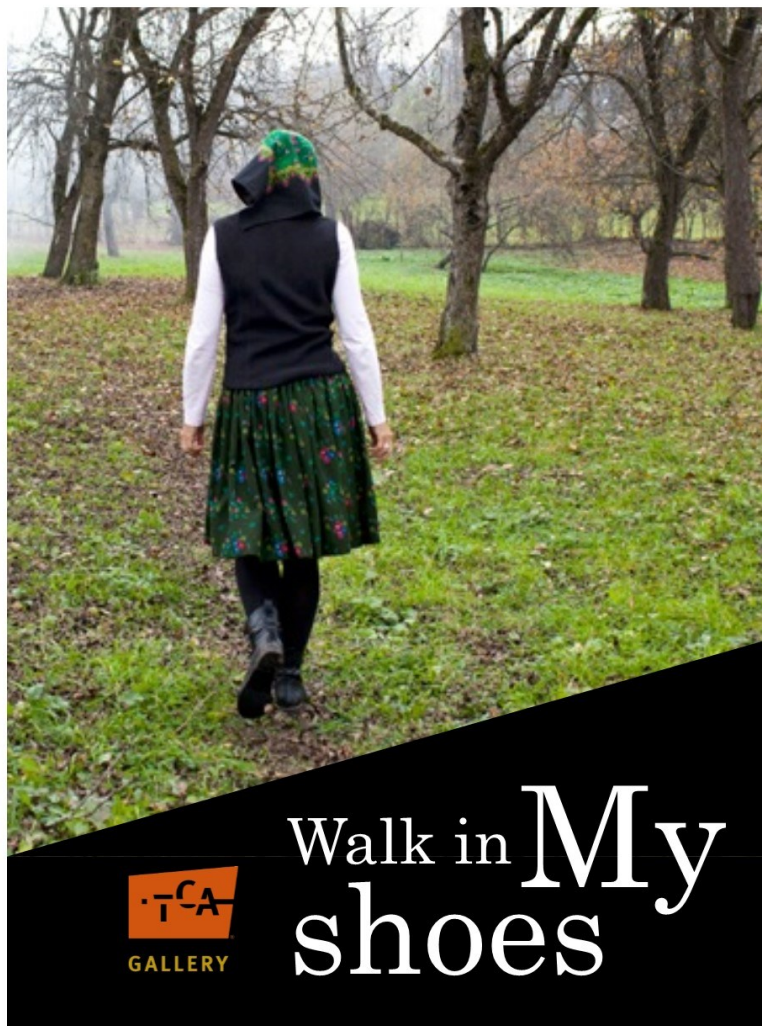


# Art Connects Us with Ourselves and Others

A Guide for Understanding the Exhibition



The Gallery at TCA  
700 W. Rio Salado Parkway | Tempe, AZ 85281  
480-350-2867



Artwork by Gregory Sale

# Walk in My Shoes

Jan. 19– May 12, 2018

*The arts help us express what cannot be said. Through an artist's eyes, we can experience, discover and see how it feels to "walk in another person's shoes" for a moment. While it is impossible for one exhibition to convey the entirety of the human condition, this show celebrates diversity, expression and the value of multiple viewpoints.*

*Dear Reader:*

*We hope this guide will provide you with some easy-to-use tools to enhance your experiences with visual art and understand art.*

*Over the years, we've noticed that people can be both attracted to and intimidated by art at the same time. We've found that asking questions that start "informal conversations" is one of the best ways to put people at ease.*

*Sure, some art is beautiful and easy to approach, while other art can be challenging and not so easy to digest. Just like a book, visual art can be appealing, serious and yes, even ugly. Some art confirms, celebrates and expands how we understand ourselves. Other art opens pathways through which we can explore other viewpoints. You as a viewer (reader) also bring a variety of thoughts and personal preferences into the experience. With practice and some new tools on your belt, you'll find that those seemingly complicated layers of meaning and context can be peeled back and explored. It's just knowing where to look and why.*

*Sincerely,*

*Mary Erickson, Ph.D. (TCA Docent) and  
Michelle Nichols Dock (Curator)*

Cover artwork by Emily Matyas.

