



Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art

## **Come and See:** ***The Journeys of Linda Schaefer***

*Exhibition*

*Educator's Guide for Teachers and Parents*

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### **EXHIBITION INFORMATION:**

#### **About Linda Schaefer:**

According to photographer Linda Schaefer, her thirty-year career “began in a darkroom at the University of Michigan. When I first saw an image magically appear in a pool of Dektol solution, I knew that I would find my calling through the art of photography.” She began working for CNN in 1985 as a journalist, but decided early on to heed the calling of her “first love—still photography” and work full time as a free-lance photographer for the Associated Press.

During her career, Schaefer has been recognized by a variety of esteemed media outlets, with her work appearing in the New York Times, Time, Newsweek, the Los Angeles Times, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Parade Magazine, Paris Match, GQ, Stern, and the Catholic Digest among others. Her documentary “The Face of America,” which captured the faces of voters during the 1988 presidential campaign, was exhibited at both the 1988 Democrat and Republican conventions and featured on CNN.

In her pursuit to capture with her camera both the “light” and “dark” aspects of humanity, Linda Schaefer has toured “some of the darkest corners of the world,” engaging in exhilarating, often dangerous, adventures. As a young woman armed only with a camera, she bravely confronted the street life of New York City—recording images of gang members, prostitutes, and the homeless. She hitchhiked through the Amazon with another female journalist, riding on the back of sugarcane trucks, to document the indigenous Xevante tribe. While covering a non-violent civil rights protest, Schaefer (along with the protestors) was stoned by members of the Klu Klux Klan. Later she visually recorded the inner workings of the organization for the anti-Klan network “under the guise of a New York City newspaper photographer.” She also turned her lens toward the war on the Adriatic coast between the Croatians, Serbians and Muslims.

However exciting that these tales may seem, Schaefer’s greatest adventures were her humanitarian efforts, working with a medical relief team in Romania and volunteering in the orphanages and homes for the dying operated by Mother Teresa in India. Linda Schaefer met Mother Teresa in 1995. Schaefer recalls that when she asked Mother Teresa for permission to document her work in India the saintly woman “tested my authenticity and commitment to the work of her order by making me put down my cameras. Instead, she invited me to ‘Come and See’ the work as a volunteer.” Finally, Mother Teresa granted Schaefer permission to document the Missionary of Charity homes. Linda snapped “thousands” of photos of Mother Teresa and the members of her order in their pursuits to help the orphans, the sick, and the dying. Some of these images were selected for Schaefer’s book, *Come and See*.

Linda Schaefer resides in Ada, Oklahoma with her son Paul. She currently teaches at East Central University, where she inspires students “with that passion for the art and science of a medium that captures the soul of our culture.”

## About the exhibition:

*Come and See: The Journeys of Linda Schaefer* is a retrospective exhibition of Schaefer's photography; it contains images from all of her major photography series and her most fascinating adventures. This powerful exhibit taps all ranges of emotions as it illuminates the full spectrum of human existence. The happy, innocent, healthy, and blessed are represented alongside the grieving, forlorn, frightened, and ailing.

## SHAPING POSITIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCES:

There is much for students to glean from Schaefer's photographs in terms of visual knowledge. Teachers and parents will find the following guidelines useful in helping students take advantage of this exciting learning experience.

### Elementary Students:

Younger, elementary students will delight in the colors of Schaefer's photographs of India, Romania, and the Amazon. They will be curious about these people who apparently have lives so different from their own. Thus, this is a wonderful opportunity for discussions about different cultures and the various ways that people live. The images of families and children provide students a means of relating to the people of these cultures, and they provide teachers and parents opportunities to discuss with students the similarities and differences between the students' lives and those of the figures in the photographs.

Students of this age will likely want to move quickly from photo to photo, finding it hard to focus on a particular image due to the rich visual offerings within their range of vision. Teachers and parents may choose in this case to allow children to roam, remaining close at hand if the students have questions or appear open to discussing a photograph. Parents and teachers may also want to draw their students' attentions to particular images that will provide ample opportunity for insightful discussions of the students' concrete observations, but will not be overwhelming to the students either visually or emotionally.

Selected images should be simple and sparse in terms of "how much" is portrayed. The subject should be people and/or animals instead of objects or landscapes; images containing one person or small groups, especially children and families are effective. Clear settings, familiar activities, recognizable emotions, shared values and a sense of timelessness will help younger students relate to the image and feel more comfortable discussing it. Colorful, active images will hold the students' attentions for a longer discussion. Suggestions for prompting and facilitating observation-based discussions with students follow.

### Junior High and High School Students:

Older students can certainly benefit from seeing first hand these images of world cultures and events that they have likely studied or will be studying in social studies and world history classes. These students will likely notice more of the photographs' details, taking time to examine closely at least a few of the photographs. Unlike the younger children, they will already have some understanding of the subject matter presented in the images and it will enable them to bring their own knowledge bases and experiences into their interpretations of the photographs.

For this age group, it is recommended that parents and teachers instigate student discussions about select images. These discussions can stem from three distinct purposes. For one, as with the younger students, the photographs can act as stimuli for considerations of cultural similarities and differences. Furthermore, the images may also serve as springboards for the sharing of knowledge of history, geography, and society (i.e. *Let's discuss the civil rights movement...*). Finally, parents and teachers may choose to use particular images to prompt insightful observation-based discussions.

