

Marking the Land: Jim Dow in North Dakota

Index

Introduction to the Museum and the Rural Initiative	1
Preparing for Your Exhibit Visit	1-2
I Am the Photographer activity	3
Community Heritage: Interviewing and Taking Pictures	4
More Fun with Cameras: Digital and Video Project Ideas	5
A Camera in the Making: Simple Pinhole Cameras	6-7
Meet the Town Historian: ME!	7
Writing About What I See	8
Glossary	9
Further Exploration and Resources	10
Appendix 1: Handouts	
What do I Say?	
Looking and Talking About Photographs	
Mood and Meaning in a Photograph	
For the Younger and the Youngest Learner	11-12
Appendix 2: Visual Thinking Strategies (for teachers)	13

Marking the Land: Jim Dow in North Dakota

Marking the Land: Jim Dow in North Dakota is a photographic exhibit that originates from the North Dakota Museum of Art in Grand Forks. The Museum originally commissioned the artist to photograph folk art in 1981 at which time he became intrigued with the weather, the vastness and the people of North Dakota. Dow returned to North Dakota, this time to record his impressions in a different way. As the landscape of the plains changes with the movement from farms into urban areas, as young people seek jobs in other states, what is left is the vestige of what was and what is still holding on. Human activity and interchange, the effects people, industry and time have had on the land are evident in the pictures, even though one finds no people in the photos. This exhibit encourages students to make connections between the past and present states of this land we call home.

Rural Arts Initiative

The Rural Arts Initiative began in 2003 with the Museum's first traveling exhibit *Snow Country Prison: Interned in North Dakota*. As the Museum is located on the far eastern edge of the state it becomes difficult to bring school children to Grand Forks. In response, the Initiative was designed so that Museum exhibitions can travel to rural towns. The Museum invites the community and schools to actively participate by attending the exhibition, holding related events, and using the exhibit as a source for learning. *Marking the Land* is the fourth traveling exhibit from Grand Forks. Other exhibits included *Snow Country Prison: Interned in North Dakota*, *Shelterbelts*, and *Introductions: Artists Self Portraits*. Exhibitions are curated by the North Dakota Museum of Art and travel to all parts of North Dakota.

How to use this Information

Each of the activities in this document is linked to North Dakota curriculum standards for Visual Arts, Social Studies and/or Language Arts. Those listed reflect what we feel are the most closely connected to the suggested activities. Teachers are encouraged to find other sources and to feel free to adjust and expand upon the activities to fit your specific classroom curricula and age. Museum education staff is available by e-mail or by calling 701-777-4195 to assist in any way with your educational goals.

Before You Visit the Exhibit

Teachers are urged to prepare students by first helping them understand that our personal responses to what we see reflect individual opinions, and that it is always good to ask ourselves questions. Most of us are used to looking at snapshots of people or things we know. The subject matter of some unfamiliar photographs can be more difficult to engage in. One technique to help us spend time with photographs is called Visual Thinking Strategies. It is a very non-intimidating way in which many museums teach children how to approach and question a piece of art. We suggest you visit the website www.carearts.org/lessons, or search for Visual Thinking Strategies on the internet. Some of these strategies, which are methods for interpreting what we see, are included with some of the following activities. You can practice VTS by finding photographs in advance of your visit and using them to begin discussions. This will offer students a chance to feel more comfortable in voicing opinions when they are at the actual exhibit.

For older students, introduce and review elements and principles of design and follow with practice by looking for them in different photos and artworks. A list of design terms can be found in the glossary at the end of these materials.

An effort will be made to display some photographs that were taken near your site so that students may recognize areas from their surroundings. On the way to the exhibit, point out features of the landscape, buildings or places of interest as a way to begin observing before you get to the exhibit.

While at the Exhibit

Remind students to be respectful towards the work by not touching it. Taking photos is permitted if you do not use a flash. A handout may be available for each student upon arrival to the exhibit that will include some activities to do while at the exhibit. A copy of this is included at the end of these materials and can be duplicated as needed. These activities include questions designed to inspire discussion. Your group should meet at one image so you can help them practice looking and discussing a photograph before they go on to view the rest of the exhibit.

After the Exhibit

You may use the handout to enter into a discussion about what the children saw at the exhibit. In order to prepare children for some of the following activities, ask students to share what they wrote or found using the handout. Help them make connections between the photographs and what they know or have experienced about the land or the people of North Dakota and Minnesota. The following activities may be altered to accommodate different grades and ages of children, or meet different standards than those listed.

