or illustrate, proving a respite from serious academic work” and or the image’s “stigma of being an easy read, useful only in scaffolding early literacy development, but not valuable as a tool for adolescent and adult learning.”<sup>2</sup> Similar to our understanding of textual literacy as a level of cultivated mastery beyond the mechanics of reading, visual literacy implies a practice that extends beyond the natural processes of seeing. Furthermore, if we consider the pedagogical outcomes that can be addressed through visual literacy training, which builds student capacity for working with primary sources, distinguishing between objective and subjective information, adopting more concrete language in oral and written communication, and understanding different points of view and the impact of our own biases when drawing conclusions, this training speaks to skills integral not just to art history, but to the heart of a liberal arts education.

Inspired by partnerships between medical schools and museums that produce measurable outcomes in the frequency and sophistication of diagnostic observations through limited art history-based interventions, this paper documents the re-orientation of a traditional survey course to explicitly address foundational visual literacy skills.<sup>3</sup> Despite the widely documented outcomes among these postgraduate models, including gains in critical thinking, observation, communication skills, empathy, and bias recognition, there does not exist a similar focused protocol at the undergraduate level. Rather than create a new stand-alone course, or significantly

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<sup>1</sup> Deandra Little, Peter Felten, and Chad Berg, “Liberal Education in a Visual World,” *Liberal Education* 96 (Spring 2010): 46.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Thomas, Nancy Place, and Cinnamon Hillyard, “Students and Teachers Learning to See, Part 1: Using Visual Images in the College Classroom to Promote Students’ Capacities and Skills,” *College Teaching* 56 (2008): 23-7.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Sheila Naghshineh et al., “Formal Art Observation Training Improves Medical Students’ Visual Diagnostic Skills,” *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 23.7 (July 2008): 991-997, and Marcia Brennan, et al. “Medicine and the Museum: An Experiential Case Study in Art History Pedagogy and Practice,” (2019) published in this issue of *Art History Pedagogy and Practice*. Nationwide, more than 70 clinical programs have partnered with museums to provide visual analysis training as part of their medical/nursing curriculum; the most comprehensive listing and bibliography for these programs is facilitated by the Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History at University of Texas, Dallas, available online at <https://www.utdallas.edu/arhistory/medicine/>.

reconfigure the disciplinary focus of the art history survey, this Spring 2019 pilot implemented a series of exercises and assessments designed to directly target transdisciplinary components of visual literacy and to highlight these competencies through student discussion and reflection with minimal disruption.

While certainly visual literacy is cultivated in any art history course through the in-class practice of looking and analysis, it is not typically articulated as a primary outcome, nor are content-heavy courses structured to address these skills in a systematic or demonstrable fashion. At the same time, this pilot was mindful of the dangers of moving the survey course away from a discipline-specific, content-based curriculum. There is a delicate balance to be sought in making art history more relevant to students across campus without devaluing the field as a subject of its own merit or reducing it to a series of generic skills. While emphasizing visual literacy training introduces an element of competency-based education that necessarily replaces some art historical content within the structure of the course, these interventions were short exercises at the beginning of class.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, with careful image selection, works used in these exercises can be chosen to reinforce existing course content.

### **Research Question**

This study asks whether improvements in components of visual literacy can be measured through a minimally-invasive protocol of exercises that complement, and potentially reinforce, the traditional course content of the art history survey.

### **Methodology**

This study employed content analysis and qualitative coding of pre- and post-tests to capture and characterize the number and types of observations made on descriptive, timed writings. This data was combined with participant reflections to assess whether students enhanced their skills of observation and description.

### **Participants**

Students in this study were enrolled at Furman University, a private, liberal arts college in Greenville, South Carolina. This course, ART 131 (Western Art from the Renaissance to the Modern), is traditionally focused on disciplinary content, with limited instruction in formal analysis and writing. There is no prerequisite for the course.

ART 131 fulfills a general education requirement (Visual and Performing Arts), as well as a major requirement for Studio Art and Art History majors. In Spring 2019, 25 students enrolled in ART 131; 23 completed the semester. Of the 25 students, 19% took the course for the general education credits, 44% as a major requirement, and 38% reported the course as an elective. The

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<sup>4</sup> Motivated by Julia Sienkewicz's liberatory call in "Against the "Coverage" Mentality: Rethinking Learning Outcomes and the Core Curriculum," this reduction was part of a continuing editing of the images included in the author's survey courses. See Julia Sienkewicz, "Against the "Coverage" Mentality: Rethinking Learning Outcomes and the Core Curriculum," *Art History Pedagogy and Practice* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-14.

course included students from all years, with sophomores and seniors most heavily represented.

