

Freshmen art students collaborate on 'AV Club' exhibition

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"AV Club: Next Question" opens Friday, March 5, at the Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, Harder Hall, on the Alfred University campus. An opening reception is planned for 4:30 p.m. that day at the gallery. "AV Club: Next Question" takes a nostalgic, yet critical look at educational technology, says Gallery Director Sharon McConnell. The exhibit was created by Emily Blair and Michelle Illuminato from the collaborative group Next Question. Since 1993, Next Question has been exploring a variety of issues, from the politics of fairytales to the navigation of urban space, often collecting information from direct sources. "AV Club" represents Next Question's collaboration with students and faculty from the Freshman Foundation Program in the School of Art & Design at Alfred University, as well as each contributors' own memories of school. The collaboration with the art students employs the medium of the filmstrip, a once-popular educational technology, explains McConnell. Though intended to focus our attention, the filmstrip instead invited free association. As the narration plodded along the dusty highway of the lesson, spurred by the occasional beep, our minds tended to wander down other more alluring pathways in the frozen image. In the end, the medium served only to highlight the contingency of relationship between the explanation and the image. Taking advantage of this surreal gap of meaning, first-year students worked with imagery and sound from found filmstrips to create surprising narratives of their own. After consultation with freshman foundation students, Next Question assembled the final pieces from the students' work. The resulting collaged filmstrips are educational in a new way, as the students' different voices enhance, redirect and contradict one another. Along with these filmstrip collaborations, the exhibit also presents the "history" of educational technology, as interpreted by Next Question. Next Question drew on scholarly accounts, interviews with School of Art & Design students and faculty, and their own memories of school to concoct a new story of instructional technology. Presented in filmstrip and overhead form, this alternate history highlights the power of narration, both official and unofficial. Additional information about the upcoming exhibition, which runs through April 2, and the Fosdick-Nelson Gallery may be obtained by calling McConnell at 607 871 2149.