



ATENEUM

DECK OF ARTS

60 Art Cards and an Idea Notebook

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To the User

This is a deck of art cards. On the cards are printed images of 60 works of art from the collections of the Ateneum Art Museum. Some are familiar masterpieces, others are less famous works.

Whether you are an art lover, an adult visiting the museum with a child, a teacher, an art professional, or a care professional, the art cards are a great resource. This booklet contains ideas and suggestions for how to use the cards. Many exercises are presented in a short and a long version. Everything can be adapted freely to your needs.

Art cards are easy and fun to use. No special place or long preparation is needed. You can use the cards to create thematic mini exhibitions at home or at work. Just two pictures side by side can be a show, a pair of images that communicate with each other.

The art cards can be used alone or together with others. They are perfect for setting the mood for a small group at a meeting, in therapy, in teaching, or creativity training.

The cards contain several masterpieces of Finnish art, pictures you can see live in the Ateneum Art Museum. The museum website has additional information as well as images of these and other works in the collections. You can even use the deck to support a visit to the museum, either before or after.

For those who for some reason cannot visit the museum to see the pictures live, the cards give an opportunity to have a visual experience nonetheless. Many of the exercises are ideal for use in homes for the elderly.

Lots of applications! Art cards can be used in many inventive and playful ways. They can be used to illustrate and teach about art, but also to search for connections, to organise a theme night for friends around an art panel or a relaxing visual occupational therapy day for a work team. With two decks of art cards you can play a visual match-making game. And of course you can supplement the deck with cards of your own!

Do we see the same picture? The art cards can be used among a group of friends or a team for talking about the pictures or even about yourself, your thoughts and feelings. Unfamiliar pictures can shake loose associations about your own life, something that is meaningful, new ideas or insights. It can be fascinating to see how many different thoughts and interpretations one and the same image can have for different people. In fact, the question is not unwarranted: Do we all see the same picture?

About the order of suggestions and exercises: The first part of the booklet contains general questions designed to inspire discussion and ideas, and a few themes arising from the selection of pictures in the deck. With a view to different user groups, many of the exercises include both a fast version (**EASY**) and longer or otherwise more demanding one (**NEEDS TIME**). Many of the exercises can be adapted also for small children. At the very end, the so-called Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) is presented that can be used by all groups.

You can also download this booklet as a PDF file from the museum website, public programmes page:
www.ateneum.fi/public-programmes/?lang=en.

Common Questions

TOPIC, THEME, STORY

1. What is going on in the picture?
2. What thing in the picture caught your attention first?
3. What can you see in the picture?
4. What action is there in the picture?
5. Where does the picture take place?
6. When does the picture take place?
7. Is there some theme in the picture?
8. Does the picture tell a story? What kind of a story?
9. If the picture was the middle frame of a comic strip, what would the first and the last frame be like?
10. How would you describe this work in just one word?
11. What could be the title of this work?

MEDIUM, FORM

12. How do you think the picture was made?
13. Does the picture have a rhythm?
14. How is the picture framed? Why do you think it is that way?
15. Can you describe the layout of the picture?
16. What colours are used in the picture? How are they used?
17. What is the light like?
18. Does the picture show any particular time of day or season of the year?

SENSES

19. Can you sense some temperature or texture in the picture?
20. What kind of music would suit the picture?
21. How would the picture move if it were alive?
22. What kind of sound would the picture make?
23. What smells, odours or tastes could the picture have?

LINK TO OWN LIFE

24. How does the picture link to your own life?
25. Is there something familiar in the picture?
26. Do you like the picture?
27. If you like the picture, can you say why?

28. What does the picture make you feel?
29. Can you find a picture that matches your present outfit?
30. Is there something surprising in the picture?
31. Is there something in the picture that you do not understand?

MOOD, EMOTIONAL STATE

32. *Alone, in pairs or a group.*

Find things in the pictures that make you:

- relaxed
- excited
- irritated
- delighted
- upset
- sad

(add more moods)

After naming the mood, try to think what specific things in the picture make you feel that way.

