Literacy Development Helps Teachers Address National and State Education Standards in Language Arts.
get involved

www.art21.org

Teaching with Art21

The teaching with Art21 toolkit is a broad-based introduction to contemporary art. This toolkit explores the art and ideas of artists working today, offering suggestions about how to bring discussions of contemporary art into the classroom and into the lives of students.

Professional Development Workshops

Art21’s self-directed Professional Development Workshops encourage educators to develop techniques for integrating the thought provoking content of the Art21 series into their teaching. Designed to assist individuals and organizations interested in hosting workshops, seminars, training events, and institutes, the toolkit contains suggestions for workshop content, as well as examples of past programs.

Preview Screenings

To initiate local screenings of Season 4, both nationwide and abroad, Art21 offers preview DVDs and a screening guide containing planning suggestions and publicity materials. Museums, schools, community-based organizations, and individuals are encouraged to host preview events before the Fall 2007 premiere to inspire new audiences and alert local communities about the broadcast.

Thematic and Artist-based Screenings

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Art21, Inc.

A private non-profit organization, Art21’s mission is to increase knowledge of contemporary art, ignite discussion, and inspire creative thinking by documenting artists at work and in their own words.

Art21 illuminates the creative process for students, teachers, and the general public by producing films and videos, including the Emmy-nominated, nationally broadcast PBS series Art:21—Art in the Twenty-First Century, as well as books, two comprehensive Web sites, education materials, multimedia resources, and public programs featuring a diverse selection of visual artists working in the United States today.

Art:21—Art in the Twenty-First Century, the Series

Endorsed by the highly regarded imprimatur of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), Art21’s Emmy-nominated series Art in the Twenty-First Century is an educational resource, a valuable archive, and a living history of contemporary art in the United States. It’s a body of work with value that lives far beyond each Season’s initial broadcast.

- Art:21 is the first broadcast series for national public television to focus exclusively on contemporary visual art and artists in the United States.
- Four seasons have been produced for PBS (Fall 2001, Fall 2003, Fall 2005, and Fall 2007).
- Each season contains four, one-hour programs.
- Each hour features 3–5 artists in 12–15 minute segments.
- A total of 72 established and emerging artists have been featured.

Featured Artists

In the Art:21 series, contemporary artists speak directly to the audience in their own words, reflecting on their lives, sources of inspiration, and working processes. Profiled artists include painters, sculptors, printmakers, photographers, installation and video artists, and artists working with new media, environmental or public issues, and hybrid forms.

Viewing the Series

Season 4 programs can be taped off the air and used for educational purposes at no cost for one year from the date of the first national broadcast, October 2007. Check local PBS station listings as broadcast times may vary.

For long-term use, Seasons 1 through 4 of the series are available on VHS and DVD from PBS Video and Davis Publications.

To order from PBS
1-800-PLAY-PBS (1-800-752-9727)
www.shoppbs.org

To order from Davis Publications
1-800-533-2847
www.davis-art.com

Audience

The series Art in the Twenty-First Century is produced for a broad range of public television audiences. Series-related education materials support the use of contemporary art in K-12 classrooms, on college and university campuses, and for adult and community audiences. The Educators’ Guide content and additional online resources introduce critical concepts and opportunities for higher-level thinking relevant to middle, high school, and college students. Teachers who work with students of all ages are encouraged to interpret the material to support their individual teaching methods and needs.

Art21 strongly recommends that teachers preview all videos before showing them to determine whether the content is appropriate for their students’ age level.
This guide is designed as a resource for planning lessons, facilitating discussions, introducing Season 4 video content in various contexts, and supporting further research and exploration of contemporary art and artists. Educators are encouraged to use the Art in the Twenty-First Century video series, Educators’ Guides, and Art21 Web sites in tandem to integrate contemporary art and ideas into classroom learning and community dialogue.

**Artist Pages**

**Biography** A broad overview of each artist’s work and working methods, including current and past projects. Biographies can also be found online at www.pbs.org/art21/artists

**Media and Materials** A synopsis of major media and materials referenced in the video segment and in current work. Use these media to compare and contrast with other artists across the series.

**Key Words and Ideas** Additional thematic connections and ways to relate the artists work and working process to curriculum. The Key Words and Ideas also reference relevant vocabulary to support discussion.

**Discussion Questions** Suggested discussion questions explore ideas introduced in the video and book. Before Viewing and After Viewing questions are provided to connect and build on audience knowledge before and after segments are screened.

**Activities** To follow up discussion questions, suggested activities provide opportunities for hands-on exploration of the ideas and materials presented in the series. Activities are open-ended and can be interpreted for different age levels, learning styles, and media choices.

**Themes**

Each one-hour program is loosely organized around a broad category or theme that helps viewers analyze, compare, contrast, and juxtapose the works of the profiled artists. These themes are intended to inspire interpretive possibilities, and in many cases the artists’ works are relevant to multiple themes.

Discussion questions and suggested activities support investigation of the diverse artists featured within the theme but can also be used as general discussion topics relevant to artists across the series.

**Glossary**

Selected vocabulary words are highlighted in bold print throughout this Guide. Definitions for these words can be found in the glossary on page 32. An online glossary with additional vocabulary can be found at www.pbs.org/art21.

**www.art21.org**

In 2007, Art21 will launch a new Web site, www.art21.org. This Web site will feature video, community authoring tools, and social networking to create a dynamic and collaborative online environment in which to experience and discuss contemporary art.

**www.pbs.org/art21**

The series Web site provides more information about the artists featured in Art in the Twenty-First Century, including biographies, interviews, video clips, and slideshows.

**Artists Online**

www.pbs.org/art21/artists

For each artist featured in the broadcast series, Art21 produces a wide range of supporting resources to inspire further exploration. Slideshows include works of art as well as video stills from the broadcast. Interview transcripts present material from the series as well as new content from extended conversations with the artists. Video clips show short segments from the broadcast.

**Online Lesson Library**

www.pbs.org/art21/education/onlinelessonlibrary

The Online Lesson Library is an archive of interdisciplinary lesson ideas suitable for a single class period or for an entire semester. Lesson plans support teaching with contemporary art through references to literature, the humanities, visual literacy, popular culture, history, and current events. Links to national and state education standards, student worksheets, video clips, and slideshows enrich each lesson. Topics include abstraction and realism, home and displacement, individuals and collectives, labor and craftsmanship, the natural world, public and private space, rituals and commemoration, technology and systems, and war and conflict.
Art21 defines contemporary art as the art of today, produced by artists who are living in the twenty-first century. It is both a mirror of contemporary society and a window through which we view and deepen our understanding of the world and ourselves.

Contemporary artists work in a globally influenced, culturally diverse, and technologically advancing world. Their art is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenge traditional boundaries and defy easy definition. Diverse and eclectic, contemporary art is distinguished by the very lack of a uniform, organizing principle, ideology, or "ism." In the United States, contemporary artists give voice to the varied and changing landscape of American identity, values, and beliefs.

Contemporary viewers play an active role in the process of constructing meaning in art. With contemporary art, it is often said that the viewer completes the artwork by bringing to it his or her personal reflections, experiences, and opinions.

Connections to Teaching

- Bringing contemporary art into school and community learning enables educators to address issues that affect our lives, provoking curiosity, encouraging dialogue, and igniting debate about the world around us.