With older students, the criterion for choosing the photographs to use in observation-based discussions with younger students still applies. However, taking into account the older students' growth and experiences, the images selected for this age group may have more details, increased complexity of subject matter, and some ambiguity that can lead to a variety of "readings." Familiarity and shared values remains important, but timelessness is less of a concern. Obvious symbols (flags, etc.) can be useful. With these students, comparing and contrasting can serve as a constructive tool, so choosing images that have obvious similarities and differences will help maintain the discussions.

## **FACILITATING OBSERVATION-BASED DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS:**

### **Visual Thinking Strategies:**

To engage students in stimulating observation-based discussions, teachers and parents should employ Visual Thinking Strategies\*--a student-centered method that "uses art to build the capacity to observe, think, listen, and communicate."

First, allow the students to examine the selected photograph, give them a few moments before you speak. Then, ask the question "What do you see in this image?" (Have students raise their hands and speak one at a time.) Students will generally begin making lists of objects that they see. The true discussion begins when a student finally introduces an interpretive aspect, for example "the girl looks sad or the building looks burned," something that goes beyond a literal description. (From this point forward, rather than ask "What do you see...? You should ask, "What's *going on*...? This indicates to students that you want them to interpret, rather than simply list, what they observe).

Following an interpretive observation, you should respond by paraphrasing the comment while pointing at the area in the photo that the student referenced. Then, ask the student, "What do you see that makes you say that?" You can also vary your response ("What do you see that makes you say she looks sad? Is there something you're noticing in her expression or body language? What is it specifically?"), provided that you don't lead the student to draw conclusions that are not his/her own. The student should point out visual evidence to support the interpretive comment (for example, "I think she is sad because she appears to be crying—her eyes look glossy"). Continue paraphrasing the students' responses and pointing to the pertinent areas in the picture.

You should always listen carefully, making sure that you are hearing and interpreting each student's comments correctly. Remain neutral, qualifying and validating *each* of the observations, even if they have been repeated or seem wrong or silly, by paraphrasing the comments, pointing to the pertinent area, and asking for the visual evidence. Be sure that your tone, body language, and facial expressions encourage each student to participate. When you paraphrase, don't change the meaning of the students' comments, but use the opportunity to introduce by example proper grammar and applicable vocabulary. Draw attention to similarities, "links," between student comments, even if the students are disagreeing, to reveal how some observations can incite others and that opinions can be different or can change. Avoid summarizing—you want the students to understand this as an "open-ended" process.

*These observation-based discussion strategies are based on the Visual Thinking Strategies outlined in the work of Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine. Available at [www.vue.org](http://www.vue.org).*

## Suggested Artworks for Observation-Based Discussions:

### Photographs by Linda Schaefer:

- *Market Ladies*, Romania, 1992
- *Searching for Clothes in a Church*, Croatia, 1992
- *Croatia* [Two Women in a Window], 1992
- *Shepherd* [with a flock], Romania, 1992
- *Circle of Life*, Xevante Village, Amazon, 1990
- *Vernasi* [Mother and Child], India, 1995
- *Woman at the Well*, Tiligash, India, 2008
- *City of Joy*, Calcutta, India, 1995
- *Kodai Karal*, South India, 1993
- *Baptism*, Coney Island, New York City, c. 1980
- *Gandhi Prem Nevas—Mother Teresa's Leper Colony—Weaving on a Charkhas, a Symbol of India's Independence*, India, 1995
- *Leper making Saris*, India, 1995
- *Hippie Gathering*[Woman and two Children], North Carolina, c. 1980
- *Hippie Gathering*[Man on a Bus], North Carolina, c. 1980
- *Hatian Mother*, Miami, Florida, 1988
- *Man on a Horse*, Georgia, c. 1980

*Come and See: The Journeys of Linda Schaefer* will be on display at the MGMoA Sept. 11 – Oct. 25, 2009.

### Artworks in the MGMoA Permanent Collection:

- Tanner, *Scene in Cairo*
- Oswalt, *Urban Anthology*
- Berminghaus, *Boy with Two Horses at Haystack*
- Imhof, *Navajo Woman Weaving*
- Gerome, *Femme en Serai*
- Roseland, *Reading the Letter*
- Remington, *Good Advice*
- Bridgman, *Scene in Morocco*
- Barbieri, *Esther before Assuerus*
- Moran, *Coast of England*
- Sonntag, *Sunset*
- Peter, *Storm*
- Anderson, *In the Café No*
- Richardson, *Man with Wagon*.

Please note that the artwork in the permanent gallery is periodically rotated. If you want to use a particular artwork for this or another activity, please call the MGMoA at 878-5300 to confirm whether or not the work is currently on display.

To practice observation-based discussions at school, visit the MGMoA website to access images you can view online or download at: <http://www.mgmoa.org/education/observation-based-discussions>.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

According to Visual Understanding in Education, observation-based discussions “build many of the skills that are tested on standardized tests such as literary response and analysis, writing, mathematical logic, scientific observation, and reasoning.

“Most thinking—indeed most knowledge—begins with observations that form the basis for ideas later given shape in language. Visual Thinking Strategies builds habits of:

- *Making complex observations*—continuously adding breadth and depth
- *Drawing conclusions*, making inferences and interpretations based on observation
- *Expressing and articulating* these ideas and discussions and in writing
- *Citing evidence* to back up interpretation—evidential reasoning
- *Considering a range of possibilities*—being able to brainstorm, to accept multiple viewpoints, to speculate, and to use qualifying language
- *Revising*
- *Elaborating*
- *Applying* these habits to other subjects without prompting.

*These Curriculum Connections are based on the research of Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine. Available at [www.vue.org](http://www.vue.org).*

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