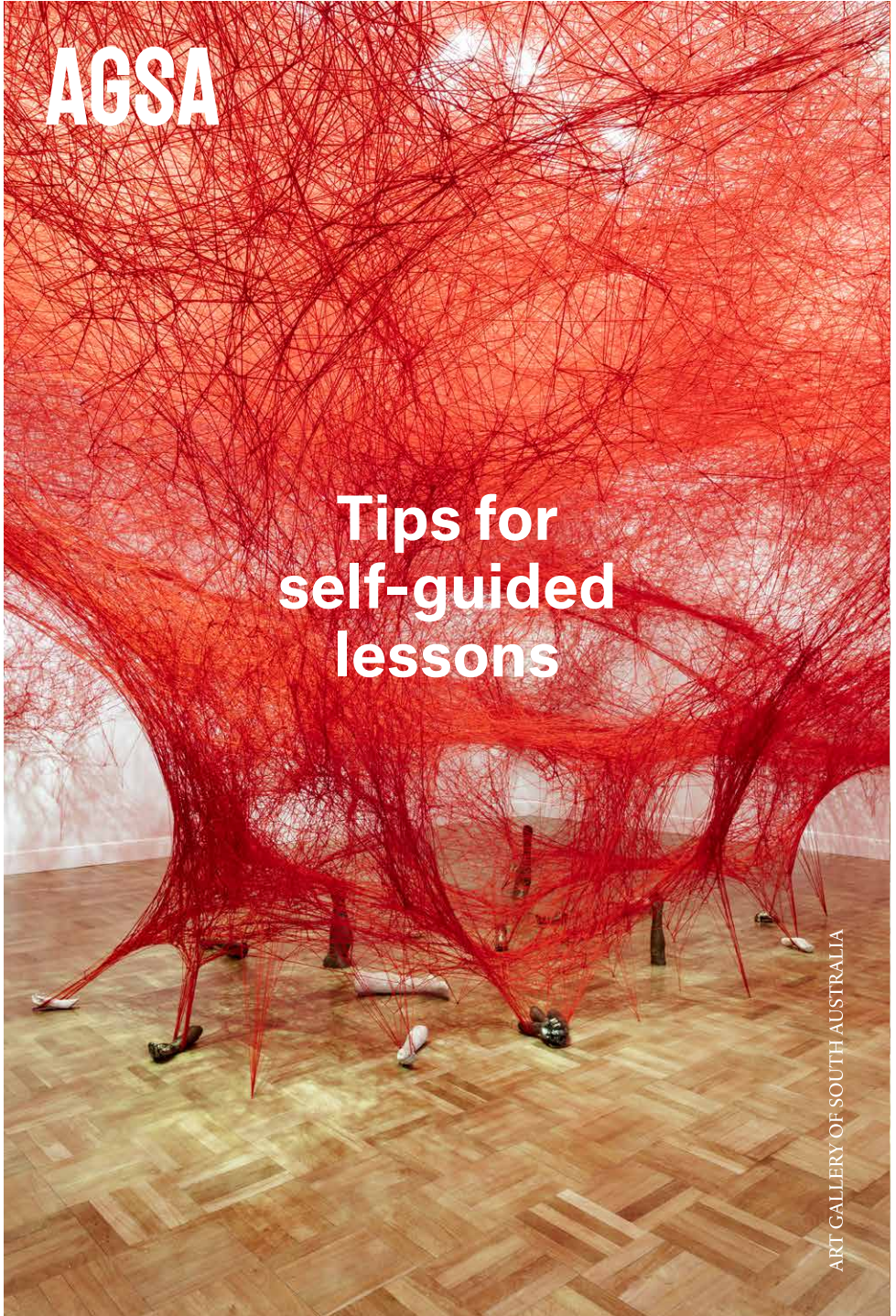


**AGSA**

**Tips for  
self-guided  
lessons**

ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



**Front cover image** Chiharu Shiota, Japan, born 1972, *Absence Embodied*, 2018, Berlin and Adelaide, wool, bronze, plaster 16 hands; Gift of the Gwinnett family through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2018, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery.

## Tips for self-guided lessons

A self-guided visit needn't be a daunting experience with students. You do not need to be an art expert or know anything about the works of art you are about to encounter, you just need to be armed with some engaging, open-ended questions to start a dialogue with your students.

The suggested list of questions provides an opportunity for your students to practise their critical and creative thinking skills. The questions encourage long looking, resulting in your students actively engaging with works of art, with ideas and each other.

Included is a set of pencils and looking logs (blank concertina booklets) for drawing or writing activities.

We recommend dividing your students into groups of 10–15, this will make it easier to move around the Gallery.