- Art21 artists serve as creative role models who inspire students to consider how ideas are developed, articulated, and realized in the contemporary world, and they offer educators opportunities to support diverse learning styles.

- Contemporary artists address both current events and historical ideas. These references help educators and students make connections across the curriculum and support interdisciplinary thinking.

- As artists continue to explore new technologies and media, the work they create encourages critical thinking and visual literacy in our increasingly media-saturated society.

- Art21 enables students to understand that contemporary art is part of a cultural dialogue that concerns larger contextual frameworks such as personal and cultural identity, family, community, and nationality.

An Introduction to Contemporary Art

Curiosity, openness, and dialogue are important tools for engaging audiences in contemporary art. Instead of questioning whether a work of art is good or bad, the study of contemporary art requires a more open-ended methodology and an inquiry-based approach. Asking questions that stimulate discussion and debate is the most important step in the process towards appreciating and interpreting works of art.

One of the cornerstones of the Art21 philosophy is to allow the artists to present their work in their own words and to encourage viewers to find their own innate abilities to consider, react, and respond to visual art.

Use the questions and activities on the following page as a way to introduce broad concepts and ideas that artists address in their work.
Starting a Conversation about Contemporary Art

What makes a work of art a work of art? Is contemporary art defined by particular boundaries or parameters? (See artists Jaar, Allora & Calzadilla, Dion, Manglano-Ovalle, and Ryman)

What is the role of the artist? Has this role changed over time? (See artists Dion, Adams, Jaar, Holzer, and Pittman)

What distinguishes visual art from other forms of visual communication like advertising and photojournalism? (See artists Adams, Lé, Holzer, and Bradford)

Who decides what a work of art means—the artist, the critic, the viewer, or history? (See artists Pittman, Ryman, Manglano-Ovalle, Allora & Calzadilla, and Dion)

What are the most important skills an artist can have? (See artists Dion, Simmons, Pfaff, Huyghe, Jaar, Sullivan, and Bradford)

Where do artists find inspiration? (See artists von Rydingsvard, Bradford, Spero, Sullivan, Allora & Calzadilla, and Pfaff)

What materials and tools do artists use to create art today? Have tools for making art changed over time? (See artists Manglano-Ovalle, Huyghe, von Rydingsvard, Spero, Ryman, and Pfaff)

What is the difference between working alone and collaborating with fabricators, audiences, others? (See artists von Rydingsvard, Pfaff, Ryman, Manglano-Ovalle, Dion, Sullivan, Allora & Calzadilla, and Simmons)

In addition to museums and galleries, what are other sites or venues where art can be shown? How does the location or context of a work of art affect its meaning? (See artists von Rydingsvard, Jaar, Sullivan, Bradford, and Holzer)

What are the subjects, issues, and themes important to artists working today? (See artists Pittman, Adams, Jaar, Spero, Lé, Bradford, Simmons, Dion, and Huyghe)

What role does beauty play in contemporary art? Does a work of art need to be beautiful? (See artists Adams, Pittman, Ryman, and Lé)

Suggested Activities

Initiate a debate based on any of the previous discussion questions. Turn the question into a statement and have students develop arguments for and against to present to the class.

Encourage students to write regularly in a journal or notebook to keep questions, ideas, or pictures related to their art-viewing experiences. Use any of the Before Viewing and After Viewing questions as journal assignments to be completed in anticipation of a group discussion.

Use the Art21 series and the Web site to prepare students to view art in museums, galleries, and other exhibition venues. Discuss the different ways audiences can see and experience contemporary art (in the Art21 series, on the Internet, in person, etc.) and reflect on how these different contexts influence the way we look at and interpret the work.

View a range of different artist segments to inspire students to write their own artist statements.

Use Art21 as a springboard to connect with your local arts community. Invite a local artist, curator, or collector to discuss particular artists, issues, or concepts relevant to your audience.

Using Video in the Classroom

Teachers should preview all video content. Consider viewing a single artist profile or specific portions of different artist profiles to address specific discussion questions or to anticipate a hands-on activity.

Prepare viewers for what they will see. Initiate a discussion or writing exercise using the Before Viewing questions. These questions are designed to set up expectations about the content and solicit personal experiences and opinions.

Ask viewers to identify vocabulary words while watching. Use the Art21 Glossary to discuss and clarify relevant terms.

Introduce additional resources such as copies of artist interviews, images of specific works of art, or lesson ideas and topics found on the Art21 Web site www.pbs.org/art21. These resources introduce specific ideas or themes addressed in the video segments and can support post-viewing discussion.

Encourage active viewing by identifying appropriate points for pausing, clarifying, or expanding on what participants are seeing and hearing. Stop and revisit the pre-viewing questions or ideas when relevant. Encourage participants to take notes, sketch, or consider specific questions while they watch.

Facilitate after-viewing discussion by analyzing and responding to the video segment with relevant discussion and follow-up activities. Consider ways for participants to process their ideas independently before sharing them with the group either by writing or drawing.

Use the Art21 themes to initiate conversation about multiple artists and their work. Compare and contrast different creative models for thinking and making, as well as ways of problem solving and expressing ideas.

For more information and resources about using contemporary art in the classroom, visit www.art21.org
How is our understanding of the natural world deeply cultural? This thematic hour features artists who address the submission of wilderness by civilization, the foundations of scientific knowledge, the impact of technology on biology and society, and mankind’s relationship to the earth, forged by working the land.

DISCUSSION

Before Viewing
- Research and discuss the term “ecology.” How does the term apply to the man-made environment as well as to the natural world? How does it relate to issues that are currently in the news?
- How do ideas about the human relationship to nature vary across world cultures? Across historical time periods? What are some of the ways these ideas have been expressed in visual, musical, or literary form?
- What are the most pressing environmental issues that society faces today? What role can artists play in addressing these issues?

After Viewing
- How does each artist in this hour explore human relationships to the environment? What are some of the different ways they describe or create environments?
- How is an artist’s process a kind of ecology? Describe the “artistic ecology” specific to each of the artists featured in this hour. How does each artist interact with their assistants or collaborators? What environments do they operate within? Who is their audience and what impact does their work have on society?

ACTIVITIES
- Create a visual web or diagram that illustrates the different elements or participants within an ecosystem of your choice. Select a real system (school, neighborhood, biological, or political) or an invented one (a novel, film, or television series).
- All four artists in this hour use metaphor as a tool. Create a visual response to a pressing environmental concern using metaphor to carry the message. Write a poem or artist’s statement that expands on the ideas explored in your visual work.
- Counteronyms, also known as “antantonyms” or “Janus words,” have two opposite meanings. For example, the word “dust” can mean “to remove fine particles,” or it can mean “to add fine particles.” Put together a list of counteronyms and play a game of charades or Pictionary using each word’s opposite meaning as the clue.

Jennifer Allora born 1974, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mark Bradford born 1961, Los Angeles, California
Guillermo Calzadilla born 1972, Havana, Cuba
Robert Ryman born 1930, Nashville, Tennessee
Catherine Sullivan born 1968, Los Angeles, California

How do contemporary artists address contradiction, ambiguity, and truth? The artists in this episode blur the boundaries between abstraction and representation, fact and fiction, order and chaos. Creating juxtapositions that are at times disorienting, playful, and unexpected, these artists engage with uncertainty and plumb the relationship between mystery and meaning in art.
How does contemporary art engage politics, inequality, and the many conflicts that besiege the world today? How do artists use their work to investigate issues such as misery, turmoil, and injustice? This episode examines the ways in which contemporary artists picture war, express outrage, and empathize with the suffering of others.

