



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2009 Volume VI: The Brain in Health and Disease

Art is Not Just in the Eye of the Beholder But in the Brain

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This curriculum unit is designed for middle school students but could easily be adapted to upper elementary and high school students. During a period of about eight weeks, students will complete three studio projects that connect directly to how the brain works. The unit is designed to introduce students to the link between art and the brain. Specifically, the brain is the driving force on how the world is seen AND how art is created and viewed. The unit explores the rules and assumptions that the brain makes and how they effect our perception of the visual world, art and how we perceive both. By exploring the two visual pathways, the "what" and "where" systems, students will create three studio projects: one focusing on depth, one on color, and one on the illusion of movement. Fine art examples and optical illusions will be used to teach the ways that the brain perceived what is seen. The unit focuses both on how the brain perceives the world, how artists have used this information throughout the centuries, and how students can create an artwork using these principles.

(Developed for Art, grade 7; recommended for Art, upper Elementary through High School grades)

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