

## **Descriptive Language** – Describe what you see, not what you know

Below is a staff training outline on using descriptive language to make museum tours and exhibits more accessible for visitors with no vision, low vision, or visual processing disorders. Use descriptive language regularly to enrich museum visits for everyone!

Go to the Art Beyond Sight link or qr code below for examples of full visual descriptions of museum art and artifacts. Try listening to descriptions before viewing objects.

### **Looking Exercise 1 – Look, Don't Think**

- Look at an object for 5 seconds. What three words first come to mind?
- Look for 15 seconds. What stands out?
- Look for 30 seconds. Now what do you notice?

### **Looking Exercise 2 – Stretch your Imagination**

- Describe the color of the object in the following ways:
  - using a noun
  - referring to an emotion
  - referring to another sense
- Describe the shape of the object using a comparison.
- Describe the texture of the object using three different words.

**Write!** Create a two to four-sentence description of your object using your words and observations.

More tips for crafting descriptive language

- Do you have time for a full visual description of an object?
- What essential elements of the object would you include in a quick but vivid “sketch” of the object?
- Use comparisons. For example: “the texture of the painting is rough like the bark of a tree” or “her red velvet train puddles on the carpet like spilled wine.”
- Guide visitors in mimicking a figure’s pose, or pretending to use an object. How does doing this make them feel? What does it make them think about?

Art Beyond Site Visual Description Examples: <https://www.artbeyondsight.org/mei/verbal-description-training/samples-of-verbal-description/>