I AM THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Visual Art Standards

- Standard 1: Students understand and apply visual art media, techniques and processes.**
- Standard 2: Students understand how works of art are structured and how visual art has a variety of functions.**
- Standard 3: Students know a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.**
- Standard 4: Students understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture.**
- Standard 5: Students understand the characteristics and merit of one's own work of art and the works of others.**
- Standard 6: Students make connections between the visual arts and other disciplines.**

Language Arts Standards:

- Standard 4: Students engage in the speaking and listening process.**

Most families own a camera, and often a digital one. If your classroom has access to digital cameras or disposable cameras, invite children to experiment with taking pictures of any subject which may include people and animals. Bring the pictures to the class to discuss. Leave plenty of time for observances by other class members. You may encourage discussion by asking all students or the photographer some of these questions:

- What is happening in this picture?
- Tell me about why you think this. Point out examples.
- What else do you see happening here?
- Why did you, the photographer, take this picture?

Or for the rest of the class:

- Why do you think this student took this picture?
- What kind of mood does this picture have? What in the picture make you say this?
- Can you talk about why this is a successful picture? (perhaps using elements and principles of design)
- How might this be different if it was a painting or a drawing or a black and white photograph?

Now have children repeat this exercise only have them take pictures of things or places, that DO NOT include people or animals.

- What is happening in this picture?
- What do these things tell us?
- What is interesting about this? Show us what makes you think this.
- What is not interesting in this picture? Explain why you think this by pointing out specific things.
- What were some of the things the photographer might have been thinking about?
- Does your picture say anything about people? (for instance, an old gym might still have a flag, a worn floor, bleachers and posters-what does this tell us about the community, people, school, era?)

COMMUNITY HERITAGE: INTERVIEWING AND TAKING PICTURES

Visual Arts Standards

Standard 1: Students understand and apply visual art media, techniques and processes.

Language Arts Standards

Standard 1: Students engage in the research process.

Standard 2: Students engage in the reading process.

Standard 3: Students engage in the writing process.

Standard 4: Students engage in the speaking and listening process.

Social Studies Standards

Standard 1: Students use Social Studies skills and resources.

Standard 6: Students understand the role culture plays in shaping human development and behavior.

Jim Dow's photographs tell a story about the people and communities of North Dakota by showing the "marks" they make: a building, a business, a place and personal memorabilia. A good way to help students connect the photographs with their own community or heritage is have them interview a person who lives there.

Together as a class decide upon what would be good interview questions. Have the class develop and practice asking open-ended questions together (those with an explanation as an answer rather than a YES or NO). You may design a template of questions together, however, this sometimes takes the spontaneity out of the interview. If photos are part of the project the pictures the children take might include:

- A picture of the person interviewed in the setting of where they live or work
- At least two each of the elements and principles of design that you have reviewed and practiced pointing out by using photographs in your classroom, books or elsewhere.

The Interview

- Pick a family member or adult who has lived in North Dakota for a long time.
- Pick a time when to meet with the person without a lot of interruption if possible.
- Make sure you spell their name correctly and find out what they do or did for a living.
- Explain why you are doing this interview; for a report, a scrapbook?
- Ask them if you can take some pictures of them. Hint: pictures might be better if they are taken with some background. For instance, if you are interviewing a farmer, you might want to take the picture in a field or a barn.
- Bring your list of prepared questions, however, if someone says something that is not on the question list, but it interests you, it will probably interest everyone else, so be prepared to stray from your list if you need to.
- Ask them if they have pictures or items to show you that are personal to them.
- When you feel you have all the information you want, if possible, (depending on what your class is planning to do at the end of this) invite your person to an event, or offer to let them read your final project report. The completed interview and photos can be formed into a newsletter, scrapbook, classroom exhibit, or on-line newsletter to share with the community at the end of the project. A visit to a library, historical site or newspaper archives can enhance this project as well as help students learn more about how to conduct research.

MORE FUN WITH CAMERAS

Visual Art Standards

Standard 1: Students understand and apply visual art media, techniques and processes.

Standard 2: Students understand how works of art are structured and how visual art has a variety of functions.

Standard 3: Students know a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.

Standard 5: Students understand the characteristics and merit of one's own work of art and the works of others.

Language Arts Standards:

Standard 4: Students engage in the speaking and listening process.

