

In the Footsteps of Michelangelo

Teacher Resource for

Visual Arts 11-12

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Introduction

Westminster Abbey is a Benedictine monastery 87 kilometres east of Vancouver. Like others of its ilk, the walls are adorned with religious art. Reproductions of Renaissance artists Fra Lippa, Piero della Francesca, and others are prominently displayed. But there's something different about this monastery. In addition to the reproductions, there are original, contemporary artworks created not by artist-priests of the 16th century, but by one of their own, William Harold Massey, or as he's known by his religious name, Father Dunstan, now 79 years of age.

The video, *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo*, is constructed around a “day in the life” of resident Father Dunstan Massey. It is a monk's life—teaching, praying, and reverence. The climax of the program is the creation of “The Celestial Banquet”, a huge fresco that will occupy one wall of the communal dining room. Representational yet stylized, it depicts The Last Supper in Heaven. It is likely to be Dunstan's final work, the crown jewel in a portfolio of murals, frescoes and sculptures which will remain in the Abbey long after he's gone. It will be Dunstan's “Sistine Chapel.”

In the Footsteps of Michelangelo is an intimate portrait of a priest who has devoted six decades of his life to God. Along the way, we get an insight into monastic life and a frank discussion about faith, art, and the relationship between the two.

Using this Resource

This resource offers the following support for secondary school visual arts teachers:

Lesson 1: The Art of the Fresco, focusses on the materials and processes used in fresco painting, and includes an opportunity for students to create their own artworks based on what they learn from the video and other in-class activities.

Lesson 2: The Artist at Work, involves a more research-oriented approach, focussing on the many considerations facing working artists today, and comparing to those faced by artists in the Italian Renaissance.

Teachers may choose to conduct one or both of these lessons.

This teacher resource also contains a number of extension activities that can be used in a range of visual arts teaching situations as well as additional subject areas such as English language arts and social studies.

Lesson 1: The Art of the Fresco

Overview

This lesson uses the video, *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo*, as a focus for discussion of the art of the fresco. Students then have an opportunity to apply what they have seen to create their own artworks using a modified fresco process.

Curriculum Correlation

This lesson can be used to address a number of learning objectives from the following BC provincial curricula:

- Art Foundations 11
- Art Foundations 12
- Studio Arts 11 (Drawing and Painting)
- Studio Arts 12 (Drawing and Painting)

For a list of the BC prescribed learning outcomes related to this lesson, see the Curriculum Correlation section. Comparable learning outcomes/objectives from other provinces can also be addressed by this lesson.

Suggested Time

4-6 hours

Materials and Resources

The following resources are used in this lesson:

- video: *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo* (54 minutes)
- additional books, magazines, electronic resources, etc. depicting examples of frescoes (where available)
- student resources:
 - The Art of the Fresco—Background
 - The Art of the Fresco—Group Self-Assessment
- materials and equipment for students to create their own modified version of a fresco: boards, plaster, paints, brushes, acetate and awls for making pounce sheets, etc.

Preparation

- Preview the video in order to familiarize yourself with the information and to prepare for any questions that might arise in the course of the lesson. You may also decide to show only portions of the video (e.g., those sections that focus on the processes of creating the fresco). In addition, you may wish to identify points in the video to pause for discussion.
- Optional: obtain and display resources depicting additional examples of fresco artworks, particularly those from the Italian Renaissance.
- Make copies of the following student resources to distribute to the students:
 - The Art of the Fresco—Background
 - Creating a Fresco—Group Self-Assessment

Procedure

1. Begin with a brief discussion reviewing what students already know about frescoes, particularly those of the Italian Renaissance. Have students work individually to create concept maps or other graphic organizers on the topic of frescoes. Provide an opportunity for them to share with a partner.
2. Introduce and screen the video, *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo*. Pause for discussion as required.
3. Distribute the student handout, *The Art of the Fresco—Background*. Allow time for students to read the handout, then add to their concept maps with additional information from the video and the handout.
4. Continue the discussion by focussing on the following questions:
 - The fresco is an art form not used frequently today; in the video, Dal Schindell calls the fresco “a lost art form.” Why might that be? What are some of the challenges associated with painting a fresco? (e.g., time-consuming, the “race against time” to apply the paint to the wet plaster, physical challenges for the painters, needing to age the materials, the fact that the work becomes a permanent fixture and is not movable)
 - Both Father Dunstan and Michelangelo used liturgical subject matter in their frescoes. What subject matter have other fresco painters used? If we were to paint a fresco in our school, what subject would we use?
5. Provide an opportunity for students to complete their concept maps with additional information based on the class discussions.
6. Divide the class into groups. Explain that they are going have an opportunity to create their own artworks using a modified version of the fresco technique—using ordinary paints and plaster instead of aged plaster and lime-based paints, and using small boards (e.g., 1 m²) as opposed to full wall-sized.

