

How VTS Relates to Art Adventure Tours

VTS and Art Adventure are different programs with similar goals of encouraging close looking and critical thinking. *Pure* VTS is rarely appropriate for Art Adventure for three reasons: 1) many Art Adventure images are non-narrative, 2) students have already studied and discussed the images, and 3) Art Adventure guides often introduce information on their tours to prompt further questions and discussion.

VTS	Art Adventure Tours
Goals for participants	
Build upon the story-telling instincts of beginner viewers to foster engaging, meaningful interactions with works of art to promote critical thinking skills and practice respectful group interactions. Most VTS discussions happen with objects participants have not seen before and are not familiar with.	Fostering engaging, meaningful interactions with works of art to promote critical thinking skills and practice respectful group interactions are integral to all Mia tours! On Art Adventure tours, most students arrive at the museum with some predetermined (unambiguous) interpretation of the works of art having learned about the objects in their classroom. Art Adventure tours build on that knowledge by exploring the “real thing,” making connections to other works of art in the galleries and encouraging critical thinking. As with VTS, listening and observation skills are fostered through open-ended, developmentally-appropriate questions.
Works of art used	
Depictions of actions, settings, and emotions that are recognizable by and of interest to young people; strong narrative content; open to multiple interpretations.	The Art Adventure includes a variety of art produced by a diversity of cultures across time and that are interesting to young people. This may include objects that are non-narrative and/or require introducing information to avoid cultural misinterpretation.
VTS method	
Begin with a moment of quiet looking.	Does it apply to Art Adventure? Yes, with limitations. A quiet moment helps orient the group to the object they will be discussing and take note of their initial observations on seeing the “real” work of art. The limitation is time due to the fast-paced nature of navigating the museum and completing a tour in one hour’s time. A moment is often just that – a moment.

Art Adventure Guide Handbook
Tour Techniques – How VTS Relates to Art Adventure Tours

VTS method	Does it apply to Art Adventure?
Open with the question, “What’s going on in this picture/artwork?”	Yes, most often. This is an especially good question to begin a discussion if the object has strong narrative content. It encourages students to really look rather than simply relying on being told what they are seeing. The more they see for themselves, the more confidence they will have in their own ability to make sense of a work of art. Do not open with this question when the artwork lacks narrative content or may be culturally specific and not open to multiple interpretations.
Follow up interpretive responses with, “What do you see that makes you say...?”	Yes. Even when participants recite learned facts, the question encourages thoughtful comments that are grounded in what is seen. This question helps students make connections to and observations about the object to foster critical thinking. It demonstrates a genuine curiosity about the reasoning behind each observation and keeps the discussion fresh.
Encourage further discussion with, “What more can you find?” or “Does anyone see something different?”	Yes. These questions are useful to generate further comments that help the facilitator gauge the understandings and experiences of the group and stimulate further thinking. It lets the participants know that the process of discovery isn’t over.
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. It also 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 words.
Make links between the comments of different participants.	Yes. Similarly, information you introduce should reference the group’s comments and observations.

VTS method	Does it apply to Art Adventure?
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 an interpretation should always be acknowledged by the facilitator, and contradictory information presented respectfully. “I can see why you would say that this is made of metal. Because this is so old, the wood has darkened to make it look like metal.” “Many people tend to see.../believe that.../associate this with... but in the artist’s culture ...”
Maintain neutrality in your responses to all comments from your tour participants.	Yes. Respond to all comments from participants with same level of enthusiasm. This will validate everyone’s comments and encourage greater participation.
Refrain from providing information group members do not already know or ask for.	Yes and no. Any facilitated tour discussion should focus on the groups’ interests and observations. However, new information may encourage closer looking, deeper discussions and further questions. Do make new information relevant by relating it to observations they have made. Keep all information developmentally-appropriate. Continue to exercise judgment regarding what information will be meaningful to the group.