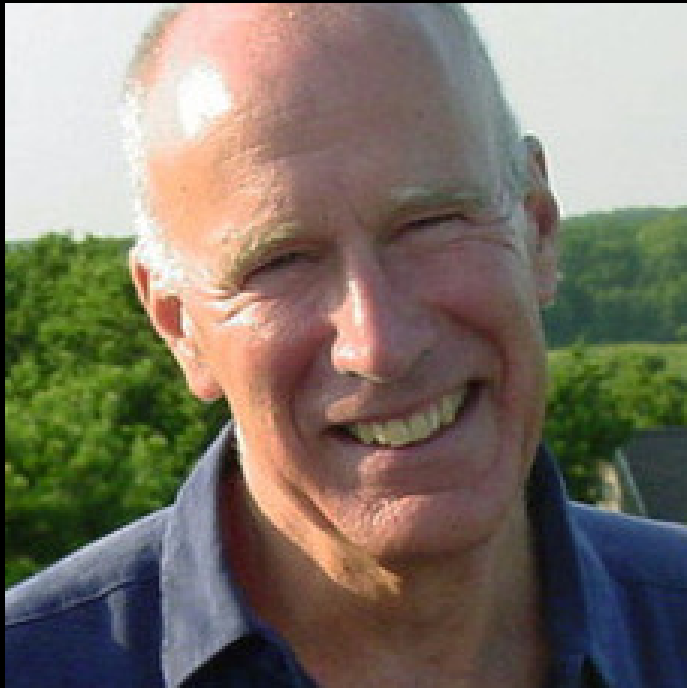


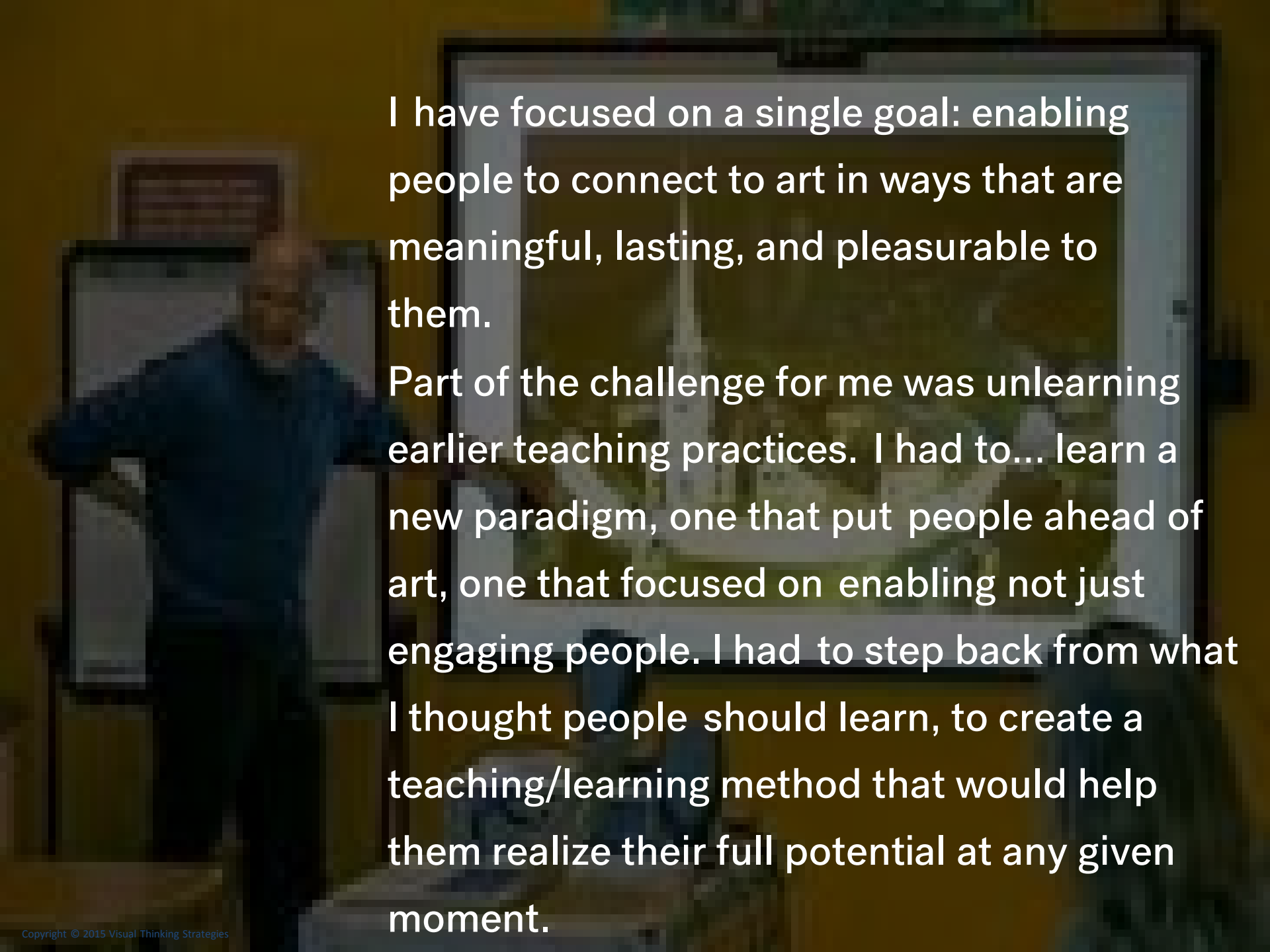
Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