Provide time for students to work in their groups to create their frescoes. Advise them that they should use a consensus model to decide on a subject for their fresco, and to determine who will be responsible for what tasks. Assist students as required with materials and processes (e.g., creating pounce sheets, preparing and applying the plaster).

Assessment

- Collect students’ concept maps, looking for evidence that they have incorporated information from the video and class discussion.
- Before students begin work on their frescoes, distribute the group self-assessment instrument, *The Art of the Fresco*, provided at the end of this lesson. Discuss the criteria as a class; you may choose to include additional criteria as appropriate for your class.

The Art of the Fresco—Background

The word *fresco* comes from the Italian phrase *buon fresco* (“really fresh”) as opposed to *in secco* (“on dry surface”).

True fresco technique consists of painting in pigment in a water medium on wet or fresh lime mortar or plaster. As the plaster dries, it absorbs the pigment and the painting becomes part of the wall surface rather than resting on top of it. This makes a durable work of art; if the wall is destroyed, the painting can often be reassembled because of the size of the plaster parts.

Because of the need to work on freshly laid plaster, careful study of the wall surface can reveal the area worked on in one day. In Renaissance Italy this was called a *giornata* (“daily amount”). These divisions are visible if the plastering technique was not good.

The fresco art form reached its height during the Italian Renaissance. Fresco artists from that period include

- Botticelli
- Carracci
- Correggio
- da Vinci
- Fra Angelico
- Ghirlandaio
- Giotto
- Mantegna
- Masaccio
- Michelangelo
- Raphael

Fresco artists who worked after the Italian Renaissance include

- Father Dunstan
- Peter Hurd
- Diego Rivera
- Georges-Pierre Seurat
- Giovanni Battista Tiepolo
- Sister Lucia Wiley

Creating a Fresco—Group Self-Assessment

Group members:

The subject we chose for our fresco:

We chose this subject because:

Use the following key to mark your group on the criteria below:
 4=excellent, 3=good, 2=fair, 1=unsatisfactory / not evident

	Mark
• our fresco expresses our selected subject in a meaningful and purposeful way	
• our work reflects the context of a fresco	
• we used our materials and processes effectively, safely, and appropriately	
• we used our materials and processes in a way that is consistent with the fresco art form	
• our group worked efficiently and co-operatively together	
•	

What we learned from this process:

Teacher comments:

Lesson 2: The Artist at Work

Overview

This lesson uses the video, *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo*, as a focus for a variety of research tasks related to the many considerations facing working artists today, and comparing to those faced by artists in the Italian Renaissance.

Curriculum Correlation

This lesson can be used to address a number of learning objectives from the following BC provincial curricula:

- Art Foundations 11
- Art Foundations 12
- Studio Arts 11 (Drawing and Painting)
- Studio Arts 12 (Drawing and Painting)

For a list of the BC prescribed learning outcomes related to this lesson, see the Curriculum Correlation section. Comparable learning outcomes/objectives from other provinces can also be addressed by this lesson.

Suggested Time

2-4 hours plus out-of-class research time as required

Materials and Resources

The following resources are used in this lesson:

- video: *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo* (54 minutes)
- additional books, magazines, etc. depicting examples of frescoes (where available)
- student resource:
 - The Artist at Work—Research Questions
- teacher resource:
 - The Artist at Work—Assessment Tool

Preparation

- Preview the video in order to familiarize yourself with the information and to prepare for any questions that might arise in the course of the lesson. You may also decide to show only portions of the video, particularly if this is students' second viewing. In addition, you may wish to identify points in the video to pause for discussion.
- Optional: obtain and display resources depicting additional examples of fresco artworks, particularly those from the Italian Renaissance.
- Make copies of the student resource (The Artist at Work—Research Topics) to distribute to the class.
- Prepare to facilitate students' research assignments as required, guiding them to appropriate print, video, and online resources.