The Institutional Review Board at Furman University approved the collection and publication of research on student writing and performance. Students were advised that their participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous (their writing samples were collected and coded by a third party) and that their participation in the study would have no impact on their coursework or evaluation. Twenty-two students ( $n = 22$ , 18 females and 4 males) consented, although not all subjects completed every exercise.

## Research Design

There exists a lively and wide-ranging debate on the definition and scope of what can be considered “visual literacy.”<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this study, this term has been adopted to suggest a set of competencies analogous to the more common notion of textual literacy. Appropriate to the nature of the survey course, foundational skills were emphasized, foregrounding observation (including the differentiation between objective and subjective observations), the descriptive use of concrete language, and the analysis of basic formal elements. This is not to suggest that these competencies represent the complete value of art history to a general university curriculum, but rather build on one mindset, categorized by Marie Gasper-Hulvat as “Sight as Interpretation.”<sup>6</sup> Within this mindset, students often assume that describing a work of art is a straightforward, obvious, and simple process; she argues that the survey course should challenge and complicate their understanding of the processes of seeing and looking. Building on Gasper-Hulvat’s claim that “students generally enter our courses without understanding how looking itself is an interpretive process,” the present study aimed to make the transition to visual literacy an explicit component of the coursework.<sup>7</sup>

Over the sixteen weeks of the semester, students participated in seven exercises that were explicitly labeled as visual literacy training. These were designed to call attention to skills that were practiced on a regular basis, including formal analysis, identifying and decoding detail, labeling of subjective and objective observations, and written description of artworks. Each exercise was prefaced with a short explanation that singled out a particular skillset and asked students to be mindful about their work. These exercises ranged from five to thirty minutes within our 75-minute class period and were typically conducted in the first minutes of class.

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<sup>5</sup> See James Elkins, *Visual Literacy* (New York: Routledge, 2008) for a disciplinary conversation on the nature and range of visual literacy.

<sup>6</sup> Building on the Rhonda Reymond’s work to define threshold concepts in art history, shared in her 2015 paper, “Portals to Learning; Threshold Concepts in Art History Pedagogy,” presented at SECAC, Marie Gasper-Hulvat identified mental models and misconceptions common among students enrolled in survey courses in her 2016 CAA presentation, “Changing Mental Models and Priorities in the Art History Survey.” My thanks to Marie for her generosity in sharing this paper with me. Additionally, Brad Wuetherick and Elizabeth Loeffler provided a broader notion of threshold concepts in art history, centering around the task of teaching students to “read” art in their conference paper, “Threshold Concepts and Decoding the Humanities: A Case Study of a Threshold Concept in Art History,” presented at the Sixth Annual Conference of the National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (2012), and published at [www.researchgate.net/publication/265637065](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/265637065).

<sup>7</sup> Marie Gasper-Hulvat, “Changing Mental Models.” Unpublished paper, presented at CAA Annual Conference, Washington DC (2016).

Participation was required of all students. Their work was graded according to their engagement with the writing prompts and accounted for 10% of their final grade.

### **Exercise 1: Observation and Communication (Description)**

On the first day of the semester, students were shown Rachel Ruysch's *Flower Still Life* (Toledo Museum of Art) and given six minutes to write a description. They were encouraged to be as thorough as possible and challenged to continue writing for the full six minutes. (Duration: six minutes)

This description was then used to facilitate a full-class discussion, connecting these observations to formal, historical, and artistic considerations of the painting, both to introduce the course and general practices of art history and to encourage students to value their observations as meaningful interpretations of a primary source.

### **Exercise 2: Observation and Communication (Partnered Drawing)**

Students were given a copy of either Robert Delaunay's *Man with a Tulip (Portrait of Jean Metzinger)* (Private Collection) or Ammi Phillips's *Girl in a Red Dress with Cat and Dog* (American Folk Art Museum). They were directed to spend five minutes describing the work as completely as possible and cautioned to use only words – no sketches.