# Inquiry Strategy with Tactical Questions

The following 4-question strategy is an easy to use tool for investigating the layers of context and meaning in visual art.

## What Can I See? Facts about the artwork.

- Subject Matter
- Design Elements & Principles
- Technical Features
- Function
- Reproduction versus Original
- Care/Condition



## What Else Can I Learn?

Contextual facts.

- Artists' Lives
- Physical Environments
- Cultural Context
- Artworlds (Art Experience)



## What Does It Mean?

Conclusions about meanings.

- Personal & Cultural Viewpoints
- Artists' Intentions
- Art Specialists' Understandings



## How Does It Compare?

Conclusions about connections among artworks.

- Style
- Art Influence (From Other Art)
- Themes

# Hints for Asking Good Questions

Hints for a well-rounded conversation: You'll often learn more from open-ended questions than close-ended questions.

A **closed-ended question** is answered with a one-word response such as yes or no or another single word. *Example:* Is this an oil or acrylic painting?

*Closed-ended questions* start with verbs like “Is? Do? and Can?”

An **open-ended question** requires more explanation.

*Example:* How is painting in oil different from painting with acrylics?

*Open-ended questions* start with “Why? and How?”

Some words can be used for **both types of questions** such as:

What?

Who?

Where?

When?

Both open and close-ended questions are valuable. The construction and phrasing of a question shapes the kind of information you can expect to receive.

**For Practice:** Write down 3 open-ended questions. Pretend you are meeting someone for the first time. You need to ask questions to get to know that person better.

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

# What Can I See?

## Tips for looking carefully at an Artwork



**Subject Matter:** Some artworks have subject matter and others do not. Subject matter refers to anything real or imaginary that is shown in an artwork (such as people, places and things).

**Elements of Design:** Traditional elements in Western art include: (“D” represents “dimensional.”)

### ***2D Elements***

line  
shape  
value (light and dark)  
color

### ***3D Elements***

form or mass  
space  
texture

### ***4D Elements/Time***

sequence  
duration

**Design Principles:** Ways artists organize elements of design to create interesting and unified compositions. Some Traditional Principles include:

Balance	Variation	Focal Point	Pattern
Harmony	Repetition	Movement	Transition
Emphasis/Focal Point	Rhythm	Direction	Proportion
Contrast			

**Technical Features:** Careful viewing of an artwork usually reveals evidence of how it was made. (Indicators might include art making tools, materials and processes.) Artists make artworks that serve many **FUNCTIONS** such as:

Capturing the beauty of nature	Memorializing an important event
Celebrating or criticizing a person, event or group	Exploring visual possibilities
Sharing a vision	Promoting a belief or cause
Celebrating the artist's heritage	Making the ordinary extraordinary
Stimulating action	Many more



# What Can I See?

## Practice looking carefully at an Artwork



**Reproduction Vs Original:** Some reproductions can look pretty different from the originals. Common differences between originals and reproductions are:

- |               |          |                 |            |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| Size          | Colors   | Surface Texture | Luminosity |
| Angle of View | Lighting | Other           |            |

**Care/Condition:** The condition of artworks can deteriorate over time for many reasons, among them:

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Perishable or fragile materials | Damage in storage        |
| Matting, mounting, or framing   | Temperature and humidity |
| Accidents                       | Vandalism                |



### Sample Questions:

See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “what you see.”

Stephen Marc, Tempe, AZ  
*Hair and Palm Trees*  
photograph  
16” H x 20” W

What is the man in the photograph wearing? Where is he?

What shapes and color are repeated?

Does the position of the camera emphasize angles?

Do you think this is a portrait? Why?

How do you think viewing the actual photo might be different from viewing the reproduction printed in this guide?

Can light damage photographs?

# Now You Try! *What Can I See?*



Stephen Marc, *Dragon Dance*” prior to the Sea Fair. (Chinatown Parade, Seattle, WA, 2017) photograph

**Look at this next piece by Stephen Marc. List 3 quick descriptions about what you see:**

(Example: “large sculpture, depicts a woman and is made of bronze.”)