Mia

WHAT IS VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES (VTS)?

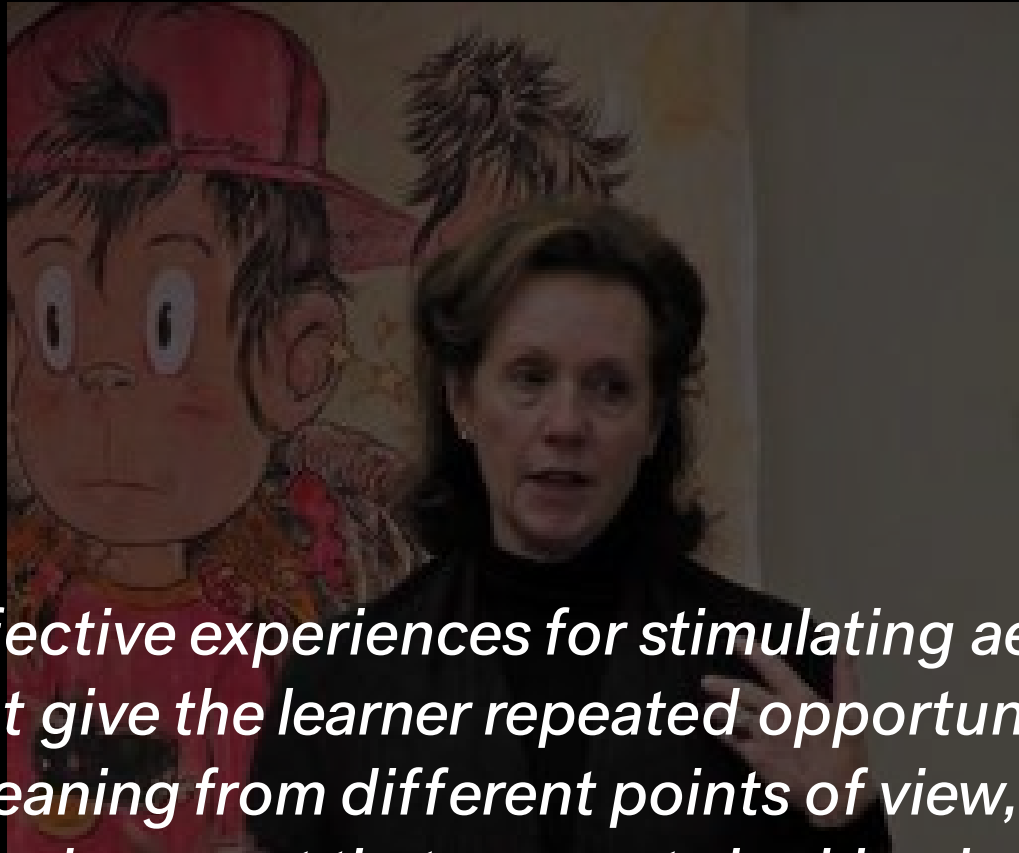
VTS was co-created by Philip Yenawine, a museum educator and Abigail Housen, a cognitive psychologist





I have focused on a single goal: enabling people to connect to art in ways that are meaningful, lasting, and pleasurable to them.