Themes in the Art Cards

- Friendship
- Childhood
- Love
- Community
- Life choices and turning points
- Human nature
- Portrait of the artist – of a person
- State of mind/mindscape
- Beauty
- Death
- Finnish landscape
- Alone – together
- Seasons of the year

Suggestions, Ideas, Exercises

33. Take a moment to enjoy art.

EASY Choose a picture that seems glad or happy to you. Take a moment to enjoy it.

34. My favourite picture.

EASY *In a group (also in the museum).* Choose your favourite picture and present it to the others.

35. Give a title to the picture.

EASY Choose a card, but do not look at the title of the work at the back. Take your time to look at the picture and give it a title that seems appropriate to you. (If you know the picture, invent a new title for it.) If you are doing this in a group, the group members can take turns presenting their card and their title to the picture, and only then is the original title of the work revealed. Conclude with a new round of discussion to talk about if the presentation changed people's idea of the picture.

36. Find something new.

EASY Choose one card. Take your time to look at the picture – as long as it takes to find something new in it.

37. What is the picture about?

EASY Someone holds the cards in a fan so that you cannot see the pictures. Choose a card without looking at the information on the back side. What does the picture say to you right now? Does it have a message? What can you receive from it?

38. Gift to a friend.

EASY Find a picture that you would like to give as a gift to a friend or to a loved one you miss. Send it as a picture message to the person and then follow up by calling him/her.

Variation in a group: You can give the 'gift' to another member in the group.

39. **Picture as a journey.**

EASY *Alone, in pairs or small groups.* Look at the pictures on the cards. Think about a journey – a real journey or an imaginary one. Choose a few cards that you can use to illustrate the journey. Present the journey to the rest of the group using the pictures.

40. **Picture pairs: like two peas in a pod, or like night and day.**

EASY Sometimes it only takes two pictures side by side to tell an interesting story.

Find pairs in the cards:

Find pictures that seem to go well together because of their subject, composition, colours or some other quality. What things in the pictures make them seem like a good pair? What does their interaction tell you?

Find two pictures that are very different or contradictory. What aspects of the pictures seem contradictory?

41. **Using art cards to learn to know others, exercise 1.**

EASY *Group exercise.* Use this to kick off a meeting or some other event. Spread many art cards on a table. All participants select a card that seems interesting to them at that particular moment. Everyone takes a few moments to study the picture on their card. A round of introductions is then made, with the pictures: everyone says their name and tells what made them select that particular picture just now.

In pairs in a small group: The group discusses the cards in pairs. Everyone then presents their pair and the pair's card to the rest of the group.

Discussion, if the group is large: The pictures can be discussed in pairs, and then one or two volunteers tell the group about the other person's selection.

42. Using art cards to get to know others, exercise 2.

EASY *In a small or medium sized group.* Everyone selects an art card that seems interesting to them at that particular moment. Without showing the picture to others, everyone considers what made that particular picture interesting to them. The instructor then collects the cards, mixes them and deals them out on a table (or floor) in the centre of the group, with picture-side up. Everyone selects a card that is not their own. A round of introduction then follows, in which every person says their name and tells the others what aspect of the new card seems interesting to them. Then the person who chose the card originally presents themselves, telling the group what they found interesting in the picture. That person then continues by presenting their new card, and this goes on until all the cards are discussed.

43. Warming up exercise for a group meeting: The picture connects to...

NEEDS TIME *Group exercise.* Everyone in the group gets a card (no looking at the titles on the back just yet). The task is to find something in the picture that connects somehow to the group's other work, such as:

- personal life
- wishes or dreams
- present-day Finland or the person's home region

Conclude with a discussion.

44. Art cards in home care.

EASY An example from home care: A home care employee has a deck of art cards. While talking with a client, they spread out cards on a table, encouraging the client to choose one that seems good that particular day. They talk a moment about the picture, exchanging news and views through and with the pictures. A picture can also trigger new ideas and have an invigorating effect. The employee can leave the card with the client until the next meeting, when they can choose a new card.

45. Art jury.

NEEDS TIME *Group exercise.* Three volunteers are needed, and each one is given an art card. The volunteers take turns presenting their card to the rest of the group, trying to convince them of its importance. Let your imagination run wild, go for gold! The members of the audience will then give one to three points to the pictures (with a large audience, all members have one vote). The points are tallied up to see which picture won. *Concluding:* Have a group discussion about the winning picture and what made people vote for it.