# Activities for students in the Gallery

You may only have time for a few of these questions, but you have a range to choose from to suit your students.

- 1 Locate a work of art which can be viewed by all the students in your group. Allow student to look at the work of art for 1min. Now, make a list of as many words you can think of that are associated with that work of art. Play a 'round robin' game with each person sharing a different word.
- 2 Based on your observations and before looking at the wall label, invent a title for a work of art.
- 3 Pair two works of art together. Why did you make this selection?
- 4 Slow down the pace at which you look at a work of art. Imagine a work of art was a door to a new world and imagine stepping inside the image. What would the place look like? What would the atmosphere feel like?
- 5 Using Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander works of art, design a tour that highlights different regions of Australia or moments in Australia's history.
- 6 Curate a new exhibition for the Gallery using one of the following themes:  
Yellow  
A rainy day  
Texture  
My favourite things  
Women  
Pattern  
Mathematics  
Science  
Paper, scissors, rock  
Humour  
Light and shadow  
  
Select 3–5 works of art to suit your theme. Take note of the title and artist or photograph these if you have access to a phone or camera (just no flash).
- 7 Spend time drawing a sculpture on display. Pay close attention to proportion and scale.
- 8 Find an example of a quiet and a loud work of art. Describe what qualities make them quiet and loud.
- 9 Document the titles of the works of art you see during your visit. Put them together to create a story or poem
- 10 Imagine you could give a work of art to a family member, which work of art would you choose and why?

Finally, go back to the work of art you first looked at today. What do you notice now that you didn't before?

These activities are taken from our Curiosity Cards. A complete set can be found in this pack, you may like to choose some different questions for your students.



# How to look at a work of art

## Tip 1

### Look and look again

- 1 Allow your students time to look – it might be thirty seconds; it could be a minute. Slow down and take time.
- 2 After the looking time, turn your back on the work of art and ask students to draw, write or describe what they saw. What did they notice?
- 3 Look again at the same work of art.
  - Did the children notice anything new?
  - What important details did they miss the first time?

A simple activity such as this reinforces the importance of looking intently and looking again.

## Tip 2

### Finding a way in

Before providing any contextual information about a work of art, ask students to brainstorm (for one minute only) all the words they think of when they look at this work. Ask students to share their words with the class – this is their opportunity to make a ‘mark on the page’ and make a personal connection to the work in front of them. You might like to collate all of the words on a large sheet of paper back in the classroom; these words usually constitute a great starting point to describe the work of art.

Although it might be tempting to reach for Google to locate details about a work of art immediately, a great deal of information is already present in front of you. Resist the urge to impart too much knowledge too soon, as it can limit your students’ ‘way in’ or willingness to share their ideas and opinions.

## Tip 3

### Unpicking the pieces

- What is going on in this work of art?
- What can you see?
- How does the work make you feel?
- What can you see that makes you feel that way?

Imagine the work of art is a completed jigsaw puzzle, so let’s take the jigsaw pieces apart so that we can look at each piece closely.

- What colours, lines, shapes, textures have been used?
- How has the artist used these elements and principles?

These discussion questions begin to form the basis of a description and analysis of a work of art.

## Tip 4

### Putting the pieces back together

Based on what you have observed, what might the artist be communicating?

- Have you read the wall label?
- Does the title, where or when the work was created support any assumptions you made?

Having this information can at the very least add another layer of understanding, but often it can complete the picture.

Sometimes, though, the artist’s intention will never be revealed to us, and that is ok – we can still appreciate a work of art and make our own connection to it while learning about an artist, composition of a work of art, and the way artists use elements, principles and materials.

## How to read a wall label

While we prioritise 'long looking' at works of art, a wall label can provide you with some valuable information about an artist, where they are from, their age and where and when the work of art was made.



## Available from the Gallery Store



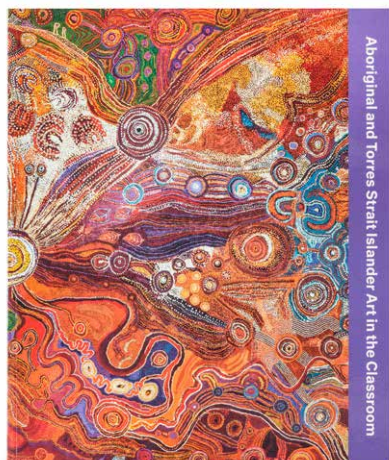
Curiosity Card

\$14.95



Art School in a Box

\$29.95



Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Art in the Classroom

\$29.95

## **Bookings and information**

E [education@artgallery.sa.gov.au](mailto:education@artgallery.sa.gov.au)

W [agsa.sa.gov.au](http://agsa.sa.gov.au)



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