

**VALLEY**

**BILL HARRIS: FROM LIFE**

**FOCUS**

**Teacher's Guide**

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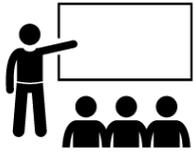


## Carnegie Arts Center History

The historic Carnegie Library opened in 1916, one of more than 1,600 libraries built by Andrew Carnegie across the U.S. It served as the City of Turlock's library until 1968 and has been used as an arts center since 1979. In November 2005 a fire destroyed everything but its outside walls. The City of Turlock and the Carnegie Arts Center Foundation soon joined together to rebuild and expand the facility. Opening in September 2011, the renovated Carnegie Arts Center is now operated entirely by the Foundation as a private, nonprofit. When you are walking to the gallery look for the scorch marks left by the fire.



# Museum Etiquette



DO listen to the Docent's instructions



DO raise your hand



DO use your inside voice



DO walk instead of run



DO NOT touch the artwork



DO NOT lean on the walls or pedestals



DO NOT use your phone inside the Gallery or Art Studio



DO NOT bring food or drinks into the Gallery

## Field Trip Content

HWY 99 Palms, acrylic on canvas, 2023



On view in the CAC's Ferrari Gallery this Spring is the exhibition *Valley Focus: Bill Harris- From Life*. This year's Valley Focus exhibition features the work of well-respected regional artist William Harris. Working in photography, acrylics, watercolors, and relief printmaking, Bill is talented in the widest range of creative activity. His work in our community spans decades, and this solo retrospective exhibition highlights many of the

themes and issues he is drawn to in creating his art.

The CAC is offering teachers and students the opportunity to see these museum-quality works in person. Trained docents will be available to lead tours Tuesdays through Fridays from **February 17 through May 15, 2026**.

Each visit includes a tour of the exhibition as well as an art activity that will complement the students' gallery experience. In the gallery, we will explore the artist's approach to depicting three-dimensional space, and students will also learn about the processes used to create artwork using different materials such as watercolor, printmaking, photography, and acrylic paints. The studio art lesson will focus on the



The Corner Store, photograph, 2011

composition of landscape art, emphasizing space and depth. Students will create their own landscapes using some basic principles of design. During the field trip, we will discuss the artist's process we see in the exhibition artwork and look for similarities and differences in the students' own creations. Design concepts introduced during the field trip will include foreground/ middle ground/ background, overlapping, and receding size. Younger grades will focus on overlapping and foreground/ background.

Paul's Flower Stand, watercolor,



The program has been developed with content appropriate for 2<sup>nd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Adjustments can be made for older grades.

## Our field trips may address the following State of California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards:

### Grade Two

Cr1.1: Brainstorm to generate multiple approaches to an art or design problem.

Cr1.2: Make art or design with various art materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.

Cr.2.1: Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design.

Cr2.2: Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces.

Re 7.2: Categorize images based on expressive properties.

Re8: Interpret art by identifying the mood suggested by a work of art and describing relevant subject matter and characteristics of form.

Re9: Used learned art vocabulary to express preferences about artwork.

### Grade Three

Cr1.1: Elaborate on an imaginative idea

Cr2.1: Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

Cr2.2: Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and proficient use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.

Cr2.3: Individually or collaboratively construct representations, diagrams, or maps of places that are part of everyday life.

Cr3: Discuss, reflect, and add details to enhance an artwork's emerging meaning.

Pr4: Investigate and discuss possibilities and limitations of spaces, including electronic, for exhibiting artwork.

Re7.1: Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.

Re 7.2: Determine messages communicated by an image.

Re8: Interpret art by analyzing use of media to create subject matter, characteristics of form, and mood.

Cn11: Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place it was made.

## **Grade Four**

Cr2.2: When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.

Pr4: Explore how past, present, and emerging technologies have impacted the preservation and presentation of artwork.

Pr5: Analyze the various considerations for presenting and protecting art in various locations, indoor or outdoor settings, in temporary or permanent forms, and in physical or digital formats

Re 7.2: Analyze components in visual imagery that convey message.

Re8: Interpret art by referring to contextual information and analyzing relevant subject matter, characteristics of form, and use of media.