**DISCUSSION**

**Before Viewing**
- Discuss the idea of protest in relation to personal experience as well as local, national, and global events. What current events and historical issues have been protested? Are there differences between what has been protested in the past and what is protested now? What forms can protest take? In what ways have protests of the past affected contemporary forms of protest? 
  - Discuss historic works of art that address political or controversial subjects, such as Goya’s Black Paintings or Picasso’s Guernica.

**After Viewing**
- How do issues of *ambiguity* and contradiction surface in the work of artists featured in this episode? How do these terms challenge conceptions about the nature of protest and how protest is realized?
- How do these artists address or anticipate their audiences? What are the expectations of viewers in relation to their work?

**ACTIVITIES**
- Make a list of the various symbols and appropriated imagery used by the artists featured in this hour. Create a new set of symbols, images, or text that can be used in a poster series, a postcard, or another printed form to express personal ideas about a current event or political cause. Display or mail your work to a targeted audience.
- Redesign found images of political propaganda or protest-related material to create a sense of *ambiguity* and encourage a conversation or dialogue about related issues.

What role do emotion, fantasy, and nostalgia play in contemporary art? How do contemporary artists further and react to traditionally romantic ideas such as sentimentality, pathos, and the philosophy of art for art’s sake? This thematic hour poses questions about the value of pleasure in art and features artists whose works are extended meditations on mortality, love, and make-believe.

**DISCUSSION**

**Before Viewing**
- Make a list of personal and cultural associations with the word “romance.” Where do ideas about romance come from? Compare and contrast historic and contemporary ideas about the nature of romance. Consider diverse cultural sources such as The Tale of the Genji or Shakespeare’s sonnets, as well as current popular media such as movies and tabloids. Is romance real, invented, constructed, personal, universal?

**After Viewing**
- Discuss the concept of having a romance with a work of art. Can an artist have a romance with specific materials or techniques? What works of art, materials, or working methods from this hour were inspiring?
- In what ways do the artists in this hour include elements of nostalgia, heroism, cynicism, fantasy, and melodrama in their work? How do these ideas relate to the theme of romance?
- Discuss how the artists featured here illuminate abstract concepts or emotions in their work. Expand the conversation by referencing additional artists who create abstract work, for instance Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, or Richard Tuttle.

**ACTIVITIES**
- Write or illustrate a ballad or tribute to a person or event that inspired a strong emotional response or personal change in your life.
- Create a collage, sculpture, or installation that incorporates images from popular media that express different aspects of romance: fantasy and reality, sentimentality and cynicism, nostalgia and melodrama.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

Examine a selection of photographs spanning the history of the medium and, as a class, choose several of the most powerful to discuss in greater detail. Which characteristics determine what makes a successful photograph? Is beauty important? Can unattractive or disturbing things be represented in a beautiful way? In what ways can images possess or exert power?

After Viewing

Why do you think Adams “admits” to being “in pursuit of beauty?” What do you think he means when he describes beauty as “a suspect word among many in the art world?”

Adams says that his goal as an artist is to capture both “what remains glorious in the West” as well as “what is disturbing and needs correction.” Describe several of Adams’s photographs in relation to this statement. Discuss his relationship to traditional images of the American West and to the tradition of social commentary in art.

Adams asserts that “photography and poetry both center on metaphor.” Discuss this statement from a personal perspective and in relation to Adams’s work. In what other ways is photography like poetry? How do they communicate ideas differently?

ACTIVITIES

Explore the history of your region using sources such as books, magazine and newspaper articles, the internet, and interviews with teachers, neighbors, and members of your family. How has your area changed over the years in terms of development, land use, and human impact on the environment? Create a visual essay that documents your research to share with others.

Create a beautiful image of a typically ugly or repulsive subject. Write a companion piece that narrates the process of producing the image and describes your subject’s transformation.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

■ How can humor be used to say something serious? Discuss the role of humor, absurdity, and contradiction in visual art. Consider the work of artists such as Marcel Duchamp and the Dadaists in your discussion. How have artists used absurdity and contradiction to address serious social issues or challenge conventions? Where do you see the use of absurdity and contradiction in art and popular culture today?

After Viewing

■ Allora says, “The nature of making art . . . is to turn something upside down. Then you start to see it completely differently and new meanings come out.” In what ways do Allora & Calzadilla disrupt expectations? How do they give objects and materials new meaning?

■ Allora & Calzadilla say that their projects, such as the video Returning a Sound represent a “way to confront something which in general may seem overwhelming, and then to own it and contribute something.” Discuss this statement, and use the Art21 Web site to compare the ways in which other contemporary artists such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Cai Guo-Qiang, and Jenny Holzer interpret and respond to current events or political issues.

■ The installation of Chalk (Lima) enabled protesters in Lima, Peru, to “make visible their demands” and culminated in the “arrest” of Allora & Calzadilla’s sculptural chalk pieces. What effect does public interaction have on the meaning(s) of this artwork? How and by whom is meaning created?

ACTIVITIES

■ Collaborate with classmates to design an interactive public art piece that sparks community discussion. Consider how your work will relate metaphorically to local issues, and choose materials accordingly. Document audience interaction with the piece, and analyze the results.

■ Create a list of topics that Allora & Calzadilla address in their work, such as freedom of speech and globalization, and select one to research and respond to. Working with a partner or small group, choose three or more everyday objects to arrange in a way that addresses your topic.

■ Assemble an archive from a variety of online sources, audio recordings, video clips, music, text, or still images related to an event or issue you would like to investigate. Construct a montage or collage from your findings, and design a fitting display or performance space for exhibition.

Chalk (Lima), 1998–2002. 12 chalks, 64 x 8 inches in diameter each. Installation view: Pasaje Santa Rosa, Bienal de Lima, Peru. Courtesy the artists.

Mark Bradford

http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/bradford

DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

- Initiate a conversation about public spaces and the concept of “community,” exploring your local environment for cues if possible. How do constructed spaces such as city streets, parks, and marketplaces both shape and reflect the identities of the people who live there? In what ways has technology changed our concept of public space, geography, and community? How have artists approached these issues in recent history?

After Viewing

- Why do you think Bradford makes a distinction between a “making background” and an “art background”? Use the Art21 Web site to compare and contrast Bradford’s work with that of Barry McGee and Margaret Kilgallen. What distinguishes art from other handmade or informal modes of visual communication, such as advertising, signage, and graffiti? What impact does context have on the way a visual work is perceived or understood?

- Bradford says that scanning the layers of informal advertising around Los Angeles, he feels he is “tracing ghost cities of the past. It’s the pulling off of a layer and finding another underneath.” How is this sentiment reflected in his work? How are Bradford’s artistic processes related to archaeology or anthropology?

- Discuss the term “postmodern” and consider Bradford’s description: “It’s a state of mind. Fluidity, juxtapositions, cultural borrowing—they’ve all been going on for centuries. The only authenticity there is what I put together.” What does Bradford mean by authenticity? How does he use juxtaposition in his work?

ACTIVITIES

- Many of Bradford’s paintings include nontraditional collage elements, such as hair salon end papers and billboard remnants. Bradford describes these elements as “materials that have memory.” Select a material that for you evokes a specific time or a place, or one that symbolizes an aspect of your identity. Use this material to create an abstract, multimedia self-portrait.

