

Between the Hand and Sky: The Art of Elizabeth Gould **Faculty Guide**

Pre-Tour

To prepare for a visit to the exhibition, faculty may ask students to consider, explore, and define some key terms:

Scientific illustration
Gender roles

Lithography
Ornithology

Printmaking
Field science

During your Visit

Between the Hand and Sky: The Art of Elizabeth Gould can be explored through one of the following overarching educational themes. Below you will find a brief summary of each theme, related questions to drive dialogue, and a prompt for consideration that goes beyond the exhibition. Use one or more of to focus a conversation in the gallery, and/or to develop student assignments.

Theme 1: A Woman's Place

In Elizabeth Gould's time, the role of women in European society was traditionally that of a dutiful wife, daughter, or mother. In this exhibition, though, Gould is being presented as a scientist and artist who deserves more credit for her contributions. In both the sciences and in art, women were historically considered to be in a "supporting" role to their male counterparts if they were included at all. Also, in the 19th century travel had become much easier. As a result, there was an explosion of information and illustration in European and Western societies specifically. Dutiful wives may have tagged along to support their husbands as silent partners in their explorations. Elizabeth Gould was one such example, but not without physical impact. Elizabeth's early death at the age of 37 resulted soon after traveling in Australia.

- What was Gould's role and life like within the framework of her husband's? How is that similar or not to contemporary marriage partnerships?
- Do you see places in the artwork where Gould may be adding narrative or asserting opinion? How about in the story of her life as described by the interpretive text?
- Do you think work like Gould's contributed to changes in gender roles? How so or why not?

- Consider the availability of health care and medical treatment of women. How has technology helped or hindered women's roles in exploration, science, art and society in general?

Beyond the exhibition: As a university student, you are pursuing a particular field of scholarship. In terms of diversity and gender, what did the field look like 50 years ago? What about 100 years ago? What changed? What are the challenges facing your field in its diversity practices today? How can it benefit from more inclusion? (Are you in a field that is “new”? Consider the parent fields for your own.)

Theme 2: Picturing Science

Before the camera, the only way to relay scientific observations was through illustration. The images in this show are being showcased as art objects on a wall whereas they originally would have been in a folio or book accompanied by scientific text. Through the advancements of the printing press and in lithography, images and books were able to be mass produced as never before. The sharing of scientific images with accompanying text revolutionized the availability of information in the 19th century Western society.

- What information is being portrayed in Gould's drawings? What can you tell about the animal or its environment?
- Early pictures in the exhibition are from taxidermied animals while later ones are from life. Can you see a difference? What changes?
- How were images like this beneficial to the sciences? How may they have been harmful?
- Traveling to capture exotic animals (for taxidermy or through illustration) was a key part of this time period of scientific exploration. How does this relate to colonialism? How might the portrayal of natural environments have influenced European attitudes toward “foreign lands”?
- What do these pictures tell you about people's relationship to the environment at the time in which they were made? How is that similar (or not) to our own?
- How does the presentation of the pictures on the wall change their context? How does it change your understanding and interpretation?
- What makes them scientific and/or artistic? Where is the line and why might there be a difference?

Beyond the exhibition: Scientific illustration is still a necessary field for communicating concepts. What do scientific illustrations look like today? What type of information are they portraying as compared to work from the past?

Theme 3: Process and ownership

Though this exhibition is highlighting Elizabeth Gould’s specific role in creating the prints on display, it also shows how many individuals may be involved in the creation of a single artwork. Such divvying out of tasks is not new or unusual in many creative endeavors. Printmaking, as well as other process heavy art forms, has a long history of communal workshops and collaboration.

- Where else do you see share ownership or collectivism in art making? How are those art forms valued by the larger art markets or institutions?
- How does collaboration benefit art forms like printmaking? How are skills shared? What does advancement look like?
- How does this impact acknowledgment and value in the art world? Whose name ends up on top?
- The “lone artist” trope is relatively recent in art history. How has the narrative of a solo artist impacted art forms that are traditionally more collaborative, like printmaking?

Beyond the exhibition: In contemporary art, shared ownership and collaborative art making has found its place in political art—and so has printmaking. Why does political or activist art lend itself to this type of art making? How does this relate to the history of the art form?

Final Thoughts

- Within the field sciences, there is an effort to make BIPOC researchers, enthusiasts and hobbyists more visible. An example would be the Black Birders movement. What are the challenges that are limiting inclusion? What efforts are being made to make changes? Think about how a lack of diversity in the field sciences inhibits to advancement. How can the field sciences benefit from diverse perspectives and participation?
- Acknowledgements in collaborative work – listing all contributors for a specific work of art, for instance—is often lacking in museum databases. In fact, the McClung’s database did not list Elizabeth Gould as a creator prior to this exhibition. Who has historically been making the choices for acknowledgement? Consider the lenses and value given to recognition. Is there a different way to consider creative work or research in collections? What are some parallels between the sciences and arts; where do they differ? How does bias play in to what stories are retained and what is left out? How does bias in acknowledgement shape collections?