Students then exchanged papers and were directed to sketch the painting, relying only on the provided written description. They were given another five minutes to complete this task on the second page of the handout. Both paintings were then revealed to the class and students discussed the project with their partners. They were asked to consider: (1) what they felt was successful in their descriptions; (2) what they were frustrated by; and (3) what would they do differently in their roles of both the description's author and audience. We then held a full-class discussion to compare notes. The exercise concluded with a five-minute reflection, during which students wrote independently on what they would change, add, or continue to include in their description if they did this exercise again. (Duration: thirty minutes)

### **Exercise 3: Subjective and Objective Observations (Drawing Conclusions)**

Students were shown Paolo Veronese's *Mars and Venus United by Love* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) and asked to write on the following prompt: Please take a look at the image shown. What do you suppose is going on in this painting? Please first write what you think is taking place. Then please describe the evidence that you can find in the painting that led you to this conclusion. Students were then led through a discussion which compared their interpretations and evidence, followed by a connection to contemporary paintings that were part of course materials. (Duration: five minutes writing, ten minutes discussion)

### **Exercise 4: Subjective and Objective Observations (Formal Analysis Example)**

Students were given an example of a formal analysis essay and shown the object on which it was based. They were then asked to identify the thesis statement, topic sentences for each paragraph, and to mark subjective and objective observations. The class then discussed their markings and identified patterns. (Duration: eight minutes writing, seven minutes discussion)

### **Exercise 5: Subjective and Objective Observations (Hypothesis and Evidence)**

Students were given a handout with two columns for objective and subjective observations and shown William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (Tate Britain). Students spent five minutes creating a list of what they saw and were then asked to explain what they thought was happening in the painting. Any observations that were key to their interpretation were to be marked with an asterisk. Students were first placed in small groups to compare their interpretations and evidence, which were then shared with the group. After discussing a range of possible interpretations, students began to settle on a shared reading of the painting, which was then elaborated on through an instructor-led art historical discussion. (Duration: twenty minutes)

At this point in the semester, students also began to prepare for their final reflection on visual literacy by completing a five-minute, in-class brainstorming sessions after Exercises 5, 6, and 7.

Following Exercise 5, the prompt asked them to consider: How does this experience relate to a real-world scenario of working in a group when group members do not necessarily read the situation in the same way? Your example can be personal, professional, or academic. (Duration: five minutes)

### **Exercise 6: Observation and Communication (Partnered Drawing)**

In this repetition of Exercise 2, students were given a copy of either Maximilian Kurzweil's *Lady in Yellow Dress* (Vienna Museum) or Amedeo Modigliani's *A Woman* (Detroit Institute of Arts). The timing and prompts remained the same, as students were given five minutes to write a description of their painting and five minutes to render a sketch based on a description from their partner. Reflection and discussion centered on how this experience differed from the first time and how they had modified their approach. (Duration: thirty minutes)

As part of preparation for their final reflection, students were asked to write for five minutes on the following: (1) what they did differently in their descriptions this time; (2) what they felt they did more successfully this time; and (3) what did they think was the point of this exercise/what did they learn. (Duration: five minutes)

### **Exercise 7: Observation and Communication (Description)**

Students were shown Rachel Ruysch's *Still Life with Bouquet of Flowers and Plums* (Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels) and provided with the same prompt from the first day of class. (Duration: six minutes)

### **Final Reflection:**

Students were then given the prompt for their final reflection paper and given five minutes to brainstorm. This final reflection intended to underscore their development of this visual literacy skillset and its relevance beyond art history and the classroom. Students were encouraged to draw from the short reflections drafted in-class and to consider how their experiences could connect to and enrich their personal, academic, or professional ambitions.

### **Additional Activities**

These exercises were explicitly additional to the course material, however the concepts were also



integrated into exercises that have traditionally been part of the ART 131 survey and general disciplinary practices in art history, including class discussions and minor adjustments to the following practices:

### **Unit recaps:**

Throughout the semester, unit recaps were used to reinforce the application of course material and visual literacy skills. After the completion of a stylistic period, students were shown an unfamiliar image, given four minutes and an index card, and asked to list how this work exemplified the characteristics of that particular unit. After working independently, the class shared their summaries, which they were encouraged to compile as a study guide. In addition to articulating the characteristics of the given style, my observations of these short writing exercises and my review of the notes they generated revealed that students became more comfortable working with unknown images, practicing their analytical skills, and synthesizing class discussions with information from their textbook. While this added approximately eight minutes to each unit, it was useful as a diagnostic tool and as test preparation.

