



TEACHING WITH
GALLERY 400



About Gallery 400

UIC Gallery 400 is the contemporary art space at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC). The Gallery supports contemporary art, architecture, and design through exhibitions, lectures, publications, and programs that prioritize interpretative reflection and critical inquiry.

Gallery 400's mission is to be a contemporary art hub for social interaction, transformative experience, and multi-dimensional learning. Creating a place to connect, Gallery 400 actively positions its exhibitions and public programs as opportunities with which to build community and as avenues for learning in informal social settings.

Operating within the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago—the largest university in Chicago and one of the most diverse in the US—Gallery 400 endeavors to make the arts and its practitioners accessible to a broad spectrum of the public and to cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives. Gallery 400 is recognized for its support of the creation of new work, the diversity of its programs and participants, and the development of experimental models for multi-disciplinary exhibitions.

In support of Gallery 400's mission, the department of Community Engagement and Public Programs strives to build and maintain relationships with a diverse range of campus and community members and groups that reflect the diversity of Chicago and UIC. These relationships are characterized by mutual respect for one another's needs and values, moving at the speed of trust as it develops between us, and ongoing investment in the vitality of the communities our partners live and work in. We deeply value the expertise and knowledge that our campus and community partners bring to the operations and programs at UIC Gallery 400. We strive to foster a welcoming space where contemporary art interpretation, display, and making is truly open to all.

What that in mind, this packet is designed to help you integrate UIC Gallery 400, and its exhibitions and programs, into your teaching practice. It covers information about the Gallery, instructions for booking tours, along with ideas and suggestions for using the Gallery to enhance your syllabus.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO COLLABORATING WITH YOU!



Plan Your Visit

- A wheelchair accessible elevator is located near the gallery entrance
- Photography is allowed. Please remember to turn off your flash when taking photos
- Large bags need to be left by front desk when touring the gallery
- Food and drink are not permitted inside

Self-Guided Tours

You are welcome to conduct self-guided tours of exhibitions at Gallery 400. To prepare for your visit, find more information about our exhibitions on our [website](#), or reach out to our staff at gallery400engagement@gmail.com for additional questions. Plan to check in with the front desk on the day of your visit.

Take your time exploring the gallery and observing the work on display. Consider scanning the QR codes for detailed audio descriptions. iPads are available at the Gallery 400 front desk from which users can log on to an accessible webpage for the exhibition. It is enabled for screen readers and includes audio descriptions of artworks as well.



Virtual Tours

The Gallery regularly conducts virtual tours via Zoom in collaboration with the UIC Disability Cultural Center. Virtual tours are a great way to access the exhibit if you are unable to come in person. These tours are CART captioned and include ASL interpretation, as well as visual descriptions of every artwork discussed. Keep an eye on our website and social media for program announcements and to register for a tour.

Guided Tours

Gallery 400's staff offers guided tours for groups of all ages. Tours are free of charge, open to the public, and available during gallery hours when exhibitions are on view.



Our staff is happy to personalize your tour to your group's interests or needs. In the past, Gallery staff have incorporated writing and group projects into tours, or focused on themes relevant to class readings and assignments.

To request a tour, please scan the QR code to the left, or find the form on our [website](#).

Please include details regarding your interests and needs. Our Programs Graduate Staffer will reach out to you to plan and coordinate the details of your tour.





How can UIC Gallery 400 augment your syllabus?

Gallery staff are happy to work with you as you develop your syllabus, creating projects based on our current or upcoming exhibitions and programs.

In the past, gallery staff have:

- Helped develop writing prompts using the artwork in a current exhibition
- Worked with instructors to create a handout or interpretive activity for an upcoming exhibition
- Visited classes to talk about working in museums and exhibition development

Other approaches to consider for your class:

- Connect exhibition themes or artwork to various social and cultural issues or contexts
- Assign students to make creative in-Gallery videos responding to, or interpreting, artworks through a course framework
- Create a close-looking activity to connect attention and self-awareness to ideas and methods in your course
- Encourage students to create their own exhibition based around themes similar to ones they encounter at the Gallery

Example: Teaching Visual Analysis Assignment

This two-part assignment is an exercise in writing and looking designed to strengthen students' visual analysis skills.

STEP I: Direct students to visit the Gallery and ask them to observe the artwork quietly for a few minutes. Encourage them to note down their initial reactions and observations, including:

Who...

- is the artist, and what do we know about their style or influences?
- is the subject of the work? Are there any identifiable individuals, symbols, or representations?

What...

- is the subject? Are there any objects or themes depicted?
- design elements can you identify? How do these elements contribute to the overall composition and meaning

When...

- was this piece made? Are there any influences that could have aided in its creation?

Where...

- in the gallery is the piece displayed? Does its positioning play a role in its interpretation?
- is nearby work displayed? Is the piece in conversation with any other pieces around it?

Have students draw the artwork and take careful photographs of it, as well as any labels in the exhibition referring to the artwork.

