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# THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

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## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

ART:  
GRADES 9-12



# STEPHEN WILTSHIRE & CITYSCAPE ART: DRAWING DISTANCE & PERSPECTIVE

## Exhibit Connections: Observation Deck, Stephen Wiltshire exhibit

### OVERVIEW OF LESSON PLAN

In this project, a series of lessons before and after a trip to the Empire State Building, students will learn about and practice drawing cityscapes and showing perspective. They will consider how to use parallel (and non-parallel converging) lines to show distance and make the viewer think different parts of the artwork are farther away.

This art lesson will focus on the exhibit of the artwork of Stephen Wiltshire. In this inspiring exhibit, we learn the story of an artist who traveled by helicopter above New York City and then drew a cityscape from his memory of the trip. His incredible work is displayed at the Empire State Building.

This lesson will leverage the art exhibit to provide three learning experiences:

- Students will attempt to observe and re-create a real-life scenario from memory to see what parts of the view are memorable for them and to see how challenging this is.
- Students will study Stephen Wiltshire's drawing to learn how to show "distance" in an artwork—particularly using linear patterns such as city streets and building façades.
- Students will learn specifically about the life of Stephen Wiltshire, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of three and went on to become a famous artist with a genius for drawing from memory.

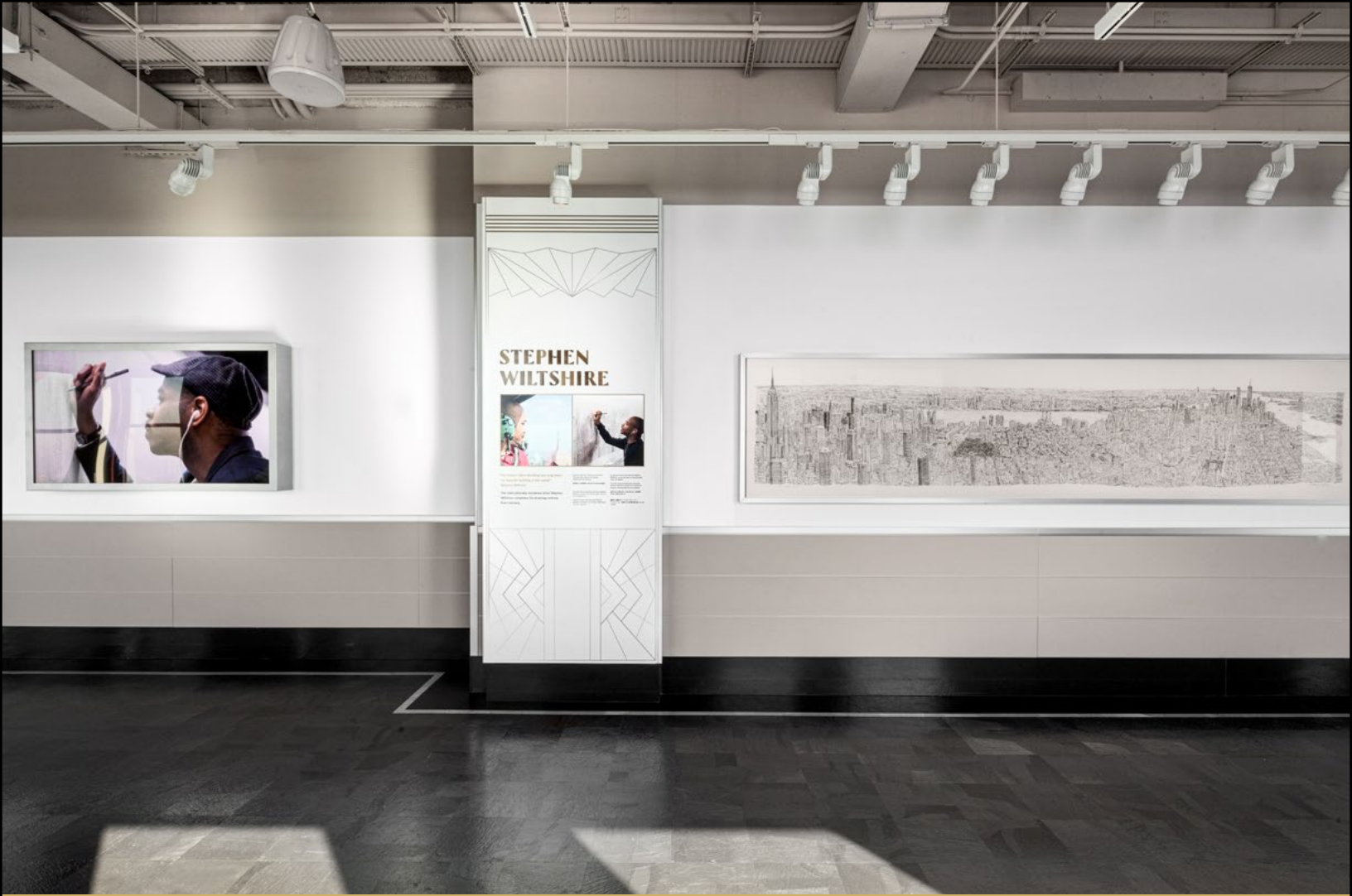
With these three ideas in mind, students will create two pieces of their own art and write about their experience making both of them.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will deepen their understanding of:

- Drawing art from memory
- Observing a real-life scene and considering what parts of it are memorable or distinctive for themselves or for another viewer
- Drawing objects in a way that changes their perceived distance from the viewer, and using parallel (or almost parallel) lines to convey distance
- Researching an artist's work, analyzing it to consider the artist's techniques, and writing about their learning