Part of the challenge for me was unlearning earlier teaching practices. I had to... learn a new paradigm, one that put people ahead of art, one that focused on enabling not just engaging people. I had to step back from what I thought people should learn, to create a teaching/learning method that would help them realize their full potential at any given moment.



The most effective experiences for stimulating aesthetic development give the learner repeated opportunity to construct meaning from different points of view, take place in an environment that supports looking in new and meaningful ways, and are inspired by rich, varied, and carefully chosen works of art.

Visual Thinking Strategies is:

a discussion-based teaching & learning strategy

A sequenced image curriculum for Pre-K – Grade 8 and a professional development program for teachers

Grounded in 30 + years of research and field-testing



How did you feel as a participant?

The environment of VTS

group discussion

student-centered

neutral

developmentally appropriate

engaging

safe



What did the facilitator do in this discussion?

With 2-3 colleagues, consider...

1. What was needed to **begin** this process?
2. What **questions** were asked?
3. What else did the facilitator **do**?

VTS Elements

Silent
Looking

Only these
Questions

*What's going on in
this picture?*

*What do you SEE
that makes you
say ...?*

*What more can
we find?*

Actions

Listen carefully to
each comment

Point to features
described in the artwork
throughout the
discussion

Paraphrase and
accept neutrally all
comments. New
vocabulary and proper
sentence structure may
be modeled.

Link related
comments together to
form connections and
model building on the
ideas of others.

Thank you

Conclude by
appreciating a skill
the students
demonstrated in the
discussion

Begin with **silent moment to look**

Ask: **What's going on in this picture?**

(In Pre-K and K you can begin with "What do you see in this picture?")

If the comment is interpretive, ask:

What do you see that makes you say...?

After each paraphrase, ask: **What more can we find?**

- **Listen** carefully to each comment
- **Point** during comments and paraphrases
- **Paraphrase** every comment neutrally
- **Link** Ideas

Conclude with **"Thank you"**

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What's going on in this picture?



What do you notice about these viewers?

- What interests them?
- What do they rely on to make sense of what they see?
- What do you think VTS teaches?

VTS Goals for Students

To develop **flexible and rigorous thinking skills**, including observing, brainstorming, reasoning with evidence, speculating, cultivating a point of view, and revising

To **strengthen language and listening skills**, including willingness and ability to express oneself, respect for the views of others and ability to consider and debate possibilities

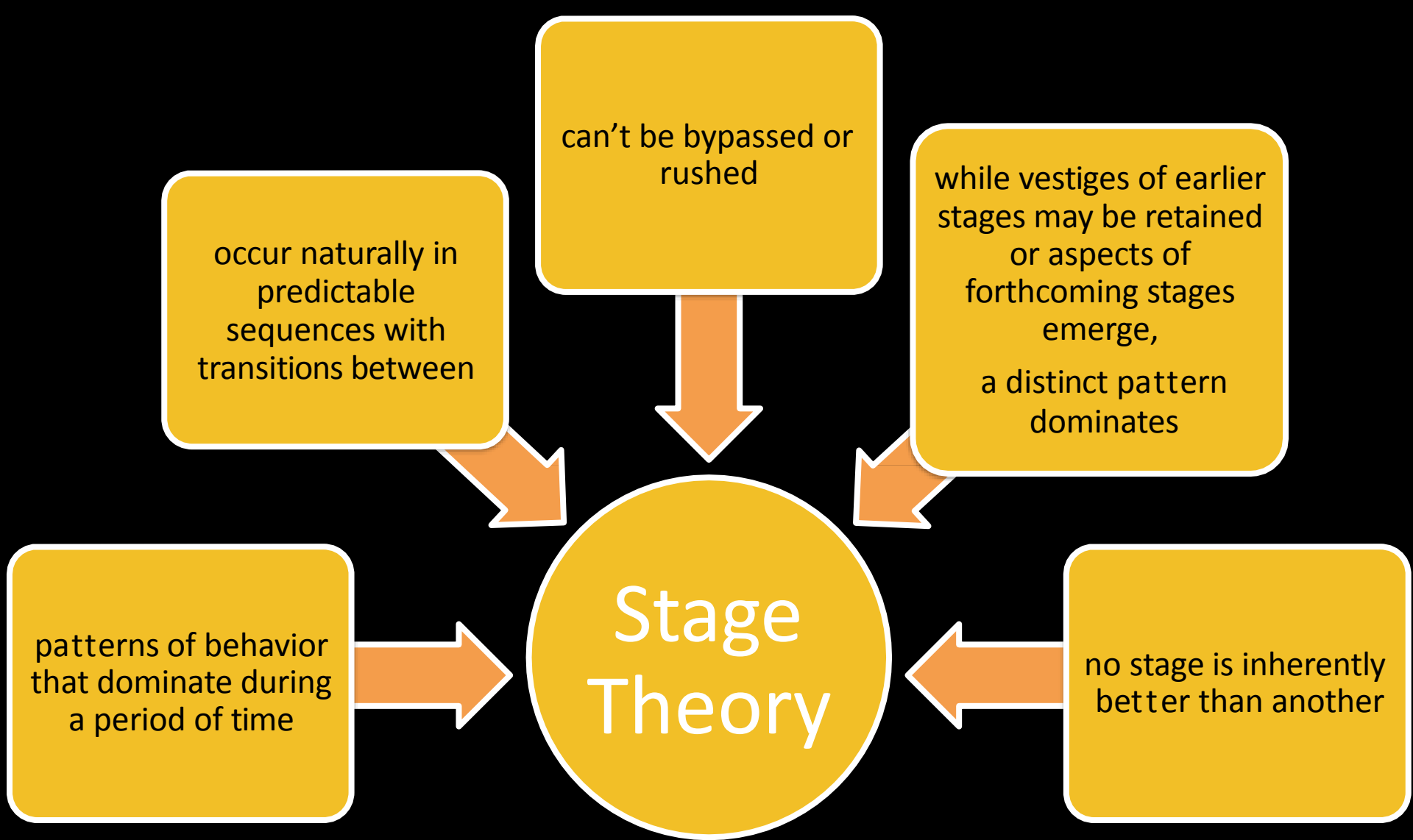
To **develop visual literacy skills** and personal connections to art, advancing one's ability to **find meaning in diverse and complex art**