### **Formal Analysis paper:**

ART 131 traditionally includes a formal analysis paper as the major writing assignment. Students are asked to visit the Greenville County Museum of Art to write about an object on exhibit. They are asked to formulate a thesis on how meaning is communicated to the viewer and to support that thesis with their observations. In Spring 2019, instruction for this assignment was timed with the fourth Visual Literacy exercise, which introduced the format and structure of a formal analysis paper and provided exposure to the types of information that could be included. Replacing the usual introduction and overview of this writing assignment, this approach was time efficient and more meaningful to students unfamiliar with this genre of writing.

### **Data Collection and Essay Scoring Procedures**

The two exercises that were repeated at the beginning and end of the semester allowed for a pre- and post-test assessment: the six-minute written description of a floral still life by Rachel Ruysch and the partnered drawing exercise. At the conclusion of the semester, copies of student work were handled by an IRB-approved research assistant who removed all identifying information from each, replacing names with a numerical code. These samples were then analyzed for trends. Certainly, deriving quantitative data from student writing is a subjective and complex operation.<sup>8</sup> The following represents an evaluation of writing samples that were coded to assess particular competencies sets.

For the first and seventh exercises (descriptions of still lifes by Rachel Ruysch, see Table 1), student writing samples were coded to characterize the operations within each sentence as either

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<sup>8</sup> My approach to coding student writing was guided by Karen Manarin, "Close Reading: Paying Attention to Student Artifacts," in *SoTL in Action: Illuminating Critical Moments of Practice*, ed. Nancy L. Chick (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2018): 100-108; and Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (London: SAGE Publications, 2013).

(1) naming (listing objects within the painting); (2) describing (providing detail about those objects); or (3) analyzing (discussion of formal elements or interpretive/art historical hypotheses). Student responses were transcribed into a Microsoft Excel document and each sentence was labeled with the corresponding code(s); for example, the sentence “This is a painting of a vase of flowers” was coded as naming while “This is a still life painting showing a large, disordered arrangement of flowers on a table” was coded as both naming and describing. These samples were then coded to assess student achievement within these categories as novice (1 point), learner (2 points), or expert (3 points)<sup>9</sup> The rubric for this analysis is included in the appendix. The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared to determine student gains in the number of observations made, the proficiency of those observations, and the distribution within the writing sample among these operational categories.

For the second and sixth exercises (partnered drawing exercises), writing samples were coded to capture the number of observations made and what components of the paintings were included in their description. These samples were then coded again to assess the use of concrete descriptive language, assigning either one to two points, according to the level of specificity used in each statement. Each statement was then coded to represent the component(s) of the painting it addressed and these observations were mapped to measure the range of elements discussed in the descriptions. In a further extension of this project, it would be interesting to then measure the accuracy of the drawn rendering in relation to the instructions given.

## Results

In the analysis of these two writing exercises, an unanticipated, but promising, result became clear. In repeating these activities, students had learned and refined what types of information were most relevant and had adjusted their responses accordingly. While little difference existed between the descriptions in exercises 1 and 2, the students produced significantly different descriptions on exercises 6 and 7.

This shift was predicted in student reflections following exercise two, when they were asked what they would change if they had this exercise to do again. Reflections included: “The most useful comments were the simplest. Color, composition, content, and then secondary to those is style and feeling... I would spend less time explaining ambiguities and my interpretation.” Others spoke to the need for more concrete language, explaining “I described things as being plain or having detail when I should have described what they looked like, using detail. I could have written more concisely and had more time to include more detail” or “I would change putting assumptions and stick to things I can actually point out”

This change implies an understanding of bias and multiple interpretations of a shared primary source. As one student explained, “the describe and draw exercises made me think about the art not just from my perspective, but from my partner’s perspective.... The second time I focused on describing the art in a way anyone would understand.” Another student reflected that “effective

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<sup>9</sup> Both examples of student writing would be coded here as “novice,” based on their lack of concrete or specific language. This rubric was loosely based on a university rubric used for textual analysis, my familiarity with disciplinary writing, and experience with Writing Across the Curriculum programs.

language is not only concise, but efficient, and this efficiency comes from understanding who you're talking to.”