**SUGGESTED TIME ALLOWANCE:** One-1.5 hours



# RESOURCES/ MATERIALS:

- Information provided in the Empire State Building exhibits
- Paper or notebook for taking notes and/or sketches at the Empire State Building
- Pencils for sketches
- Additional sketching and writing will be done after the trip using common art supplies

# ACTIVITIES/ PROCEDURES:

## **PRE-TRIP ACTIVITY**

Students will complete a pre-trip activity in which they will attempt to observe a scene briefly (in school, at home, or virtually) and then recreate it in a sketch/drawing without being able to look at the scene again. Instruct students to “Do the best they can and never stop.” (Stephen Wiltshire) They will compare their sketch with the real scene and consider why some things were memorable and others were not. This will prepare them for the Stephen Wiltshire exhibit by understanding (from their own personal experience) how difficult the task is. It will help them appreciate the art by prompting them to think about what sights are most memorable.

After students complete their sketches, have them watch the Stephen Wiltshire video and the Stephen Wiltshire interview video, and then generate three questions they would like to ask the artist.

## **Exhibit: Stephen Wiltshire Exhibit (30-45 mins)**

Students will choose their favorite view from anywhere around the Empire State Building Observation Deck and use a pencil to sketch a design of what they see.

- How does he make different buildings appear to be at differing distances from the observer?
- How are parallel (or non-parallel converging) lines used to show the distance a street travels or distance in general?
- If time allows, extend the time in this exhibit so students can view the video about Stephen Wiltshire’s work at the Empire State Building.

## **Exhibit: Observation Deck (30-45 mins)**

Students will choose their favorite view from anywhere around the Empire State Building Observation Deck and use a pencil to sketch a design of what they see. This will serve as a “practice” exercise for a cityscape of their own that they will sketch after the trip.

## **POST-TRIP ACTIVITY/FURTHER DISCUSSION**

After the trip to the Empire State Building, students will consider what they learned about Wiltshire and his sketches of the New York City skyline. They will write a response summarizing their experience and their understanding of how Wiltshire shows “distance” in his sketches. Specifically, how are the lines of roads used to show different parts of the city that are farther away? What do you notice about the sides of buildings very close to the artist, and how do they change as you go farther down the sides of the buildings?

Students will create their own version of a cityscape based on their sketches from the Empire State Building and their experiences in the pre-trip activity.

This assignment could be extended into an art unit on other techniques in landscape drawing. Art teachers could teach various strategies and techniques for conveying size, distance, and perspective in landscapes, including the use of parallel lines, and adjusting the size of objects to show their distance, as Wiltshire does. Students could use these techniques in a landscape drawing in any context.

### **Evaluation and Assessment**

Teachers can review and assess the written work and artwork by each student according to the standards and grade levels appropriate for their class. Students should be able to write a clear explanation of the artwork they observed and techniques that the artist used in the sketches. Students should be able to create a piece of original art that demonstrates the technique that they observed (regardless of the artistic quality of the artwork, the technique should be evident). Teachers can assess according to their normal assessment systems.



# CONNECTIONS TO THE STANDARDS

## FROM NEW YORK STATE STANDARDS FOR VISUAL ARTS

### VA:CR1.2.HSI

a. Consider a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

### VA:CR2.3.HSI

a. Develop a proposal and create sketches or a model for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.

# PRE-TRIP WORKSHEET

## PRELIMINARY TASK

In order to prepare for your trip to the Empire State Building, we are going to try an artistic challenge: Find a view of something you want to draw. It could be your classroom, a room in your home, a view out the window, or a detailed view in a picture or online.

Assignment: Use a stopwatch to time yourself. Set the timer for 30 seconds. Look carefully at the scene you chose for exactly 30 seconds. After 30 seconds, stop looking—go to another room, or turn around in your chair to face the wall. Then, on a blank piece of paper, try to make a drawing/sketch of the scene you observed. Try to include as much detail as you can. Be as precise as possible. If you choose your kitchen, ask questions like:

- How many chairs are around the table?
- How many cabinets are in the kitchen?

Try to see how precise you can make your drawing. Then, only when you are finished with the drawing, look at the scene again and see how you did. Write a paragraph reflecting on the experience.

- How accurate and detailed is your sketch?
- What types of things did you draw accurately?
- What types of things did you forget about?

When we get to the Empire State Building, we are going to see an exhibit by an artist, Stephen Wiltshire, and we'll see the sketch he made after a short trip in a helicopter above New York City.

Watch the Stephen Wiltshire video and the Stephen Wiltshire Interview video hosted on YouTube, and then generate three questions you would like to ask him.

### Stephen Wiltshire Interview







# POST-TRIP WORKSHEET

## POST-TRIP TASK: ART ASSIGNMENT

You have completed your trip to the Empire State Building and learned about the artwork of Stephen Wiltshire. To wrap up this experience, your assignment is to create your own sketch/drawing of a cityscape. You can use any view of buildings as your inspiration, such as part of the New York City skyline that you observed from the Empire State Building, another city like New York, a part of New York different than Manhattan, or a small town where you live. It can be your neighborhood, a street nearby, or a scene that you find online. Use a pencil (or colored pencils) to draw a cityscape of the scene. Pay particular attention to how you convey depth. Try to practice some of the techniques Wiltshire used to show buildings and streets that are farther away in different parts of the drawing.

When you are finished, write a one-paragraph reflection on this experience.

- What do you think about Wiltshire's sketches?
- What did you learn about his techniques and ways to convey depth or distance in artwork?
- What else did you learn or enjoy from this experience?

