



## *Richard Barnes: Animal Logic*

January 29-April 15, 2011

### University of Wyoming Art Museum 2011 Educational Packet for K-12 Teachers

**Purpose of this Packet:** To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibition and age appropriate suggestions for exploring the concepts, meanings, and artistic intent of art work before, during, and after the museum visit.

**Curricular Unit Topic:** Examining the relationships between man and nature and the human need to catalog and collect.

The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to **observe, question, explore, create and reflect.**

**Observe:** Students will observe the photography of Richard Barnes. They will notice the behind the scenes imagery of natural history museums and think about the contrivance of these habitats by man. Students will consider what this tells us about the human need to collect and catalog.

**Question:** Students will have an opportunity to read, write, sketch, listen to teachers and museum educators, and, then, to come up with questions about man's relationship with nature. What questions does this work invite you to ask? What emotions do these photographs conjure? Why do we preserve and collect? What can we learn from/about these specimens?

**Explore:** Students will be asked to look deeply at the photographs. What details do you notice? How are these details integral to the artist's message? How does the artist use composition? What is in context? What is out of context?

**Create:** Students will be given time to practice sketching and drawing, and will create their artistic response to the concepts raised by the work of Richard Barnes.

**Reflect:** Students will evaluate their final art products with other students from their classes and with teachers and museum educators. They will be given feedback on the art work and the concepts behind the making of the art work. After this process, each person will then write an essay about their process of making art and the concepts behind the work. This portion of the museum experience can be carried out in the student's home school and classroom.





**Introduction:** Photographer Richard Barnes (American) examines the modern museum in much the same way as an archaeologist examines an excavation site. Fascinated with what lies below the surface, *Animal Logic* is a selection of photographs from three different bodies of work that each investigate the elements of preservation, death and nature, and the role of museums.

The Container series works speak to humankind's urge to catalog, preserve, or as some would argue, to subdue nature. Packaged and crated animals are placed in hand-made boxes, eternally posed as if captured in a natural moment. Barnes takes that concept further with the work in his Diorama series. Faux habitats with museum workers and plastic wrapped inhabitants are illustrations of just how unnatural natural history museums can be. Aside from showing the behind-the-scenes work of an institution responsible for preserving and presenting history and culture, Barnes explores how these roles are fulfilled.

Finally, in the Refuge series, Barnes invites viewers to look closely at each nest – a natural construct that is infiltrated with human detritus and castoffs. Barnes' portrayal represents the lifespan of these nests in each

photograph: created by birds, removed from nature by scientists and placed in a zoology museum, and then removed from storage and photographed, to finally be presented in an art museum.

With a slightly ironic twist and a unique perspective, the photographs in this exhibition question the relationships of people and nature, and what draws us to collection and preservation. These images hold memories and death – an artificial presentation of what once existed in nature. Yet there is also a human element to these images – in the role of the photographer, the viewer of this exhibition, and the hypothetical museum visitor viewing these dioramas and taxidermy animals at their respective institutions.

Richard Barnes has traveled extensively, photographing for commissions that range from archaeological excavations to documenting the cabin of Ted Kaczynski. His work is included in such public collections as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. He was the 2005-2006 recipient of the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. He currently lives and works in New York.

---

**Artist's Background:** Richard Barnes divides his time between commissioned work and personal projects. He looks at architecture as artifact and, by placing it within the context of archaeology, challenges our conceptions of the way we inhabit the built environment.

Throughout the 1990's Barnes worked as the photographer for the joint Yale/University of Pennsylvania excavations at Abydos, Egypt. This led him to consider the ways in which we think about and depict the past. Using architecture and the artifacts of excavation, he considers the interaction of past cultures and how they are preserved and interpreted in the present.

Following the trajectory of the artifacts extracted from the ground to their placement in museums and other exhibiting institutions, Barnes began a body of work based on the role of museums in contemporary culture, working first in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, then extending his research to include collections in the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Comparative Anatomy in Paris, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. This work looks at the museum as a "container" of the celebrated and the forgotten, the odd and the everyday.

In addition to his photography, Barnes has lectured extensively, including such venues as the Carnegie Museum of Art, The Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, Parsons School of Art in Manhattan, the lecture series of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Friends of Photography. He has also done workshops and worked as an adjunct professor/visiting artist at the San Francisco Art Institute and has taught in the same capacity at the California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco.



**Lesson Overview:** Students will learn about the work of photographer Richard Barnes. They will learn about his artistic techniques, skills and style.

They will learn about why he began the series that would make up *Animal Logic* and how his background relates to the artwork he makes. They will explore the connections between his artwork and the environment and why we preserve and collect.

Students and teachers will consider the concepts behind his art and what those concepts mean to viewers. They will explore ideas generated as the result of viewing his work. They will sketch and draw Barnes' *Container*, *Diorama*, and *Refuge* series works included in *Animal Logic* and develop word lists that describe what they see and how they feel about this work. They may write short paragraphs in response to worksheet questions about the exhibit.

In the Shelton Studio, students explore materials and ideas related to man's relationship with nature and/or the human drive to preserve and collect. They may work 2-dimensionally or 3-dimensionally, using their notes, word lists and sketches as reference. While doing this they will think about connections and relationships they have with the natural world.