- Bradford says, “The sheer density of advertising creates a psychic mass, an overlay that can sometimes be very tense or aggressive.” Do you agree with this assessment? Identify and make note of every piece of advertising you come into contact with over a 24-hour period. What have you discovered?
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing
■ What is the job of an artist? Of a curator? Of a scientist? Discuss these roles in relation to the creation and dissemination of knowledge as well as collection and exhibition practices. Organize field trips to art and natural history museums, and consider your personal knowledge of laboratories and artist studios. Discuss the different kinds of objects and collections found in each context, as well as the different ways that these objects and collections are organized, stored, and displayed.

After Viewing
■ Dion says, “The job of an artist is to go against the grain of dominant culture to challenge perception, prejudice, and convention.” Discuss Dion’s work in relation to this quotation and what perceptions, prejudices, and conventions he challenges.

■ According to Dion, the “bread and butter of artists” are humor, irony, and metaphor. How does Dion utilize these tools in his work? Use the Art21 Web site to explore and compare works by other artists (such as Laylah Ali, Raymond Pettibon, and Walton Ford) who use humor, irony, and metaphor in their work.

■ In reference to his work Neukom Vivarium, Dion says, “I want to acknowledge or even enhance . . . the wonder of the vast complexity and diversity within a natural system. I want to show how difficult it is for us to grasp.” How is this idea reflected in Neukom Vivarium? How does it relate to Dion’s other work, such as Scala Naturae?

ACTIVITIES
■ As a class or in groups, build an encyclopedic museum collection from a random sample of household, classroom, and natural objects. Create a fictional society and historical narrative that explains each object’s significance within the collection. Consider how items should be classified and display them accordingly.

■ Research visual and literary forms of parody and satire that use irony as a vehicle for cultural critique (such as Francisco Goya’s print series The Disasters of War, political cartoons, or the plays and novels of Oscar Wilde). In the visual medium of your choice, use humor and irony to make a statement about an issue that is important to you.


Mark Dion

Born
1961, New Bedford, MA

Education
B.F.A. and Honorary Doctorate, University of Hartford School of Art, Hartford, CT

Lives and Works
Beach Lake, PA

Biography
Mark Dion’s work examines the ways in which dominant ideologies and public institutions shape our understanding of history, knowledge, and the natural world. The job of the artist, he says, is to go against the grain of dominant culture, to challenge perception and convention. Appropriating archaeological and other scientific methods of collecting, ordering, and exhibiting objects, Dion creates works that question the distinctions between objective (rational) scientific methods and subjective (irrational) influences. The artist’s spectacular and often fantastical curiosity cabinets, modeled on Wunderkabinets of the sixteenth century, exalt atypical orderings of objects and specimens. By locating the roots of environmental politics and public policy in the construction of knowledge about nature, Dion questions the authoritative role of the scientific voice in contemporary society.

Media and Materials
Mixed media installation, public art, sculpture

Key Words and Ideas
classification, collections, irony, metaphor, satire, site-specificity

http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/dion
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

■ Initiate a discussion about the role of language in visual art. How is visual art related to spoken and written language? In what ways is visual art a language? How do artists and writers reveal their authorship (“hand” or “voice”) in their work? In what instances might authors or artists choose to remain anonymous? In what instances is written and visual information censored? By whom?

After Viewing

■ Discuss the term “truism” and create definitions for the word independent of Holzer’s work and in relation to Holzer’s work. How does the use of the first-person voice in Truisms affect the meaning of text as well as the interpretation of the work?

■ Study an example of Holzer’s redacted work, such as WISH LIST BLACK and research the process of government censoring. What is being censored in the original texts and why? How does Holzer merge visual imagery and text to call attention to what has been eliminated in these works?

■ Holzer says, “I like to be absolutely out of view and out of earshot. I don’t sign my work because I think that would diminish its effectiveness.” Discuss Holzer’s statement. How does Holzer’s appropriation of text and collaboration with writers serve this objective?

ACTIVITIES

■ Create a new version of a catalog, map, advertisement, sign, or menu that subverts the original intention of the object by altering visual and textual elements. Place your object in a location where someone might expect to see the original version and document public response.

■ Explore the relationships between political propaganda, commercial marketing, and visual art. Describe the techniques used to address the public in each area.

■ Choose a current topic from the news and divide the class into three groups: one to visually represent the topic as propaganda, one to represent it as marketing, and one to represent it as art. Discuss the results and compare the strategies used to convey different intentions.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

- What does it mean to be creative? Discuss the concept of originality and its relationship to appropriation, collaboration, and influence. How and why do artists use appropriation in their work? How do artists borrow from and build on foundations laid by their predecessors? Their contemporaries? Is it possible to say something truly new and unique?

- How are rituals created and how do they change over time? Research the history of several annual celebrations across various cultures (such as El Dia De Los Muertos, Mardi Gras, and New Year celebrations). Discuss the initiation of each of these traditions and why they endure.

After Viewing

- Huyghe describes the initiation of a new project as “creating a world” and that his “walk through this world is the work.” Describe the different worlds that Huyghe creates. How does the viewer enter into these worlds and what is the viewer’s role upon entry?

- Huyghe says that he wants to “bring back some myth to create a zone of no knowledge.” Why are myths important or useful? How are they established? How is Huyghe’s work related to myth? In what ways does Huyghe’s work, as well as myths, combine elements of reality and fiction?

- What images, ideas, and characters does Huyghe borrow to make his work? Can/should images be owned? Ideas?

ACTIVITIES

- Create a myth or story that explains why a school mascot or local icon is an important figure in your community. Invent an annual celebration honoring the figure, including elements like reenactments, parades, costumes, songs, and decorations. Set a date and host the celebration. Document the results with photography or video.

- Huyghe is interested in allegory and parables. Describe how his work relates to these written forms and then choose a fable or parable and bring it to life in visual form.

- Choose a work of visual art to translate into sound or music. Record your audio piece and perform it for a live audience.
**DISCUSSION**

**Before Viewing**
- Discuss the importance of location and context in determining the meaning of a work of art. Consider works of art installed in public locations versus those installed in galleries, museums, libraries, government offices, schools, etc. Conduct a survey of the different sites where works of art (both historic and contemporary) are on view in your community. Consider why the work is located there, who views it, and how different viewers might interpret it.

**After Viewing**
- Where and how does Jaar choose to exhibit his work? How do his installations affect the way a viewer interacts with and reads the work? What expectations does Jaar have of his audience? What does Jaar hope his art will do?
- For Jaar, making art combines three significant influences in his life: theater, magic, and architecture. How are these influences apparent in his work?
- Jaar says, “The paradox is that there has never been so much control of images by governments and corporations—control of images, control of our landscapes, of this landscape that affects our lives. What we see is what makes us.” What images is Jaar talking about? How do images make us?

**ACTIVITIES**
- Choose a public location in your community and temporarily install a visual or written statement. What would you like to communicate to the individuals that use this space and how will you find out what their responses are?
- Ask students to complete the following tasks every day for a week: watch the evening news on two different television stations, collect the front page of two different newspapers, print out two different online news sources. What are the lead stories for each source? What images are used to illustrate each story? What information is included and what is omitted? As a group, discuss which event made the most impact and why. Create a collaborative work of art that illustrates this story from a new vantage point.