Hint: This exercise can also involve ‘difficult’ pictures, such as non-objective or abstract art, or challenging contemporary pieces.

Variation: One person (can also be the instructor) takes out a selection of pictures. Each picture is studied unhurriedly, and then the members give one-word reactions to the pictures. The words can be written down on Post-It notes next to the picture (use expressive adjectives, not just pretty/ugly etc., but more challenging ones, such as gritty, airy, etc.). No points are given in this version.

46. Picture of the day or week.

EASY Go through the deck and select one card that feels good to you right now. Place the card on your night table or your desk, on a window sill or in the bathroom, anywhere you can look at it daily. You can use a frame to keep it upright. Clothes-pegs are a handy way to prop up the picture. Select a new picture every morning, or once a week.

47. Miniature changing show.

EASY Use art cards creatively: hang or prop them up to make a tiny art exhibition at home or at work. Be bold, think of alternative places and pictures. Window sills, tables, empty walls are all great. You can create interesting contrasts by placing a picture next to another that you already know. If the selection of pictures builds up into a thematic or narrative whole, you can also give a title to the exhibition.

48. Create your own pop-up exhibition.

EASY *Alone, in pairs or small groups.* Choose three cards and create a thematic show with them. Set the cards up so as to create a hanging.

Concluding: The exercise can end with an opening of the show: all participants present their shows to others, and discuss them.

Variation: Do the exercise in pairs. The pairs may not talk with each other, but are allowed to communicate in other ways such as gestures, expressions, sounds. The aim is to create a joint thematic exhibition using just three pictures. In concluding, the exhibition is presented to the other pairs – now you can speak. Discuss to find out if the exercise taught you something.

49. From one picture to another, transitions.

EASY *Alone or in a group. With the art cards or in the museum.* Study the art cards you selected from the deck, or works in the museum. Try to find connections: What things can connect pictures to other pictures? Forms, colours, subject matter, titles? Do some works seem like pairs for some reason?

50. Big domino.

EASY *In pairs or in a group.* The entire deck is dealt out among the participants. Everyone takes a moment to study their pictures. A collective ‘domino’ is then built on a table or the floor, with everyone putting down a picture next to another one, explaining how the two pictures connect and what their relationship is. The connecting (or contradictory) factor can be colour, topic, form, mood. This exercise is particularly suited for rounding up a meeting.

Concluding: The group studies and discusses the picture path or tree thus created.

Variation: The exercise can also be performed with everyone holding only one card. Participants lay down their card next to another card, telling others what relation it bears to the other picture (similar feeling, opposite emotional state, same tone of colour, etc.).

51. **Beauty in ugliness.**

EASY Find a picture that seems ugly or unpleasant to you. If you find one, look at it for a moment and try to discover something in it that is beautiful or pleasing.

52. **Boring picture – debate.**

NEEDS TIME *In pairs, in a group.* People can have very different ideas about pictures. Encourage the group to engage also with something that is unfamiliar, non-figurative, or ‘ugly’. Divide the group into pairs. Spread cards on a table and let everyone choose a picture they think is boring, strange, unpleasant, ugly or uninteresting. Working in pairs, everyone presents their picture to the other person, telling what makes them feel the picture is uninteresting, unpleasant or ugly. The other person listens without interrupting or making any judgements. Then the pairs switch the cards, and now each one must try to find something positive or interesting in the other person’s picture.

Concluding: Discuss the exercise first in pairs, then in the group. Did anyone change their mind? Did anyone find new perspectives on the picture?

53. **Game: The fastest storyteller.**

NEEDS TIME *In a group, optimally 3–6 players.* The entire deck is dealt out among players. Four cards are placed picture-side up in a row in the centre of the table. Players can exchange their cards one at a time. In exchanging cards, they first lay down their own card and then take another from the centre of the table. The objective is to compile as many four-card picture stories as possible. The player wins who first has the maximum number of stories in their hand. The game ends and all players present their stories to the others.

Easier version: Each player compiles just one four-card story.

