

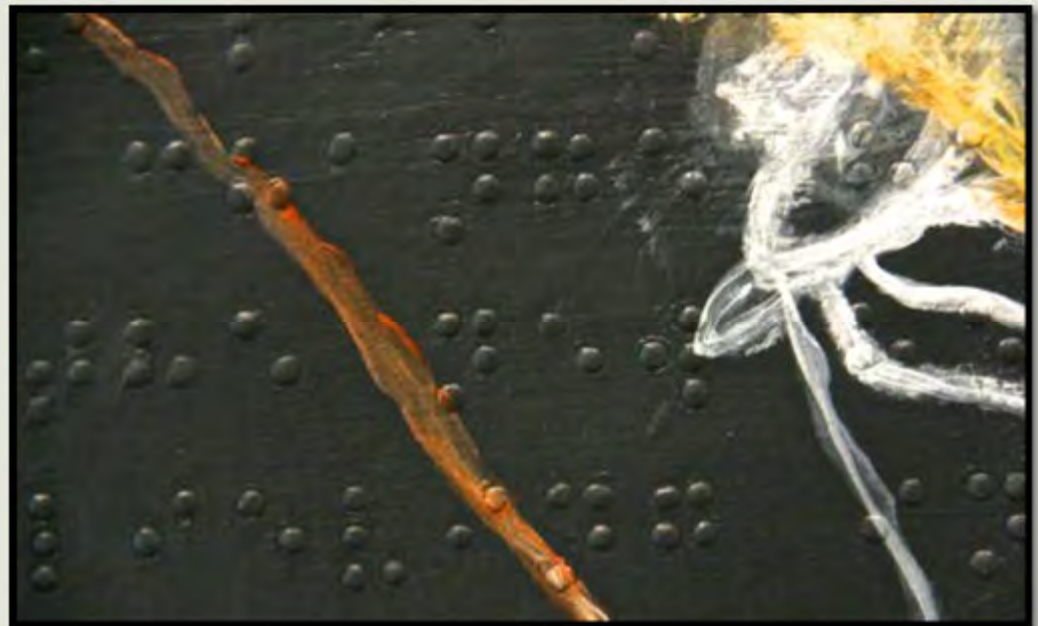


KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS

*“Art is not what you see,
but what you make others see.”*
Edgar Degas

Engaging Through Touch

Touch Tours for the Visually Impaired





KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS



INTRODUCTIONS

Presenters:

[Michelle Stempien](#) Curator of Education, KIA

[Frank Wolf](#) Docent, KIA

[Tracy Klinesteker](#) Docent, KIA



KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS



South Street Entrance

OUR BACKSTORY

Touch Tours at the KIA

OUR BACKSTORY

Finding An Audience

- Kalamazoo is host to the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons Training Center.
- Kalamazoo Regional Educational Services Agency (KRESA) services school children with visual impairments.
- A new and underserved audience is needed for such specialized tours.
- Open communication between these agencies and others allow for an exchange of information about our tours.





OUR BACKSTORY



Getting Started

- Build an Advisory Committee.
- Members of our committee include:
 - A Professor with the Dept of Low Vision and Blindness Studies at Western Michigan University,
 - A local artist (*Blind*),
 - A VI/Mobility instructor at KRESA,
 - A retired counselor from the Training Center (*Blind*),
 - And a retired VI teacher.

OUR BACKSTORY

Orientation and Mobility Training for Docents

How to:

- Greet our guests.
- Guide visitors through the galleries using proper O&M techniques.
- Explore the art.
- What to do with canes and guide dogs.
- Assist with putting on gloves.
- Experience visual impairment and how it affects the implementation of a tour.





OUR BACKSTORY



"Art Ark," Steve Curl



"Kluane,"
Paul Ponchillia



Where We Are Now

- Grant writing and new art.
The "Art Ark" and "Kluane"
Braille Transcriptions
- Spreading the word.
"What to do in Kalamazoo"
- New technologies to explore:
iPads – enlarge images & sound
Swell paper
Real objects
2-D paintings
3-D printing





KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS

"Rolling
Cash Box,"
Holly Fisher
Photograph
by Frank
Wolf



CHOOSING OBJECTS: "THE ART"

How We Choose Objects for Our Touch Tours



CHOOSING OBJECTS

We look for objects that have certain characteristics.

- Size
- Material
- Texture
- Complexity
- X Factor

"Man on Box," Kirk Newman
Photograph by Frank Wolf





CHOOSING OBJECTS

Size

- Small enough for portability.
- Durability.

