



## THOMAS EAKINS: SCENES FROM MODERN LIFE

### Lesson 2: Studies in Motion

Estimated Time: 5 sessions (Within 45 minutes)

#### Introduction

Thomas Eakins made extensive use of photography to help his students understand human locomotion. In this lesson, students will be introduced to Eakins and his motion studies and create some of their own motion studies. Just as Eakins used the latest photographic technology of his day, students will use the current digital video technology of today to create their own artwork.

#### Grade Level

9-12

Please Note: The video program contains several scenes featuring black and white archival photographs of nude male and female models, including some photographs of Eakins himself.

#### Subject Area(s)

Studio Art

Technology

Language Arts (See Extension Ideas)

#### Objectives

- Students will use digital video to capture human motion
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of human motion by producing a realistic representation
- Students will compare illustrations made before and after the project and draw conclusions about the results

#### Estimated Time

5 sessions (Within 45 minutes)

#### Materials

- VHS or DVD-*Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life*
- VHS or DVD Player and TV monitor
- Digital Video camera(s), tri-pod (s)
- Video editing software that allows import from camera and printing individual frames

- Location to shoot video with plain background
- Drawing materials (pencil, charcoal, ink, paper)
- Painting materials (paints, brushes, canvas or paper)

## Procedure

### Session 1- Introducing Thomas Eakins and Motion Study -(45 minutes)

In this session students will receive a video introduction to Thomas Eakins and his use of photography and anatomy. The scope of the project will be explained and students will create their first drawings of human motion.

1. Prepare the video program by cueing up the tape or DVD.
2. Begin the session with the first drawing activity (25 minutes)
3. Using a student model, have students sketch a human arm, a human leg and a person running
4. Ask students to put their names on their sketches and collect them (Store them until the end of the project)
5. Tell students you are going to introduce them to an artist they may or may not know
6. Play the following scenes from the VHS or DVD-*Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life* (Total running time should be **14 minutes**)

OPEN	A big artist keeps a sharp eye on nature. . .	01:00:10-01:02:34
SCENE 8	Rowing on the River The rowing paintings	01:22:57-01:26:00
SCENE 13	The possibility of the instant Eakins pioneering work with photography	01:30:58-01:35:13

7. Explain the scope of the project to students
  - We will be employing our own motion study techniques to create drawings and paintings
  - When we have concluded our motion studies, we will compare the drawings you made today with the ones you create at the end of the project

8. Explain the way they will be graded/assessed in this project
  - Participation and attitude in all activities
  - Completion of assigned work
  - Ability to identify details in comparing and evaluating their own work

### **Session 2- Motion Study with Cameras -(45 minutes)**

Prior to this session you will need to identify an outside location with a plain background where a person can run, jump etc. If you have access to a video studio make sure it is large enough to accommodate the action of a person running, jumping etc. You will not want to pan the camera or follow the motion. You will want to have a locked down camera and capture the motion within the frame.

#### 1. Prepare students for photographing motion

- Point out that Eakins was using the latest technology in his day and the class will use the latest technology in their day
- Recall how Thomas Eakins created motion sequences to study the human form in motion
- Tell students that they are going to capture a sequence of human motion with the video camera (s)

#### 2. Video shooting motion

- The key to capturing human motion is to isolate the subject from a busy background so their human form is clear to see
- Set up the camera(s) on the tripod and make sure the frame is wide enough to capture the beginning and end of a human motion
- Record a student volunteer jogging, walking, running, jumping past the camera
- If the camera has a small monitor for playback, check to see that the motion has been captured and is framed properly
- Have different volunteers do the same motions
- Allow different students to operate the camera(s)

### **Session 3- Capturing Motion -(45 minutes)**

In this session you will be utilizing video editing software that will allow printing of individual frames.

1. Students will select a sequence from the footage they shot in the previous session. The idea is to print out a sequence of motion and use one of the print outs as a reference for their drawing or painting. Depending on your computer video editing resources, you may have the entire class working at the same time or have students complete this task during scheduled studio time.

