

Pre- & Post-visit Materials for Teachers

2010

Whitney Biennial

February 25-May 30, 2010



WHITNEY

Education

whitney.org/K-12

About these Materials

What is the Whitney Biennial?

The Whitney Biennial is the Museum's signature exhibition of new directions and developments in American art over the past two years. It is an opportunity to showcase some of the most exciting and innovative art made by contemporary artists working in the United States.

How can these materials be used?

These materials provide a framework to prepare you and your students for a visit to the Biennial and offer an opportunity to reflect on your experience upon returning to the classroom. The following discussions, art projects, information, and writing activities introduce some of the exhibition's key themes and concepts:

- **Pre-visit Discussion:** What is the Role of Art Today?
- **Pre-visit Activity:** Current Events and Art
- **Pre-visit Activity:** Looking Closely at Works of Art
- **Tips for Your Museum Visit**
- **Post-visit Projects and Activities**
- **Looking Back, Keeping Track Timeline**
- **Bibliography and links**

As noted throughout this guide, some lessons are especially relevant to elementary, middle, or high school students. However, we encourage you to adapt and build on the ideas explored in these materials to meet your teaching objectives and your students' needs.

These suggested lessons and activities can be used by schools scheduled to visit the Biennial with a Museum Educator, self-guided high school group visits, and teachers looking for ideas on how to approach teaching contemporary art. We recommend that, if possible, you visit the exhibition in advance of bringing your class.

If you have signed up for a school tour or a program and would like to preview the exhibition, requests for passes can be made by emailing schoolprograms@whitney.org. Attn.: Educator Passes. Please include your name, school, and mailing address.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the exhibition.

What is 2010 about?

This year marks the seventy-fifth edition of the Whitney's signature exhibition. The Biennial serves as an important platform for the study, analysis, and discussion of contemporary art. Since its inception, the Whitney Biennial has offered many kinds of art, fostered debate, and stirred controversy.

While Biennials are always affected by the cultural, political, and social moment, this exhibition—simply titled *2010*—embodies a cross section of contemporary art production rather than a specific theme. To underscore the idea of time as an element of the Biennial and to demonstrate the influence of the past on *2010*, familiar and forgotten artists from previous exhibitions are brought together in *Collecting Biennials*, an accompanying installation drawn from the Museum's collection on view on the fifth floor. Balancing different media ranging from painting and sculpture to video, photography, performance, and installation, *2010* is meant to be experienced as a double-sided telescope where the history of the Whitney can be observed from the past, present, and beyond.

The artists selected for this year's exhibition provide diverse responses to the anxiety and optimism characteristic of this moment. The fifty-six artists included in *2010* are representative of a much larger and broader world where many more artists are operating and active, each of them part of a rich and lively system from where the Biennial as an exhibition draws its inspiration. This Biennial, like the many that have preceded it, is also directly or indirectly shaped by the Whitney's distinctive Marcel Breuer building, the Museum's collection, and the legacy of past Biennial exhibitions, curators, and artists.

How did the Biennial begin?

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the Museum's founder, introduced the Biennial Exhibition in 1932, the first year of the Museum's existence. The Biennial exhibitions offered audiences the first major public forum for viewing contemporary American art. The first exhibition featured many now well-known twentieth-century American artists, including Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, Elsie Driggs, and Florine Stettheimer. In early Biennials, the works were all for sale and the artists themselves selected which work they would include in the exhibition.

How are the Biennial artists selected today?

The Biennial curators visit museums, galleries, and artists' studios to see as many artists and works as possible. From this search the curators narrow their focus to the artists and works of art in the exhibition.

How can I find out more about Biennial artists?

The 55 artists and artists' groups in this year's exhibition represent a wide range of established and emerging artists of varying ages, backgrounds, and sensibilities. For the first time in the Biennial's history, over half the artists included are women.

For more information on Biennial artists, visit <http://www.whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial>. We have also included information on selected artists in *2010*, the Whitney Biennial and *Collecting Biennials* that we think might be of interest to you and your students on pages.