Standard 5: Students understand media

Digital photos (still)

- Are you really symmetrical? – take pictures and manipulate. Or take a picture of your face, enlarge it to life size. Cut it in half lengthwise, take one half and attach it to a plain piece of paper and finish off by drawing your other side. Or do not cut the photo in half, instead draw a line down the middle. Carefully measure with a ruler the width of your left eye and right eye, how far your nose is from your left ear, your right ear, etc. Are you symmetrical?
- Advertise a product or an idea by taking a picture, then adding the text. A picture of a stray dog could be the start of an advertisement for the local animal shelter, or a picture of red shoes could be advertised by: Take a trip to Oz.
- Take a picture of a word from a sign and manipulate it – BOOKS could advertise the library, or can be “changed” to read “BOOK-IT” as a slogan to get people to read, or maybe to exercise!
- Take a vacation from your desk using your imagination and a camera.
- Stand in one place and take a series of pictures of what is around you.
- Nine of me. Take a number of pictures of yourself or have someone take a number of you, catching you at different times of the day doing different things.
- Take pictures of the sky, trees, landscapes to perhaps capture a mood.
- Take pictures, print and cut them up and rearrange them into a collage or crazy quilt or CD cover.

Video projects

If you have access to a video camera or a digital video camera try these things:

- My monster – transform something normal into something scary or vice versa.
- Interview a friend or a family member.
- Pick a product to sell or promote, make a slogan, make a 30 second advertisement.
- Documentary: Christmas in Cavalier or some other subject.
- It's a dog's (or a cat's, shoe's, hat's, etc.) life...
- How did you do that? (show how to make or do something).
- Educational message (3 ways to stay healthy).
- Tell a story.
- A day in the life of “Me”.
- Mapping my world (How to get from here to there to there and home again).

A CAMERA IN THE MAKING: SIMPLE PINHOLE CAMERA

Visual Arts Standards

Standard 1: Students understand and apply visual art media, techniques and processes.

Science Standards:

Standard 3: Students understand the basic concepts and principles of Physical Science (how a lens works and the path of light)

Following are instructions for making a simple pinhole camera. There are many websites and books that show alternative ways and that cover understanding the human eye and how the camera works. This is one taken from www.exploratorium.edu/science

What Do I Need?

45 Minutes

- * empty Pringles® chip can
- * marker
- * ruler
- * X-Acto knife or utility knife (ask a grown-up to help you cut)
- * thumbtack or pushpin
- * masking tape
- * aluminum foil
- * scissors (if you want)
- * bright sunny day

What Do I Do?

1. Take the plastic lid off the Pringles® can and wipe out the inside. (Save the lid!)
2. Draw a line with the marker all the way around the can, about two inches up from the bottom. Have a grown-up cut along that line so the tube is in two pieces.
3. The shorter bottom piece has a metal end. With the thumbtack, make a hole in the center of the metal.
4. Put the plastic lid onto the shorter piece. Put the longer piece back on top. Tape all the pieces together.
5. To keep light out of the tube use a piece of aluminum foil that's about 1 foot long. Tape one end of the foil to the tube. Wrap the foil all the way around the tube twice, then tape the loose edge of the foil closed. If you have extra foil at the top, just tuck it neatly inside the tube.
6. Go outside on a sunny day. Close one eye and hold the tube up to your other eye. You want the inside of the tube to be as dark as possible-so cup your hands around the opening of the tube if you need to. Look around your yard through the tube. Don't look directly into the sun! The lid makes a screen that shows you upside-down color pictures!
7. Hold your hand below the tube and move it very slowly upward. Your hand is moving up, but you'll see its shadow move down the screen!

What's Going On?

The hole doesn't make the picture. The image of the world is always there. All the hole does is make it possible for you to see it.

Suppose you point your Pringles® Pinhole at a brightly lit bouquet of flowers. Light reflects off the red rose, the blue iris, the white daisy, and the green leaves. If you hold a piece of white paper near the bouquet, some of that reflected light will shine on the paper-but it won't look like anything. That's because light bouncing off the red rose ends up overlapping with light bouncing off the blue iris, the white daisy, and the green leaves. There are many images of the bouquet on the paper-but they overlap with one another, and the colors all blend together, making a jumble of light.

The hole isolates a small part of the light, sorting a single image from the jumble. Only a few of the light rays reflecting off each point on the rose are traveling in a direction that will let them pass through the hole. The same is true for light bouncing off all the other flowers in the bouquet. On the other side of the hole, these light rays reveal an image of the bouquet.