Materials

- Stone, bronze, wood, or found/recycled parts.
- Can talk about process of creation.



Seal by Paul Ponchillia
Photograph by Frank Wolf



CHOOSING OBJECTS

Texture

- Look for contrasts.
- Rough/smooth, high/low, indentations.

Complexity

- Has interest.
- Shapes that can be easily visualized.



"Nathan Hale,"
Frederick William
MacMonnies



CHOOSING OBJECTS

X Factor

- Interesting appeal.
- History of the piece.
- Something special about the artist.
- Exhibition serendipity.



"The Marriage of Hiawatha,"
Edmonia Lewis



"Yellow
Stone Saga,"
Peter Voukos



Junyao splashed bowl,
unknown, Chinese



Mask,
unknown,
African

CHOOSING OBJECTS

Generally What to Avoid

- Overly complex objects.
- Ambiguous and abstract shapes.
- Fragile pieces.
- Artwork displayed in precarious positions.
- Sculptures accessible from only one side.

Photograph
by Frank Wolf



KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS



THE TOUCH TOUR

How We Conduct Our Touch Tours



TOUCH TOUR

- Tours are usually one hour divided into two 30-minute periods.
- One docent for every two visitors.
- Maximum of four visitors per tour.
- Visitors are school age children, young adults, and seasoned individuals.



TOUCH TOUR

First Half

- Upstairs in a conference room.



TOUCH TOUR

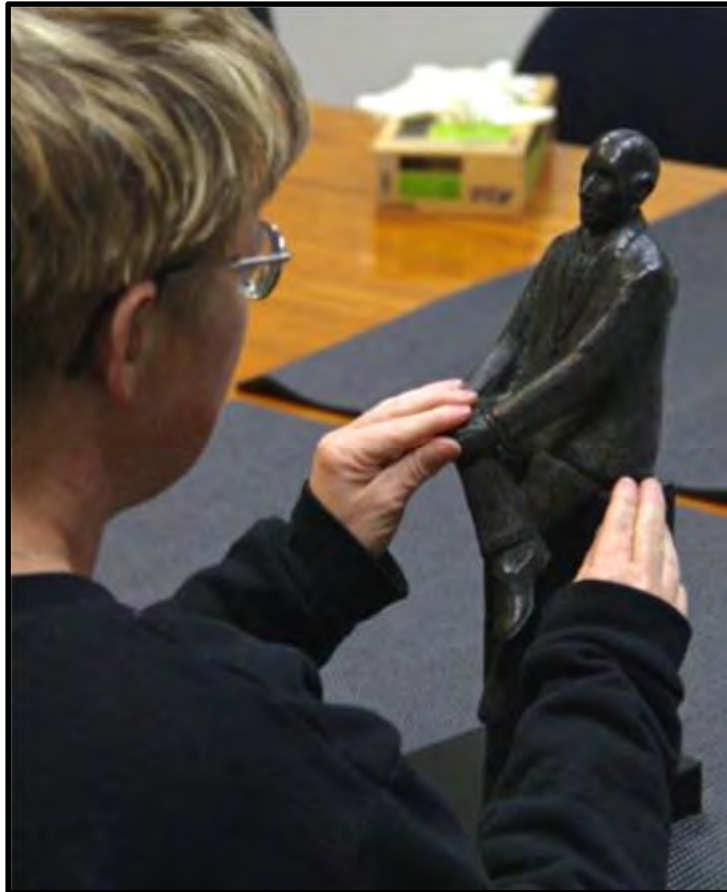
First Half

- Get acquainted.
- Learn life experiences with art.
- Present objects on a table.





TOUCH TOUR



First Half

- Gather clues as to what can be seen (*i.e., partially blind, totally blind*). This will help gauge interactions with your visitors.
- Most visually-impaired people are happy to inform you of their visual needs.
- Some will have other challenges in addition to their visual loss.
- Each tour is different. Be flexible!



TOUCH TOUR



Second Half

- Move downstairs to the galleries.
- Objects cleared with our curator are explored with gloves.
- Limited to what is currently on display.