54. **Turning points in pictures.**

NEEDS TIME *Alone or in a group.* Think about turning points in your life, important events or other things. Choose pictures from the deck that reflect them in terms of mood or situation. Make a timeline with the pictures. At the end of the timeline, place a

picture or pictures that might be dreams that have come true. Think which one of the events or achievements in your life is one that you can be particularly proud for, and how you might carry that forward to your next challenge.

Variation: Add a few cards to the end of the timeline that reflect your unfulfilled dreams that you would like to make come true.

55. Problem and solution.

NEEDS TIME *In a small group, to discuss a topical issue common to all members of the group.* Two cards are chosen collectively: one that stands for the topical problem/issue, another that stands for a positive solution/outcome. Use the pictures to discuss how the end result might be reached. What is better in the second picture? What concrete steps are needed to attain the outcome?

Picture and Word

56. Writing exercise: warm-up, raw copy.

EASY *Alone or in a small group.* Either each member chooses one picture for themselves, or the group chooses one picture collectively. Then all write about the picture without censoring their thoughts: ideas, associations, stories, poems, dialogue. Set a time limit, five minutes should be enough.

Concluding hint: After the writing is finished, each group member underlines one point or passage that is important to them, and these are then discussed in the group.

57. Storycrafting.

EASY *In a group (or pairs).* Begin the exercise by having the entire group study one art card or a work of art. Then move to storycrafting: Participants take turns (preferably in a free order) to add a sentence to the story. One person serves as a secretary, writing down the story on paper or a computer as it

unfolds. When everyone thinks the story is finished, someone reads it aloud. Everyone can make corrections or changes if they think their passage was recorded incorrectly. Conclude with a discussion on whether people now see the picture with different eyes.

Variation: Storycrafting can also be done so that everyone studies the picture at leisure and then writes a short poem or aphorism about it. Then a story about the picture is crafted using the method described above. After the collectively written story is read aloud, everyone reads their own poem or aphorism. Conclude with a discussion.

Storycrafting can also be done one person at a time.

58. Collective long story. (Storycrafting variation)

NEEDS TIME *In a small group.* Each participant is dealt about five cards. Everyone takes a moment to study their cards. One person puts down a card on the table/floor and starts the storytelling. Next, any person who can continue the story with a card of their own puts it next to the first card and continues the story by adding a sentence or two. One person serves as secretary and records the story on paper or a computer. Finally the story is read out aloud, following the progression of the picture cards. If a story is exceptionally well-crafted, you can type it out and print or otherwise enlarge it so that it can be displayed with the cards for others to read.

59. From pictures to story, variation 1.

NEEDS TIME *Alone, in pairs, or in a group.* Everyone selects two or three art cards from the deck. Alternatively, cards can be dealt to the participants. Consider how the cards might be linked together. Create a storyline to link the cards. Use all cards. You can tell the story orally or write it down.

Concluding: Place the cards in the order in which they appear in your story and let others study them for a while. Only then tell the story.

60. From pictures to story, variation 2.

NEEDS TIME *In a small group.* Everyone chooses one art card. The cards are placed on a table, floor or window sill in the same order as the group is sitting; the order can also be decided together. Begin the story by moving from one picture to the next, creating a story with a plot so that everyone can participate. One person serves as secretary and writes the story on paper or computer a sentence at a time.

Concluding: The story is read out aloud.

61. Surrealist poem.

EASY *Group exercise.* Choose one picture of a work of art for the entire group. You can also study the picture as video projection from the website <http://kokoelmat.fng.fi/app?lang=en>. Begin by studying the picture quietly for a moment. Then everyone writes down words or ideas, as many as possible, that are associated with the picture, its mood, the thoughts that it awakens. Then all participants underline one or two of the most important items and read them aloud, taking turns.

Concluding discussion: Do these verbal reactions constitute a modern poem? Does the picture begin to live differently when you look at it again after hearing the contributions?

62. Write about the picture.

NEEDS TIME *Alone or in a group.* Take you time to study a picture. Then choose a role: journalist, copywriter, poet, political speech writer, obituarist, songwriter, love letter writer, diarist. Assume the role and write about the picture. Feel free to use the register and jargon of the genre of your choosing.

Feedback: A volunteer reads their piece to the group (or everyone can read theirs).

63. Poem and image.

NEEDS TIME *Group exercise.* For this exercise, photocopied poems are needed, as different as possible, not too long. All participants receive one poem. Then they search from cards on the table a picture that fits the poem, plus two other pictures.

