



Changing Views

art, contemplation & wellness

Edited by Lindsey Hepler

OpenGrounds . University of Virginia

Clinician's Eye

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Clinician's Eye is a joint educational project of the University of Virginia's Fralin Museum of Art and the UVA School of Medicine's Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities. This highly interactive workshop is an exercise in mindful, deliberate attention that uses visual art analysis to help medical students and other health professionals improve their core clinical skills in observation, collaboration, communication, compassion, and reflection.

Developed in 2012–2013, Clinician's Eye takes cues from medical school and museum partnerships and from related research at several other leading medical schools, including Yale, Harvard, Cornell, Columbia, the University of Texas at San Antonio, and the University of Southern California.¹ But UVA's program is our own, designed in-house by Jordan Love, The Fralin Museum's academic curator, and piloted with a variety of medical student classes through the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities. Since Fall 2014, as the result of a curriculum committee decision, Clinician's Eye has been a required part of every UVA medical student's education.

Clinician's Eye can take place in a classroom or auditorium, but our preferred venue is the art museum, in part because of its wealth and variety of art objects and in part because the gallery setting can be a refreshing change for health professionals, sharpening the mind and soothing the spirit. Every semester the museum's exhibitions turn over, which means that new artwork, including pieces on loan and some from the permanent collection, can be utilized in each workshop. As a set of activities, Clinician's Eye is sufficiently flexible to accommodate this changing subject matter. As a result, the workshop is always fresh and offers new perspectives to repeat attendees—not to mention the instructors!

Clinician's Eye can be conducted with large groups (or online, though we neither do nor recommend this), but we prefer to work with small groups of participants. A cluster of ten or so learners can move about the museum, convening for different parts of the workshop before different individual works of art. The immediacy, close interpersonal communication, and sharing of perspectives that happen when the cluster has a close encounter with a painting, photograph, or sculpture all seem to benefit the participants. The small-group setting also helps even the quietest students speak up and interact more freely and fully with their peers.



