

Shifting Perspectives:

Connecting to Contemporary Art

Educator Resource Package

Grade 10-12

Contemporary artists often use unconventional methods, media, and messages that push the boundaries of traditional art forms. Challenge your students to investigate how contemporary artists blur the lines between opposing ideas to alter and shift perspectives in art. Through in-gallery sketching, group discussions and writing activities, students have the opportunity to rethink how they understand their own ideas through examinations of art from the past and present.

This package will help to prepare your class for their visit and provide in-class activities to further engage with the key concepts explored during your visit to the Art Gallery of Alberta.

Big Ideas

- Exploration of contemporary art through a variety of interactive interpretation exercises
- Investigation of how art and images change across cultures and throughout time (specifically the relationship between historical and contemporary art)
- Focus on making connections to contemporary issues and students' personal experiences with visual culture
- Exploration of opposites to understand how artists blur boundaries and encourage multiple interpretations



Before your visit

Work with your students to explore the concept of Shifting Perspectives before visiting the AGA. Using the reflection questions below, work with students to brainstorm what they already know about contemporary art and practice interacting with art using a framework for critical analysis.

Big Questions: Shifting Perspectives?

What is art? Where can we see art in our everyday lives?
How can we 'read' a work of art? Why is it important to be able to 'read' art?
Where have you seen the word 'contemporary' before? Dance, music, art?
What is contemporary art? How can contemporary art be defined and/or characterized?
What images come to mind when you think of contemporary art?
If you googled contemporary art, what would come up?
How do contemporary artists blur boundaries in order to shift audience perspectives?

So, what IS contemporary art?

The term 'contemporary art' is not easily defined and does not have one specific meaning. In many cases however, the term 'contemporary art' refers to art made and produced by artists living today.

Today's artists work in and respond to a global environment that is culturally diverse, technologically advancing, and multifaceted. Characteristics of contemporary art are often more conceptual than technical and may include:

- Use of a wide range of **media**
 - Reflection and commentary on contemporary society.
 - Questioning of traditional ideas of how art is defined. Viewers may be challenged to set aside questions such as, "Is a work of art good?" or "Is the work aesthetically pleasing?" Instead, viewers consider whether art is "challenging" or "interesting."
 - Questioning of what constitutes art and how art is made.
 - Dialogues with the art styles and movements that came before.
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Your Turn: Interacting with Contemporary Art

Introduce your students to different ways of looking at art using the FRAMES framework on the next page. Choose art images related to your current topic of study in order to make connections between new learning and what students already know.

Suggested Contemporary Artists & Art Images

- John Baldessari, Specimen (After Dürer), 2000
- Guy Ben Ner, Treehouse Kit, 2005
- Bruce Nauman, Human/Need/Desire, 1983
- Julie Mehretu, Bombing Babylon, 2001

FRAMES

Interacting with Art

First Response

What do you see? What do you think of it?
What does the artwork remind you of?
Where do your opinions come from?

How was the artwork created?
What techniques, materials and tools did the artist use? How do you know?
Describe the elements and principles used by the artist. How do they contribute to the artist's message?

Break it Down

Time, Place, Space

What does the artwork tell us about:

- the time period in which it was made?
- the place in which it was made?
- the culture in which it was made?

How do we make sense of an artwork?
How does the artwork relate to our own lives and experiences?
What new meaning do we bring to the artwork?

New Meanings

Alberta Education Program of Study Connections

Fine Arts

ENCOUNTERS: Students will encounter a wide range of art forms through a variety of 'looking at art' activities.

- Students will build upon their understanding of the idea that the role and form of art differs through time and across cultures.
- Students will build upon their understanding of the idea that art reflects and affects cultural character.

Social Studies

SOCIAL STUDIES 10-1: Perspectives on Globalization

- Students will understand, assess and respond to the complexities of globalization by investigating the relationship between local and global ideas in art.

SOCIAL STUDIES 20-1: Perspectives on Nationalism

- Students will understand, assess and respond to the complexities of nationalism by exploring the dichotomy between the representation of individual identity and nationalistic/provincial identity in artworks.

DIMENSIONS OF THINKING

Students will:

S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking:

- evaluate ideas and information from multiple sources
- determine relationships among multiple and varied sources of information
- analyze current affairs from a variety of perspectives

S.2 develop skills of historical thinking:

- analyze multiple historical and contemporary perspectives within and across cultures

S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy:

- communicate effectively to express a point of view in a variety of situations
- use skills of formal and informal discussion and/or debate to persuasively express informed viewpoints on an issue
- ask respectful and relevant questions of others to clarify viewpoints
- listen respectfully to others

Language Arts

General Outcome 1: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences in the Gallery.

- Students will form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions on different visual imagery
- Students will consider new perspectives as seen in a variety of artwork and imagery

General Outcome 2: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms, and respond personally, critically and creatively.

- Students will construct meaning from text and context in order to discern and analyze context
- Students will connect self, text, culture and milieu
- Students will appreciate the effectiveness and artistry of print and non-print texts