To **nurture problem solving abilities, curiosity and openness to the unfamiliar**

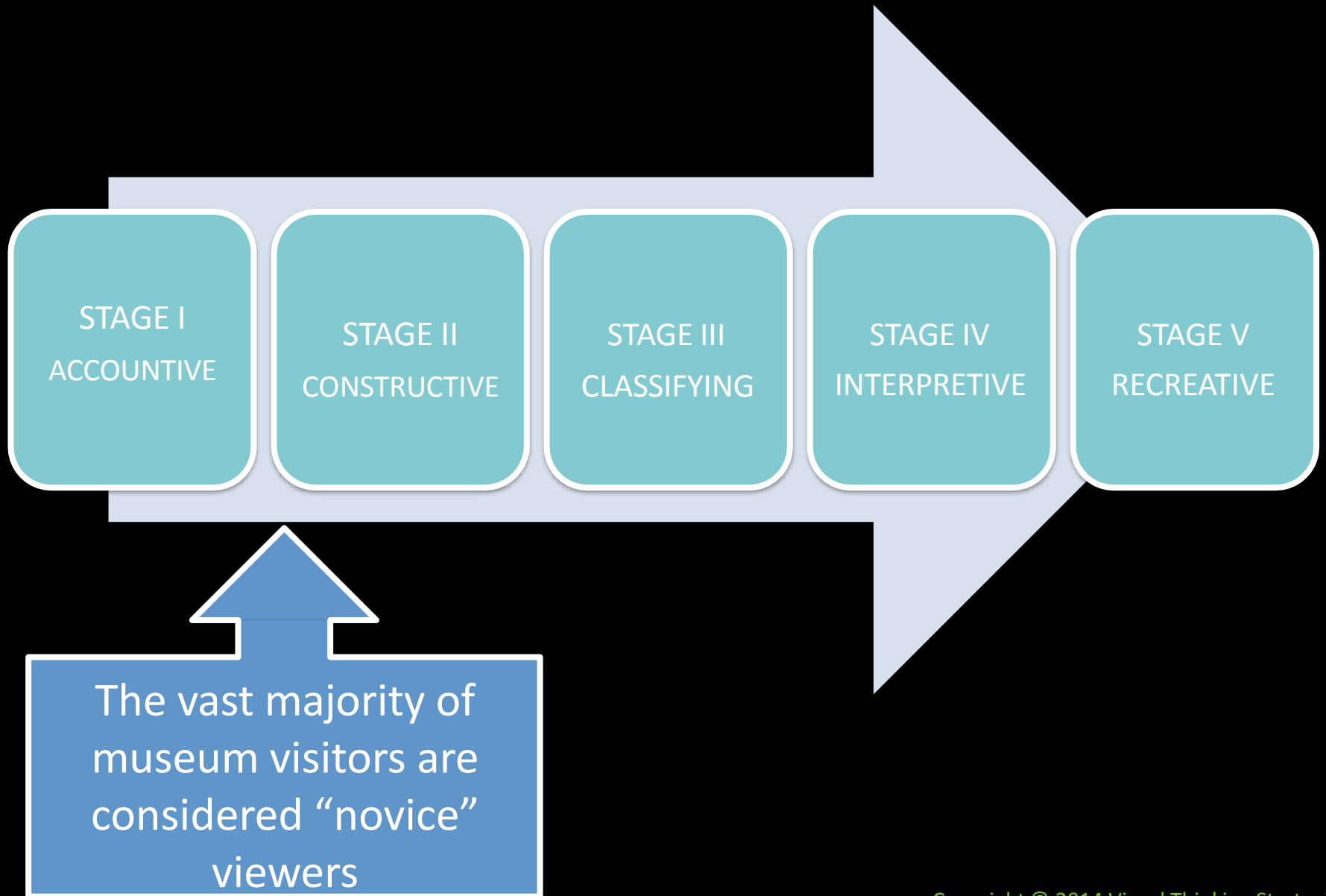
To **build self-respect, confidence and willingness to participate in group thinking** and discussion processes

