Exhibition in a Box

Teachers’ Guide
For School Tours and Classroom Presentations

Don ZanFagna

MISSION
The Aspen Art Museum is a noncollecting institution presenting the newest, most important evolutions in international contemporary art. Our innovative and timely exhibitions, education and public programs, immersive activities, and community happenings actively engage audiences in thought-provoking experiences of art, culture, and society.

HISTORY
The Aspen Art Museum is a kunsthalle, or noncollecting museum for contemporary art, located in the historic mountain community of Aspen, Colorado. It is one of only four art institutions in Colorado accredited by the American Association of Museums and the only museum on the Western Slope with this accreditation.

Founded in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum continues to be at the center of Aspen’s renowned cultural community, which includes the Aspen Music Festival and Aspen Institute. In addition to exhibiting contemporary art, the AAM is committed to public and educational programming for communities in the Roaring Fork Valley (Aspen, Basalt, Carbondale, Redstone, Marble, and Glenwood Springs) and the surrounding region (New Castle, Parachute, Rifle, Grand Junction, Avon, Eagle, Vail, Crested Butte, and Leadville). Through free public programs and guided tours of museum exhibitions, collaborations with other organizations, and art outreach programs in regional schools, the museum provides a wide variety of community-based programming.

In July 2005 the AAM welcomed Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson as its Director and Chief Curator. Among her accomplishments, Zuckerman Jacobson has fostered the introduction of collaborations with companies like the Aspen Skiing Company to bring contemporary art to new audiences in innovative ways. She has reimagined the AAM Distinguished Artist-in-Residence program, launched the Aspen Art Press, founded a special annual artist honoree prize (the Aspen Award for Art), launched the AAM’s award-winning local television program Art Matters, and created Exhibition in a Box.
One of the Aspen Art Museum’s most relevant and successful community-based programs is *Exhibition in a Box* (EiaB), an outreach program that offers elementary students a curriculum-based classroom introduction to contemporary art and a behind-the-scenes glimpse into how an art museum functions using current AAM exhibitions as a starting point. Following the classroom visit, the program continues with an all-expenses-paid visit to the museum, where the students will tour the facility, meet museum staff, and see the work of artists discussed in the classroom.

EiaB presents museums as a cultural resource for everyone and introduces contemporary art as the expression of living artists who share and respond to the world we all inhabit. With this and other education activities for all ages, the Aspen Art Museum is committed to creating lifelong learners who continue to develop skills to better decode, interpret, and navigate the highly visual, aural, and material realities of the 21st century.

The program is offered free of charge to all public and private elementary schools located within a 2 1/2–hour drive from Aspen. The program premiered during the 2007–08 school year with a focus on third-grade classrooms in the Roaring Fork Valley. Based on the success of its first year, EiaB has been expanded to Eagle, Garfield, Gunnison, and Lake Counties. Due to Colorado’s unique topography, many of these schools are located in isolated locations with limited access to cultural resources. EiaB responds by bringing the cultural resources of the Aspen Art Museum to them.

This education guide provides multidisciplinary activities to capture the interest of students and inspire their creativity, as well as includes background information on the artist and exhibition. We also focus on helping the teacher connect the classroom presentation and museum visit with the third-grade curriculum and Colorado state standards. In addition, this guide provides links to online art resources, student activities, a glossary, and pre- and post-visit questions.

The AAM thanks the Colorado Creative Industries for their generous support of the Exhibition in a Box program. The Colorado Creative Industries and its activities are made possible through an annual appropriation from the Colorado General Assembly and federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**MEMBERSHIP**

To thank them for their participation in *Exhibition in a Box*, teachers will receive an Aspen Art Museum Individual Membership ($35 value). Benefits include:

- Subscription to AAM’s Member’s Magazine
- 10% discount on summer and winter workshops for children
- 10% discount on AAM SHOP purchases
- Invitations to all exhibition openings
- Special viewing hours and events
- Online educational resources

**TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT**

The AAM will reimburse round-trip mileage for *Exhibition in a Box* museum visits. When scheduling your tour please request a transportation reimbursement form.

Following the field trip, return the form with a transportation invoice or receipt along with a breakdown of the associated costs on school letterhead. Reimbursement will be issued within four weeks from the date of submission.

**FEEDBACK**

As an educational resource for teachers, the AAM welcomes feedback regarding the classroom presentation and your trip to the museum. Please let us know what worked well and what might improve your next *Exhibition in a Box* experience.

