

**Pre & Post-Visit Activities**  
**Michael Copeland: It's Only Make Believe**  
February 7 – May 25, 2014

Your museum visit and pre-and post-visit activities support learning by addressing National Content Standards for the Visual Arts, Wyoming Education Standards and NCSD Essential Curriculum.

**National Standards for Visual Arts Education**

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and process to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

Content Standard #2 Using knowledge of structures and functions: students learn the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas.

Content Standard #3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Content Standard #4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

**Wyoming Education Standards:**

Content Standard:

Fine Arts

1. Creative Expression through Production

All Benchmarks, K-8

2. Aesthetic Perception

All Benchmarks, K-8

3. Historical & Cultural Context

Benchmark 1, K-8

Social Studies

5. People, Places & Environments

Benchmark 4, Grades 3 & 4

Benchmark 3, Grades 5 & 6

Language Arts

3. Speaking and Listening

Benchmark 1, Grades K-4

Benchmark 3, Grades K-2, 5 & 6

Benchmark 4, Grade 5

Benchmark 6, Grades 5 & 6

**NCSD Essential Curriculum:**

**K -5 grades**

Art

Q3-Unit 3: Art Etiquette

**K-1**

Q1–Unit 1: Introduction to types of Lines, Geometric Shapes

Q2–Unit 1: Curved, Straight, Angled Lines and Texture

Q3–Unit 1: Primary Secondary Colors and Geometric Shapes

**2<sup>nd</sup> grade**

Q1–Unit 1: Introduction to types of Lines, Geometric Shapes

Q2–Unit 1: Curved, Straight, Angled Lines and Texture

Q2–Unit 3: Placement and size

**4<sup>th</sup> grade**

Q1–Unit 1: Intermediate Colors

Q2–Unit 1: Visual Form

**5<sup>th</sup> grade**

Q1–Unit 1: Complimentary, Analogous and Monochromatic Colors (Tints and Shades): Students demonstrate advanced proficiency and independence in working with a wide variety of art materials and resources to explore the arts.

**K-8 grades**Language Arts

Unit 1-4: Speaking and Listening to be a productive learner

Q1-4, 7, 11, 15: Vocabulary Acquisition (ongoing unit of study)

## Pre-Visit Activities

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Before visiting the NIC, we recommend that you and your students explore and discuss some of the concepts and ideas listed below:

**1. Introduce the concept of realism and abstract art styles.** Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ◆ What does the word “abstract” mean?
- ◆ What does the word “realistic” mean?
- ◆ Do you prefer to look at art that depicts recognizable subjects or art that don’t always show things like they appear to be in real life? Explain why.
- ◆ Could a work of art in which only shapes, colors, textures, lines, and values are used be considered art? Why or why not?
- ◆ Why might an artist paint a picture without having a recognizable subject matter?

After discussing students’ ideas, inform students that Realism is the representation of objects as they exist or look like in the real world. Abstract art is a style of art in which the subject matter doesn’t look like a real person, object, or place. Abstract art may reflect an emotion, feeling, thought, experience, or an aspect of a reality that has been simplified or rearranged. Color, lines, shapes and feelings are more important to the abstract artist than imitating nature.

**2. Investigate how the artist uses compositional elements to tell the story and convey a message.**

Choose an example image from art history or use the suggested images of Copeland’s work (Appendix 1). Have students examine and discuss the work. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ◆ What do you see in this work of art?
- ◆ What is the focal point of this work? How does the artist show this?
- ◆ Based on established focal point, what is going on in the painting?
- ◆ What do you think happened before this moment?
- ◆ What do you think will happen next?
- ◆ How do compositional elements such as the positioning of the figures close to each other and the background contribute to the story?
- ◆ What is the title of this painting? Does the title help to tell a story?

**3. Inform students about Michael Copeland.**

Michael Copeland is a New Mexico-based mixed-media artist who works in drawing, painting, print and collage. He has been creating art for over 40 years and has been an educator for twenty-eight years.

According to the artist, even as a young person he was seeing composition in everything.

His greatest inspiration was his first art teacher, O.K. Harry. When Copeland became an art teacher himself he tried to bring the unexpected and avoid boring in the classroom. He often used humor and sometimes shock to keep his students interested and he believes that this translated to his work.

Copeland often combines realism, abstraction and allegory in his works of art. The artist creates images that are unusual: some evocative and unnerving, some whimsical and mysterious, all colorful and mesmerizing. Thematically, the artist likes to challenge stereotypical perceptions and he finds facial characteristics to be the perfect compositional tool for great storytelling.

## During Your Visit to the NIC

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### Look. Inquire. Investigate.

1. Choose two works of art, one with recognizable objects and another with more abstract subject matter. Have students compare and contrast the two works of art in terms of how they are alike and how they are different. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ◆ What do you see in this work of art?
- ◆ What does this painting/collage make you think about?
- ◆ Is the work of art true to life? How real has the artist made things look?
- ◆ If the painting/collage is not completely realistic, what parts/details are not realistic?
- ◆ How does the presence of abstract elements make you feel?
- ◆ How would you describe this work of art to someone who cannot see it?
- ◆ How are these paintings different and how are they similar?

Tell students that Copeland works in the style known as abstract realism. The artist often combines abstract elements and realistic representation in one work of art.

2. Choose one of the Copeland's paintings. Have students discuss how the artist uses compositional elements to tell the story and convey a message. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- ◆ What do you see?
- ◆ What part of the painting catches your eye most? What is the focal point of the painting?
- ◆ How does the artist show this? (Direct our eye through composition, lines, colors, shapes, etc.)
- ◆ Describe the lines in the painting. Describe the colors and shapes you see in this painting. How does the placement of these elements help the artist to create a focal point?
- ◆ How do compositional elements such as the position of the figures and background contribute to the story?
- ◆ What do you think is going on in the painting?
- ◆ What happened before this moment?
- ◆ What do you think will happen next?
- ◆ How would you describe the person's clothing? What does it tell you about the person?
- ◆ What other objects are included in the art work? Why do you think they were included?
- ◆ What is the title of this painting? Does the title help to tell a story?

## Post-Visit Activities

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### 1. Write.

Have students choose one of Copeland's works and write a short story about possible events and characters the painting depicts. Have students tell the story sharing the character's thoughts and feelings, describing the events that led up to the picture, or imagining the events that followed.

### 2. Immerse.

Discuss the use of allegory in Copeland's paintings (7-12<sup>th</sup> grades).

Allegories are similar to metaphors: in both the author uses one subject to represent another, seemingly unrelated, subject. Allegories are generally understood as rhetorical, and, as a form of rhetoric, are generally designed to persuade their audience.

Discuss Copeland's painting *Crown of Horns*.

- ◆ What symbolic items does the artist use to represent a chosen message?
- ◆ Why did the artist crown his character with the crown of horns opposed to traditional crown of thorns?
- ◆ What other details in the painting aid in expressing the artist's idea? Explain.

### 3. Create.

Mixed Media Art (K-8).

Have students draw their characters on the paper and cut them out. Have students collage the background of a separate paper/mat board using paper, newspaper and/or other mixed media.

Have students arrange their characters on the background taking into consideration the focal point of the work. Have students use pastel/chalk crayons/ fine markers to draw/outline the details of their characters. Have students add details that will help tell the story.

## Appendix 1.



*Pet*, acrylic and mixed media on wrapped canvas, 2013.



*Crown of Horns*, acrylic and mixed media on wrapped canvas, 2010.