UVA medical students at
The Fralin Museum of Art

Photo: Stacey Evans

opposite

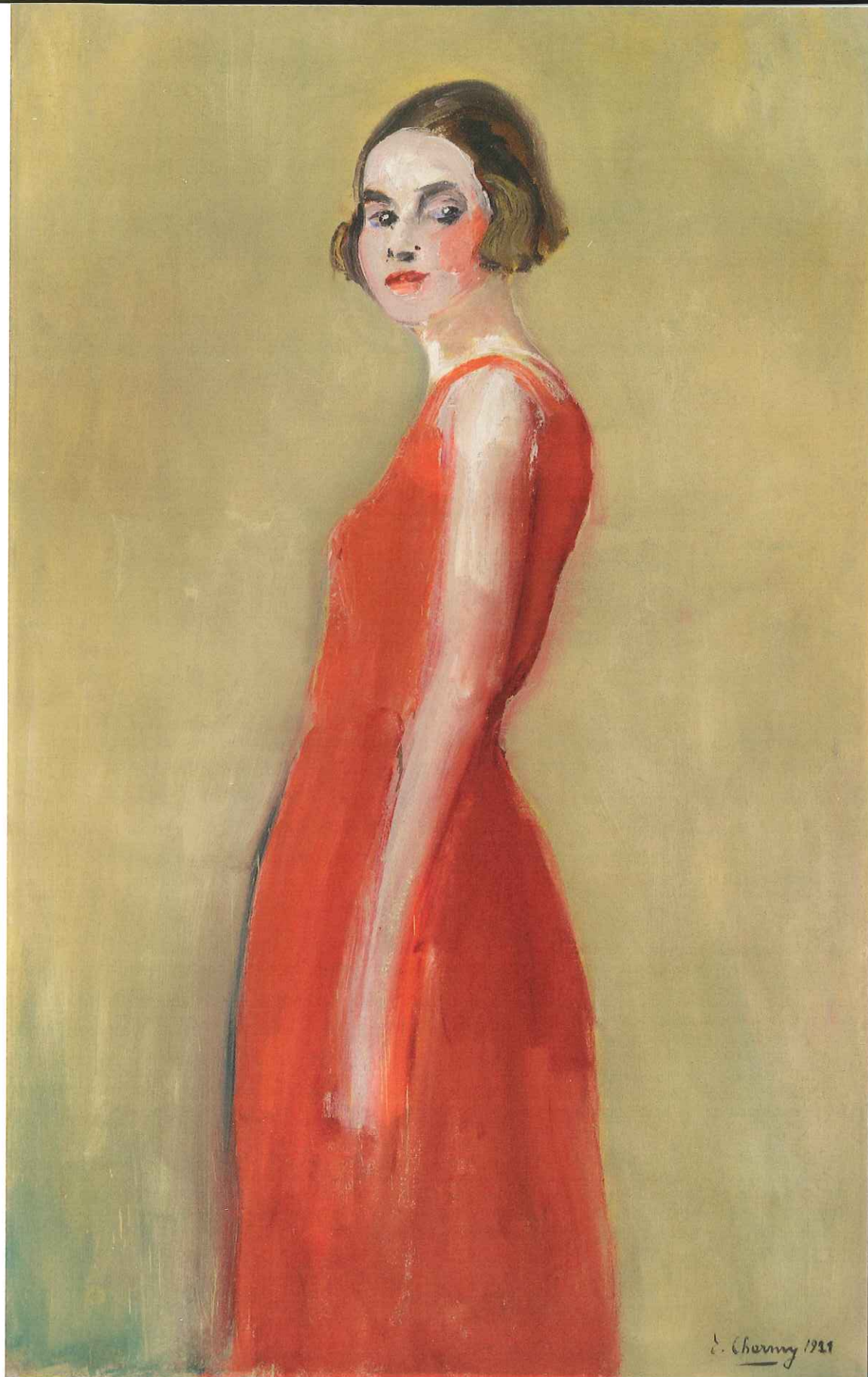
Emilie Charny

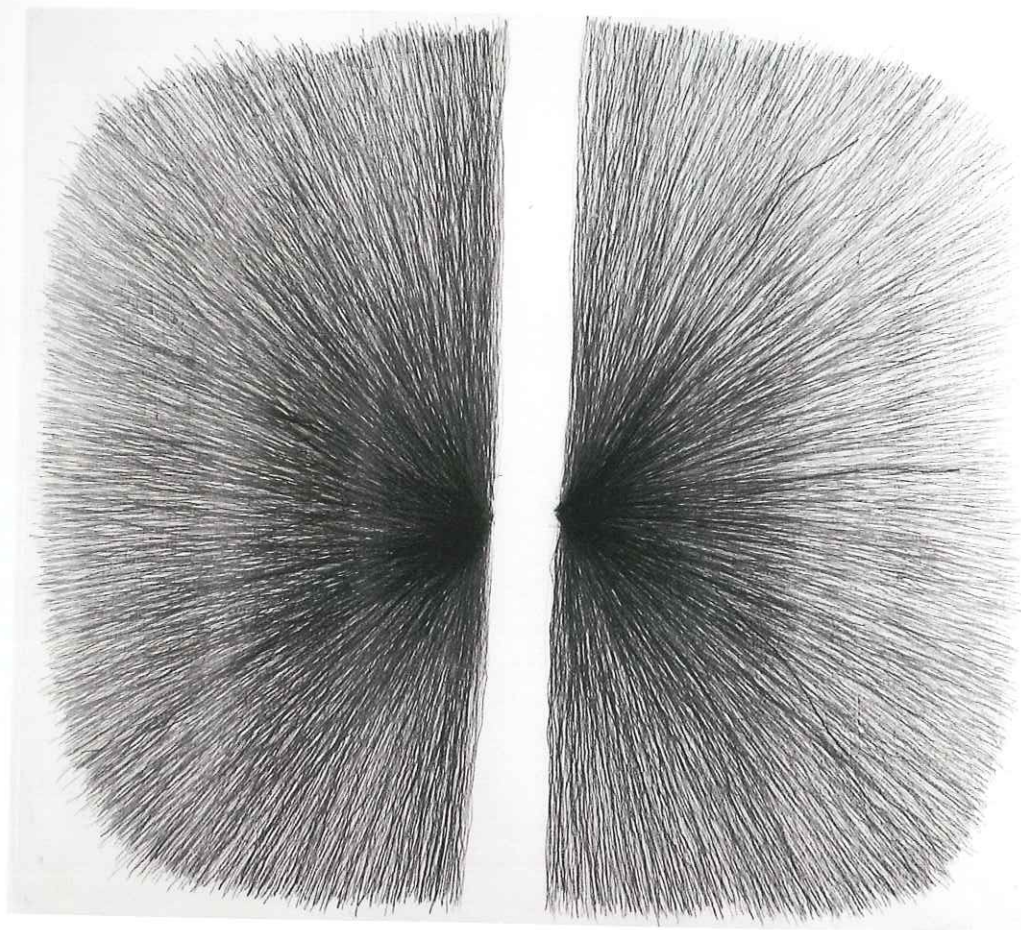
1878–1974, French

Portrait, 1921 (the girl in the red dress)

Collection of Pamela K. and William A.
Royall, Jr., Richmond VA
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In the workshop—normally, a two-hour activity—participants are challenged by museum educators and medical professors to slow down their looking. They are asked to observe, inventory, and articulate in a nonjudgmental way what they actually see in the art before them, usually a mix of representational and nonrepresentational works in different media. Questions for the group are broad and open-ended: What do you see? What’s going on here? What do you see in the artwork that prompts you to reach your conclusion? Exercises include the group taking time to “read” closely and generate an inventory of all that they see in a particular work. There is also a hands-on drawing/describing activity that learners undertake in pairs. Both give participants practice in mindful attention, in close reading, in description and interpretation (and noticing the difference between the two), and in communication. An exercise in which learners generate words or phrases about abstract art offers insight into their own and others’ distinctive ways of seeing and responding.