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**Alfredo Jaar**

**Born**
1956, Santiago, Chile

**Education**
Instituto Chileno-Norteamericano de Cultura, Santiago, Chile
Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile

**Lives and Works**
New York, NY

**Biography**
In installations, photographs, film, and community-based projects, Alfredo Jaar explores the public’s desensitization to images and the limitations of art to represent events such as genocides, epidemics, and famines. Jaar’s work bears witness to military conflicts, political corruption, and imbalances of power between industrialized and developing nations. Subjects addressed in his work include the holocaust in Rwanda, gold mining in Brazil, toxic pollution in Nigeria, and issues related to the border between Mexico and the United States. Many of Jaar’s works are extended meditations or elegies, including *Muxima* (2006) (a video that portrays and contrasts the oil economy and extreme poverty in Angola) and *The Gramsci Trilogy* (2004–05) (a series of installations dedicated to the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who was imprisoned under Mussolini’s Fascist regime).

**Media and Materials**
film, photography, multimedia
installations, public projects

**Key Words and Ideas**
arquitectura, current events, media,
metaphor, public intervention

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![Image of Alfredo Jaar](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/jaar)
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

Discuss the different ways that wars have been represented over time in entertainment, news media, and art. Where are images of contemporary conflicts occurring worldwide presented? What messages about war do these images convey? Describe the most moving or memorable images of war you have seen and what made them particularly striking. What are the similarities and differences between photojournalism and art photography?

After Viewing

Discuss Lê’s life experiences as a political refugee, artist, and war reenactor. In what ways do these roles promote different perspectives and how are these experiences reflected in Lê’s photographs?

Lê says, “I’m fascinated by the military structure, by strategy, the idea of a battle, the gear. But at the same time, how do you resolve the impact of it? What it is meant to do is just horrible. But war can be beautiful.” How do Lê’s images describe both the beauty and horror of war?

Select examples of news photographs of the Vietnam War and compare them with Lê’s photographs taken in Vietnam and as a reenactor. How are the images similar or different? Discuss the differences between personal experience and journalistic narratives about war.

ACTIVITIES

Make a collection of images that represent a particular aspect of war, such as uniforms, equipment, or explosions. Present the images with an accompanying text that describes changes over time and/or across conflicts.

Interview someone who has experienced war as a civilian or soldier. Question them, soliciting their personal experiences and memories about that time. Record your interview and create a collaborative work of art that brings together the perspectives of the interviewer and the interviewee.

An-My Lê

Born
1960, Saigon, Vietnam

Education
B.A.S. and M.S. in Biology, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA
M.F.A., Yale University, New Haven, CT

Lives and Works
New York, NY

Biography
An-My Lê fled Vietnam with her family as a teenager in 1975, the final year of the war, eventually settling in the United States as a political refugee. Lê’s photographs and films examine the impact, consequences, and representation of war. Whether in color or black-and-white, her pictures frame a tension between the natural landscape and its violent transformation into battlefields. Projects include Việt Nam (1994–98), in which Lê’s memories of a war-torn countryside are reconciled with the contemporary landscape; Small Wars (1999–2002) in which Lê photographed and participated in Vietnam War reenactments in South Carolina; and 29 Palms (2003–04) in which United States Marines preparing for deployment play-acted scenarios in a virtual Middle East in the California desert. Suspended between the formal traditions of documentary and staged photography, Lê’s work explores the disjunction between wars as historical events and the ubiquitous representation of war in contemporary entertainment, politics, and collective consciousness.

Media and Materials
photography, film

Key Words and Ideas
ambiguity, landscape, reenactment, war
Born
1961, Madrid, Spain

Education
B.A., Williams College, Williamstown, MA  
M.F.A., School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Lives and Works  
Chicago, IL

Biography
Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle’s technologically sophisticated sculptures and video installations use natural forms such as clouds, icebergs, and DNA as metaphors for understanding social issues such as immigration, gun violence, and human cloning. In collaboration with astrophysicists, meteorologists, and medical ethicists, Manglano-Ovalle harnesses extraterrestrial radio signals, weather patterns, and biological code, transforming pure data into digital video projections and sculptures realized through computer rendering. His strategy of representing nature through information leads to an investigation of the underlying forces that shape the planet as well as points of human interaction and interference with the environment. Manglano-Ovalle’s work is attentive to points of intersection between local and global communities, emphasizing the intricate nature of ecosystems.

Media and Materials
Mixed-media sculpture, public art, sound, video

Key Words and Ideas
beauty, collaboration, conceptual art, fabrication, metaphor, site-specificity

DISCUSSION

Before Viewing
■ Consider the ways that science, technology, and art are related. How have scientific discoveries and technological advances changed the materials and tools that artists use? How can data and scientific or mathematical concepts be represented visually?

■ Research and discuss the term conceptual art. Discuss examples of works by artists from art history (such as Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys) as well as current artists (such as Jenny Holzer and Fred Wilson).

After Viewing
■ Manglano-Ovalle says, “All my work, even the most formal work, has an underlying politics to it. But I don’t want to reveal my position.” Research other artists whose work could be considered political on the Art21 Web site (such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Nancy Spero, and Alfredo Jaar). What issues do they address? How and why does each reveal or conceal their position on their subject matter?

■ Discuss Manglano-Ovalle’s statement, “Art does not reside in the object. It resides in what is said about the object.” Can a conversation about a work of art be more powerful than the work itself?

■ How does science inform Manglano-Ovalle’s working process, media choices, and subject matter? Discuss how natural forms such as clouds and icebergs serve as metaphors to address social issues such as immigration and identity.

ACTIVITIES
■ Manglano-Ovalle says, “If art is a platform from which to speak but not tell you something, that’s good . . . And if that’s a way in which I give you a platform from which to think and debate it, that’s even better.” Choose one of Manglano-Ovalle’s works to initiate a debate. Research both sides of the issues raised by the work and debate the different interpretive perspectives.

■ Redesign an everyday object to comment on a current social issue. Consider material and scale. Whose help or expertise would you need to fabricate the object? What exhibition location would be most appropriate?

■ Manglano-Ovalle uses metaphor to draw a parallel between storm clouds and the influx of new immigrants to the United States, describing the hope and anxiety that characterize both. Create a national weather map that illustrates other examples of metaphorical storms of our times drawing on current events.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

As a class, create a list of steps an artist might use to plan and prepare for a site-specific work. Consider examples of indoor and outdoor site-specific installations in your community or from the experience of students. How does each relate to its particular surroundings? How are viewers encouraged to move through the space? How and where was the work fabricated before being installed? Imagine that your classroom is an exhibition space. What steps would you take in order to create an installation that fills the space?

After Viewing

Pfaff says of her work, “I've been very involved in not having a signature material. I think there is a signature style. It's like handwriting.” How would you describe Pfaff's style? Compare and contrast Pfaff’s work with that of other artists who create site-specific installations such as Jessica Stockholder or Richard Serra. What distinguishes Pfaff’s work, making it characteristically hers?

Pfaff describes her installation Buckets of Rain as being not only about a great loss, but “more about choices—life and death, good and bad.” How does she communicate the duality of abstract ideas and emotions through color and shape?

Pfaff says she was a poor student in school but explains that she was recognized for “visual intelligence.” Discuss the idea of visual intelligence. How would you teach someone about sculpture without using words? What other subjects can be taught visually?