Adapted from © 1998 Exploratorium

MEET THE TOWN HISTORIAN: ME!

Visual Arts Standards

Standard 1: Students understand and apply visual art media, techniques and processes.

Standard 4: Students understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture.

Standard 5: Students understand the characteristics and merit of one's own work of art and the works of art of others.

Standard 6: Students make connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Language Arts Standards

Standard 1: Students engage in the research process.

Standard 2: Students engage in the reading process.

Standard 3: Students engage in the writing process.

Standard 6: Students understand and use principles of language.

Jim Dow's photographs are of interesting places throughout North Dakota and Minnesota. Viewing the exhibit may have started the students thinking of interesting and important places in their own community. For this activity, students (working in small groups or pairs) should choose a place or building they think is important to them or to their town. This could be their favorite ice hockey rink, the cornerstone on the bank, the local cemetery or the old school house. A variety of research means can be employed, from newspaper or library research to simply asking town residents. They should work together with their teacher and class to decide upon what places to explore. This would also be a good time to review picture taking techniques, how to use a simple camera and what makes a good picture.

If the students work in groups, assign roles such as one or two students to interview, one or two students to be the recorder (writing) and one or two to photograph the building or place. They should together research further its history and role in the community and produce a report, poem, play or artwork about their findings. Students should keep in mind the elements and principles of design when photographing their chosen site.

WRITING ABOUT WHAT I SEE

Language Arts Standards

Standard 3: Students engage in the writing process.

Standard 5: Students understand media.

Standard 6: Students understand and use principles of language.

Visual Arts Standards

Standard 1: Students understand and apply visual art media, technique and processes.

Standard 2: Students understand how works of art are structured and how visual art has a variety of functions.

Standard 3: Students know a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.

Standard 5: Students understand the characteristics and merit of one's own work of art and the work of art of others.

We have included two appendices at the end of this document, pages 12 and 13 which can be used as handouts or guides while at the exhibit and to gather information for the following activity.

Students begin by using ideas they gathered from or wrote in the handouts at the exhibit to produce a report about the photograph they most enjoyed. The report might address the following:

- What is the title or place of this picture? (This can be found on the guide or label)
- What do **you** think the photograph is about? List some examples from the picture that make you think this.
- Does the photo have a message?
- What things in the picture make you think this?
- If you were to take a picture to tell the same message, what would **you** do?
- Can you name some things (elements and principles of design) the artist used to make this picture successful? What are they. (For instance, "**color**" is important because it is a hot day and the artist uses a lot of orange and red in his photograph which make it seem warmer or most of the "**lines**" and edges of the walls and ceilings lead my eye to the center and to the most important part of the picture.

GLOSSARY

Elements and Principles of Design

***NOTE: Various sources list the elements and principles differently and sometimes they are categorized differently as well.**

Visual **Elements** in a work of art are the basic things that can be seen in the piece. These elements are listed below. (Be aware that different sources may include or exclude certain elements and principals, and definitions may vary.)

Line- describes a shape or outline or edge

Texture- the degree of roughness or smoothness in objects

Shape- a two-dimensional space without thickness or form. Shapes are flat and can be either geometric or organic.

Form- a three-dimensional object having volume and thickness. Form can be viewed from many angles.

Value- the degree of light and dark in a design. Contrast is an extreme difference in values.

Size- the variations in proportions (bigness or littleness) of an object, line or shape.

Principles of design are the results one gets from using the elements. They combine the Elements to create an aesthetic placement of things that produce a good design. These principals are listed below.

Center of Interest (Emphasis)- an area that first attracts attention in a composition, and is most important compared to other objects in a composition. This can be accomplished by using contrast of values, more colors, and placement in the format.

Balance- a sense of visual equality in shape, form, value, etc. All elements can be used for creating balance in a composition.

Harmony- also referred to as Unity, Harmony is a when one uses a consistency in a design to bring a composition together.

Contrast- is the change in Value of one or more colors. It can be used to make certain objects stand out in a composition (a light object against a dark background) It can also be used to create an area of emphasis.

Directional Movement- is a visual flow throughout a composition or, how one's eye moves around a composition. Placement, position, values, patterns all contribute to directional movement.

Rhythm- a movement in which some Elements recur regularly to create a flow, almost like the beat or rhythm of music.