### **Description Exercise Results (Tables 1-3)**

In the pre-test description of Rachel Ruysch's *Floral Still Life*, students made an average of 11.8 observations in the six-minute timed writing, compared to an average of 15.2 in the post-test. When considering the types of observations made, the number of naming and describing statements stayed relatively stable (64 and 146, pre-test; 69 and 141, post-test); the greatest increase came in higher-level analytical statements. These tripled from 26 in the pre-test to 79 in the post-test. Additionally, student observations revealed progress from novice toward learner ranking. When weighted according to the grading rubric, average student score rose from 15.6 on the pre-test to 26.2 on the post-test. As might be expected at the end of an art historical survey course, students were also more proficient in the use of art historical terminology and historical interpretation of the work.

### **Partnered Drawing Exercise Results (Tables 4-6)**

Student reflections made clear the different approaches taken to this task on its second iteration. In addition to their familiarity with the exercise, as one student wrote, “our descriptions also improved because we recognized that not everyone shares our same frame of reference, so it is vital to be specific and detailed in shared explanations.” In this vein, students not only made more observations (averaging 5.4 more observations on the post-test), but significantly increased their use of concrete language and compositional detail on the post-test. When weighted for concrete descriptive detail, student scores improved from 11.8 on the pre-test to 20.6 on the post-test, a 75% improvement. There was no significant increase in the length of these writing samples, so the shift occurred internally as students moved from ambiguous or interpretive statements to more clear directive ones. Students incorporated the results of their reflections after the first round, using more compositional and “big picture” information along with notable specifics. Students in this exercise employed fewer interpretive comments, focusing more on objective information that could be more certainly decoded by their partner.

Student reflections demonstrated an increased awareness of the needs of their partner, with one explaining “not everyone will have the same vision or perspective as you, even if you think you are accurately describing what you see to them.”

There was also a significant level of agreement that emerged among the second pair of descriptions. Where the responses from the first exercise included a wide range of details, demonstrating little consensus on what was most necessary to include, the second group of essays showed little variance among student responses. This suggests a developing consensus on the most useful information for the successful completion of this exercise, a skill that was not directly addressed in coursework.

In their reflections, several students connected this exercise to their other courses, either commenting that the timed nature helped to set priorities when confronted with an assignment

and “contributed to my ability to complete things quickly in other classes that assign time-sensitive tasks” or that they learned to “link my claims to specific evidence in [written] texts.”

### **Discussion and Limitations**

The results of this pilot suggest that the benefits that were noted in medical school/museum partnerships can be effectively transposed to the undergraduate classroom with minimal disruption to the traditional survey course. By making explicit the practices embedded within the discipline, students became more aware of the need to develop visual literacy and more aware of their processes of observation, interpretation, and communication. They came to better understand that a work of art contains both concrete data that can be gathered for analysis and interpretive elements. As students practiced differentiating between what can be located in the work and what is a result of their interpretation or bias, they rehearsed the distinction between observation and inference, or the objective and subjective and were better able to distinguish between the two in their writing.

One limitation of the present study was the lack of an external control group; given the pilot nature of this semester project and the author’s teaching load, it was not possible to directly compare these results with a control class. Given the initial success of these results that suggest the potential for small interventions within the survey, a follow-up is planned for Fall 2019, where concurrent sections of ART 131 will allow for an experiment/control group to be studied. Future findings will allow gains to be more specifically assigned to this protocol, distinguishing them from the gains made by students enrolled in an unaltered survey course.

In 2007, James Elkins argued “the possibility of reconciling the first-year college education so that it works on a visual model is, I think, the most important and potentially revolutionary problem in current curricular theory.”<sup>10</sup> While his work calls for a broad base of visual material across multiple disciplines, certainly the introductory art history survey is a natural ground for these lessons to take place. The articulation and demonstration of improved visual literacy skills does not require a radical reconsideration of the survey course. Not only can small interventions increase student learning and proficiency, but by calling attention to the competencies developed through the study of art, we can demonstrate the discipline’s relevancy and centrality to the pedagogical goals of the university.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> James Elkins, “Introduction,” in *Visual Literacy*, 3. See also his chapter, “Visual Practices across the University: A Report” in *Imagery in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by Oliver Grau (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011): 149-174.