ACTIVITIES

Create a list of unusual drawing materials. Make a three-dimensional drawing with a new tool or unusual means of mark-making.

Visualize an abstract idea such as sadness, loss, joy, or excitement and create a sculpture or installation using a combination of found and handmade objects.

Media and Materials

Installation, mixed media sculpture

Key Words and Ideas

abstraction, collaboration, color, contrast, duality, site-specificity

Buckets of Rain, 2006. Wood, steel, wax, plaster, fluorescent lights, paint, black foil, expanding foam, and tape; 2 gallelies, 153 x 249/10 x 209 inches and 153 x 228 1/2 x 165 inches. Installation view: Ameringer & Yohe Fine Art, New York. Photo by Zonder Title and Jordan Tinker, courtesy the artist and Ameringer & Yohe Fine Art, New York.


Born

1946, London, England

Education

B.F.A., Washington University, Saint Louis, MO
M.F.A., Yale University, New Haven, CT

Lives and Works

Kingston and Tivoli, NY

Biography

Balancing intense planning with improvisational decision-making, Judy Pfaff creates exuberant, sprawling sculptures and installations that weave landscape, architecture, and color into a fractured yet organic whole. A pioneer of installation art in the 1970s, Pfaff synthesizes sculpture, painting, and architecture into dynamic environments in which space seems to expand and collapse, fluctuating between the two- and three-dimensional. Pfaff’s site-specific installations pierce through walls and careen through the air, achieving lightness and explosive energy. Her work is a complex ordering of visual information composed of materials such as steel, fiberglass, and plaster as well as salvaged signage and natural elements such as tree roots. She has extended her interest in natural motifs in a series of prints integrating vegetation, maps, and medical illustrations and has developed her dramatic sculptural materials into set designs for several stage productions for the theater.

http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/pfaff
Born

1952, Los Angeles, CA

Education

B.F.A. and M.F.A., California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA

Lives and Works

Los Angeles, CA

Biography

Influenced by commercial advertising, decorative traditions, and Latin American folk art, Lari Pittman’s meticulously layered paintings transform pattern and signage into luxurious scenes fraught with complexity, difference, and desire. Pittman’s hallucinatory works reference many aesthetic styles, from Victorian silhouettes to social realist murals to Mexican retablos. Pittman uses anthropomorphic depictions of furniture, weapons, and animals loaded with symbolism to convey larger themes of romantic love, violence, and mortality. His paintings and drawings are a personal rebellion against rigid, puritanical dichotomies. They demonstrate the complimentary nature of beauty and suffering, pain and pleasure, and direct the viewer’s attention to bittersweet experiences and the value of sentimentality in art. Despite subject matter that changes from series to series, Pittman’s paintings often include complex narratives and opulent imagery that reflect the rich heterogeneity of American society, the artist’s Colombian heritage, and the distorting effects of hypercapitalism on everyday life.

Media and Materials

painting

Key Words and Ideas

aesthetic, allegory, metaphor, social commentary, symbolism, visual literacy

DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

■ Discuss what it means to be alternative or mainstream. Cite examples from contemporary culture as well as social and cultural movements of the past 100 years that have challenged or changed mainstream beliefs, practices, or styles. What role have artists played in these transformations? What is the role of social commentary and critique in art? What works of art include social commentary? Discuss these works’ content and how they communicate ideas visually. Which are the most effective and why?

After Viewing

■ Pittman says that Latino culture is characterized by “bittersweetness,” that “being simultaneously happy and sad is not a problem. Nor is it fundamentally contradictory.” In what ways is this duality apparent in Pittman’s work?

■ How do we read visual images? Pittman compares certain visual elements in his paintings to nouns and verbs. Select one of Pittman’s paintings and identify visual verbs, nouns, and adjectives in order to create a reading of the work.

■ Pittman says, “as chaotic as American culture is . . . I thrive on that.” What does he mean? How is this sentiment reflected in his work?

ACTIVITIES

■ Create a visual or written work that explores the concept of duality, bittersweetness, or simultaneity in American culture.

■ Study one of Pittman’s paintings and list the references to advertising, popular culture, and historic art traditions you find in the work, noting why each may have been used. Collect photos or drawings of signs and symbols from around your community and incorporate them into a portrait of your local environment.
Untitled #32 (A Decorated Chronology of Insistence and Resignation), 1994. Acrylic, enamel, and glitter on panel, 84 x 60 inches. Private collection. Photo by Douglas M. Parker Studio, courtesy the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles, and Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

Discuss the terms abstraction and realism, using a variety of examples from genres such as academic painting, abstract expressionism, minimalism, and photorealism. Engage in a conversation about different ways to “read” a painting, such as looking at subject matter, materials, and technique. What kinds of stories can a painting tell? How has history shaped our expectations about what a painting looks like? How do factors like personal background, perception, patience, and curiosity factor into the ways we read works of art?

After Viewing

Robert Ryman's work explodes the classical distinctions between art as object and art as surface, sculpture and painting, structure and ornament—emphasizing instead the role that perception and context play in creating an aesthetic experience. Ryman isolates the most basic of components—material, scale, and support—enforcing limitations that allow the viewer to focus on the physical presence of the work in space. Since the 1950s, Ryman has used primarily white paint on a square surface, whether canvas, paper, metal, plastic, or wood, while harnessing the nuanced effects of light and shadow to animate his work. In Ryman’s oeuvre, wall fasteners and tape serve both practical and aesthetic purposes. Neither abstract nor entirely monochromatic, Ryman's paintings are paradoxically “realist” in the artist’s own lexicon.

ACTIVITIES

Select an everyday object and consider how your perception of it could be altered by color, context, lighting, and framing. Paint or cover the object in a single color and display it in a neutral context. Photograph the object in several different locations, changing lighting, framing, and perspective. Create a book with your images or display them as a series. How does repetition and juxtaposition affect the impact of the individual images?

Identify all the different varieties of white surfaces and objects that exist in a particular setting. Using white paint chip cards from a hardware store, compare and label the multiple tones of white. How does light (natural and artificial) affect one’s perception of the object or surface? Alternatively, use a piece of white paper and masking tape to explore different tones of white created by changing the context and surroundings of the paper. View and discuss the placements and what affected the changes.

Media and Materials

painting

Key Words and Ideas

abstraction, light, monochromatic, realism, scale, surface, texture

Note


Untitled


Series # 13 (White)


Born

1930, Nashville, TN

Education

Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, Nashville, TN

George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, TN

Lives and Works

New York and Pennsylvania

Biography

Robert Ryman’s work explodes the classical distinctions between art as object and art as surface, sculpture and painting, structure and ornament—emphasizing instead the role that perception and context play in creating an aesthetic experience. Ryman isolates the most basic of components—material, scale, and support—enforcing limitations that allow the viewer to focus on the physical presence of the work in space. Since the 1950s, Ryman has used primarily white paint on a square surface, whether canvas, paper, metal, plastic, or wood, while harnessing the nuanced effects of light and shadow to animate his work. In Ryman’s oeuvre, wall fasteners and tape serve both practical and aesthetic purposes. Neither abstract nor entirely monochromatic, Ryman’s paintings are paradoxically “realist” in the artist’s own lexicon.

http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ryman
Laurie Simmons

 Born
1949, Long Island, NY

 Education
B.F.A., Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA

 Lives and Works
New York, NY

 Biography
Laurie Simmons stages photographs and films with paper dolls, finger puppets, ventriloquist dummies, and costumed dancers as “living objects,” animating a dollhouse world suffused with nostalgia and colored by an adult’s memories, longings, and regrets. Simmons’s work blends psychological, political, and conceptual approaches to art-making, transforming photography’s propensity to objectify people, especially women, into a sustained critique of the medium. Mining childhood memories and media constructions of gender roles, her photographs are charged with an eerie, dreamlike quality. On first glance her works often appear whimsical, but there is a disquieting aspect to Simmons’s child’s play: Her characters struggle over identity in an environment in which the value placed on consumption, designer objects, and domestic space is inflated to absurd proportions. Simmons’s first film, The Music of Regret (2006), extends her photographic practice to performance, incorporating musicians, professional puppeteers, Alvin Ailey dancers, Hollywood cinematographer Ed Lachman, and actress Meryl Streep.