Taking turns, each one places their three cards on the table in random order and reads the poem aloud. The others try to determine which one of the three pictures fits the poem best. Finally the reader reveals their choice.

Hint: Poems and pictures, poems and music, poems and smells can also be connected in this way. Someone can be particularly inspired by a poem's pace and verbalism, and you do not have to be an actor to read a poem aloud!

64. Write a postcard. An exercise with mental images.

EASY Choose a picture and imagine it is a postcard. Who would you send it to? What would you write on it?

65. Picture writes a letter.

NEEDS TIME *Alone, in pairs, or in a group.* Choose a card that has a person in the picture. That person now writes something to you: thoughts, words, a poem or a letter. What does the person write? Imagine and write in the first person. When you are finished, you can swap your picture and text with your pair.

Conclude with a discussion.

Picture, Word, Touch

66. Picture massage/drawing on the back.

NEEDS TIME *In pairs or in a group.* Working in pairs, one person is blindfolded, the other can see. An art card is given to the seeing player, who studies it a moment, then places it somewhere they can see it, such as in the lap of the blindfolded player. The seeing player takes the blind player's hands into their own and gives a gentle hand massage while talking about the picture: what things are in it, what is happening, what the colours are, what other sensory observations one might make of it. When the hand massage and the description are finished, the blind player can open their eyes and look at the picture.

Variation: The seeing player draws the picture on the blind player's back or palm.

Concluding: Spend a moment discussing the picture and the associations and thoughts awakened by the description/ touching. Reverse the roles and do the exercise again, with a different picture.

67. **Lovely hands.**

EASY *In pairs or in a group.* First choose one of the displayed works of art or an art card that shows traces of the artist's work. What do works of art tell about hands and the artist? What are the things we can do with our hands? Discuss. The exercise can be concluded by everyone giving a short hand massage to the next person, finishing with a fragrant moisturiser.

Picture, Music

68. **Singing picture.**

EASY Find a picture of a work of art (or a work itself, if you are in a museum) that might sing to you. What kind of music do you hear? Try to hum the tune.

69. **Tuning up: Music and picture.**

NEEDS TIME *Alone or in a small group.* Music plays in the room. Art cards are spread on a table. Each participant chooses one picture that fits the music they are hearing. (They might also select another one that is discordant with the music.) The exercise can be repeated with different types of music. You can also use meditative music or recordings of natural sounds.

Concluding: Standing or sitting in a ring, participants talk about what in the picture links to the music.

Variation: You need paints (such as ready mixed poster colours), large brushes and large sheets of paper. Participants listen to the music and paint freely their ideas based on the picture and the music together.

Picture, Movement, Sound

70. Living picture.

EASY *Group exercise.* One participant has a picture of an artwork that the others cannot see. The participant describes what he or she sees in it and what is happening in the picture, and the others animate the picture, turning it into a living, moving, maybe even vocal thing that fits the description. In the end, the picture is shown to everyone.

Variation: If the group is relaxed enough: The person (or several persons together) describes the picture in pantomime, using only sounds, gestures and movements. In the end, the picture is shown to everyone.

Or: One person describes a picture they have in their hand, while the others sketch a picture on paper based on their understanding of it.

Or: One person describes a picture in their hand, and others write about the thoughts, smells, sounds and moods that the description awakens in them.

Concluding: Discussion about the exercise.

71. Living comics/pantomime, animating the picture.

NEEDS TIME *In small groups.* One art card is assigned to each group. The group replicates the picture in the form of a comic strip that moves, using pantomime. What has happened before the picture? What happens in it? What will happen next? Each group has a moment to plan their pantomime and then present it to others.

Conclude with a discussion.

72. Picture into sounds.

NEEDS TIME *In small groups.* Each group gets three pictures. Each group selects one picture of which to make a soundscape. The sounds can be produced using any objects at hand and voices: mumbling, rubbing, humming. Feel free to use your body and room in inventive ways! The soundscapes are practiced by

each group alone so that the others cannot hear. Then others listen to the soundscape with their eyes closed.

Conclude with a discussion. Groups try to guess what the soundscape picture was. Each group takes its turn.