Procedure

1. Introduce and screen the video, *In the Footsteps of Michelangelo*. Debrief with a class discussion on the various issues raised during the video.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Distribute copies of the student handout, *The Artist at Work—Research Topics*. Have each group select one of the research topics listed in the handout. (You may wish to facilitate this process to ensure that each topic is addressed by at least one group.) Discuss as a class the format that groups' research findings will take. For example, students could choose to create any of the following to present their findings:
 - an electronic slide show
 - an oral or multimedia report
 - a television documentary
 - a web site
 - a series of posters.
3. Provide time for students to conduct their research and prepare their projects. Facilitate as required.
4. Allow an opportunity for groups to present their projects to the rest of the class for questions and discussion.

Assessment

- Use criteria such as those outlined on the teacher resource, *The Artist at Work*, to assess students' research projects.
- Have students use their journals to reflect on what they learned from their own research project and the work of other groups. Collect students' journals, looking for evidence that they are able to
 - cite at least one piece of information from each presentation viewed
 - make connections among all the information presented in relation to the considerations facing working artists in the past and today
 - make connections between the information presented and their own artmaking.

The Artist at Work—Research Topics

Select one of the following research topics for your project.

The Modern Renaissance Man / Renaissance Woman

Father Dunstan can be considered a modern “Renaissance Man” in part because he is an artist, a teacher, and a poet.

During the Renaissance, there were new expectations for success. During the European Middle Ages, men proved their worth in battle, and fought for the glory of God and their king or queen. In the Renaissance, emphasis was placed on individual achievement. A Renaissance man had to be skilled in a number of areas, physically, mentally, and creatively. Most importantly, he had to be dedicated to learning and the pursuit of knowledge.

Select one artist from any time period or country, and focus your research project on how this artist can be described as a “Renaissance Woman” or “Renaissance Man.” Consider questions such as the following:

- How do different aspects of this person’s work complement each other? (e.g., da Vinci’s study of science informed his ability to create realistic artworks)
- How does this person exemplify the qualifications of a modern-day Renaissance woman or man? (you may choose to write a “job description” citing personal characteristics, training and education, etc.)

Patronage

Another similarity Father Dunstan shares with the artists of the Renaissance is that he has the patronage of the church to support his work.

Although artists during the Renaissance might be able to make money by painting commissioned works, most artists tried to find a patron to ensure a steady income. Patronage of the arts grew during the Renaissance as a result of the shift in importance from military to artistic achievement. During the Middle Ages, the noble families of Europe gained honour and prestige through military conquest. During the Renaissance, the best way to gain personal status was to surround oneself with great works of art. For the ruling classes, this also meant “decorating” your city with new and glorious architecture and sculpture.

The rise in personal patronage during the Renaissance also contributed to portraiture as an art form. During the European Middle Ages, personal portraits were rare. In the Renaissance, with a greater emphasis on the arts, portraits became a status symbol. The majority of portraits of the Renaissance age are of the artists’ patrons or the patron’s family members.

Many artists today rely on individual or corporate patronage for financial support. There is a downside to patronage, however, namely a loss of artistic freedom. The artist is often required to paint what the patron wants, not what the artist want.

Focus your research on a comparison of patronage past and present, including

- the benefits and drawbacks of patronage
- examples of type of patronage today, how funding is disbursed, and who receives it
- an examination of at least one artist from the Renaissance and one present-day artist, comparing how patronage has affected their work.

The Art of the Renaissance

The Renaissance was the period in European history from approximately the early 1300s to 1550. The word *renaissance* means “rebirth.” The idea of rebirth originated in the belief that Europeans had rediscovered the superiority of classical Greek and Roman culture. It signifies the time when Europe emerged from the “dark ages,” now known as the Middle Ages or Medieval era.

The Renaissance brought significant changes to the styles of art, architecture, philosophy, literature, and music. During the Middle Ages, the purpose of paintings was to glorify God. During the Renaissance, this emphasis changed; although many artworks were still created for religious purposes, beauty and realism became more important. The ideal painting was one that delivered faithful renditions of reality through colour, form, and atmosphere. As Leonardo da Vinci said, “The most praiseworthy form of painting is the one that most resembles what it imitates.”