Cn11: Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created.

## **Grade Five**

Cr1.1: Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for artmaking.

Cr2.2: Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment.

Pr4: Define the roles and responsibilities of a curator, explaining the skills and knowledge needed in preserving, maintaining, and presenting objects, artifacts, and artwork.

Re7.1: Compare one's own interpretation of a work of art with the interpretation of others.

Re8: Interpret art by analyzing characteristics of form and structure, contextual information, subject matter, visual elements, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

Cn11: Identify how art is used to inform or change beliefs, values, or behaviors of an individual or society.

## **Grade Six**

Cr2.1: Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.

Pr4: Analyze similarities and differences associated with preserving and presenting two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and digital artwork.

Re7.2: Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

Re8: Interpret art by distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant contextual information and analyzing subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

Cn11: Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.

### **Grade Seven**

Pr4: Compare and contrast how technologies have changed the way artwork is preserved, presented, and experienced.

Re7.2: Analyze multiple ways that images influence specific audiences.

Re8: Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages of ideas and mood conveyed.

Cn11: Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and culture use.

### **Grade Eight**

Cr1.1: Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or contemporary media.

Re7.2: Compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

Re8: Interpret art by analyzing how interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or idea and mood conveyed.

**There also will be Language Art Content Standards that may be met with this lesson.**

# What to Expect on the Day of Your Field Trip



Arrive at the Carnegie Arts Center.



You will be greeted by your volunteer docents.



If you have more than 35 students, your students will be split into two groups, usually by class.



One group will start in the Gallery. There, the students will receive a guided tour through the exhibition.



One group will start in the Studio. There, the students will be guided through an art lesson and activity.



After 45 minutes the two groups will switch activities.



After both activities students will get back on the bus. Docents will make sure teachers will have all of the students' artwork to take home.

## Suggested Classroom Activities

<https://zam.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2013/09/Landscapes.pdf>

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fBCnsFJSbazgiDxvPtZ34V7JnFBUO6ObSvTB9BvHDBk/edit?slide=id.p10#slide=id.p10>

[https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/landscapes/lesson02.html](https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/landscapes/lesson02.html)

<https://www.theartmuseum.org/create-a-city-scape>

## Post Visit Activity #1

### *Thank You Letter to the Carnegie Arts Center Volunteers*

**Time needed:** 20-30 minutes

**Materials needed:**

Paper, pencils, crayons, markers, or colored pencils

**Vocabulary:**

Landscape/ Cityscape	Middle Ground	Docent
Photograph	Background	Exhibition
Painting	Overlapping	Gallery
Collage	Art Studio	Artwork
Foreground	Carnegie Arts Center	Volunteers

**Directions:**

The CAC docents who facilitated your visit are volunteers who donate their time to learn about the exhibition and explore it with student visitors. Discuss what it means to be a volunteer and why their service is valuable.

Have your students write a thank you letter to their field trip docent volunteers (names of your field trip docents will be provided in a post field trip email).

Have students illustrate their letter.

Mail Thank You letters to:  
Megan Hennes, Assistant Director  
Carnegie Arts Center  
250 N. Broadway  
Turlock, CA 95380

**Example:**

*Dear...*

*Thank you for...*

*My favorite part of the field trip was...*

*I enjoyed when...*

*The part I remember most about the field trip was...*

*Sincerely...*

## Post-Visit Activity #2

### *I went to the Carnegie Arts Center and...*

**Time needed:** 20 minutes

**Materials:**

Large writing surface (such as a whiteboard, chalkboard, or a large sheet of paper on a bulletin board)

Colored construction paper, scissors, markers, pencils, tape or pushpins

**Directions:**

Write on your large writing surface, “I went to the Carnegie Arts Center and ...”

Have students write this statement on the top of a sheet of colored paper, too.

Under their statement, have each student write or draw an image of the most memorable thing they saw or did at the Arts Center.

Discuss responses as a larger group. Ask students follow-up questions such as:

What were some similarities in experiences and memories?

What were some differences?

Was visiting the Arts Center a good/valuable/beneficial experience?

Are there any must-see works of art they would recommend to family or friends visiting the exhibition at the Carnegie Arts Center?

