Art Gallery. National Museum of Art in London,

Reviewed by Arnold Pulda

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This CD-ROM is based upon a collection at the National Museum of Art in London. I use it in my class when we study the Renaissance. Our textbook devotes several pages to Renaissance art and artists, however, the students (9th-graders) are interested in a more in-depth treatment, thus the CD-ROM. <p> One must understand, first of all, that this is not a comprehensive survey of the Great Works or anything like it. You will not find, for instance, Leonardo's "Last Supper," or Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel, for the simple reason that neither of these works is at the National Gallery. There are, indeed, other works by Leonardo and Michelangelo in the collection, as well as those of almost every other important artist. Since many items with which your students might be familiar are not included, it provides a perfect chance for students to contribute from other sources. <p> Instead of focusing on specific paintings or sculptures this CD-ROM deals with themes. At the opening screen you get a choice of taking one of thtours through the Gallery. These tours deal with Line and Perspective, How a Painting is Made, Repairing and Restoring Art, etc. Click on a choice and the pleasant English-accented voice of a man illustrates the given theme in a tour lasting about 10 minutes. The tour guide illuminates his theme by showing several works of art. On most screens there is an "Animation" button which, when selected, shows the process by which a certain technique was executed--how the artist, in mid-painting, changed the position of his subject's hand, or tinkered with the color of the sunset, or added to the picture in stages over time, for instance. <p> These animations are fascinating, and the student running the show (I always ask for a volunteer to man/woman the mouse; I take a position near the large-screen 35" TV that my monitor is connected to.) often clicks on the Animation several times. The students enjoy seeing how things are done, and this Animation device satisfies that need. I often hear comments of "Gee, I didn't know they did it that way" after such an illustration. I am not an art teacher, and the fact is that I didn't know it, either. <p> These animations are not always technical: one that always catches students' attention illustrates the pointillism of Seurat, showing, by increasing close-ups, that dots of blue and orange make up what appears to be a red hat. I am not a science teacher, either, but there is much science in these mini-lessons, too. We see how paintings are x-rayed and tested, and restored. The tour guide shows us how paintings that have become yellow with age are restored to their original bright colors using chemicals in modern, scientific handling, for instance. <p> I do not want to belabor the point, but there is much potential for inter-disciplinary work using this CD-ROM. Therefore, I recommend taking each of the four tours. Doing so will take about 30-40 minutes, depending on your student-operator, the interests of the class and other factors. I find that it is wise to allow the students to take their time through these tours, using conve-

nient buttons such as "Go Back," or menus show-
ing "Contents," to refer to other works of art. After
the tours, you may focus on more specific themes
such as "Portraits," "Still Life," "Landscape," or
about a dozen other well-organized and related
items. <p> One caveat: this collection is heavily
Euro-centric. You will not find much Asian, Amer-
ican, or African art here. As a supplement to a his-
tory unit on the European Renaissance, as I have
used it, <cite>Art Gallery</cite> is an excellent
learning device that is truly interactive.

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