

Revised February 1, 2004

CURRICULUM MODEL FOR:

"COEXISTENCE:" A LARGE OUTDOOR ART EXHIBITION SCHEDULED FOR THE TWIN CITIES IN MAY AND JUNE, 2004.

"Exhibition "Coexistence" initiated and created by the Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem, curator, Raphie Etgar (www.coexistence.art.museum)"

Curriculum developed by Vicky Knickerbocker, CHGS Outreach Coordinator, Stephen Feinstein, CHGS Director, and input from the following educators: Barbara Cox, Perpich Center for the Arts, Judith Petka, Weisman Art Museum (University of Minnesota), Sarah Herzog, European Studies Consortium (U of M), Amalia Anderson, University of Minnesota Law School Human Rights Center and Faith Clover, Art Education (Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota.)

Note: Application of this may vary from district to district in the USA according to standards and needs of teachers. This is only a suggestion. The curriculum is provided without charge to any user.

Its Educational Purpose:

This international art exhibit, which will be exhibited in Minneapolis and St. Paul during May and June 2004, focuses on the theme of "coexistence" and was created to inform, motivate and create conversation by those who view it.

It has direct meaning for teachers and students and brings the State of Minnesota guidelines for Art, English, and Social Studies to life.

These artistic images are a wonderful way to complement students' knowledge and understanding of what it means to be an informed and socially responsible citizen. These large posters can be analyzed by students to increase their knowledge of what coexistence is and why it is important to study.

This artistic analysis can also be used to expand their understanding of why humans have not always gotten along. These reasons include: religious, ethnic, or racial misunderstandings or conflicts. Furthermore, it will increase their awareness of what effective and non-effective conflict resolution strategies may be.

Suggested Teaching Approaches: Below are a number of suggestions that teachers may use to implement the Coexistence project in their own schools. These are only suggestions, developed, however, with input from many centers of excellence that have used art as a way to enhance understanding of issues in the social sciences. Art teachers may not need a curriculum and may be right at home with the existing images and materials. Social science teachers may prefer some suggestions below. These are strategies which need not be implemented in any particular order, and there is a full range of choices.

***STRATEGY:** Obtain a set of Coexistence posters from the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies to use in your own classroom setting. These posters have been provided by a grant from the Jay and Rose Phillips Foundation of Minnesota. It is highly recommended that you have these posters laminated. One set will be donated to each school that is interested in working with the project (we recommend that you laminate them for long-term use). The images and quotations can also be found on the website: <http://www.mots.org.il/eng/exhibitions/traveling.htm>

***STRATEGY:** Choose one or two quotations from the Coexistence posters. Examine how this quote has/have been used in the past, and how its meaning may have changed for use in the 21st century. Can words that had positive meaning in the past lose this connotation over time?

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the State of Mississippi, a State sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice...

Nobel Prize Laureate Eli Wiesel on "Indifference."

Here is a quote within Professor Wiesel's address at the National Civic Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda, Washington, D.C., April 24, 1979.

The title of his speech is "The Holocaust: Beginning or End?" The context of the quote is as follows: "For we have learned certain lessons. We have learned not to be neutral in times of crisis, for neutrality always helps the aggressor, never the victim. We have learned that silence is never the answer. We have learned that the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference. What is memory if not a response to and against indifference?"

(Source: *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*, edited by Irving Abrahamson.)

***STRATEGY:** Defining what Coexistence will teach us about.

Examine the meaning of the following words and phrases that relate to this international art exhibit:

Coexistence

tolerance

intolerance

indifference

equality

legal equality

religious equality

economic equality

love

harmony

“other”

conflict

race

respect

“Love thy neighbor as thyself.”

rights

utility

harmony

conversation

“justified intolerance”

“unjustified suppression”

liberty

democracy

free market

“free market of ideas”

civil disobedience

zero tolerance

what is the difference between “zero tolerance” and “intolerance?”

good

evil

helping

Establish a discourse about these words and others that students brainstorm, and their relationship to this exhibit. As a project, create an artistic image that conveys meaning of the word or phrase.

***STRATEGY: Coexistence – what does it look like today?**

Ask your students what a world based on peaceful coexistence might look like. Using 2-column notes have student list peaceful and non-peaceful descriptions of coexistence.

Next, ask the students to create a visual collage of pictures, quotes, newspaper clippings or photos that represent what peaceful and non-peaceful coexistence looks like. Have a group

discussion about these visual images . . . in what types of ways are they similar and different.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: CREATE QUESTIONS USING QUOTATIONS:

Here are some additional resources that could be used to further stimulate a conversation and to increase students' awareness of what coexistence has meant to different people:

Are there problems with the word "Tolerance?" Consider these two recent quotes from two well-respected educators.