Does the Biennial take over the entire Museum?

Yes! *2010* can be found in the Lobby, Sculpture Court, and on the second, third, and fourth floors. *Collecting Biennials*, on the fifth floor of the museum, is dedicated to works by artists who were featured in past Biennials. Visitors may explore the Biennial in any order they choose.

For information on programs for schools and educators, please visit
<http://www.whitney.org/Education/K12>.

Pre-visit Discussions and Activities

What is the Role of Art Today? Elementary, Middle, and High School

When visiting *2010: The Whitney Biennial*, your students may pose some challenging questions about the works of art they encounter. Questions such as “What makes this art?” or declarations such as, “I could do that!” are rich with potential for meaningful class discussion.

Using a wide range of materials, formats, subjects, sounds, and images, artists often challenge the viewer to reflect on their own expectations of art and the role of the museum. The following discussion topics can help prepare students for what they will see in the Biennial exhibition. This preparatory conversation will enable students to later reflect on whether or not their opinions and expectations of art remain the same or change after their visit to the Biennial.

Objectives

- Encourage students to consider the importance of art in their lives.
- Provide students with a framework for looking at art.
- Prepare students for engaging with art in the Biennial.

Class Discussion

Ask your students to consider a variety of art forms—such as visual art, music, performance, dance, film, video, and literature. Ask students to take a few minutes to write a response to the following questions:

1. Why is art important to you? What role does it have in your life?
2. What materials do you expect art to be made out of?
3. In your opinion, what ingredients are needed to make a good work of art?
4. What kind of art do you expect to see in the museum?

Invite your students to share their reflections while collecting their ideas on a board (preferably one which will not be erased) or large sheet of paper. Alternatively, students can create a collective collage of their ideas or post their reflections on a classroom bulletin board.

Display students’ ideas on a wall in your classroom until after they have seen the Biennial exhibition. After your students visit the museum, ask them whether or not they would change or expand upon some of their initial ideas about the role and value of art in their lives.

Pre-visit Discussions and Activities

Current Events and Art Middle and High School

Many of the artists included in the Whitney Biennial engage with topics related to current or recent events. Some of these events are national and global while others may deal with the artist's own life. This lesson will help students recall recent events and prepare them for some of the art they will encounter at the Biennial.

Objectives

Encourage students to reflect on recent and current events.

Provide students with a cultural context for viewing the Biennial.

Invite students to consider how recent events, trends, and ideas may factor into artists' practice.

Collaborative Collage

Materials: Notebook or journal, pens, colored pencils, glue sticks, scissors, poster board or large pieces of paper, newspapers or magazines, computers, printers, Internet access, *2008–2010: A Selected Chronology* (see Appendix).

Resources: Do a Google image search for “creative timelines” to find a variety of timeline configurations.

Warm Up Class Discussion: As a class, define the meaning of the word “biennial.” Share some information about the Biennial with your students.

Now ask your students to take a few minutes to write about events in the news from the past year; newsworthy topics may fall under numerous categories such as the environment, entertainment, science, sports, and politics. Collect your students' reflections on a board.

Group Work: Divide students into groups, assigning each group one of the following categories: Environment, Science, Politics, Entertainment/Pop Culture, or Economics. Based on class discussion, the timeline included in this packet, and additional online research, each group should compile a collaborative timeline of events from the past two years.

Ask each group to create a collective collage of the events they consider most significant. Each group should be given either one large piece of paper or poster board. Employing imagery and text, students may use a variety of materials such as colored pencils, magazine or newspaper cutouts, or printouts from the Internet.

Class Reflection: Ask groups to share the events they selected with the class. What social, political, and cultural impact did these events have locally, nationally, or globally? Are any of these events still unfolding or ongoing? Have they listened to any recent music that addresses these issues? How did these events affect them personally?

Biennial Visit: When you visit the Museum, ask students to look for connections between events of the past two years and the art exhibited in *2010*.