Critical Thinking Skills Encouraged by VTS

Observing
Interpreting
Evaluating
Associating
Problem-finding
Comparing
Flexible Thinking



STAGES OF AESTHETIC DEVELOPMENT



Stage 1 – Accountive

Accountive viewers are storytellers. Using their senses, memories, and personal associations, they make concrete observations about a work of art that are woven into a narrative. Here, judgments are based on what is known and what is liked. Emotions color viewers' comments, as they seem to enter the work of art and become part of its unfolding narrative.

Stage 2 – Constructive

Constructive viewers set about building a framework for looking at works of art, using the most logical and accessible tools: their own perceptions, their knowledge of the natural world, and the values of their social, moral and conventional world. If the work does not look the way it is supposed to, if craft, skill, technique, hard work, utility, and function are not evident, or if the subject seems inappropriate, then these viewers judge the work to be weird, lacking, or of no value. Their sense of what is realistic is the standard often applied to determine value. As emotions begin to go underground, these viewers begin to distance themselves from the work of art.

Stage 3 – Classifying

Classifying viewers adopt the analytical and critical stance of the art historian. They want to identify the work as to place, school, style, time and provenance. They decode the work using their library of facts and figures which they are ready and eager to expand. This viewer believes that properly categorized, the work of art's meaning and message can be explained and rationalized.

Stage 4 – Interpretive

Interpretive viewers seek a personal encounter with a work of art. Exploring the work, letting its meaning slowly unfold, they appreciate subtleties of line and shape and color. Now critical skills are put in the service of feelings and intuitions as these viewers let underlying meanings of the work what it symbolizes emerge. Each new encounter with a work of art presents a chance for new comparisons, insights, and experiences. Knowing that the work of art's identity and value are subject to reinterpretation, these viewers see their own processes subject to chance and change.

Stage 5 – Re-Creative

Re-creative viewers, having a long history of viewing and reflecting about works of art, now willingly suspend disbelief. A familiar painting is like an old friend who is known intimately, yet full of surprise, deserving attention on a daily level but also existing on an elevated plane. As in all important friendships, time is a key ingredient, allowing Stage 5 viewers to know the ecology of a work — its time, its history, its questions, its travels, its intricacies. Drawing on their own history with one work in particular, and with viewing in general, these viewers combine personal contemplation with views that broadly encompass universal concerns. Here, memory infuses the landscape of the painting, intricately combining the personal and the universal.



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- **Link** Ideas

Conclude with **"Thank you"**

VTS Coaching Questions

To VTS facilitator: **“What did you learn from this and/or how did you feel about teaching this time?”**

To the group: **“What about _____’s teaching made you feel good as a student?”**

To all: **“Was anyone surprised by anything that happened?”**

To group: **“Does anyone have any questions they would like to ask _____?”**

To VTS facilitator: **“What do you want to work on? How do you think you can do that?”**

Thank you!