Select one artwork from a time and place before the Italian Renaissance, one from the Renaissance, and a third from Father Dunstan’s work. Compare each in terms of

- materials and processes used
- subject matter
- the purpose of the artwork.

Frescoes Then and Now

The art of the fresco was most prominent during the Italian Renaissance. However, as the video showed, the art form is still alive today.

Select one fresco artist from the Italian Renaissance (e.g., Botticelli, Carracci, Correggio, da Vinci, Fra Angelico, Ghirlandaio, Giotto, Mantegna, Masaccio, Michelangelo, Raphael) and one from another time and/or place (e.g., Father Dunstan, Peter Hurd, Diego Rivera, Georges-Pierre Seurat, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Sister Lucia Wiley). Compare these two artists in terms of

- the materials and processes they used in their frescoes
- other types of art forms they created
- their dominant subject matter
- how the time and place in which they worked affected their art.

Art and the Church

One of the speakers in the video says that “if Dunstan had not joined the church, he could have been a household name.”

Consider the following questions in your research project:

- What drives someone to make art if they aren’t following a divine calling?
- Did Father Dunstan’s decision to join the church help or hinder his artistic expression? How?
- What other artists have created works based on religious inspiration? How are their works the same as and different from other artists of the same time and place?

The Artist at Work—Assessment Tool

Rating (0-3)	Criteria—To what extent does the student:	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate knowledge of the roles that artworks have in reflecting, sustaining, and challenging beliefs and traditions 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate thorough knowledge to the purposes of artworks in a variety of contexts 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse how context influences the content and form of images 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse characteristics of images from a variety of contexts 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse the effect of the specific selection of materials and processes on the meaning and purpose of images 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess the effect of a specific image sources used for artworks 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use appropriate visual arts terminology throughout their work 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use specific examples to support their positions 	

Key: 3=excellent, 2=satisfactory, 1=needs improvement, 0=not evident

Extension Activities

The following activities can be incorporated easily into a range of visual arts teaching situations. They can be used to supplement the two lesson plans provided in this resource, or as stand-alone activities. Some of these activities can also be used to address additional subject areas such as English language arts and social studies.

Debate

In the video, Father Dunstan says “I have never consented to the theory of art for arts’ sake alone.” Conduct a class debate on this issue, with one side taking the position that art can exist for its own sake alone, and the other side taking the position that art should have a purpose.

Reflection

The video talks about the various images throughout the Abbey as being “more than just works of art . . . to the monks it’s a part of their being here, their worship, their way of living. It does bring us back to the idea that art can be a part of our life. It can enrich our daily life, it’s not just something for a museum or gallery.”

Have students use their journals to reflect on a familiar space where artworks “enrich daily life.”

Field Trip

Conduct a field trip to a place where frescoes, murals, or other large-scale public art are incorporated into the overall space design. Have students complete a guided reflection sheet, taking note of

- how the form of the artwork relates to the function of the space
- how the space would be different without the artwork
- dominant colours, shapes, lines, etc. and how they affect the overall effect of the work
- materials and processes used.

Research

Father Dunstan says that “Mythology as I discovered it confronts the really deep and serious questions of life. Love, bravery, death. Those things that give a whole contour to the human life.”

Have students conduct research into how the themes of love, bravery, and death are reflected in specific artworks of a particular time and place.

Research

The European Renaissance represented a significant ideological shift from the Middle Ages. Have students conduct research into other ideological shifts (e.g., the age of reason, the industrial age, the age of exploration, the global community), and how those have been represented in the artworks of the day.

Curriculum Correlation

The following table illustrates which prescribed learning outcomes for the BC provincial curricula, Art Foundations 11-12 and Studio Arts 11-12 (Drawing and Painting), are addressed by the two lesson plans provided in this package.

The lesson plans can also be used to address comparable visual arts learning outcomes/objectives in other provinces.