Pre-visit Discussions and Activities

Looking Closely at Specific Works of Art: Artist as Storyteller Elementary and Middle School Students

Visit the 2010 webpage <http://www.whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial> and spend some time looking at the images. Some of the artists have a strong message to convey while others focus on the specific representation of a person, place, or action. Here are some suggestions to start your students talking and writing about these works of art. For more information on the artists listed here, visit the Biennial website or see pages 15-19 of this guide.

Objectives

Students will learn to look closely at a work of art they may view during the Biennial.
Students will make connections between the work of art and an element of the writing craft such as character or setting.

Character

Show students *Woman with Dog*, 1977 by the artist Duane Hanson. This work is included in *Collecting Biennials*, on the Museum's fifth floor and may be found online: <http://www.whitney.org/Collection/DuaneHanson>

Ask each student to think of one word to describe this woman. Go around the classroom and ask them each to share their word.

Then have students write a first-person monologue. What might this woman be thinking? Why?



Duane Hanson, *Woman with Dog*, 1977. Cast polyvinyl polychromed in synthetic polymer, with cloth and hair, 46 x 48 x 51 1/2 in. (116.8 x 121.9 x 130.8 cm) overall. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from Frances and Sydney Lewis 78.6
Art © Estate of Duane Hanson/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Setting

Print out or project the James Casebere images called *Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY)# 1 and #2*, 2010. Use the image packet that accompanies these materials.

Ask students to work in pairs and write a description of this place. First have them create a list of what they see (observation). Make sure they include a lot of details! Then ask them to write what they think about their observations (interpretation).

Have students share their ideas with the class.

Ask follow up questions such as:

What kind of place is this?

What is the mood?

How is this similar or different from the place they live?



James Casebere, *Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY) #1*, 2010. Digital chromogenic print, Edition of 5. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Photography Committee and the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation E.2009.1141



James Casebere, *Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY) #2*, 2010. Digital chromogenic print, Edition of 5. Collection of the artist; courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery, New York E.2009.1142

Now show students Edward Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning*. Ask them to compare the Casebere and the Hopper images. What is similar about these works? What is different?

Ask them to pick one of the works of art and draw a few people to "add" to the work. What are the people doing? Why? How do the students' drawings relate to the setting or place depicted here?



Edward Hopper, *Early Sunday Morning*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 35 3/16 x 60 1/4 in. (89.4 x 153 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney 31.426

Pre-visit Discussions and Activities

Artist as Critic

Middle and High School Students

Objectives

Students will look critically at and interpret a work of art that is in the Biennial.

Students will learn about the context surrounding this work and will consider how it relates to current events.

Visit <http://www.whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial> to look at images by artists in the exhibition or refer to the accompanying image and information packet. Many of the works included in the exhibition address issues of art and politics. **Nina Berman's** photographs of soldiers who have recently returned from the war in Iraq, **Curtis Mann's** manipulated photographs of the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, and **Daniel McDonald's** sculpture of Uncle Sam, Charon, and Michael Jackson are all subjects for rich discussion. More information on these artists can be found in the images and information packet accompanying this guide or on the Biennial website.

Select one of these works of art. Ask students to work in pairs to look at the image and to talk about it together. Ask them to write their responses to the following questions and then share with the entire class.

What do they see?

What medium did the artist use? How does this affect the work of art and its meaning(s)?

What do they think the artist is trying to say? Why?

Tips For When You Visit The Museum

Viewing Video and Film

Much of the third floor of the Whitney is dedicated to video art. Works by the artists Kate Gilmore, Rashaad Newsome, and Josephine Meckseper might be particularly interesting for older students. Ari Marcopoulos's work in the second floor Film and Video Gallery is also fun to watch.

Before going in to view a video, provide students with some questions to consider, such as: What is happening in this video? If people are included in the video, what are they doing? What impact does sound (or the lack thereof) have on your viewing experience? What might the artist be trying to say?

Challenging Material

On occasion, some of the work in the Biennial may be especially challenging for your students. If your students giggle or seem uncomfortable with something they have seen, be sure to address their discomfort. What is challenging about these works of art? Return to ideas shared in the pre-visit conversation regarding the role of art today.