STEP II: After their visit to the Gallery, direct students to turn their observations into a short essay. Additional research about the object is welcome, but not required. Encourage students to use visual analysis such as style, form, iconography, narrative, representation, symbolism, technique etc. Ultimately, the essay should describe the piece of art as if addressing a person who has not seen it.

Example: A Written Response Assignment. Ask students to write up a reflection after their visit to the Gallery, drawing on concepts both taught in class and topics covered within the exhibition.

Example of Student Response

Learning Together: Exhibition Response from AH 180: Introduction to Museums and Exhibitions

I thought this experience was incredibly valuable in terms of learning more about our local Chicagoan community through the lens of education and educational disparities within Chicago. The use of so many different types of media to showcase this was fantastic and it kept me engaged both during our individual walk-throughs of the gallery and during the guided tour. A focal point of this exhibition was to shed light specifically on the African American and Hispanic-American communities, both of which have a deep history of oppression in Chicago. This was also another reason as to why I was kept so engaged during the tour, as minority history is a big passion of mine within my own major, history.

I mentioned this during the tour, but perhaps the most enlightening information I gained from Gallery 400 was the topic of creativity—specifically performance—and applying it to improving reading proficiency and habits. When I used to be an elementary education major, one of my field works took me to a local boys and girls club down in Champaign, Illinois (as I was a UIUC student at the time) where I participated in a reading group with young children. During which, we learned just how important reading proficiency is in encouraging the youth to go further in their education, as many children who linger at a lower reading proficiency in grade school often become discouraged in learning as a whole, as reading comprehension is vital for any course a student takes—including STEM courses. This can lead to higher dropout rates among students who have a lower reading proficiency than the average for their grade. Therefore, seeing the different methods and avenues educators were taking to encourage children to read and write without having it feel forced upon them was incredibly inspiring. Rather than suppressing creativity, the educators who actively encouraged and participated in it ultimately led to a major change within their own local communities.



Discussion Strategies

Our staff members use two primary strategies when leading tours to observe and discuss the art in our exhibitions.

Object-Based Learning

This strategy begins with close examination of an object, drawing upon students' description and analysis skills to draw conclusions about broader themes. For example, an installation featuring a makeshift community garden assembled from found objects invites questions about sustainability, resource sharing, and the role of public spaces in fostering community connections.

Gallery staff will often split students into smaller groups and ask each group to consider a single artwork. Encourage students to consider the what, how, and why of their assigned artwork.

WHAT are they looking at?

HOW does the artist use elements of style like line or color in the artwork?

WHY did the artist make these choices?

Students may use labels or other in-gallery resources to learn more about the artwork, but should also rely on their own observations.



Visual Thinking Strategies

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

foreground

observations about an artwork. Rather than

relying on labels or

background

knowledge, VTS begins by asking students to

describe what they are

seeing in front of them and critically unpacking

those ideas.

Goals of a VTS session:

- Observation: develop skills for close looking and careful attention to detail
- Interpretation: use critical observation to express original thoughts about the work
- Discussion: facilitate a dialogue and exchange of ideas with others
- Reflective thinking: consider different viewpoints and reflect on original interpretation

To lead a VTS session, ask students three simple questions:

WHAT'S going on here?

WHAT makes you say that?

WHAT more can we find?

Gallery 400 staff try to focus on making connections between responses rather than sharing facts about an artwork. They guide the conversation, but let participants lead the discussion. The goal is for students to practice and strengthen their interpretation skills through observation and reasoning. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers!



Programs at UIC Gallery 400

Every semester, the Gallery hosts a suite of programs to accompany the exhibition on view, including lectures, hands-on workshops, screenings, and more.

In addition to exhibition programs, UIC Gallery 400 hosts the Voices Lecture Series, featuring artists, designers, critics, curators, and art historians at the leading edge of artistic discourse. Invited speakers present on their areas of expertise and open up the floor for questions from the audience.

You might consider:

- Attending with your class
- Offering students extra credit for attending individually
- Asking about giving a talk or lecture if your expertise is related to our upcoming exhibitions
- Joining us at our exhibition openings

Information about upcoming programs can be found on our [website](#) and [social media](#).

HOURS

TUESDAY - FRIDAY: 10AM - 5PM

SATURDAY: 12 - 5PM

ADMISSION IS ALWAYS FREE!



Stay connected!

Visit our website at
gallery400.uic.edu

Follow us on Instagram or
Facebook @gallery400

Sign up for our newsletter to
keep up with exhibitions and
programming!



For additional questions, reach
out to us at
gallery400engagement@uic.edu

Where is the gallery located?

400 S Peoria St
Chicago, IL 60607

North of UIC's main campus

The gallery is accessible by:

- the UIC-Halsted Blue line
- the following Buses:
 - #8 Halsted
 - #60 Blue Island/26th
 - #7 Harrison
 - #126 Jackson
- Street parking and public garages are located nearby if traveling by car