Using Art Cards in the Ateneum Art Museum

Some of the works on the art cards are included in the collection display at the Ateneum Art Museum. The museum website provides information about which works are currently on show. Many of the exercises can be done in the museum as well. You can tour the museum with a small group together with the art cards and make notes. Writing boards can be borrowed from coatroom attendants. The museum has movable chairs you can use, and you can also sit on the floor near the works, being careful not to lean on the walls or the bases of any works. To keep the art safe, you must always keep at least one metre between yourself and the work of art.

73. **Detective: Which pictures can you find?**

EASY Construct an alternative tour of the show by searching for works that are in the deck, and stopping to study them. The hanging of the collection display at the Ateneum evolves, because other museums often request to have works on loan. Take the deck of art cards or some of them with you to the museum and see which of the works you can find there. When you find a familiar work, it can surprise you: it can be larger or smaller than you thought, it can have a particularly fine frame, or can be hung meaningfully next to some other work.

74. **Spot a familiar work.**

EASY *Group exercise.* Find out beforehand (from the Ateneum website or by visiting the museum) which of the works in the deck are currently on show in the collection display. Take time with your group to study these works. Take the cards along to the museum. Give each member of the group one card and send

them to explore the show. Tell them to signal the others when they come across the work on their card. Then discuss the work in the group: what is going on in it, what it reminds them of, does it seem pleasing or interesting, what is special about it, is there something surprising about it, and so on.

Variation: Do the exercise as described above, but build a 'bridge' from a previously 'discovered' work to the next, considering what things in the two works could serve to link them together.

Concluding, possibly in the group's own base: Discuss the visit to the museum and also the meaning of everyone's 'own' picture.

75. Match-making game in the museum.

EASY *Group exercise.* Either in the museum or at a group's own function. You will need two decks of art cards. Everyone gets one card. During the game, the players will have to find their own pair. You can also devise an assignment for the pairs.

Variation. Instead of showing the pictures to the players, you tape the pictures on the players' back. The task is to find your match by pantomime and sounds, but without actual spoken words.

76. One blind player.

NEEDS TIME *In pairs or in a group.* This can be played with the art cards or in the museum. One player can see, the other one – or the entire group – is blindfolded. The blind player closes their eyes (or keep their eyes down all the time). The seeing player walks the blind player safely to the gallery and the chosen work. The seeing player describes the work to the blind player as vividly and accurately as they can: colours, shapes and size, theme and content, mood and position in the gallery. The blind player asks no questions but listens quietly, and when the seeing player is finished, the blind player can look at the work.

Concluding: Come together to discuss the exercise. What was it like being the recipient of the description? How closely did the blind player's idea of the work correspond to reality? What things were completely different? What was the most interesting

thing in the description? What possibly led the blind player astray? Which parts of the description were the seeing player's own opinion, which parts directly observable in the work?

77. Step inside the picture.

NEEDS TIME *Alone (or in pairs), in the museum or with the art cards.* Choose a work of art or an art card that you like or that seems interesting. If possible, do not look at its title at this point. Imagine that you are able to enter into the picture. Where are you? Describe the space and how it feels (hot or cold, other qualities). Are you alone or are there others with you? Are you one of the persons in the picture or an outside observer? What is happening in the picture? What is it like to be here? What are you doing? What could be the title of the picture? You can write down your thoughts and the title of the work.

Concluding A: Show the picture to your pair and tell them what is in the picture.

Concluding B: Swap pictures with your pair and let them tell first their thoughts about your picture. Only then tell them yours.

Art Cards and Ateneum Website (www.ateneum.fi)

78. Listen to the story about a work on an art card.

EASY *Alone or in a group.* You will need a computer with Internet access. The collection display and the Ateneum Art Museum website have dozens of audio presentations of individual works of art. There are audio clips in Finnish, Swedish, English, Russian and simplified Finnish. Pictures of the works of art can be found in the audio guide section of the website. To start the audio presentation, click on the title of the work below its picture. Many of the works covered in the audio guide are also included in the art cards.

Concluding: Begin by studying the picture of the work of art (pass the art card around or view the online image on a computer screen or as a projection). Talk about the picture, what is happening in it, what details there are, what kind of a mood it has, what you think is its theme. Next, listen to the audio presentation, and discuss afterwards if you see something more in the picture now.