Collecting Biennials

The fifth floor of the museum is comprised of an exhibition, *Collecting Biennials*, which addresses the history of the Biennial and features artists who participated in previous Biennials. It is a great place to start a visit and includes works by artists such as Lee Bontecou, David Hammons, Duane Hanson, Edward Hopper, Barbara Kruger, Glenn Ligon, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, and Andy Warhol. For more information on these artists, refer to the accompanying image and information packet.

The Mezzanine Gallery features *From the Archive*, a reading room that presents materials from the Whitney's Frances Mulhall Achilles Library and archives, and charts the history of the Biennial. You may want older students to read what art critics have written over the years about the exhibition. This guide includes a post-visit writing exercise centered upon being a critic.
<http://www.whitney.org/Exhibitions/CollectingBiennials>

At the Museum

Guided visits

We invite you and your students to visit the Whitney to see *2010*. In an hour-long thematic gallery tour that builds upon classroom learning, we introduce students to three to five works of art through careful looking, discussions, and activities. Museum educators lead inquiry based conversations as well as sketching or writing activities in the galleries.

If you are scheduled for a guided visit, your museum educator will contact you in advance. Let them know what preparatory work you have done, how this connects to the rest of your curricula, and what you would like your visit to focus on. If you are visiting during public hours, you and your students (in chaperoned groups) are welcome to stay after your guided tour.

All educators and students who have a guided tour will receive a pass which offers free admission to the Whitney through June 30, 2010.

Self-guided visits

High school students are welcome to visit the museum during public hours in a self-guided capacity. A maximum of 60 students may arrive at the museum together and must then divide into small groups (no more than 4 students) to visit the galleries. One chaperone must accompany 15 students.

Discuss museum rules with students before your visit. We have found that works of art are more accessible if students are provided with some structure or direction, and we recommend giving students a task to complete while in the galleries. You may want to create a worksheet, free-writing or poetry activity, or sketching assignments. Self-guided visits must be scheduled in advance.

For more information and to schedule a guided or self-guided visit, please visit <http://www.whitney.org/Education/K12/SchoolPrograms>.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Whitney!

Post-visit Discussions and Activities

Objectives

- Encourage students to thoughtfully reflect on their own responses to *2010*.
- Foster deeper exploration of concepts and ideas explored during their visit.
- Help students to develop well-reasoned opinions.
- Provide students with a framework for critiquing art.
- Provide research opportunities for students

1. Making Art Every Day Elementary, Middle, and High School

Materials

Construction paper or heavy paper, letter or legal size sheets of paper, stapler, colored pencils

The artist **Charles Ray** has created large, colorful drawings of flowers. He makes a different work of art every day, inspired by the things around him and by his imagination.

Help students to create their own artistic journals or sketchbooks. This can be done by folding construction paper in half and stapling sheets of paper in between. Ask them to create a new drawing every day for a week or a month! They can also write in their journals. Feel free to give them drawing or writing prompts, such as:

Draw something:

- that makes you happy
- new that you learned
- new that you ate
- you are confused about
- that has inspired you
- you heard on the news
- from your imagination
- you see out their window

2. The World Around Us

Some artists work from memory while others draw inspiration from the world around them. **Dawn Clements's** large-scale, highly detailed drawings depict interior domestic spaces in classic 1940s and 1950s Hollywood melodramas.

Ask students to make a detailed drawing of a room or object from their own home. Then have them write a description of this place or thing. Challenge students to include as many details in their writing as they do in their drawing.

Post-visit Discussions and Activities

Everyone's a Critic! Middle and High School

Since its inception, the Whitney Biennial has invited discussion and stirred controversy, and has therefore always been a favorite target for art critics. The following writing exercise allows students to voice their opinion about the art they encountered at the exhibition. This activity also allows students to compare their impressions of the Biennial with the ideas and expectations they voiced in the pre-visit discussion: *What is the Role of Art Today?*

Writing Exercise: Ask your students to write responses to some or all of the following questions:

- What were your expectations before visiting the exhibition?
- What was most memorable about your visit?
- Which work of art was especially meaningful to you?
- Was there a work of art you did not like? If so, why?
- Did you see anything that was surprising or unexpected? If so, explain.
- Did anything you see challenge your ideas about how you define art? Be specific: was it the material the artist used, the content or subject of his or her art, or the way it was displayed?
- Did you see any recurring issues or topics throughout the exhibition?