 Media and Materials
Photography, film

 Key Words and Ideas
animation, characters, domestic settings, narrative, popular culture, puppets

 DISCUSSION

 Before Viewing
■ Start a conversation about the similarities and differences between “high” art forms and “popular” art forms. Make a list of media and practices that fall into each category and consider what distinguishes one from the other. Why and by whom has the distinction been made? Do they ever overlap? If so, how?

■ Compare and contrast characters from a variety of sources such as illustrations and cartoons, television, film, and theater. What are the key components of characterization? How do writers, actors, puppeteers, and animators develop a character through narrative? How do still images convey narrative differently than live action or film?

 After Viewing
■ Why do you think Simmons makes a distinction between being a photographer and “using photography as a tool”? How can a tool or technique direct an artist’s ideas? How can ideas determine media choices?

■ Simmons cites influences ranging from such painters as Manet and Matisse to fashion photography, Life magazine, and old TV commercials. Describe the influences and references you see in her photographs as well as the film, The Music of Regret (2006). What influences your work?

■ Describing the making of The Music of Regret, Simmons says, “I got a chance to revisit my work and figure out what would happen if the characters started to talk to me, to sing and dance.” Discuss how the transformation from still to moving images changes the impact of Simmons’ work. How does the film re-examine or reinvent her earlier subject matter?

 ACTIVITIES
■ Simmons says that when she first began using photography as a tool, the fact that “you didn’t have to be super-skilled to pick up a camera and use it . . . it was so completely liberating.” Choose a medium or tool that you have never used before to reinterpret a piece you originally made in another more familiar one. Document your process and the results.

■ Create a character or self-portrait in the form of a puppet. Write a monologue that describes a specific emotional state and stage a performance with accompanying music.

■ Select a painting or photograph that suggests a specific narrative. Create a written story or drawing that reflects what happened five minutes before and five minutes after what you see in the image. Alternatively, follow one of the subjects back in time from the moment depicted and then forward.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

Discuss as a class what it means to be political in the general sense and as an artist. How do issues become politicized? Images? Ask students to select a picture from a newspaper or magazine that they feel represents a political issue. What sides or opposing viewpoints are depicted or implied? Is the image slanted towards one side, or is it neutral? Is the image meant to urge the viewer to believe or do something? If so, what?

Collaborate on a list of famous artists. What percentage of these artists are women? Analyze your findings as a class and discuss the factors that may explain the iniquity.

After Viewing

Consider Spero’s statement, “I see things in a certain way, and as an artist I’m privileged in that arena to say publicly what I’m thinking about.” What do you think Spero means by “privileged?” Do artists hold a privileged position within society? Why or why not? If, as the saying goes, with privilege comes responsibility, what is an artist’s responsibility?

How does Spero’s work reflect the specific time period in which it was created as well as universal or timeless themes? Using the Art21 Web site, explore the work of artists such as Eleanor Antin, Kiki Smith, Shazia Sikander, Kara Walker, and Nancy Spero. Consider how each uses historical figures, narratives, or techniques to comment on the present.

ACTIVITIES

Collect drawings and found images of historical figures or mythological characters from a variety of sources such as Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek vases, Mesoamerican reliefs, or Hindu statuary. Create a visual statement about a contemporary issue using your collection as collage elements or source material.

Spero says, “I never thought of my work in terms of being radical, although I tried to make it radical—that is, to shift the premise of what goes for pictures on a wall.” Create a visual image that challenges the conventions of your chosen medium. Look at examples of artists’ statements or exhibition texts and write a companion piece that similarly defies traditional form.


Nancy Spero

Born

1926, Cleveland, OH

Education

B.F.A., School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL

Honorary Doctorates, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Williams College, MA

Lives and Works

New York, NY

Biography

Nancy Spero is a pioneer of feminist art. Since the 1960s, her work has been an unapologetic statement against the pervasive abuse of power, Western privilege, and male dominance. Executed with a raw intensity in the vulnerable medium of paper and in ephemeral installations, her work often draws its imagery and subject matter from current and historical events such as the torture of women in Nicaragua, the extermination of Jews in the Holocaust, and the atrocities of the Vietnam War. Spero works with a rich range of visual sources showing women as protagonists—from Egyptian hieroglyphics, seventeenth-century French history paintings, and Frederick’s of Hollywood’s lingerie advertisements. Her figures, in full command of their bodies, coexisting in nonhierarchical compositions, visually reinforce principles of equality and tolerance.

Media and Materials

drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, installation

Key Words and Ideas

ephemerality, feminism, monoprinting, political activism, scale

http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/spero
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

- Sullivan’s work is influenced by both the performing and visual arts. Initiate a conversation about the similarities, differences, and intersections between the contexts of theater, film, and visual art. How would you describe the viewing experience in each one of these contexts? How does each define and use terms such as gesture, expression, and craft?

After Viewing

- Research and discuss the elements of drama, including plot, character, and theme. How do Sullivan’s video works adhere to or break with film and performance traditions? With conventional narrative structure? What references to common or familiar styles, settings, and genres do you see in her work?

- When describing her work Sullivan says, “There’s a place in the work where automation and mechanization is like a kernel of mindlessness. It’s meant to be frightening because it’s arbitrary—because you can’t understand why.” Discuss her statement and your personal reactions to her work. How would you describe the emotional impact of Sullivan’s films and performances?

- Describe the effect that isolating and repeating a single gesture or expression has in Sullivan’s video work. What do you think Sullivan means when she says that the choreographed sequences for her video work The Chittendens suggest “oppressive cultural regimes”?

ACTIVITIES

- Select a film to watch as a group. Individually choose two opposing emotions, such as joy and sorrow or anger and contentment, and identify scenes and characters that exhibit your chosen emotions. Take note of the costumes, sound effects, musical style and volume, dramatic lighting, and camera point-of-view that accompany these characters and scenes throughout the film. Discuss your findings as a group, reenacting illustrative scenes that contain your selected emotions.

- Create a visual script, score, or map that provides detailed instructions for recreating a common scene or completing a daily activity, such as preparing a meal, attending school, etc. Exchange scripts and perform the instructions. Document the performances and discuss the results.