After receiving an evaluation form in the mail, please fill it out and mail or fax it back to the AAM at your convenience. Your evaluation is crucial to helping the Education Department strengthen the program for future years. We also appreciate receiving thank-you letters or student artwork made in conjunction with your visit. We hope you enjoy your visit and greatly look forward to working with you and your students.
There are countless benefits to including art in the classroom. *Exhibition in a Box* is tied to the National Standards of Learning and focuses on object-based learning, visual literacy, critical thinking, and the creative process. The program offers each student the opportunity for the personal reflection that takes place as a part of viewing art as well as the benefits of discussing art in a group setting, which allows for better listening, thinking, and concentration. The program also offers teachers the opportunity to work with their students on the following:

- Understanding the arts as a universal language
- Using art as a way of communicating feeling without writing or speaking
- Talking about art to promote discovery and alternative modes of learning
- Learning to see an object, problem, or situation in multiple ways
- Looking at art to trigger the imagination

When visiting the Aspen Art Museum, please remember that you are in a space that encourages the contemplation and quiet discussion of art by all visitors. A few guidelines to remember:

- Raise your hand if you have a question or something you would like to share.
- Speak quietly in the galleries using your inside voice.
- Stay at safe distance from the artwork and do not touch the artwork unless you are given permission to do so.
- Please walk and do not run in the museum.
- Enjoy food and beverages before entering the museum, or save them until after the tour has ended and you have exited the gallery.
- Have fun!

Take a moment to prepare your class for their visit by asking them a few questions about their experiences with art and museums. When you return, share the postvisit questions to encourage students to think and talk about what they saw at the AAM.

**PREVISIT**
- Have you ever been to a museum before? If so, what did you find there?
- Have you ever been to the Aspen Art Museum before? What do you expect to see when you visit?
- What materials do artists use to make art?
- Is art always beautiful? Should it be? Why or why not?
- Should art tell a story or have an important meaning? Why or why not?
- Can anyone make art? Why or why not?

**POSTVISIT**
- Describe what the art museum experience was like for you.
- Did you see or learn something unexpected at the art museum? If so, what?
- How was the real work different than the photographs you saw in the classroom presentation?
- Which work of art was your favorite? What did you like most about it?

The following pages provide an in-depth look at the integration of the museum and classroom visit with the Colorado third-grade classroom curriculum standards.
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Artist Don ZanFagna has been a practicing artist since the 1950s, creating stunning works that examine the creative potential of ecological design. Manifested through extensive journals, drawings, collages, and architectural models, his work combines environmental consciousness, technological savvy, and utopian spirit.

ZanFagna founded CEASE (Center for Ecological Action to Save the Environment) and was a speaker, along with Ralph Nader, Margaret Mead, and numerous others, at New York’s first Earth Day Teach-In at Union Square in 1970. Though presented at venues like the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, ZanFagna’s work has long been underrecognized as important.

Born 1929 in Saunderstown, Rhode Island, ZanFagna holds advanced degrees from the University of Michigan and Southern California in Painting, Art and Architecture. During the 1970s and 80s he held the Department Chair in Art at Rutgers University and was an Eco-Architecture Professor at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. The artist currently lives in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

ZanFagna’s Aspen Art Museum exhibition features selections from his late 1970s Pulse Domes series. Recalling the visionary projects of figures like Buckminster Fuller, ZanFagna’s Pulse Domes are vividly imaginative collages of homes that are created, constructed, and maintained entirely through organic processes. They reveal an artist deeply engaged with the rapid social and technological changes that took place over the course of the 1960s and 70s—an era of radical transformation in everything from space exploration and robotics to personal computing and biological research. In their integration of art, architecture, and environmental consciousness, ZanFagna’s works are, in retrospect, both very much of their time and also eerily prescient, prefiguring a number of vital and current artistic practices.

General exhibition support is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.
Selected Works in the Exhibition

Don ZanFagna
Pulse Dome 20, 1976
Collage
10 5/8 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the Don ZanFagna Foundation.

Don ZanFagna
Pulse Dome 27, 1976
Collage
10 5/8 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the Don ZanFagna Foundation.

Don ZanFagna
Pulse Dome 36, 1977–78
Collage
10 1/2 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the Don ZanFagna Foundation.
ACTIVITY

LOOKING AT ART IN THE CLASSROOM

The best way to engage your students with a work of art is to facilitate a group discussion through close looking and inquiry. By encouraging students to talk freely and openly about a work of art, students naturally develop important critical and creative thinking skills as well as problem-solving skills. The following prompts serve as a guideline for your discussion. As the discussion starts to flow, remember to include wait time, allow for multiple responses, ask for evidence to support what they see, and attend to student questions. These tips will help drive the discussion all the way through. Keep in mind that this process is not necessarily about arriving at a single interpretation or meaning behind the work of art. Rather the process is designed to help you and your students become more comfortable looking and talking about works of art in the classroom.