Research Project: Ask your students to spend some time online researching at least one artist whose work they found especially memorable. Students can begin by visiting the Biennial website at: <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial>.

Ask students to consider how the artist's choices of materials, shape, size, and color affect the meaning of the work and the message(s) that it communicates. What was compelling about this artist's approach to their work? Finally, ask your students to identify what makes their selected piece a work of art and whether or not it challenges traditional methods of art-making.

Extended Project: Exhibition Review Ask your students to return to the exhibition to revisit their initial ideas and impressions. Based on their two visits to the Museum along with their research of one of the artists included in 2010, what is their overall opinion of the exhibition? Invite them to imagine they are writing the review for a school newspaper and an audience comprised of their peers. The review can be three to five paragraphs, and should include clear and concise opening and closing sentences. Their opinions should be well-reasoned, and their interpretations thoughtfully supported with evidence.

Finally, ask students to present and discuss their reviews with the class. What was their collective experience and opinion of the Biennial? What can art communicate about the world in which we live?

Post-visit Discussions and Activities

1. Performance Art

High School

Many of the works of art in *2010* include an element of live performance. **Aki Sasamoto's** installation features glasses, nets, and tables. The artist can often be seen performing as part of her work. **Theaster Gates's** *Cosmology of Yard*, installed in the Museum's Sculpture Court, references his neighborhood on the west side of Chicago. As part of this work, he has invited artists, including the Black Monks of Mississippi, to perform. **Martin Kersels** has a work of art set up as a stage in the Lobby Gallery, where artists will be performing during the run of the exhibition.

Check <http://www.whitney.org/Events> for the schedule of events and performances and ask students to attend a performance. All high school students are admitted to the Whitney free of charge.

While students are at the performance, have them take notes or sketches of what they notice. They should consider the following questions:

What is going on? What materials are being used? What might the meaning be? How is this similar or different from the art they saw when they visited the Biennial with their class? Ask students to write up a review of the performance.

2. Artist as Critic

Many of the artists included in the Biennial espouse a specific social or political point of view. Ask students to look at ***The New York Times* article** http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/22/arts/design/22berm.html?_r=2 that includes Nina Berman's work.

Have them select one of the people in the photographs included there and write a letter from that person. Who will the letter be directed to? What will the person say? Why? What role does the Iraq war play in this person's life?

Looking Back, Keeping Track

Chronology of Events from 2008 to the present.

2008

May 12

An earthquake with the magnitude of 7.9 hits the Sichuan province in central southwest China, killing over 69,000 people.

May 15

The California State Supreme Court overturns the Defense of Marriage Act, thus allowing gay couples to marry. Proposition 8, a ballot measure and constitutional amendment in the November 4th elections, overturns the decision of the court and denies the constitutional right of same-sex marriages.

June 27

Bill Gates steps down as Chairman of Microsoft after over thirty years in the position. His focus shifts to philanthropic work.

August 7

War erupts in South Ossetia, a widely contested former region of Georgia, as Russia and Georgia border disputes intensify.

August 17

Michael Phelps wins eight gold medals, the most one person has won in a single Olympics.

September

American financial markets are thrown into turmoil as failing banks and companies trigger a global financial crisis resulting in foreclosures, high unemployment rates, and the devaluing of assets.

October 3

President George W. Bush signs the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act into law. A 700 billion dollar Treasury fund is created in order to purchase failing bank assets.

October 22

Google and HTC announce the G1 smart phone, the first mobile device to run the Android mobile device platform. With Android, Google expands their operations from search into mobile operating systems.

November 4

Barack Obama is elected 44th President of the United States. He is the first African-American to be elected President of the United States.

December

By the end of December, over three million homes are filed for foreclosure.