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, based on your observations, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork.**

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

# What Can I Learn?

## Tips for investigating an Artist's Background



**Artist's Life:** The personal lives of artists can affect their work, including such factors as:

Family

Work

Education

Travel

Personal life experiences

Other

**Physical Environment:** The physical world, both natural and human made) can inspire their work:

Natural environment (plants, animals, climate, landforms, etc.)

Constructed environment (buildings, roads, bridges, vehicles, furniture, consumer goods, etc.)

**Culture:** Artists can draw ideas for their work from their cultures:

Values and beliefs

Hobbies and entertainment

Politics

Economic situation

Language

Heritage and/or ethnicity

Other

**Art Experience (Artworld):** Artists get ideas and support from other people involved in art, through:

Art education/Apprenticeships

Insights from specialists in the art form (ceramics , painting, etc.)

Representation by art galleries

Contact with art patrons and collectors

Acknowledgement through art awards, prizes, grants, commissions.

Art included in museum collections



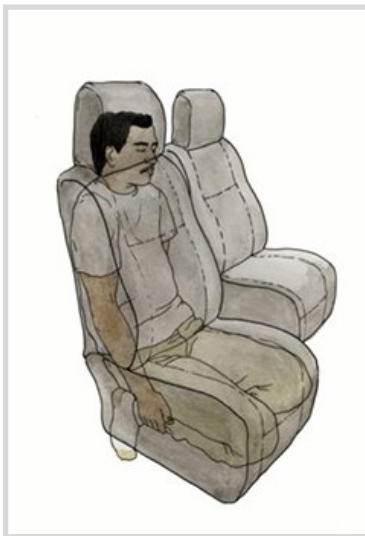
# What Can I Learn?

## Practice investigating an Artist's Background



**Julio Cesar Morales** is a multimedia artist and curator. He grew up in Tijuana, Mexico and uses his own memories and experiences as inspiration for his work. Today, he is a curator of visual arts at the Arizona State University Art Museum and continues to be a creative in a variety of media from music to visual art and explores issues such as migration, economics and labor on a personal and global scale.

His series of watercolor and ink drawings titled “*Undocumented Interventions*” depict migrants hiding in creative yet disturbing ways to attempt undetected border crossings. Some of the images come from his own eye witness accounts from his childhood in Mexico and some others are taken directly from documentary photographs taken by United States Custom Agents. They illustrate living men, women and children tucked inside customized piñatas, suitcases, and vehicle dashboards that have been modified for concealment.



Morales says, “*I am moved by the plight of individuals so stricken with fear and desperation that they willingly risk safety and freedom for the chance to pursue a better life across the border. My ongoing series highlights the harrowing conditions migrants might endure for clandestine passage into the United States.*”

**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “what can I learn.”

1. Where did Julio Cesar Morales grow up?
2. What is the physical environment like, where Morales grew up?
3. What are the traditional and contemporary features of contemporary life in Tijuana?
4. How else does Morales participate in the arts besides making visual art?

## Now You Try! **What Else I Can Learn?**



**Brainstorm and list 5 interesting facts about Julio Cesar Morales' Background.**

*\*You may want to consult pg. 9 and/or a media article and/or Internet references about the artist.\**

- a \_\_\_\_\_
- b \_\_\_\_\_
- c \_\_\_\_\_
- d \_\_\_\_\_
- e \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, based on your research, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork/artist.**

- a \_\_\_\_\_
- b \_\_\_\_\_
- c \_\_\_\_\_

# What Does It Mean?

## Tips for interpreting an Artwork



**Artist's Intention:** Artists decide how they want their artworks to look. Their intentions may be:

Personal or private	Traditional	Practical	Boundary breaking
Unconventional	Evolving	Emotional	Spontaneous
Experimental	Deliberate		
Focused on collector, patron, funder or other viewer			Other

**Art Specialists' Understandings:** The considered opinions of art specialists (experts) direct viewers' attention to aspects of artworks that they judge to be worthy of that attention. Art specialists may include:

Artists	Art Teachers	Museum Curators	Art Critics
Art Historians	Master Craftspeople	Ceremonial Leaders	Guild Members
Tribal elders	Others		