<sup>11</sup> I’d like to thank Ann Grimaldi, Curator of Education at the Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, Ellen Westkaemper, Head of Education at the Greenville County Museum of Art, and David Eubanks, Assistant Vice President, Office of Institutional Assessment and Research, Furman University for their help in generating these exercises, along with Michelle Millar Fisher, who chaired a panel, “State of the Art (History): Pedagogy Laboratory” at the 2017 College Art Association Annual Conference and the organizers of the 2016 Conference on the Liberal Arts at Jackson State University, where earlier proposals and iterations of this project appeared. My thanks also to Marie Gasper-Hulvat, David Eubanks, Diane Boyd, Associate Dean and Executive Director of Furman’s Faculty Development Center Margaret Oakes, our Writing Program Director, for their advice on assessment.

**Table 1. Description Exercises (1 and 7) (unweighted)**

	<b>pre-test # of observations</b>	<b>pre-test % distribution</b>	<b>post-test # of observations</b>	<b>post-test % distribution</b>
<b>Naming</b>	64	27.1	69	23.9
<b>Describing</b>	146	61.9	141	48.8
<b>Analyzing</b>	26	11.0	79	37.3
<b>Total Observations</b>	236	100%	289	100%

**Table 2. Description Exercises (1 and 7) (weighted)**

	<b>pre-test observations score</b>	<b>pre-test % distribution</b>	<b>post-test observations score</b>	<b>post-test % distribution</b>
<b>Naming</b>	85	27.5	113	22.7
<b>Describing</b>	188	60.1	221	44.5
<b>Analyzing</b>	36	11.7	163	32.8

**Table 3. Average earned points of student achievement (Novice-Expert) per observation, Description Exercises**

	<b>pre-test</b>	<b>post-test</b>
<b>Naming</b>	1.3	1.6
<b>Describing</b>	1.3	1.6
<b>Analyzing</b>	1.5	2.1

**Table 4. Distribution of observations made in the Partnered Drawing Exercises by student**



**Table 5. Partnered Drawing Exercise results for students completing both pre-test and post-test (2 and 6) (unweighted, by student)**

Student	1	2	3	5	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Avg.
# observations pre-test	9	7	6	3	7	8	12	8	5	10	10	9	8	7	4	7	8	7.5
# observations post-test	13	14	17	10	13	11	10	13	11	14	11	14	15	13	14	12	15	12.9
# pre-test /post-test change	4	7	11	7	6	3	-2	5	6	4	1	5	7	6	10	5	7	5.4
Percent change	44	50	183	233	86	38	(17)	63	120	40	10	56	88	86	250	71	88	72

**Table 6. Partnered Drawing Exercise results (2 and 6) (weighted, by student)**

Student	1	2	3	5	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Avg.
Score for pre-test	14	15	10	6	15	14	23	13	7	14	16	15	13	9	9	10	7	11.8
Score for post-test	24	16	26	15	18	21	21	19	17	25	27	28	28	24	18	13	17	20.6
pre-test/ post-test change	10	1	16	9	3	7	-2	6	10	11	11	13	15	15	9	3	10	8.9
Percent change	71	7	160	150	20	50	(8)	46	143	79	69	87	115	167	100	30	143	75

## Appendix

### Rubric for analyzing student progress from Novice to Learner to Expert

	<b>Novice—1 point</b>	<b>Learner—2 points</b>	<b>Expert—3 points</b>
<b>Naming</b>	Provides generic labels; omits major components or focuses on limited elements without clear priorities or organization	Attempts more precise labeling; demonstrates prioritization or organization in the naming of components	Concisely identifies components with clarity; demonstrates a deliberate process of observation and organization
<b>Describing</b>	Uses no descriptive language beyond naming or description is limited to generic/non-concrete adjectives	Employs descriptive language that modifies simple adjectives to provide some more precise description; attempts to position components in relation to one another	Provides clear, concrete descriptions of components; establishes relationships between objects with directional cues
<b>Analyzing</b>	Includes little or no identification of formal elements; treats the artwork as a transparent reality	Acknowledges the constructed nature of the artwork or of artistic choices; includes discussion of formal components, but does not elaborate or connect them to interpretive statements	Articulates formal components and provides interpretive or art historical framework as a means of contextualization