2009

January 15

US Airways Flight 1549 lands on the Hudson River after the impact of hitting a flock of birds disables both of the airplane's engines. Captain Chesley Burnett Sullenberger lands the airplane without any injuries to the 155 passengers on the flight.

January 28

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act is signed by President Obama. The equal-pay bill is named after a woman who worked as a supervisor in a tire factory for nineteen years and was paid less than her male co-workers.

February 27th

President Obama announces the date of August 31, 2010 for the withdrawal of American combat troops in Iraq and complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces by the end of 2011 after more than seven years of war.

June 11

H1N1 or "swine flu" is classified as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. The virus's first outbreak was in Mexico in early 2009 resulting in the closing of several government offices in Mexico City in order stop the virus from spreading. As of January 2010, swine flu has claimed the lives of 13, 554 people worldwide.

June 13

The reelection of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is deemed fraudulent by the supporters of the opposition, candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi. This leads to a series of sustained peaceful protests that became violent over time, due to government intervention.

June 17

Twitter, the microblogging site, becomes a major broadcast outlet for Iranians organizing protests and disseminating information on the recent election. Twitter's importance is highlighted by the plea made by the U.S. State Department to Twitter to delay their scheduled network maintenance by a day in order protect the interest of Iranians.

June 25

Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, dies. The news ripples throughout the world. Internet traffic significantly increases when the news breaks.

July 22

The longest total solar eclipse of the twenty-first century lasts six minutes and 38 seconds. It is visible from Asia and the Pacific Ocean.

September 13

Kanye West causes a stir at the MTV Video Music Awards when he interrupts Taylor Swift's acceptance speech for "Best Female Video." He pronounces that Beyonce had one of the best videos of all time.

October

Unemployment hits an all-time high. During the months of October through December, the unemployment rate consistently stays at 10%. By the end of 2009, between 4.5 and 5 million people were receiving unemployment benefits.

December 1

President Obama announces plans to intensify U.S. military presence in Afghanistan by sending an additional 30,000 troops. Anti-war protesters compared Afghanistan to Vietnam.

2010

January 4

The tallest manmade structure in the world, the Burj Khalifa, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, is inaugurated. Its height is 2,717 feet or 828 meters.

January 12

Haiti suffers a 7.0-magnitude earthquake, devastating the country's capital, Port Au-Prince. Haitians sleep on the streets as tens of thousands of houses collapse and because of the imminent threat of powerful aftershocks. The death toll is estimated to be over 200,000.

January 19

Massachusetts Republican Scott Brown wins a special Senate election to replace Democrat Edward Kennedy.

January 19

This victory for the Republican Party also rids the Democrats of the 60-40 Senate majority needed to pass a health reform bill. The House and the Senate were working on merging the bills they had each respectively passed. President Obama had initially begun efforts for health reform in early 2009.

January 31

Taylor Swift wins "Album of the Year" at the Grammy's, once again defeating Beyonce.

Bibliography

<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

<http://nytimes.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Bibliography & Links

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Whitney.org

For information about the Biennial and the artists included, visit the exhibition website at <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2010Biennial>

Art:21:Art in the Twenty-First Century, is the only series on television to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists in the United States. Access biographies, interviews, clips, images of art, and links to resources on the Web for all the artists who participate in the Art:21 series. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/>

Standards

The projects and activities in these curriculum materials address national and state learning standards for the arts, English language arts, social studies, and technology.

Links to National Learning Standards.

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

Comprehensive guide to National Learning Standards by content area.

<http://www.education-world.com/standards/national/index.shtml>

New York State Learning Standards.

<http://www.nysatl.nysed.gov/standards.html>

New York City Department of Education's *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts*, grades K-12.

<http://www.nycenet.edu/projectarts/PAGES/a-blueprint.htm>

Feedback

Please let us know what you think of these materials. How did you use them? What worked or didn't work? Email us at schoolprograms@whitney.org

For more information on our programs and resources for Schools, Educators, Youth, and Families, please visit <http://whitney.org/education/>

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Credits

2010

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