



Fiona Flannagan's Art Adventure:

Fire Equipment as Functional Art



A Virtual Learning Program Presented by the FASNY Museum of Firefighting



Fiona Flannagan's Art Adventure

Meet Fiona Flannagan, a time-traveling salesperson extraordinaire! Fiona will take your class on a journey to see how art and design have changed over time. Fiona will use all her sales tactics, including jokes, sound effects, and props, to engage your students. The Museum's rich art collection will serve as primary source material for this exciting program. Fiona will also explore how fire engines are examples of functional art. She will investigate themes of art versus function and how they coexist. This program can be customized based on your arts curriculum or program needs.

- For grades 4-6, but can be custom-made for any age group.
- The program is approximately 45 minutes in length.

Overview of Key Program Components:

Firefighting tools and equipment are examples of functional art. These tools and equipment have changed greatly over time, but always include stylized and artistic components.

Fiona will screen share examples of art and equipment from the museum's art collection for each talking point. She will discuss the significance of each era listed below in terms of what fire equipment was used and how the design and artistic elements of the fire equipment changed over time. She will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the designs for each era.

1. 1600s

- **Leather fire buckets-** customized with painted lettering or small pictures

2. 1700s-1800s

- **Wooden hand pumpers**
 - This was often the first piece of equipment a fire company purchased, and members would raise the money to buy it.

- Many featured oil paintings. Paintings included portraits and patriotic symbols. These paintings were often created by members of the fire company.
- Some had hand-carved sculptures and metalwork.

3. 1800s

- **Steam Engines**

- Firefighters move away from the highly stylized and painted hand pumpers to more industrial and basic-looking steam engines.
- Steam engines were known to explode, so it was more practical to keep them simple.

4. 1920s

- **Combustion Engines**

- Firefighters use gold leafing and pin striping techniques to customize trucks.
- By this time, most fire companies have transitioned to using gasoline-powered engines.
- The open cab seen in the examples was not very practical for fighting fires in adverse weather conditions (snow, rain, sleet, etc).

5. 1960s-present

- **Modern Trucks**

- Firefighters use gold leafing and pin striping techniques to customize trucks.
- Bigger- need more space for specialized equipment.

6. Weird Colors

- The color of the fire truck matters!
 - Red is the traditional color for fire trucks, but NOT the safest.
 - Studies show bright yellow-green is the safest color.
 - Most fire companies choose tradition over safety.

Pre-Program Research:

Use the museum's website to explore the exhibits and take a virtual tour before the program. This will familiarize students with the types of art they will see in the program including: wooden hand pumpers, steam engines, combustion engine trucks, and more.

Visit: <https://fasnyfiremuseum.com/collections/>

Post Visit Activity:

Students should be encouraged to create a fire-themed piece of functional art after the program. A Google Drive link will be sent to educators with photographs of the museum's art collection used in the program for students to reference. Students should use these photographs as inspiration for designing their pieces of functional art.

National Core Arts Standards met in this program include, but are not limited to:

VA:Cn11.1.4a: Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created.

VA:Cn11.1.5a: Identify how art is used to inform or change beliefs, values, or behaviors of an individual or society.

VA:Cn11.1.6a: Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.

VA:Cr1.1.4a: Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem.

VA:Cr1.1.5a: Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making.

VA:Cr1.1.6a: Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.

VA:Re9.1.4a: Apply one set of criteria to evaluate more than one work of art.

VA:Re9.1.5a: Recognize differences in criteria used to evaluate works of art depending on styles, genres, and media as well as historical and cultural contexts.

VA:Re9.1.6a: Develop and apply relevant criteria to evaluate a work of art.