2. Select a series of good motion sequences and make photo copies of the series for student handouts in the next session.

### **Session 4- Drawing or Painting from Motion -(Undetermined time)**

During this session(s), students will create their own artwork using a captured motion still as a reference. Students can choose what still they want to use from the photo copies available. At your discretion, you may choose to have students do a series of isolated figures, explore different compositions by drawing a variety of sizes of the figures or place the figure in an environment. You can set the deadline for completing this work according to your own schedule.

### **Session 5- Critique and Compare- (45 minutes)**

In this final session you will facilitate a critique of the students' final work using the motion captured still. When this critique has been completed, bring out the drawings from the first session and have students comment on the comparison. This will be a self-evaluation and you can incorporate that into your final assessment.

### **Concluding Statements**

To tie the activity back to the Eakins documentary, highlight these key points:

- Eakins was considered a realist painter, meaning he wanted to make his paintings look real; they were not impressions (impressionistic)
- In order to create realism, he made careful studies of his subjects which included knowing how a person was put together (dissection and anatomy) and using photography
- If you would like to pursue realistic drawing or painting, consider studying anatomy and using photography

## **Assessment Recommendations**

- Participation and attitude in all activities
- Completion of assigned work
- Ability to identify details in comparing and evaluating their own work

## **Extension Ideas**

### **Art**

- Hand drawn flipbooks of human motion
- Computer animations

### **Language Arts**

#### **Marcel Duchamp Captures Movement**

1. Procure images (or visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art) of Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*
2. Have students examine and make observations about how Duchamp captures movement in this piece.
3. To make Duchamp's picture come to life, line several students up (about 5 will do), imitating the progression of the nude figure's descent of the staircase.
4. Discuss the importance of perspective and its impact upon observation and representation
5. Distribute and have read aloud X.J. Kennedy's poem "Nude Descending a Staircase"

Toe upon toe, a snowing of flesh,  
A gold of lemon, root and rind,  
She sifts in sunlight down the stairs  
With nothing on. Nor on her mind.

We spy beneath the banister  
A constant thresh of thigh on thigh—  
Her lips imprint the swinging air  
That parts to let her parts go by.

One-woman waterfall, she wears  
Her slow descent like a long cape

And pausing, on the final stair  
Collects her motions into shape.

X.J. Kennedy

6. Discuss parallels between the language of the poem—how it creates the sense of movement through the use of verbs and imagery and the description of how the figure interacts with a personified environment—and the brush strokes of the Duchamp’s rendering of figure, environment, and motion.
7. Compare and contrast these two, so very different art styles, philosophies, and expressions of motion in a discussion format.
8. Once satisfied with these comparisons and analyses have students attempt to create (I suggest non-rhyming) poems depicting the movement that they have rendered from the activities of the Studies in Motion lesson plan.
9. As a final product, students could create a final presentation piece which combines their art work on motion and the poem together.

Lesson developed by Jon Gluckman, English, Haddon Township High School,  
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### Recommended Resources

*Highlights from the Exhibit; Thomas Eakins: An American Realist*- 22 minute bonus section from the DVD-*Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life*.

*Thomas Eakins*

By Darrel Sewell, Thomas Eakins, Kathleen A. Foster  
Philadelphia Museum of Art; ISBN: 0876331428; (September 2001)

*Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*

By Kathleen A. Foster, Mark Bockrath, Mark Bockrat  
Yale Univ Pr; ISBN: 0300061749; (January 1998)

## **Related National Standards**

### **Art**

Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

Students demonstrate the ability to compare two or more perspectives about the use of organizational principles and functions in artwork and to defend personal evaluations of these perspectives.

Students compare the materials, technologies, media, and processes of the visual arts with those of other arts disciplines as they are used in creation and types of analysis.

Source:

National Art Education Association and the National Committee For Standards in the Arts

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/professional\\_resources/standards/natstandards/standards\\_912.html](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/professional_resources/standards/natstandards/standards_912.html)

### **Technology**

Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.

Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.

Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.

The National Educational Technology Standards (NETS)

<http://cnets.iste.org/>