"I propose that the opposite of intolerance is not tolerance. It is understanding. It is acceptance. It is compassion." This reflective commentary was voiced by Jean Zeldin, Executive Director of the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education located in Overland Park, Kansas in September of 2003.

"Tolerance is, of course, an extremely intolerant idea, because it means "I am the boss: I will allow you some, though not all, of the rights I enjoy as long as you behave yourself according to standards that I shall determine." This statement was issued by noted historian Bernard Lewis, Princeton University Professor of History, as quoted in *The Atlantic Magazine*, May 2003.

George Washington is noted to have expressed concerns about the concept of toleration as early as 1790. In a letter to the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island he remarked, "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights."

In the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian population was tolerated by being defined as "second-class citizens." This meant they were allowed to reside in the Empire with certain rights, but they were not allowed to consider any issues of self-rule, control over their own education, or autonomy. When this broke down, the result was genocide and mass-murder.

Lessing, a German dramatist of the Enlightenment, wrote a drama, "Nathan the Wise," in which Saladin teaches the impatient Frank crusader: "God does not demand that all trees have the same bark."

From the web page: <http://www.geocities.com/giselaburger/anda.htm>

***Can we speak about coexistence of aspects of the arts?**

"The coexistence of music and poetry is almost natural. Poetry originates in song. On the other hand, the coexistence of poetry with painting is stranger for me, because poetry was born before painting, as a spoken language, and painting took an altogether different path. I see poetry and painting as running parallel; they don't touch, but they can

collaborate. The relationship is not as clear. But music and poetry can be one and the same."

Enric Casassas from: http://www.barcelonareview.com/14/e_catpoets.htm

***Peaceful Coexistence in Politics?**

Examine the concept of “peaceful coexistence” that was developed in 1956 by the leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev. Despite being peaceful on the surface, the USSR continued to have destructive ideas about foreign policy and attitudes toward capitalist countries. Is “peaceful coexistence” a loaded phrase too reflective of the Cold War?

***USE OF A POEM: Coexistence by: Mallik Bulusu (mbulusu@hotmail.com)**

And a moth can not be killed twice

This is a truth which is simon-pure

A truth uniface like the cast dice

Mind you, once you kill there is no cure

These aren't any mystic definitions

Of things that are irreversible

These are crystal clear exhibitions

Of laws of nature that are invincible

So, why live amidst fears of wars

By building arsenal that are nuclear

Let us coexist like the eternal stars

Only peace unifies us all into near and dear

from: <http://www.indolink.com/Poetry/p0998-261.html>

***STRATEGY: The Struggle to Achieve Coexistence**

Have students work in groups to create a word map for conflict. Include:

- *what is it?
- *what does it look like?
- *what do people have conflicts over?
- * what happens when a conflict occurs?

Remember conflict can be defined in several ways. Common definitions of conflict are a disagreement, a fight, and a battle. These definitions tend to emphasize conflict, competition, and dissention. These definitions tend to associated with violence, bullying, and aggression.

Ask students to share word maps. Ask students the following questions:

1. Can conflict be seen in a positive way?
2. Is it possible that conflict could also be viewed as an opportunity for positive growth and development?
3. Because humans frequently have different tastes, preferences, and priorities, there have been cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. In the past, how have these cultural conflicts been resolved?
4. Are there alternative possibilities that are more engaging, respectful, and mutually satisfying?

Have students share group responses.

Have students create a class mural, tiles on a theme or a quilt examining conflict.

***STRATEGY: EXAMINE THE THOUGHTS OF THE CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION: What are some other effective ways to promote coexistence?**

According to Raphie Etgar, curator of the Coexistence exhibition, “Coexistence is more than a concept and more than a popular idea for our new global culture. It involves changing our lives and changing the way we think. Coexistence is not necessarily learning to live together but perhaps learning to live side by side.”

Etgar is deeply committed to promoting greater peace and justice in the world. He has expressed concerns that humans throughout the world have relied on violence to resolve their interpersonal differences. It is his opinion that violence is not an effective problem solving approach as it stimulates greater destruction, hostility, and division. He contends that violence usually breeds greater contempt, fear, and hatred of others. As the Holocaust has taught us, Hitler’s use of violence to solve the economic and social ills of Germany caused the death of many innocent people, lead to the physical destruction of many countries, tore families apart, and pitted one neighbor against the other. As a result of his concerns, he has helped organize an international art exhibit which he hopes will help educate more people about the need to develop less violent ways to resolve human conflicts whether they occur locally, nationally, or internationally. He is extremely hopeful this art exhibit will help people learn more respectful ways of interacting with one another.