**Cultural Understandings:** A viewer's cultural understanding draws upon a set of ideas, beliefs and standards shared broadly within a culture. These are learned, not by special effort and instruction, but simply through growing up as a member of a culture. Unexamined expectations might include:

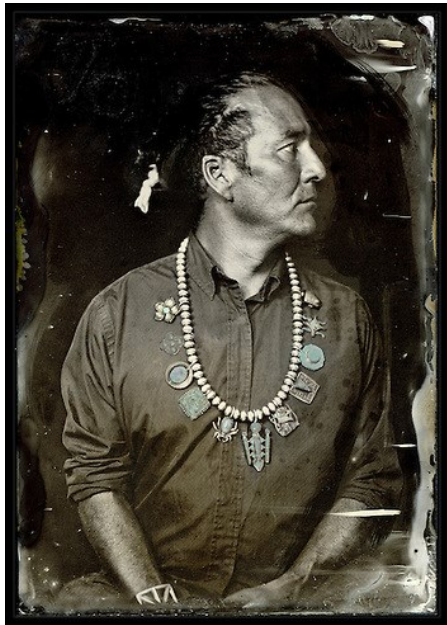
High price	Obvious meaning	Difficult to make	Easily recognizable
Familiar	Other		

**Your Own Viewpoint:** Your responses to artworks are affected by:

conscious thoughts	unconscious reactions	personal preferences
careful viewing	thoughtful reflection	relevant information
free association	previous art experience	and more

# What Does It Mean?

## Practice interpreting an Artwork



(Will Wilson Self Portrait)

Will Wilson is a photographer who was born in San Francisco and raised in the Navajo Nation. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin College in Ohio and a Master of Arts degree in photography from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. His current work is a series of artworks that respond to early photographer Edward S. Curtis' portrait series "The North American Indian." This series famously documented Native peoples from around 1907-1930 and continues to spark conversations about culture, identity and stereotypes.

Wilson has been working on the series, *The Critical Indigenous Photographic Exchange (CIPX)* since 2012 and continues to add portraits of people from across the country. For Wilson, the process of interacting with sitters is essential. Using a camera that is more than 100 years old requires sitters to remain still for long periods of time. The resulting image

etched on a tin plate is so detailed, that one might mistake it for a high resolution digital photograph. In reality, "tintype photography" goes back to the late 1800s.

Wilson says, "*I am impatient with the way that American culture remains enamored of one particular moment in a photographic exchange between Euro-American and Aboriginal American societies. .... Native people remain frozen in time in [Edward S. Curtis's photos taken between 1907 and 1930]. I want to supplant Curtis's Settler gaze and the remarkable body of ethnographic material he compiled with a contemporary vision of Native North America.*" These alone—rather than the old paradigm of assimilation--can form the basis for a re-imagined vision of who we are as Native people."

**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about "what does it mean."

What does Will Wilson intend to express this series?

How have art experts interpreted Wilson's photographs?

How might Will Wilson's photographs be understood by today's Native American peoples?



Edward S. Curtis, *Three Horses*, Photograph, 1905, Library of Congress. From the ethnographic photography book "The North American Indian." Curtis (1868-1952) visited more than 80 tribes across the country, and north into Alaska and parts of Canada, eventually taking more than 40,000 photographs.

## Now You Try! What Does It Mean?



*Nakotah LaRance*  
Citizen of the Hopi Nation & 6-time World  
Champion Hoop Dancer

CIPX Project, platinum print portrait  
2012 at San Francisco Art Institute

**Look at this work by Will Wilson.  
Brainstorm and list 5 ideas about  
what the artwork is about.**

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_

d \_\_\_\_\_

e \_\_\_\_\_

**Now, based on your interpretation, write 3 questions you  
could ask a friend about this artwork.**

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_



# How Do They Compare?

## Tips for gathering insights by comparing Artworks



**Style:** Style is a set of distinctive qualities ("family resemblance") that are shared by more than one artwork. Artists develop their own style and incorporate aspects of the styles of artists from their own or other times and cultures.

