Ten classes from five New Hampshire and Vermont schools are participating in the Hood’s ArtStart program during the 2015–2016 school year. Each class will visit the museum four times. During each visit, students will develop their visual literacy skills as they spend time in the galleries exploring art objects from around the world, and in the studio creating their own works of art. ArtStart provides students with an opportunity to engage with, learn from, and respond to art created in diverse cultures. This experience can help students develop fundamental life skills, such as reflection, imagination, and creative and critical thinking. This year’s visits include the following:

Visit 1
Exploring Inuit Art
celebrates the artistic achievements of Inuit artists from the Arctic. Before coming to the museum, students will learn about the geography of the Arctic region and the ways in which Inuit peoples have adapted to living in this extreme environment over thousands of years. In the museum, they will explore works of art that beautifully express the historic relationship between the Inuit and the animals on which they depended for survival. In the studio, students will do a printmaking activity based on drawings they make in the gallery.

Visit 2
Traveling to Ancient Assyria
takes students back in time to study six low-relief panels from the palace of King Ashurnasirpal II in ancient Nimrud (present-day Iraq). Through observation and discussion, students will learn the story of how these monumental panels carved from stone came to Dartmouth from Iraq and what they were intended to communicate. These panels will also provide students with insights into the lifestyles, customs, and beliefs of the ancient Assyrians. In the studio, students will carve their own reliefs and write their names in cuneiform using air-dry clay.
Visit 3
Art of Place invites students to explore landscapes, a source of inspiration to artists throughout history. ArtStart students will have the opportunity to compare realistic depictions of land by historic American artists with abstracted landscape forms by contemporary Aboriginal Australian artists. Through careful looking and a variety of activities, students will see the myriad ways artists express a sense of place and their deep connection to the landscape around them. In the studio, students will create their own painted landscapes.

Visit 4
Discovering Outdoor Sculpture takes students outside to explore some of the sculptures on campus. Our sculpture walk leads us through the Maffei Arts Plaza, across the Hopkins Center Plaza, and around the Green as we visit several sculptures made from a range of materials. These include works by artists Kiki Smith and Peter Imiq that were commissioned for Dartmouth. All of the works will invite students to examine art in three dimensions, to consider the messages these sculptures communicate, and to think about how they activate outdoor spaces. In the studio, students will create their own sculptures using a variety of materials and techniques.

Schools participating in the ArtStart program during the 2015–2016 school year include:

- Grantham Village School, Grantham, NH
- Hanover Street School, Lebanon, NH
- Mount Lebanon School, Lebanon, NH
- Newton Elementary School, South Strafford, VT
- Westshire Elementary School, West Fairlee, VT

In addition to the time spent at the Hood, teachers complete pre-visit activities in the classroom to prepare students for what they will see and learn about in the museum. The museum also provides the option of an ArtStart Reflection Journal, in which students can write and draw after each museum visit to further process what they are learning.

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