As he puts it, “People build walls to protect themselves. Perhaps there was a time when walls were useful, but today concrete walls cannot protect people from each other. More so, sometimes we need to protect ourselves from ourselves. I am even more concerned about the walls people build in their hearts, walls that are built in the hearts of children, when their world is destroyed, mental walls that are built in a moment of fear and hate and incitement. Many years of education and a great deal of effort will be needed to break down these walls. We are asking ourselves how we arrived at these terrible days - those of us who are within the conflict and those who are watching from outside and do not understand. What is happening today all over the world is a cycle that cannot be broken without brave and inspired leaders who must solve the problems with generosity, mutual understanding and non-violent thinking. What we need today in many places in the world is more consideration, kindness, modesty and love. “

***STRATEGY:** Explore as a research project an historical act of mass violence, genocide or the Holocaust. How is coexistence achieved in the aftermath of such traumatic events? Can the same people live together with each other or do they need to separate? The Armenians for the most part were driven out of Turkey between 1915 and 1922 after the Genocide. Most surviving Jews from the Holocaust left Europe. However, in the American Great Plains, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda and other places, the same peoples wound up living next to each other with immense tensions being maintained in the society, while there was an imperfect search for justice, resolution of assets questions, and forgiveness.

***STRATEGY: Using art to enhance students’ knowledge of coexistence:** “Talking Walls.”

Choose one poster and explore with the students what it symbolically represents.

Explore with them what they see in this poster and what these images prompt them to think about.

What does this image tell them about how people have historically interacted and treated one another?

What does it tell them about how people’s lives may be similar or different?

What does it suggest people could do differently to live in greater harmony and peace with one another?

Three examples are given to help teachers increase their students’ understanding of what this artwork means and how it personally relates to them and others.

Example #1



COEXISTENCE

What objects do the students see in this picture?

Do they see any letters or words?

Where else have they seen these objects displayed?

What do these symbols mean to them?

How do these symbols relate to their study of the modern world? What happens when coexistence breaks down?

Historically, how have these symbols been viewed?

Have they been viewed positively and negatively and why? Has there been historical conflict as a result of these cultural differences or similarities? How has this conflict usually been resolved?

What else could they or others do to resolve these types of cultural conflicts in a more respectful and peaceful manner?

Ask them why the artist Piotr Mlodozieniec of Poland might have created this image? Why do you think he produced this image exclusively in black and white? How do you think his image prompts greater thinking about the theme of coexistence?

Example #2



What are the students viewing?

If you think they are hands, what are the racial and national origins of the people whose images we see?

How do we decide and judge?

Is there a basis for discrimination in this image?

Does the image conjure up some famous paintings within the framework of art history?

For hint, see: <http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/m/michelan/3sistina/1genesis/6adam/>

Example #3



What do they see in this image?

What is the essential form used artistically?

What is the message?

Why would the image take this form?

What is meant by the “non-violent options of coexistence?”

Is this a positive or negative image?

Divide your students into groups of four and have each group examine one additional piece of artwork from the “Coexistence” poster set. Tell them they will work together to answer the following questions. Their responses to these questions will be interactively shared with their classmates using poster boards, magic markers, colored pencils, and other art supplies. The visual diagram they construct can be broken into four general categories, these being:

a: A description of what is seen in the poster

- b: A summary of what is learned about the artist
- c: A group interpretation of what this poster means
- d: An action statement of how this knowledge can be used by students at school, at home, at work, etc.

Group/Class Projects

1. Diversity in Your Community

Wherever you live, the wide diversity of your community will probably surprise you. It has been said that a culture is the sum total of all the influences that a region has undergone. Undertake an investigative project on cultural diversity in your town or community. Who lives there? How do they live? Articles, interviews, posters or displays can be designed to highlight the range of identities and cultures. How is this diversity demonstrated in music? Reflect on the number of traditions of music and dance you've come across, and the mutual influences they show. Organize a concert or cultural festival that brings together a range of cultural traditions.

2. Human Rights

How are the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious, linguistic or other minorities guaranteed in your community, nation, region? How about indigenous people, migrant workers, asylum-seekers and refugees, disabled people? Are their rights promoted and protected? Do you find that your law-enforcement officials are adequately educated about human rights? What can you do to improve attitudes or behavior toward minorities?

3. Do-It-Yourself Coexistence Program

Create your own coexistence curriculum or program. This means deciding what are the component parts of coexistence, how it is the same or different from the idea of "tolerance" and how you think the values associated with coexistence can best be transmitted. Scrutinize your text books and televisions, newspapers and magazines for stereotyping, including gender typing, and assumptions about nationalities and ethnic groups. What are coexistence priorities for your town, country or region? What are the "conflict issues" and how might they be solved?

