

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM ANNOUNCES FINDINGS OF STUDY
EVALUATING IMPACT OF ARTS EDUCATION ON LITERACY**

**Results Suggest Arts Education Increases Fundamental Literacy Skills in
Elementary School Students**

(New York, NY –July 27, 2006) The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum today released the second year of findings of a three-year study to evaluate the impact of arts education on literacy among elementary school children. The study, *Teaching Literacy through Art*, was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and was designed to examine the impact of the Guggenheim’s pioneering program, *Learning Through Art* (LTA), on students’ ability to describe and interpret art, and to apply these skills to understanding written text. The study found that students in the program performed better in several categories of literacy and critical thinking skills — including extended focus, hypothesizing, and providing multiple interpretations — than did students who were not in the program.

The findings were announced at a two-day conference, *Inquiry & Exploration in Art: Creativity & Critical Thinking in the Classroom*, organized by the Sackler Center for Arts Education at the Guggenheim Museum.

“Excellence in teaching is a hallmark of the Guggenheim and the evaluation findings confirm what we have intuitively known—that our dynamic approach to viewing, discussing, and creating works of art with youth improves their ability to think and read,” said Kim Kanatani, Gail Engelberg Director of Education, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. “When we originally drafted this proposal to the Department of Education, our review of the literature revealed few large-scale, statistically significant museum school evaluations of this kind, so the findings are powerful. They will bolster the importance of the arts in education and validate the important role an art museum can play when it makes a

strong commitment to learning and forges effective, longstanding partnerships with the schools.”

Over its 35-year history, LTA has placed hundreds of teaching artists in New York City public schools to work with students and classroom teachers on curriculum-based art projects. In 2003, the Guggenheim received a three-year Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination grant from the U.S. Department of Education to study the program’s impact on students’ literacy abilities.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine student and teacher responses at four schools elected according to specific demographic, socioeconomic, and literacy criteria: P.S. 86 and 94 in the Bronx and P.S. 148 and 149 in Queens.

Students were asked to discuss a work of art (Arshile Gorky’s *The Artist and His Mother*, 1926) and an excerpt from a book (Cynthia Kadohata’s *Kira-Kira*, 2004). The study indicated that LTA students used more words to express themselves and demonstrated higher overall literacy skills when discussing the painting than did the control group not in the program.

Specifically, LTA positively impacted five of the six literacy skills examined in response to the painting (extended focus, hypothesizing, evidential reasoning, building schema, and multiple interpretations). LTA students also demonstrated higher overall literacy skills when discussing the text. The program was shown to positively impact four of the six literacy skills examined in response to the text (extended focus, thorough description, hypothesizing, and multiple interpretations).

Finally, the study showed that LTA positively impacted attitudes toward art museums and increased students’ understanding of problem-solving in art making.

While students who participated in LTA demonstrated higher literacy skills in the oral interview conducted by Randi Korn & Associates, Inc., their New York City-wide English Language Arts test scores did not differ from students who had not participated in LTA. According to Randi Korn, Founding Director of RK&A, “We conducted one-on-one interviews with students, designed specifically to measure their ability to comprehend and think critically about a work of art or a text and explain their thoughts orally. The English Language Arts exam administered by New York tests students’ ability to fluently decode writing and students’ reading comprehension and critical thinking, using a standardized test. We are therefore not surprised that we did not see an improvement in the standardized test scores, as the test requires that students have decoding abilities in order to demonstrate their comprehension and critical thinking abilities.”

The categories of literacy and critical thinking skills were devised by LTA staff members in consultation with Randi Korn & Associates, Inc., and advisers from Columbia University, New York University, and the city’s Department of Education, among other institutions.

About Learning Through Art

The Guggenheim’s program Learning Through Art was created by a museum trustee in 1970, when New York schools were cutting art and music programs. Since it began, it has involved more than 130,000 students in dozens of public schools. The museum dispatches artists who spend one day a week at schools over a 10- or 20-week period helping students and teachers learn about and make art. Groups of students are also taken to the Guggenheim to see exhibitions. Rebecca Shulman Herz is the Manager of LTA and was responsible for the supervision of LTA’s recent research.

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The first year research report can also be found at www.learningthroughart.org.