Art Foundations 11

	<i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Lesson #
Image-Development and Design Strategies <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compare the effects of 2-D and 3-D images derived from a variety of image sources 	2
Context <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compare roles that visual arts have in reflecting, sustaining, and challenging beliefs and traditions 	1, 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse how context influences the content and form of images 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate understanding of the skills and training needed to pursue visual arts and arts-related careers 	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create 2-D and 3-D images: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that reflect personal contexts that express, defend, or challenge beliefs, values, and traditions that reflect historical and contemporary themes that reflect selected art movements for specific purposes 	1
Materials, Technologies, and Processes <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify particular techniques used in selected processes 	1, 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use appropriate art terminology to discuss materials, technologies, and processes 	1, 2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply appropriate materials, technologies, and processes to achieve intent in 2-D and 3-D image-making 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate competent use of techniques specific to selected materials, technologies, and processes 	1

Art Foundations 12

	<i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Lesson #
Image-Development and Design Strategies <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> critique the effectiveness of image-development strategies used in particular 2-D and 3-D images 	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate self-direction in selecting image sources to create 2-D and 3-D images to achieve a specific purpose 	1

	<i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Lesson #
Context <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	• evaluate roles that visual arts have in reflecting, sustaining, and challenging beliefs and traditions	1, 2
	• evaluate how content and form influence and are influenced by personal, historical, social, and cultural contexts	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create 2-D and 3-D images: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that reflect personal contexts – that express, defend, or challenge beliefs, values, and traditions – that reflect historical and contemporary themes – that reflect art movements – for specific purposes 	1
Materials, Technologies, and Processes <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	• compare the use of materials, technologies, and processes in a range of 2-D and 3-D art forms	1, 2
	• use appropriate art terminology in discussing materials, technologies, and processes	1, 2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	• use a variety of materials, technologies, and processes proficiently to create 2-D and 3-D images	1
	• manipulate a combination of materials, technologies, and processes to support intent in 2-D and 3-D images	1

Studio Arts 11

	<i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Lesson #
Image-Development and Design Strategies <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	• compare the effect of images in a specific visual expression area derived from a variety of image sources	2
	• analyse the use of image-development strategies of artists in a specific visual expression area	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create images within a specific visual expression area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – using a variety of image sources to achieve a specific purpose – applying a variety of image-development strategies to achieve a specific purpose – demonstrating a relationship between image-development strategies and the processes of the specific visual expression area 	1
Context <i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	• compare roles that visual arts have in reflecting, sustaining, and challenging beliefs and traditions in a range of cultures	1, 2
	• analyse how context influences the content and form of images	2
	• demonstrate understanding of the historical contexts of a specific visual expression area across a range of cultures	2
	• demonstrate understanding of the skills and training needed to pursue careers in a specific visual expression area	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create images within a specific visual expression area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that reflect personal contexts 	1

	<i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Lesson #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that express, defend, or challenge beliefs, values, and traditions – that reflect historical and contemporary themes – that reflect selected art movements – for specific purposes 	
Materials, Technologies, and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse how materials, technologies, and processes are used to affect the meaning of images within a specific visual expression area 	1, 2
<i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use appropriate art terminology to discuss materials, technologies, and processes 	1, 2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate competent use of techniques specific to selected materials, technologies, and processes within a specific visual expression area 	1

Studio Arts 12

	<i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Lesson #
Image-Development and Design Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the use of image-development strategies of artists in a specific visual expression area 	2
<i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare the use of image-development strategies in a specific visual expression area across a variety of cultures 	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate self-direction in selecting image sources to create images to achieve a specific purpose 	1
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate roles that visual arts have in reflecting, sustaining, and challenging beliefs and traditions in a range of cultures 	1, 2
<i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate how content and form influence and are influenced by personal, historical, social, and cultural contexts 	2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create images within a specific visual expression area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – that reflect personal contexts – that support or challenge beliefs, values, and traditions – that incorporate characteristics of other artists, movements, and periods in personal style – that reflect historical and contemporary issues – that reflect art movements – for specific purposes 	1
Materials, Technologies, and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the effect of the selection of materials, technologies, and processes on the meaning and purpose of images within a specific visual expression area 	1, 2
<i>(Perceiving/ Responding)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use appropriate art terminology to discuss materials, technologies, and processes 	1, 2
<i>(Creating/ Communicating)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manipulate a combination of materials, technologies, and processes for a particular purpose within a specific visual expression area 	1