79. More information about works in the art cards.

EASY *You will need a computer with Internet access.* All the works depicted on the art cards are in the collections of the Ateneum Art Museum. If you think some work is particularly interesting, you can find more information about it online at **fng.fi**. Use the search field to find the work you want. You can search for titles of individual works, or search artists by name. Google Art Project also contains works from the Ateneum Art Museum for closer view.

Picture Making and Cards

80. Self-Portrait.

EASY *Alone or in a group. For this exercise, you will need artist's materials.* Study a self-portrait on an art card, in the exhibition, or at the Ateneum website (search for **self-portraits** using the search function of online collections at **fng.fi**). Imagine yourself as an artist. What would your self-portrait be like, if you were to make one just now? Where would you be? What would you wear? How would you show yourself? What gestures or expressions would you make? Use your imagination, make a dream come true!

81. Variation: collective self-portrait: facilitated self-portrait of dreams.

NEEDS TIME *In pairs or in a small group. For this exercise, you will need artist's materials. Working with a pair, study the self-portraits of two (or more) artists (suggestions: Helene Schjerfbeck, Ellen Thesleff, Alpo Jaakola, Pekka Halonen). Discuss the pictures. Ask yourselves why the artists have shown themselves as they have. What does a painting tell about the person? Next, discuss what kind of a self-portrait your pair would like to make. Encourage them to take pen and paper and create a dream self-portrait. If your pair cannot draw for some reason, help them and create a dream portrait together. Note: more important that drawing in this exercise, is to talk about dreams together!*

82. From picture to story and picture.

NEEDS TIME *Group exercise. For this exercise, you will need artist's materials. Choose one picture. Tell a story about it either quietly in your mind or writing it down on paper. Speak or read aloud your story to the others, who have not seen your picture. Then they will all make a picture of your story.*

Conclude by discussing the pictures made by the group and compare them to the original picture.

Visual Thinking Strategies

NEEDS TIME *Visual Thinking Strategies, or VTS, is a method for working with pictures on cards or other media in small groups and in museums, galleries or any other place. The goal of VTS is to encourage all participants to discuss images as equals, to make observations and see/look more closely.*

The method was developed to promote skills in image perception, critical thinking and social interaction. Successful implementation of the method can empower participants and increase their interest in pictures.

Preliminaries: The instructor/facilitator asks if it is alright for the group to look at pictures together and talk about them. The setting should be quiet and allow everyone to see the picture or work of art. The instructor does not share their expertise, the point is not to arrive at any unique correct interpretation, all observations, interpretations and ideas come from the group. The instructor is genuinely interested in what the group members think about the pictures, and focuses on trying to understand what the participants mean with their answers.

Beginning: The group looks at a picture in silence for about one minute.

Instructor's questions:

1. What is going on/happening in the picture? *(This question is posed just once, at the beginning of the discussion.)*
2. What do you see that makes you say that? *The phrasing of the question must be adjusted according to the situation and the replies.*
3. What more can you/we find?

Every time someone answers a question, the instructor points to that area of the work which the person has observed. The instructor focuses on listening to what the person says and paraphrases the answer for the group. If the person says the

picture is sad, the instructor can ask the follow-up question 2 (suitably adjusted to the situation). The answer to the second question is also paraphrased by the instructor. Then the instructor poses question 3 for the group. Questions 2 and 3 alternate during the discussion. The aim is to involve everyone in the discussion, not to arrive at some 'correct' interpretation. The instructor remains neutral, gathers together the answers to the questions, and encourages participants to discover even more things about the picture.

The participants must back up their statements and interpretations with evidence in the picture. If someone asks the instructor for information about the work, the instructor can first ask if anyone in the group can give an answer, or to encourage the group to consider where they might find such information. The instructor may also tell what they know about the work, and where they got the information. The key thing is to recognise that people can have many different, even contradictory ideas about pictures, and that they can also change their mind during the discussion. The discussion can be open-ended, avoiding summaries or final interpretations. To end the session, the instructor thanks the group for the discussion.

These instructions were abbreviated and adapted from the VTS method (Visual Thinking Strategies, www.vtshome.org).

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