Artist's style

Style of art movement or period

Cultural style

**Art Influence:** Most artists are influenced by artists who worked before them, though some self-taught artists, called "outsider artists," work in isolation, largely unaware of the work of other artists. Art influences can include:

Technical and aesthetic achievements by other artists

Other artists' ideas, innovations, commitments

Traditional or historical art ideas to follow, extend or break away from

**Theme:** Some broad, cross-cultural themes have been the focus of many artists throughout history and across the globe:

People and nature

Cultural pride

Conquest

Overcoming obstacles

Strength of family

Love

Fantasy

Social order

Harmony

Chaos

Revisiting history

Heroic adventure

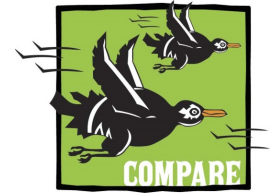
Religious devotion

Status

Many more

# How Do They Compare?

## Practice gathering insights by comparing Artworks



Emily Matyas, From *I Am My Ancestors* series  
photograph (between 2013-15, Romania)



Emily Matyas, From *In America* series  
photograph (2017, Tempe, AZ)

Emily Matyas was originally a journalist before her career as a fine artist. In her latest series, “*I Am My Ancestors*,” Matyas explores personal heritage based on her father’s Romanian parents who immigrated to the United States. Confronted with thoughts about culture and identity, she decided to take on the challenge to walk in her grandmother’s footsteps. The project took her to the Romanian village of Sarbi (near where her grandparents had lived). She chose to create self-portraits of herself as her grandmother in a fictional narrative. She wore traditional clothing, did chores around the community and interacted with the locals. The second leg of Matyas project, “*In America*” largely took place in Tempe. The counter-series include imaginings of her grandmother’s life as an immigrant in America from the everyday tasks of cooking and cleaning to the challenges of work and raising a family in a culture not your own.

Matyas says, “*Ultimately, the physicality of acting out another person's life, even if it is imagined, forges a connection between two people, two places or two cultures. Their experiences become a part of your experience which leads to shared ideas, feelings and an understanding of their reality. Putting yourself in someone else's shoes, either literally or through shared emotions, helps foster an environment of empathy towards those whose lives may be different from yours.*”

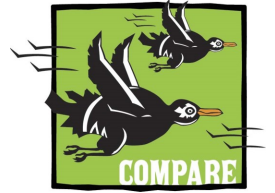
**Sample Questions:** See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “how they compare.”

How would you describe Emily Matyas’s style of photography? In what ways are both works similar (medium, subject matter, choice and organization of visual elements)?

What other art/photography influenced Emily Matyas?

How do Matyas’s photographs reflect the theme of the *Walk in My Shoes* exhibition?

# Now You Try! How Do They Compare?



Emily Matyas, From *I Am My Ancestors* series  
photograph (between 2013-15, Romania)



Stephen Marc, *Dragon Dance* prior to the Sea Fair  
(Chinatown Parade, Seattle, WA, 2017)

**List 3 highlights (your favorite information) about the artworks.**

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**Now, compare these highlights with other artworks by the same artists.**

List 2 similarities among the artworks:

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List 2 differences among the artworks:

---

---

**Now, based on your comparisons, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about these artworks.**

a \_\_\_\_\_

b \_\_\_\_\_

c \_\_\_\_\_



# Follow Up Activity

## Walk in My Shoes

This secondary level photography activity is introduced with artworks reproduced in this guide.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to interpret artworks as expressions of personal or cultural identity.  
**VA.RE.7.HS2b:** Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
2. Students will be able to express aspects of their identities through art.  
**VA.PR.4.HS2:** Examine, select, and justify choices of personal artwork for a collection or portfolio presentation.
3. Students will be able to create a series of photographs that each use the same visual element in quite different compositions.  
**VA.CR.2.HS2a:** Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form using various approaches.

### VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce the theme of the *Walk in My Shoes* exhibition: Through an artist's eye, we can experience, discover and see how it feels to "walk in another person's shoes" for a moment.

Locate artists, artworks and information about them in the "Sample Questions" sections in this guide.

Lead a discussion of how each of the artworks invites us to consider the viewpoint of another person.

### MAKING ACTIVITIES

Provide cameras or ask students to use cell phones to create a series of self portraits that reveals aspects of their personal or cultural identities.

Direct students to create different effects by organizing similar elements in different ways in each photograph.