Scale- Scale is the size of an object in relation to surrounding objects.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

For more ideas, check out the websites listed on the Resource list below. Additional websites that may be useful are:

- <http://www.betterphoto.com/photography-for-kids.asp>
- www.youthlearn.org

RESOURCES

1. Reuter, Laurel. Marking the Land: Jim Dow in North Dakota. Santa Fe: The center for American Places Inc. & The North Dakota Museum of Art. 2007.
2. Tallman, Diane J. "Community Study through Photographs".
<http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/education/lessonplans/lessonplan020.shtml>
3. "Science Explorer: Pringles Pinhole—Make a camera from a recycled potato chip can!". 1998.
http://www.exploratorium.edu/science_explorer/pringles_pinhole.html.
4. "Adobe Digital Kids Club." 2007. Adobe Systems Incorporated.
<http://www.adobe.com/education/digkids/training/index.html>

APPENDIX 1: FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS
Handouts for at the Exhibit

WHAT DO I SAY? LOOKING AND TALKING ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY

- Find the photograph that you like the best. Why do you like this photo? What things in the photo do you like? Point them out.
- Are there elements or principles of design that you can identify in the photo? What are they? Can you describe them or point them out?
- If you could pick a word or phrase that would describe this picture, what would it be? Why?
- If you could pick a mood that best fits this photo, what would it be and why?
- Why do you think Jim Dow took this picture, or decided to take the picture this way? (For instance, is the picture taken of something in the distance or close up? Does it seem that the photographer is taking it from above, or below, or straight ahead?)
- Choose one of the following words, or make up your own, that best describes this picture. Funny, cold, warm, empty, full, sad, peaceful, lonely for example.

MOOD AND MEANING IN A PHOTOGRAPH

Compare two photographs in the exhibition such as: **The View of the Graveyard with Snirt, Hague, ND** and **Snirt Covered Graveyard, Raub, ND** or choose two others.

- What are these pictures about?
- Who is in the picture?
- What is the overall feeling of the picture? What clues do you find to support this?
- If you chose the graveyard pictures, why do you think the photographer took one picture of graves far away almost on the horizon (where the sky meets the ground)?
- In the picture with the most snow in it, what does the artist do to lead our eyes away from the front of the picture and takes us into the picture.
- List different ways in which an artist or photographer can make pictures about people with or without people in it. See if you can find examples here at the exhibit or in books or magazines or other places that do the same.
- If you were going to take a picture to tell us about someone you know, but you could not have the actual person in it, how would you do this?

AND FOR THE YOUNGER LEARNER

Find these things:

- A red stool
- A TV
- A license plate BQT 752
- The words "North Dakota"
- A road
- A mailbox
- A cow on a hill far away
- A lady in a wagon
- A winter cactus
- A tower of oil cans
- A red machine monster
- A "No Smoking" sign
- A bison
- A car wash
- A scary Halloween picture
- 2 pheasants

AND FOR THE YOUNGEST LEARNER

Help your students find:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| A cow | Something Red, Green | Something Blue, Yellow |
| 5 circles | "NO" | A wooden watermelon slice |
| 8 squares or rectangles | A dog face | A cactus |
| 2 triangles | A buffalo | 2 wooden horses |
| A big fish | 2 flying birds | A cow on a hill |
| A TV | A star | A bed |
| A tractor with a smile | A lot of wooden fish | 4 yellow ducks |

APPENDIX 2: FOR TEACHERS
VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

Look at art pieces in books, around your school, or even use nature as your source of discussion.

Ask:

What do you see? Have them point out specific things that they actually see.

OR ask:

What is going on in this picture? Point out specific things that show this.

What else? Or What does this remind you of? Now answers may become a little more interpretive.

What do you see that makes you think that? Point out specifics.

Continue to ask, in different ways, "What else do you see?" or "What do you see that makes you say this?"

Allow students to think, not rushing in too soon during silences.

Repeat out loud what the student says trying not to change or interpret the idea. This allows students to clarify if they need to. I also gives other students a chance to hear what the original student has said.

Refrain from making a judgment. Do not say "Good", " I like your answer" etc.

You might say something like " That is a different way of looking at this picture. I like how you thought so hard about this picture."

Treat each observation as important.

Be prepared to follow a direction of thinking even if you feel you are getting a little "off track". Students, if given time, will usually find their way back to the artist's intent. If they do not, at least they will feel they have been given the license to investigate and interpret. This is a basis for developing good problem solving skills and a confidence in speaking.

Not all art has to have an answer or solution. It is all right to continue on to discuss another piece without totally resolving the discussion for the first one.