Students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about the work of Barnes before arriving at the art museum, using the vocabulary word list attached to this lesson as the beginning of their investigative process. Additional information and materials may be found as the result of web searching the artist. They may begin conversations about how humans interact with the natural world and learn how museums, specifically natural history museums, preserve, collect, catalog, and portray the natural world.

### **C- Print Photography:**

Chromogenic or C-prints are color prints made from a color negative, slide, or digital image that consist of dyes in gelatin layers on plastic-coated paper.

**Essential Questions:** The following questions will help students better understand Richard Barnes' work and will help foster discussion about man's relationship with nature.

### **Grades K-6**

- What is the subject of this artwork?
- How do these photographs make you feel?
- What do these photographs tell us about our perceptions of nature?
- Do you think humans influence the natural world? Why? Why not?
- How do we learn more about the relationships between plants and animals and people?
- Is this exhibit art? Why? Why not?
- What do you collect? Why?

### **Grades 7-12**

- What does this art make you think about?
- How does this work make you think about our role in the natural world?
- How does context play an important role in this work?
- Is the message of the works intentional? Explain.
- How can artists serve as a "voice" for those who cannot speak?
- How are the study of art and the environment the same? Different?

### **Art Questions to Consider**

- How important are the specimens to the meaning of this work?
- What artistic devices does the artist use? (patterns, repetition, etc.)
- What artistic skills does the artist need in order to create this work?
- Can you describe the artist's process?
- What other skills or knowledge does the artist need?



**Pre-visit Activities:** In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest teachers and students consider the following activities:

- Students research natural history and the study of habitat – both human and animal.
- Students read current events about man’s inter relationship with the natural world.
- Students and teachers visit a natural history museum and look carefully at the displays.
- Students research the c-print photographic process.

**Prerequisite Skills/knowledge:** Museum educators will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate. Teachers may select words from the following vocabulary word list for students to look up and understand:

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| realistic    | patterns        |
| repetition   | c-print         |
| nature       | environment     |
| context      | contrive        |
| habitat      | natural history |
| taxidermy    | specimen        |
| preservation |                 |

---

**Museum Activities:** These activities are suggestions. Museum educators will work with teachers to carefully tailor all classes to their students’ needs, in support of classroom goals and district and state education standards.

### Part 1

Time frame: 30 - 45 minutes (in the galleries)

- Students will closely observe the artwork of Richard Barnes.
- Students may be given a worksheet so they can respond in writing or drawing to the work they see by recording their observations and their own thoughts about the work.
- Students will create word lists that help them remember the way the art looks or describes the way they feel about the work.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- Students will learn more about the artist and why he creates this artwork.
- Students will think about the connections between art and nature exhibited here.
- They may discuss museum practices, consider environmental issues that are important to them, define vocabulary words and provide examples in the natural world that fit the definitions.

### Part 2

Time frame: 45 - 60 minutes (in the Shelton Studio)

The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum educators will work with teachers to develop specific projects, which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students will explore artistic devices that are also found in nature, and in other areas of study, such as patterns and repetition.
- Students will sketch and create word lists that describe the works of Richard Barnes.
- They will work in the Shelton Studio to create their own work in response to the concepts expressed in *Animal Logic*.
- Students will reflect, through a critique or in journals, on the process they used to create their artworks.



**Post visit activities:** We have found that students achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit when time is scheduled for post-visit activities. Here are some suggestions:

- Students might create their own museum diorama in the style of Richard Barnes.
- Research environmentalism, climate and habitat, zoology, museum practices, etc. on the web.
- Students may research artists and scientists whose work deals with environmental issues or museum practices and pull together a presentation on their findings, using a variety of technological approaches (e.g. web searches, Power Point presentations).
- Students may write their own “Night at the Museum” story about animals photographed by Barnes.
- Students might write a reflection paper about their experience at the museum.

**Suggested Curriculum Use:** The study of Richard Barnes: Animal Logic and how it’s cultural, artistic, historic, scientific, and environmental aspects will tie to multiple curricular areas including: the arts, math, sciences, history, English, reading and writing, debate, and philosophy. Museum staff will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Teaching Standards and to align museum projects and studies with ongoing classroom curricular units and lessons.

#### **Some Recommended Resources:**

- Richard Barnes website, <http://www.richardbarnes.net/>
- Animal Logic Richard Barnes, Princeton Architectural Press, NY.
- The Photographer’s Eye: Composition and Design for Better Digital Photos, Michael Freeman, Focal Press, 2007.
- Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History, Stephen Christopher Quinn, American Museum of Natural History/Harry N. Abrams, 2006.
- Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums, Stephen T. Asma, Oxford University Press, USA, 2003.

**Materials to be supplied:** The Art Museum provides selected materials for Shelton Studio projects.

**Assessment and Documentation:** In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we may ask that participants help us assess the activities and learning that takes place. Examples of evaluation tools include:

1. Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and explorations, and their studio experience.
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick-survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students’ experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum educators will record their observations and assessments.
4. When studio time permits, we ask students to briefly discuss their art completed in the Shelton Studio.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available to teachers upon written request for use in teaching and student portfolios.