LOOK
Take a minute to look closely and silently at this work of art. Then, together as a class, take inventory of what you see. Encourage students to participate by asking “What do you notice?” and “What more can you find?”

EXPLORE
After looking closely at the details, ask students “What is happening in this work of art?” This question prompts students to visually read the work by making connections between the basic elements of art (line, shape, color, texture, form, and space). Remember to always ask students to connect their thoughts and ideas back to the work of art. You can do this by asking the question, “What do you see that makes you say that?” At anytime, probe deeper by asking students “Does anyone have anything to add?” or “Does anyone agree/disagree?” These questions allow for students to offer different perspectives while encouraging respectful dialogue and the acceptance of ambiguity in a work of art.

Explore more by asking the following questions:
• What is the mood of the work? How do you know?
• What might we guess about the artist’s ideas about nature and the environment?
• What are some interesting choices made by the artist and why?
• How do you think the artist made this work?
• If you could ask the artist a question about this work, what would you ask?

CONNECT
Don’t be surprised if some students have already started to share their personal opinions, experiences, or emotions in response to the work of art. This is good! If not, you can encourage personal connections by asking the question “Does this work remind you of anything?”

DISCOVER
Select another work of art or image from popular culture and set up a visual conversation for your students to explore. Through the process of compare and contrast, students make closer observations and new discoveries are often made. Encourage students to participate by asking “What do these two images have in common?” and “How are they different?” You can conclude by asking “How can these new discoveries help us better understand the work?”

Don ZanFagna
Pulse Dome 19, 1976
Collage
10 5/8 x 14 inches
Courtesy of the Don ZanFagna Foundation.
**Third-Grade Standards**

**MATHEMATICS**

**Standard 1**
Students solve problems and make decisions that depend on understanding, explaining, and quantifying the variability in data.

**Standard 2**
Students make claims about relationships among numbers, shapes, symbols, and data and defend those claims by relying on the properties that are the structure of mathematics.

**Connection to Exhibition**

- Students collect data to better understand people and the world, such as knowing why an artist chose certain materials or a given subject matter. Students can also collect visual data, such as shapes and patterns, to help them find meaning within a work of art.

- Recognition of geometric shapes allows students to describe and change their surroundings through, for example, creating a work of art using geometric shapes or designing a pattern to decorate. Students can also collect visual data when looking at a work of art, such as finding shapes and patterns, to help them find meaning.

**VISUAL ARTS**

**Standard 1**
Analyze, interpret, and make meaning of art and design using oral and written discourse.

**Standard 2**
Explain, demonstrate, and interpret a range of purposes of art and design, recognizing that the making and study of art and design can be approached from a variety of viewpoints, intelligences, and perspectives.

**Standard 3**
- Critique personal work and the work of others with informed criteria.
- Use specific criteria to discuss and evaluate works of art.
- Recognize, articulate, and implement critical thinking in the visual arts by synthesizing, evaluating, and analyzing visual information.

**Standard 4**
- Recognize, demonstrate, and debate philosophic arguments about the nature of art and beauty.
- Recognize, demonstrate, and debate the place of art and design in history and culture.

**Connection to Exhibition**

- Students articulate commonalities and identify patterns seen in the visual information found in works of art. Students understand that critical processes of observing, interpreting, and evaluating leads to informed judgments regarding the merits of a work of art.

- Students learn to “read” a work of art, hypothesizing and discussing artist intent and mood. In addition, students use multisensory information to construct visual narratives.

- Understanding that art can be unpredictable, students develop a variety of ways to respond to surprising works. Students interpret works of art using age-appropriate descriptive vocabulary and compare and contrast the works while discussing form and content.

- Students understand that artists, viewers, and patrons make connections among the characteristics, expressive features, and purposes of art and design. Students discuss and debate the idea of what is art and learn to critique the works of others in a positive way.
## Third-Grade Standards

### Standard 1
Students develop an understanding of how people view, construct, and interpret history.

### Standard 2
Students analyze key historical periods and patterns of change over time within and across nations and cultures.

### Standard 3
Students develop spatial understanding, perspectives, and personal connections to the world.

### Standard 4
Students understand the allocation of resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy.

## Connection to Exhibition

- In order to find meaning in a work of art, students use the process of inquiry to formulate questions, identify patterns, and evaluate peer arguments. Gathering data from multiple sources (oral information given by an educator, reading written interviews with the artist and articles written on the artist, looking at maps from where the artist is from, viewing photographs and videos of the artist at work) can also provide additional context about the work of art. These skills needed to interpret a work of art parallel the skills needed for historical inquiry.