- Select an emotion and develop a single, representative gesture with accompanying sound but no dialogue. With classmates, choose a simple song and use the sheet music or tablature to structure a sequence of your gestures, assigning to each note a number that corresponds to a group member. Perform your sequence as a group and discuss reactions. What narratives emerge? What ambiguities exist?
Chittendens Screen Tests (Second Set: Virtuous Woman: Mean Showgirl Lynching Retreat), production stills, 2005. Performer: Carolyn Shoemaker. From The Chittendens, 2005. Five or six channels shot on 16mm film transferred to video and projected as digital media, color, sound, variable length per channel (total length: 2 hours 13 min). Musical score by Sean Griffin. © Catherine Sullivan, courtesy the artist.
DISCUSSION

Before Viewing

Ursula Von Rydingsvard cites specific childhood memories and personal anecdotes as having a strong influence on her work. Consider the role of memory and childhood as an inspirational source for making art. What materials, tools, or imagery provide inspiration for your own art-making? How do artists translate personal associations into universal themes and ideas?

After Viewing

Ursula Von Rydingsvard says, “My home was one in which words were not used very often . . . So words were very sparse. And in fact anybody that used too many words was automatically suspect.” How is this personal anecdote reflected in Ursula’s work? What can be communicated visually that cannot be said with words?

Discuss how von Rydingsvard’s sculptures might be seen as metaphorical. What relationship does her sculpture have to landscape? To the human body? To emotional or psychological states?

Ursula Von Rydingsvard says that she “learns” from vernacular objects such as washboards, bowls, wooden spoons, and pots. What do her sculptures retain from these sources? How does her work transform these objects and give them new meaning?

ACTIVITY

To explore a personal memory or experience, reinterpret a common household object or vessel using a new medium and a radical change in scale. Write a series of instructions that describes how to create a temporary work of art for a specific space or public location. Ask colleagues to complete the instructions and compare their results to what you envisioned.
The following words include both art and non-art terms. Many of these words have been defined in the context of an art experience but also have nuanced meanings and additional significance beyond the definitions in this glossary. A more comprehensive glossary with additional vocabulary can be found on the Web site: www.pbs.org/art21

abstract art At its purest, abstract art is characterized by the use of shapes, colors, and lines as elements in and for themselves.

aesthetic Used to describe something as visually-based, beautiful, or pleasing in appearance and to the senses. Aesthetics is a term developed by philosophers during the 18th and 19th centuries and is also the academic or scientific study of beauty and taste in art.

allegory The expression, by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions, of truths or generalizations about human existence.

ambiguity A situation in which something can be understood or explained in more than one way. For artists, ambiguity is often cited as an important characteristic that allows their work to be appreciated or interpreted from multiple perspectives.

animation Giving movement to something; the process of making moving cartoons or films that use cartoon imagery.

anthropomorphism The attribution of human form, characteristics, or behavior to nonhuman things.

aphorism A concise statement expressing an opinion or a general truth, often in a clever way. For example, "Art is the lie that makes us realize the truth." (Pablo Picasso)

appropriation The act of borrowing imagery or forms to create something new.

collaboration A working arrangement between an artist and another person, group, or institution. Artists often work in collaboration with a variety of specialists, assistants, colleagues, and audiences.

conceptual art Works of art in which the idea is of equal, or greater, importance as the finished product. Conceptual art can take many forms, from photographs to texts to videos, while sometimes there is no object at all. Emphasizing the ways things are made more than how they look, conceptual art often raises questions about what a work of art can be.

critique An assessment of something with comments on its good and bad qualities. Criticism is the activity of judgement or informed interpretation. In art, critiques often take the form of a group discussion in which the merits of a particular work are debated. Critique remains an important element in many works of art that address social issues, ideas, and events.

curator A person who is responsible for the collection, care, research, and exhibition of art or artifacts.

debate An exchange of arguments or opinions with the intention of persuading the audience of the speaker's point of view.

ecology The relationship between organisms and their environment, ecology is also concerned with the relationship between people and nature.

fabrication The construction or manufacture of an object. Artists working on large or technically difficult pieces often enlist the help of fabrication studios with access to specialized equipment and a skilled labor force.

feminist art movement The efforts of artists internationally to bring increased visibility to the role of women within art history and art practice. The movement began in the 1960s and continues today. Feminist art is related to the larger feminist movement that encompasses literary, political, and social activists.

iconography Symbols and images that have a particular meaning, either learned or universal.

installation art A work of art created for a specific architectural situation. Installations often engage multiple senses such as sight, smell, and hearing.

irony The incongruity between what is expected to happen and what actually happens, especially when the disparity seems absurd or laughable. In art and literature, irony is often used as a device for social critique and is based on making a statement that suggests its opposite is true.

juxtaposition The state or position of being placed close together or side by side, so as to permit comparison or contrast.

lexicon Literally, a vocabulary. A collection of terms or characteristics used in a particular profession, subject, or style.

metaphor A relationship between disparate visual or verbal sources where one kind of object, idea, or image is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

monochromatic Made of or having only one color or variations of one color.

monoprint A printmaking technique that yields a singular image that cannot be exactly reproduced. Essentially a painted print, in the monoprinting process ink or paint is applied directly to a plate, creating a unique image that cannot be produced as an edition or series.

montage Literally “putting together,” montage refers to an image or, in film and music, a sequence, composed by assembling and overlapping many different pieces from various sources.

parable A brief, succinct story that illustrates a moral or religious lesson.

paradox A statement, proposition, or situation that seems to be absurd or contradictory, but in fact is or may be true. Also, a statement or proposition that contradicts itself.

performance art Public, private, or documented (for example in film, video, audio, or writing), performance art is a nontraditional art form that features a performance activity by, or directed by, an artist.

photojournalism The profession or practice of recording and reporting real and “newsworthy” events using photography.

popular culture Literature, broadcasting, music, dance, theater, sports, and other cultural aspects of social life distinguished by their broad-based presence and popularity across ethnic, social, and regional groups.

postmodernism 20th-century cultural movement marked by reactions against the philosophy and practices of modern movements. Typically marked by the abandonment of strong divisions of genre or hierarchy and the embodiment of complexity, ambiguity, diversity, and interconnectedness or interreferentiality.

propaganda A systematically spread message aimed at influencing the opinions or behavior of people. Often, publicity released by an organization or government to promote a specific policy, idea, doctrine, or cause.

public art Works of art that are designed specifically for, or placed in, areas physically accessible to the general public.

realism The realistic and natural representation of people, places, and/or things in a work of art; the opposite of idealization.

redaction The editing of text to make it suitable for publication. In government documents, refers to the process of removing sensitive or classified information from a document prior to its publication or release to the public.

retablo A small oil painting typically on wood panel or relief. Used primarily in Latin American tradition as a devotional image honoring a Catholic saint.

ritual A ceremonial act or a detailed method or process of accomplishing specific objectives.

satire Exposing human vices or follies to ridicule or scorn.

site-specific art Work created especially for a particular space or site. Site-specific work can be permanent or temporary.

social commentary The act of expressing an opinion about the nature of society, most often with the intention of promoting change by calling attention to a given problem. Artists engage in social commentary through their work as a means of raising public awareness and inspiring dialogue about pertinent issues.

spectacle A mediated or constructed view or image that is of a remarkable or impressive nature, sensationalizing its subject.

symbolism The practice of representing things by an image, sign, symbol, convention, or association.

vernacular Everyday language specific to a social group or region; the everyday language spoken by a people as opposed to the literary language.

visual literacy The ability to effectively interpret images or create and use images as a form of communication.