Using tape or pushpins, post the responses onto the large surface, cutting into fun shapes or overlapping creatively. Share the response board with your school by placing it in a public area or posting on the school’s social media accounts. Share a photo of the response board with the CAC.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Observations

 Today at the Museum I saw...

 This made me think...

 Now I wonder...



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Observations

 Today at the Museum I saw...

 This made me think...

 Now I wonder...



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Observations

 Today at the Museum I saw...

 This made me think...

 Now I wonder...



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Observations

 Today at the Museum I saw...

 This made me think...

 Now I wonder...



## Evaluation Form

Thank you for bringing your students to the Carnegie Arts Center! We are striving to provide all students with a positive and memorable experience. To help us achieve this goal, please take a moment to complete this evaluation form. Please send your comments via email to [megan@carnegieartsturlock.org](mailto:megan@carnegieartsturlock.org). Thank you!

**Date of Field Trip:**

**Name of Teacher:**

**School:**

**Grade Level:**

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### GALLERY

Did the docent relate well to the group? **Yes/No**

Did your students feel welcome and comfortable in the gallery? **Yes/No**

Was the content of the tour presented in a clear manner? **Yes/No**

Was the material and presentation appropriate to the age group? **Yes/No**

Were the students encouraged to:

Think critically? **Yes/No**

Look carefully? **Yes/No**

Participate or engage with the artwork? **Yes/No**

Could the docent have done anything differently to improve the tour? **Yes/No**

If yes, please comment:

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### STUDIO ACTIVITY

Did the docent successfully connect the art activity with the Gallery tour? **Yes/No**

Was the content of the lesson presented in a clear manner? **Yes/No**

Was the material and presentation appropriate to the age group? **Yes/No**

Were the students encouraged to:

Be creative? **Yes/No**

Use specific techniques? **Yes/No**

Participate in the lesson? **Yes/No**

Could the docent have done anything differently to improve the lesson/activity? **Yes/No**

If yes, please comment:

Overall, did your students have a good experience on this visit? Did it meet your expectations?

What would your students say was their favorite part of the field trip?

What would your students say was their least favorite part of the field trip?

Was the field trip (content/presentation/experience) a valuable learning tool?

Would you bring other students to the CAC or recommend the experience to other teachers?

What was your overall impression of the Carnegie Arts Center?

What is the best way to inform you about future field trip opportunities? Email to you individually?  
Please make sure we have your email address \_\_\_\_\_

Email or flyer sent to the school/principal?

Email or flyer sent through the school district?

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Please feel free to use the rest of this sheet to offer any additional comments or suggestions to help us improve for future classes. We welcome your ideas and opinions!

## About the Exhibition

With each annual exhibition in our *Valley Focus* series, we explore the work of important regional artists and their relationship with our communities. As both a photographer and a painter, Bill Harris has been a fixture in the region's art scene for 40 years. From his years as a young artist in the Bay Area to the incredible body of work he has created in the Central Valley, this exhibition surveys his career — always working “from life.”

As an art student in the late 1960s, Bill's curiosity led him to explore a wide variety of creative techniques, eventually coalescing around photography as his first choice of medium. Influenced by the work of artists like Henri Cartier-Bresson (French, 1908-2004), Robert Frank (American, 1924-2019), and Mary Ellen Mark (American, 1940-2015), who are all renowned for their work depicting daily life on the streets in their communities, Bill stepped out onto the streets of San Francisco and Oakland with his camera at the ready.



Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Behind the Gare St. Lazare*, 1932, photograph (© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson)

