

How Does VTS Relate to Collection in Focus Tours?

A tour that uses only pure VTS (in which the guide does not introduce any information) is not appropriate for many CIF tours groups for two main reasons: 1.) our primary adult tour audiences expect you as the facilitator to share some information about the objects on the tour and 2.) many non-western and contemporary artworks lack strong narrative content and/or prompt cultural misinterpretation by visitors without the guidance of the tour facilitator. However, the pedagogical theory underlying the methods of VTS – that leaning is developmentally driven and the good teacher listens carefully for clues about the learner is ready to know – applies to all leaning situations. The habits of active looking and active listening promoted by VTS provide these clues, and are essential elements of a meaningful learning experience with art.

Pure VTS Tours	CIF Tours
Goals for participants	
Build upon the story-telling instincts of viewers to foster engaging, meaningful interactions with unfamiliar works of art to promote critical thinking skills, and practice respectful group interactions.	Provide participants with experience looking at and engaging with art to find personal relevance and to gain insight into the diversity of art produced by various cultures across time.
Works of art used	
Depictions of actions, settings, and emotions that are recognizable by and of interest to viewers; strong narrative content; open to multiple interpretations.	A well-crafted tour should include objects that are inherently interesting to adults and families, represent a diversity of cultures, and sample a variety of media. Many non-western and some contemporary objects are not appropriate put VTS because the lack narrative content and/or because they are culturally specific and not appropriate to visitors' multiple interpretations.

These differences acknowledged, many of the methods employed in a VTS discussion may be fruitfully applied to other group discussions of works of art.

VTS method	Does it apply to CIF tours?
Begin with a moment of quiet looking.	Yes. A quiet moment helps orient the group to the object they will be discussing and discover their initial observations. It encourages them to really look rather than simple rely on the being told what they are seeing. The more they see for themselves, the more

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	confidence they will have in the ability to make sense of art.
Open with the question, “What’s going on in this picture/work of art?”	<p>Use this question ONLY when the work of art lends itself to open interpretation and multiple meanings. Refrain from using this if the group’s interpretation is likely to lead to cultural misinterpretations that will require “correcting.”</p> <p>Other generic open-ended questions to start a discussion might include, “What can <i>you</i> tell me about this?” “What observations can you make about this work of art?” “What do you recognize here?” “What does this remind you of?” “How does this compare to what we just looked at?” “Based on what you see, how might this work of art relate the theme...?”</p>
Follow up with, “What do you see that makes you say that?”	Yes. When used consistently, the question encourages thoughtful comments that are grounded in the work of art. If you maintain a genuine curiosity about the reasoning behind each observation, you keep the question fresh.
Encourage further discussion with, “What more can you find?” or “Does anyone see something different?”	Yes. Useful to generate further comments that help you gauge the understandings and experiences of the group. It lets them know that the process of discovery is on-going. Because your job is to integrate relevant information according to their interests, this is a great way to stimulate further thinking.
Paraphrase comments and point to details of the work of art as they are mentioned.	Yes. The technique confirms that you have understood and value someone’s comment and helps others in the group to notice things they might not have noticed on their own. Paraphrasing also provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary – art related – words.
Make links between the comments of different participants.	Yes. Similarly, information you introduce should reference the group’s comments and observations.
Accept all comments as reasonable.	Yes and no. Use “What do you see that makes you say that?” to understand the reasoning behind any interpretive comment. The reasoning behind a misinterpretation should always be acknowledged, and the contradictory information presented

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	respectfully. “I can see why you would say that ..., but the artist intent was to.... We know from many scholars’ research on the topic of ...that ...” “Yes, many people believe/tend to see/associate this with..., but in the artist’s culture ...”
Refrain from providing information group members do not already know or ask for.	Yes and no. Make new information relevant to the group by relating it to an observation they have made. Continue to exercise judgment regarding what information will be interesting and will enhance understanding. Refrain from providing information that isn’t really helpful for understanding the work the art.
Dispel the notion of teacher as expert.	Yes. Find ways to reinforce the idea that information comes from a variety of places by indicating the source of your information. “I read in a book about this artist that...” “Scholars who have written about...” “This artist has a website that outlines...”