**The Big Idea**

*Learning to See* takes students on a journey with a cardboard viewfinder to act as a “camera.” *Learning to See* invites students to **slow down, observe, and pay attention to the world around them** while creating the groundwork to learn about composition and other important elements of photography.

**You’ll Need**

Participants will need:
- Cereal box, macaroni and cheese box, or any thin cardboard
- Scissors or an exacto knife
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Step-By-Step video tutorial: www.think360arts.org

**The Plan**

**Step 1** - Cut the front panel of the box you are using. Lay it flat. Use a ruler to measure a 2” x 2.25” or so rectangle. Now draw another rectangle or window inside the first rectangle about 1” or 1.25” from the center. None of these dimensions have to be perfectly correct. Cut out the outer and inner parts of the rectangle with scissors.

**Step 2** - You have now created a viewfinder. The **viewfinder is what one looks through when using a SLR camera**. It creates a “frame” around your subject.

**Steps 3** - Ideally you will want to head outside. I find that the natural world is the most interesting place for this activity.
Step 4 - Once outside, take in the world that surrounds you. Pay attention to light, shadow, color, texture. Look up at the clouds, look down at the ground. Look all around.

Step 5 - Hold your viewfinder/camera to your right eye. Close your left one. Bring the viewfinder to the eye and extend your arm away. This creates a telephoto type idea. The closer the viewfinder is to your eye the “wider” what you see exists through the frame. The farther away (arm outstretched), the “closer” the image appears. Play with this idea by framing the same subject in different stages of the extension of your arm that holds the finder.

Step 6 - You can also experiment with holding the rectangle horizontal (landscape mode) or vertical (portrait mode). While you are experimenting with these different “zoom in/out” or “portrait/landscape” modes, you are going to want to “record” what it is you frame in your mind.

Teaching Artist Tip

Being outside is a favorite place to explore with these concepts. If getting out isn’t something that is available, don’t worry, an inside space can work too. The idea is to slow down, observe and isolate what you view through your “camera” viewfinder/frame. Participants focus on what might otherwise be overwhelming and see the beauty of what they see within their “frame”. Breaking down the big picture and choosing a smaller element to “focus” on is what a successful experience.

Going Further

Paying attention to the world around us explores the idea of the “decisive moment” by French photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004). The decisive moment is sparked after the artist has observed what is in the frame and when the artist decides to release the shutter thus, create the photograph. This workshop initiates visual confidence through a tiny window of observation, and begins to translate an image that has meaning to the participant and the viewer. Writing prompts and drawing can also be used in the workshops to encourage the importance of reflection upon the experience of slowing down and capturing the world.