OVERVIEW

1. Students participate in explorations to learn Laban’s vocabulary of movement. They learn that the elements of time, space, force, (and flow for the older students) can be placed on continua which range respectively from urgent-quick to sustained-slow time; from direct-straight to indirect-curved use of space; from firm force to light force and from controlled-bound flow to free spontaneous flow of movement. Activities I use with each of these movement concepts can be found in Gail N. Herman’s and Pat Hollingsworth’s book Kinetic Kaleidoscope: Exploring Movement and Energy in Visual Art [Available from Univ. School at the University of Tulsa, 800 South Tucker Dr., Tulsa, OK 74104] and in Rudolf Laban’s book Modern Educational Dance.

2. After students are familiar with these elemental efforts, I introduce students to their combinative qualities which Laban calls “complete effort actions.” Laban observed these effort energies in dance, in work and leisure movements, and also in nonverbal communication. The efforts carry most of the meaning of our words. Students use their hands and arms for exploring ways to say “Hello” using different voices and movement qualities. Our hands reflect the firmness or lightness, the urgent or sustained qualities in our voices. We float, glide, dab, flick, wring, press, thrust, and slash. We note the paths and rhythms that we use in time and space.

3. Students then use the vocabulary of movement to describe the formal qualities (energies of floating, gliding, etc.) they feel and see in works of art.

4. Students observe artworks and move with kinetic qualities they see. Others guess to which painting (or part of a painting) the student is referring. Right and wrong is not the issue. Reasons for their interpretations are emphasized.

5. Students participate in activities to learn the levels, planes, and directions of movement in a kinesphere: low, medium, high; horizontal, vertical, sagittal, and diagonal. Horizontal movements are often used by givers and takers, gatherers and scatterers, nurses, teachers, preachers, and speakers. Vertical movements are often used, for example, by politicians, judges, etc., to assert authority or gain respect. Sagittal movements are the forward and back, advancing and retreating movements used in goal directed behavior.

6. Students notice paintings, or parts, that reflect a level or a direction. For example, sagittal plane can be emphasized in a bucolic scene where the viewer’s eye is directed from objects in a foreground to a pathway receding into the distance. Sometimes a painting is mainly created by using many horizontals.

7. In pairs students play the ‘sound screen.’ One moves a hand on the imaginary screen; the other makes the sounds. (Herman, G. (1986). Storytelling: A Triad in the Arts [Out of print. Available from author]).

8. Students interpret visual kinetic line graphs with their bodies and voices. Samples of the line graphs are in Kinetic Kaleidoscope.

9. Students choose a percussion instrument (temple block, chimes, drum, and shaker) to reflect a kinetic quality in a particular part of a painting.

10. Students create kinetic line drawings on 4X 6 index cards while listening to music. Then they create a dance or sound score from one drawing chosen by their group.

11. “Be the Thing.” Students take shapes in a painting and personify them.

12. While viewing artworks, keep a journal of your reactions when using kinetic energy. What energies do you see and feel?