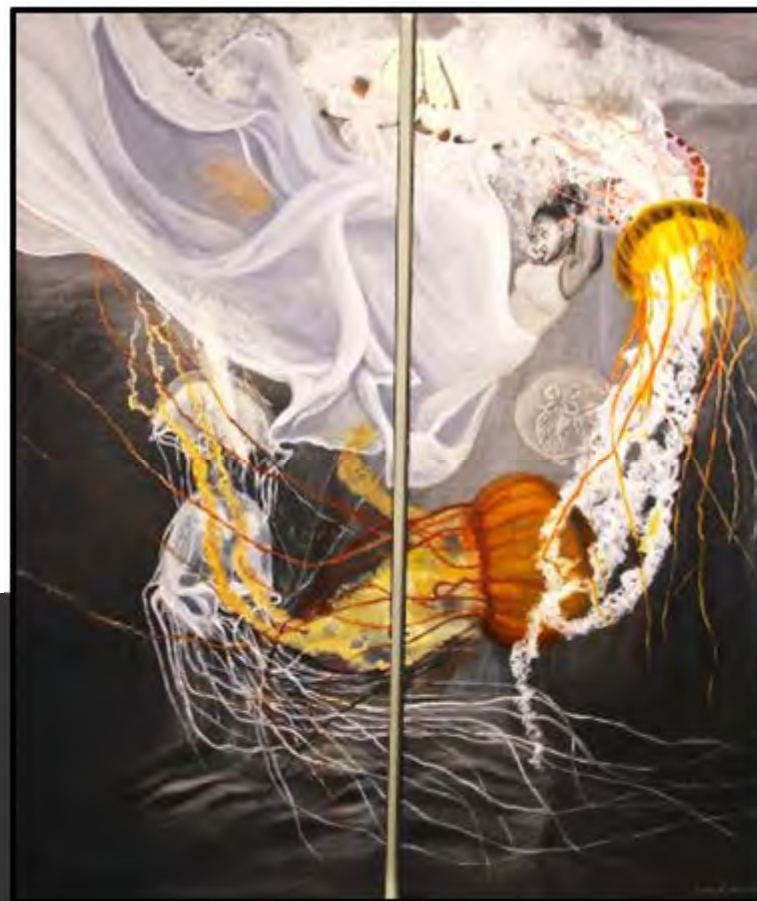
TOUCH TOUR

Second Half - Sculptures

- Sculptures on pedestals should be accessible from all sides.
- Let the visitor discover the work by themselves.
- Don't tell them too much, or too little.
- Start by finding extremities of the work.
- Encourage the use of both hands.



KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS



"Regeneration" 2014, Chakila Hoskins

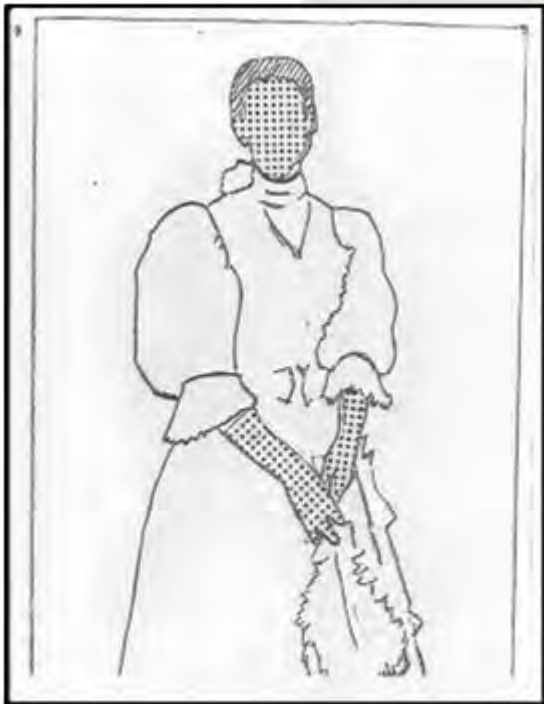
EXPANDING ACCESS

2-D Art, Real Objects, and 3-D Printing



EXPANDING ACCESS: 2-D Art

Swell paper: A tactual exploration of the image.