William Anastasi
 American, b. 1933
Brio, 2004
 Graphite on paper,
 67 x 65 in, 170.18 x 165.1 cm
 Gift of the Artist and Museum Purchase
 with Curriculum Support Funds, 2005.24
 © William Anastasi

Clinician's Eye is designed to progressively stretch participants' comfort level with art and with their responses to it. The workshop starts with figural representations or works emphasizing realism, thus enabling learners to practice visual analysis first with recognizable imagery and forms of art with which they are somewhat familiar and comfortable. As the workshop progresses to the drawing/describing exercise, learners are exposed to ancient and non-Western art. The final, word-generating exercise requires them to engage with nonrepresentational art created within the past 50 years.

In all the exercises, we emphasize visual analysis over art-historical fact. Learners begin to recognize that art has multiple uses and that they need not be an expert in art history in order to use, appreciate, connect with, or find meaning in images they encounter, including

abstract art for which overt meaning may be elusive. In helping participants acknowledge and accept ambiguity in the art they see, Clinician's Eye also helps them accept ambiguity elsewhere. For young clinicians who may crave certainty but whose practice is rife with its absence, these museum exercises may help them to accept situations that are ambiguous or uncertain. Indeed, when tested several days before and after a Clinician's Eye workshop, a small sample of UVA medical students demonstrated gains in their tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty.²

The goals of Clinician's Eye are to engage and enhance learners' visual literacy, pattern-recognition ability, verbal and listening facilities, cultural openness and perspective, and tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. These skills, in turn, help build and refine the core clinical competencies of diagnostic acumen, communication, collaboration, compassion, self-awareness, and reflection—all capabilities that the good doctor should have. One clear benefit of Clinician's Eye is that, while it refines some key clinical competencies, it does so in a nonclinical setting, safely apart from the busy hospital environment and the demands of patient care. It also does so in the presence of art, which in its wholeness and beauty can delight, renew, absorb, transport, comfort, and inspire.

UVA medical students have responded enthusiastically to Clinician's Eye, finding the experience both educationally effective and enjoyable. And, while developed for medical students, the workshop works beautifully for clinicians of all stripes and seniority, whether doctors, nurses, or allied health professionals. We're discovering too that Clinician's Eye as a competency-refining activity translates well across professional boundaries, to students in the biomedical laboratory sciences, in engineering, and in graduate business school. A day at the museum may well be a wise prescription for any professional!

1 There is a growing body of literature about the uses and effectiveness of arts- and museum-based exercises in medical and health professional education. See especially the following reports: (a) Dolev JC, Friedlaender LK, Braverman IM. Use of fine art to enhance visual diagnostic skills. *JAMA* 2001; 286:1020-1021. (b) Bardes CL, Gillers D, Herman AE. Learning to look: Developing clinical observational skills at an art museum. *Med Educ* 2001; 35:1157-1161. (c) Reilly JM, Ring J, Duke L, et al. Visual thinking strategies: A new role for art in medical education. *Fam Med* 2005; 37:250-252. (d) Elder NC, Tobias B, Lucero-Criswell A, Goldenhar L. The art of observation: Impact of a family medicine and art museum partnership on student education. *Fam Med* 2006; 38:393-398. (e) Naghshineh S, Hafler JP, Miller AR, et al. Formal art observation training improves medical students' visual diagnostic skills. *J Gen Intern Med* 2008; 23:991-997. (f) CM Klugman, Peel J, Beckmann-Mendez D. Art Rounds: Teaching interprofessional students visual thinking strategies at one school. *Acad Med* 2011; 86:10:1266-1271. (g) Schaff PB, Isken S, Tager RM. From contemporary art to core clinical skills: Observation, interpretation, and meaning-making in a complex environment. *Acad Med* 2011; 86:1272-1276.

2 In academic year 2013-2014, 47 UVA medical students each attended one of three two-hour Clinician's Eye workshops in The Fralin Museum. Before the workshop, 37 participants took a pre-test that consisted of a modified Budner's Tolerance of Ambiguity test. After the workshop, these same participants completed the same Budner's test. Eighty-six percent (86%) made gains in their tolerance for ambiguity. Funded by an Ingrassia Family Echols Scholar Grant to Louisa C. F. Howard (class of 2014), this study was exempted by the Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board.