Bill Harris, *Golden Gate Park Hippies*, 1969, photograph



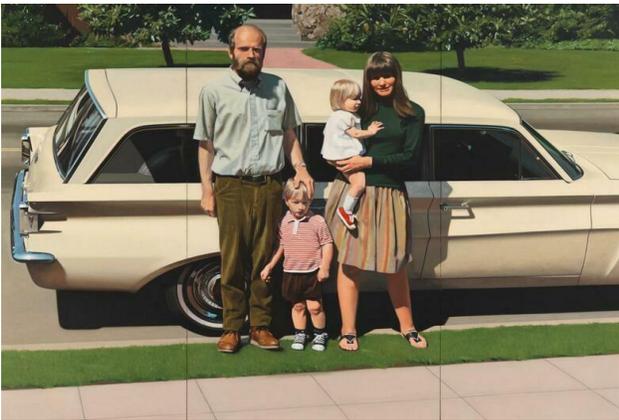
During this turbulent time in the country—with both the Civil Rights Movement and the Viet Nam era Anti-war Movement increasing in intensity—Bill was drawn to attend and document the many protests, marches, and demonstrations taking place in and around San Francisco. His black and white photographs from this period show us his

keen eye for detail; his images of young protesters effectively capture the range of their emotions in candid moments.

The freedom to photograph anonymously, blending into the crowd to find those intimate and telling shots, has been fuel for Bill's creativity ever since. He looks for subjects everywhere: people walking on the street, sitting at a bus stop,

strolling through a museum, attending a parade, at work, and at play, most of them unaware of his camera. In the best of these images, even when subjects stop and smile for him, there is an immediacy that belies any sense of posing or construction. What comes through in all of these photographs is an artist’s sensibility to his subject and his innate feel for the composition of the image. Perspective, space, cropping, balance, and tonality are all well-considered in his images whether in black and white or in color.

Robert Bechtle, '61 Pontiac, 1968-69, oil on canvas. ©1969 Robert Bechtle/Whitney Museum of American



Alongside his love of photography, the skills Bill acquired working in oil, acrylic, and watercolor have been expertly used in developing his photorealistic painting style. Inspired by painters of the Photorealist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s—including Robert Bechtle (American, 1932-2020) and Ralph

Goings (American, 1928-2016), both well-known and active in Northern California during this period—Bill began to translate some of his photographic compositions into paintings on canvas and paper.

Bill emphasizes the same compositional elements in his painting as in each original photograph. Painting would give him the freedom to alter or “improve on” the photographic source, but what he has captured with the camera is usually satisfying and transfers beautifully to the canvas. His deft technique can cause confusion on a first look; we may ask “Is this a photograph or a painting?” Viewers marvel at Bill’s skill in painting so hyper-realistically, but his ability to render unique moments, no matter the medium, is the true accomplishment.



Bill Harris, Modesto Greyhound Station, 1993, watercolor

Bill Harris, *Flags*, 1973, woodcut



Not surprisingly, as a student Bill's curiosity and creativity led him to try his hand at printmaking, producing both screenprints and woodcuts. He continued to work in this medium for several years after college, coinciding with his work as a graphic designer. The woodcuts we have included here, produced during the 1970s and 80s,

attest to his versatility as an artist.

As the curator of this retrospective, I asked Bill to share with us all aspects of his artistic output. We looked at works from his student years, most of which reflected his interest in the social and political issues of the volatile time in which he came of age as an artist. It is how these times played into his more mature work, setting him on the path of observation from life, looking for subjects and surprises on the streets, that tells the story of his long career.



Bill Harris, *Poodle Skirts (Graffiti Parade)*, photograph

Bill Harris, *The Laundromat*, 2012, watercolor



Our region has benefitted from Bill's creative presence for 40 years. He is generous with his time, attending and photographing at community gatherings and cultural events, never hesitating to share his images as an homage to the place he calls home. We see our places and our people anew through his eyes, and we are richer for it.

## About the Artist

Born in Traverse City, Michigan, Bill Harris was raised in the Bay Area from a very young age. He received a BFA in Graphic Design with a minor in Photography from the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1969. He worked as a graphic designer at the *Hayward Daily Review* from 1972 to 1985, and as a graphic designer and photographer at *The Modesto Bee* from 1986 to 2008. Since then, Bill has been semi-retired, working as a freelance photographer while continuing his fine art photography and painting practice. Over the years, Bill has exhibited widely throughout the Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area and has received numerous juried awards, including multiple Best of Show honors, several of them here at the CAC.

## The Artist on his Work

My work begins with close observation of everyday life through the camera, with paintings often developing directly from my photographs. I am drawn to candid street scenes, urban environments, and still life arrangements I find at random. These works were created while I lived in the San Francisco Bay Area from 1965 to 1986.