"A Study in Pink (Mrs. Robert McDougal),"
William Merritt Chase

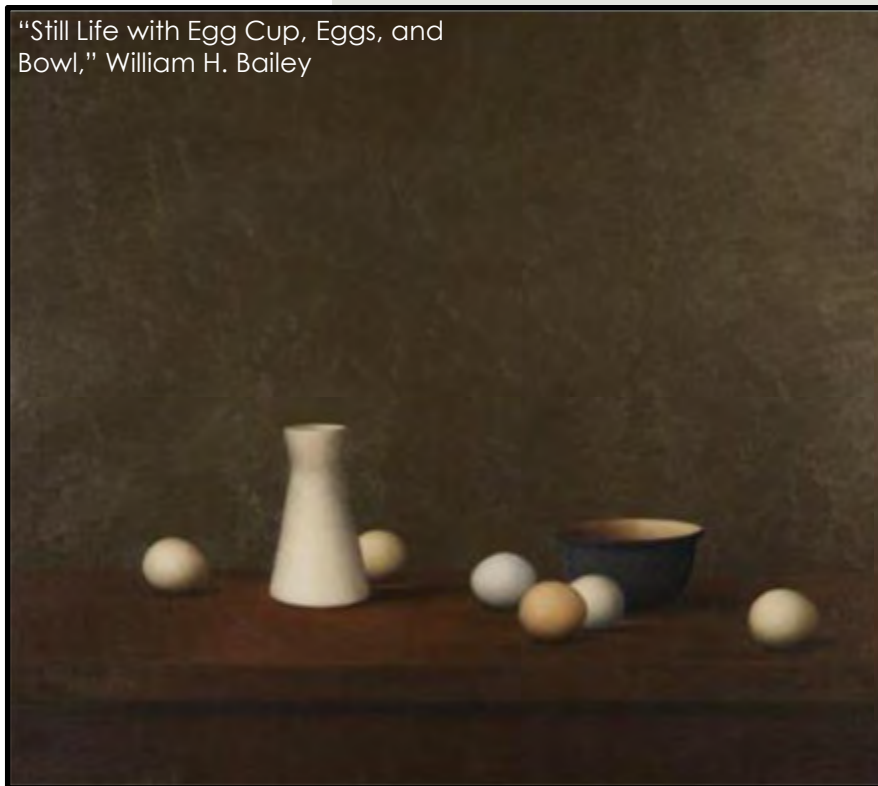




EXPANDING ACCESS: Real Objects

Physical modeling of objects in a painting.

"Still Life with Egg Cup, Eggs, and Bowl," William H. Bailey



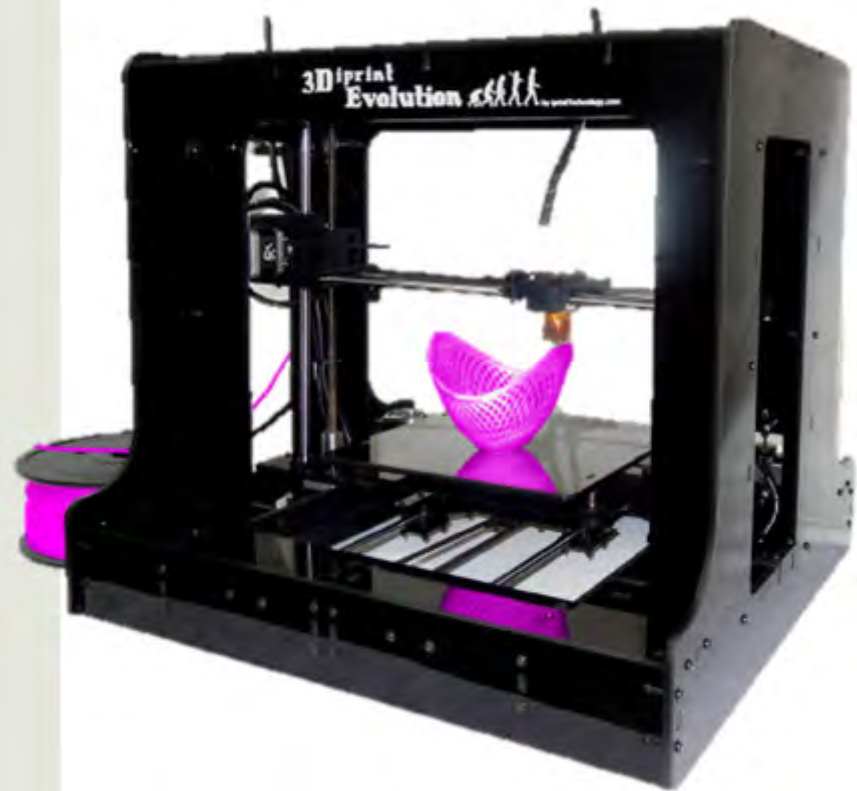


EXPANDING ACCESS: 3-D Printing

Is it the future?

Creating 3-D shapes
of objects within 2-D art.

- Will allow more concrete exploration of an image.
- Copyright issues?
- Will be expensive at first.





KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS

*“Vision is the art of seeing
what is invisible to others.”*

Jonathan Swift

Thank You for Listening!

Touch Tours for the Visually Impaired



Image Credits:

Photographs by Tracy Klinesteker and Frank Wolf.
Gallery images obtained from www.kiarts.org.