- Context and information from the past can be used to make connections and inform decisions in the present. Like historical thinkers, students can ask questions about works of art to help guide their research on a certain time period, event, or technological development in our society.

- Spatial thinking involves analysis, problem-solving, and pattern prediction. Students can interpret information about the artist’s community using geographic tools and then compare them to their own community. Discuss the geography of these places and events that have taken place there, and ask students to consider how those factors may have shaped the artist’s work.

- Students can study the Aspen Art Museum as a means of understanding producers and consumers and how goods and services are exchanged. Although the AAM is a noncollecting institution (which means that it does not buy, sell, or trade works of art to members of the community) it does play an important role in connecting contemporary artists to art patrons through its exhibitions and education programs. Students can explore the production and consumption of the art market while considering whether or not they would rather be a producer or a consumer, how an individual knows when an exchange benefits both parties, and what happens if a producer does not make enough to meet the consumer demand.
**Third-Grade Standards**

**Connection to Exhibition**

**READING, WRITING, COMMUNICATING**

**Standard 1**
Students use language appropriate for purpose and audience.

**Standard 2**
Students collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group’s attainment of an objective.

**Standard 3**
Students interpret how the structure of written English contributes to the pronunciation and meaning of complex vocabulary.

**Standard 4**
Demonstrate the use of a range of strategies, research techniques, and persistence when engaging with difficult texts or examining complex problems or issues.

- At the AAM, students are asked to look closely and think critically about work of art in small groups. Through the process of inquiry, students participate in group discussions and are asked to clearly articulate their ideas to peers. Back in the classroom, students use complete sentences, grammatically correct language, and the appropriate volume, pitch, and pace for the purpose and audience as they recount their experience at the AAM with appropriate facts and relevant descriptive details.

- During both the classroom presentation and the museum tour, students participate and engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, asking questions and linking their comments to the remarks of others in order to find meaning in works of art. Students will explain their own ideas while interacting with others by sharing knowledge, stories, and interests. Together as a group, students explore ideas that might not otherwise be reached by a single individual.

- Students increase word understanding, word use, and word relationships to build vocabulary through the process of decoding words found on the museum’s wall labels and text panels, as well as from studying the words included in the glossary section of this guide.

- The skills required to read a work of art are not unlike those needed to read and understand texts. Through observation, inquiry, and open discussion, students learn that works of art reflect different points of view based on the interpretation of the viewer. Students learn to infer meaning and assess the points of view of their peers using fairness, relevance, and breadth. There are no wrong answers when talking about art and all opinions are valid.

**SCIENCE**

**Standard 1**
Evaluate evidence that the earth’s geosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere interact as a complex system.

- Knowing that many of the Earth’s resources can be conserved, recycled, or depleted, students can study self-sustaining environments such as the Biosphere 2 to better understand the concept behind Zanfaga’s Pulse Domes.
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General exhibition support is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Exhibition lectures are presented as part of the Questrom Lecture Series.

Aspen Art Museum
www.aspenartmuseum.org/don_zanfagna.html

Who is Don ZanFagna? article from the Charleston Magazine
www.charlestonmag.com/charleston_magazine/feature/who_is_don_zanfagna

Everett White Gallery, Don ZanFagna’s gallery representation
http://everettwhitegallery.com/DonZanFagna.html

Don ZanFagna website catalogue of works
www.donzanfagna.org/

Colorado Model Content Standards
www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess//index_osa.html

GLOSSARY

Abstract
Emphasizing lines, colors, generalized or geometric forms in art; not representing concrete realities.

Composition
The organization of different parts of a painting.

Contemporary art
Art created by living artists.

Contrast
Opposition of different forms, lines, or colors in a work of art to intensify each element’s properties, (the contrast of white/black or short/tall).

Curator
The person at a museum who is in charge of selecting and arranging the works in an exhibition.

Exhibition
A public display of the work of an artist or group of artists.

Figurative
A form or shape that looks like it could be a person or animal.

Gallery
A room, series of rooms, or building devoted to the display of works of art.

Installation Art
Art that is created for a specific site, often incorporating materials and physical features of that site.

Interior
An inside space like a room, house, or school.

International
Involving two or more nations or countries.

Landscape
A picture representing a natural exterior space.

Museum
A building where works of art, scientific specimens, or other objects of permanent value are displayed.

Noncollecting
A museum that does not have a permanent collection but instead focuses on changing exhibitions.

Realistic
Looking real, as in painted from real life.