During these early years I was doing documentary photography; protests and demonstrations were happening all around the city, and I was drawn to observe and capture that cultural moment. It was those experiences that helped shape my work as a street photographer. I walked the streets looking for unguarded moments; ordinary scenes that reveal the quiet structure and humanity of everyday life, in the spirit of Henri Cartier-Bresson. Many of these images later evolve into paintings, allowing ideas to move fluidly between the two media.

After moving to Modesto in 1986, I continued to document my surroundings with photographs and paintings of common, everyday subjects—bus stations, seedy apartments, gas stations, agricultural sites. In a smaller city it is harder to remain

inconspicuous, and I often find myself photographing on the edges of town and in surrounding rural areas, a shift from my earlier urban work.

Through street photography, translated into photorealist paintings and watercolors, I want to capture slices of life that, in the hurried pace of everyday living, are often overlooked or simply passed by. Across both photography and painting, my work encourages viewers to slow down, question what they are seeing, and experience a quiet emotional connection with the image.

Now, in the Central Valley and Modesto, my street photography is often focused on people I've encountered where the community gathers—the county fair, graffiti cruises & car shows, local music events, and our downtown streets. Alongside commercial work, which includes portraits, events, and concerts, I often find unexpected fine art images emerging from everyday encounters.

Photography most directly satisfies my love of candid street imagery. I have produced extended photographic essays on subjects such as traveling tent circuses, county fairs, flea markets, street life, and the local music scene. Working anonymously in the impersonal world of the street or in a crowd often becomes paradoxically personal when a fleeting moment is frozen in time through the lens.

Sometimes I photograph and paint still-life subjects that catch my eye. Always observing my surroundings— whether at the farmer's market, on a downtown street, or a rural back road— I find there are objects and details that I can't ignore. Still life images present themselves naturally to be photographed and painted in a traditional style. Though I am a photorealist painter, I have always felt drawn to abstraction. With the camera, often through an extreme close-up or cropped perspective, something familiar or seemingly unimportant may present itself as an intriguing abstract composition. It's another extension of my passion for observation; since moving to the Central Valley, I've begun to see—and photograph— more images of this type.

## Glossary of Art Terms and Definitions

**2-Dimensional:** Something with only width and height. Things that are 2D are flat and cannot be physically held because they have no depth and are completely flat.

**3-Dimensional:** Something with width, height, and depth. Things that are 3D can be physically held because they do have depth.

**Abstract Art:** Art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colors, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect

**Background:** The area of an artwork that appears farthest away from the viewer; also, the area against which a figure or scene is placed.

**Cityscape:** An image that has a city or urban area scenery as its primary focus.

**Collage:** From the French meaning "to glue," collage describes the technique of composing an artwork by gluing a wide range of materials - including pieces of paper, fabric, newspaper clippings, and sometimes readymade objects - to a surface.

**Color palette:** The range of colors used by an artist in making a work of art.

**Gallery:** A space for the display of art and other collectible objects.

**Exhibition:** A collection of items, such as art, chosen to be displayed together to be seen by the public.

**Foreground:** The area of an image that appears closest to the viewer.

**Horizontal line:** A line that goes left to right; it is parallel to the horizon line.

**Landscape:** The natural landforms of a region; also, an image that has natural scenery as its primary focus.

**Medium:** The materials used to create a work of art, and the categorization of art based on the materials used (for example, painting [or more specifically, watercolor], drawing, sculpture).

**Middle ground:** The part of the picture that is between the foreground and background.

**Monochromatic:** containing or using only one color.

**Overlapping:** The placement of objects over one another to create a sense of depth in a 2-dimensional space.

**Perspective:** Technique used to depict volumes and spatial relationships on a flat surface, as in a painted scene that appears to extend into the distance.

**Portrait:** An artistic representation of a person.

**Realism:** Art that looks like the thing it depicts.

**Setting:** The place or location that is shown in a work of art.

**Still Life:** A work of art that shows inanimate objects from the natural or man-made world, such as fruit, flowers, dead game, and/or vessels like baskets or bowls. Looked at another way: still lifes depict things that are “still” and don't move.