4. No to Violence

How does violence come into a community, school or home, and how can it be stopped? Act out the dynamics of coexistence and intolerance through role playing, dialogue, dilemma solving. Organize public debates, take sides in a debate, and then switch sides and speak for the opposite position. How do you imagine peaceful co-existence of diverse individuals and groups? What makes it work, and what undermines it?

5. Ecological Diversity and Human Diversity

Every community is based on interdependence. Like the plants and animals, we couldn't survive if we were all the same. What are some examples of this truth drawn from daily life in your town? What are concrete examples of how a culture of peace and tolerance can promote environmental preservation? Start a project in your school or neighborhood.

6. Current Events

Organize discussions about current events in relation to tolerance and intolerance. Analyze actual conflicts of the past and present. How might they have been resolved or avoided? How is the issue of human rights in the news today? What are the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized by the international community? How do multi-cultural, multi-linguistic countries work? What are the common interests that diverse peoples share?

7. Sports and Tolerance

Do sports events foster coexistence, antagonisms, hatreds - - - or is it just a game? What are the possible links between sports and intolerance (such as exclusion of those unable to compete, chauvinism and violence), and may these be remedied? Can violence ever be healthy in this arena? Would sports events succeed if both sides exchanged half of their players in the middle of the game? (The Chinese under early Maoism used to arrange sports events in this fashion so there would be "no winner".) How is winning important and how does it relate to enmity, even hatred?

8. International Link-ups

Start an international conversation or school-pairing project, by mail or computer. Write to others in another country about issues and problems you face in your lives. Exchange audio cassettes or pictures. Explore the possibilities of participating in international summer camps or student exchanges. Ask your school to join UNESCO's Associated Schools Project.

APPENDIX:

Other web sites of interest:

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/index.jsp>

<http://www.museumoftolerance.com/mot/index.cfm>

<http://www.pbs.org/americaresponds/tolerance.html> (A PBS CURRICULUM)

<http://www.ccsf.edu/Resources/Tolerance/>

<http://www.teachtolerance.org/>

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND ARTICLES AVAILABLE ON THE WEB:

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

UN RESOLUTION ON Elimination of all Forms of Religious Intolerance

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/resolutions/47/129GA1992.html>

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/resolutions/48/128GA1993.html>

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/42/a42r097.htm>

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/commission/thematic52/95-relig.htm>

UN 99th plenary meeting, Resolution 50/183 of 22 December 1995

http://www.uq.net.au/slsoc/manussa/un_rel_2.htm

http://www.hbhsmun.org/Topic_Research_Human_Rights.htm

http://www.uq.net.au/slsoc/manussa/un_rel_2.htm

http://www.adl.org/PresRele/UnitedNations_94/4400_94.htm

<http://academic.udayton.edu/race/06hrights/WCAR2001/NGOFORUM/Religious.htm>

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS:

The Edict of Toleration of Christians by the Roman Emperor Gallarius, 311 AD and Constantine, 313 AD:

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8920/European/EDICTOFTOLERATIONBYGALERIUS.htm>

<http://rome.webzone.ru/ius/library/edict/gct.htm>

Louis XVI's EDICT OF TOLERATION FOR HUGUENOTS (FRENCH PROTESTANTS), 1787:

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/276/>

**UNESCO WEBSITE ADVOCATING TEN IDEAS FOR DAY OF TOLERANCE:
1995 was the Year of Tolerance decreed by UNESCO:**

<http://www.unesco.org/tolerance/teneng.htm>

Paul Kurtz, “Agenda for humanism in the twenty-first century.”

http://www.iheu.org/IHN/v3-1/paul_kurtz.htm

Paul Kurtz, “The Limits of Tolerance” FROM FREE INQUIRY MAGAZINE, v16/1

http://www.secularhumanism.org/library/fi/kurtz_16_1.2.html

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter III

<http://www.econlib.org/library/Mill/mlLbty3.html>

“I have said that it is important to give the freest scope possible to uncustomary things, in order that it may in time appear which of these are fit to be converted into customs. But independence of action, and disregard of custom, are not solely deserving of encouragement for the chance they afford that better modes of action, and customs more worthy of general adoption, may be struck out; nor is it only persons of decided mental superiority who have a just claim to carry on their lives in their own way. There is no reason that all human existence should be constructed on some one or some small number of patterns. If a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode. Human beings are not like sheep; and even sheep are not undistinguishably alike. A man cannot get a coat or a pair of boots to fit him, unless they are either made to his measure, or he has a whole warehouseful to choose from: and is it easier to fit him with a life than with a coat, or are human beings more like one another in their whole physical and spiritual conformation than in the shape of their feet? If it were only that people have diversities of taste, that is reason enough for not attempting to shape them all after one model. But different persons also require different conditions for their spiritual development; and can no more exist healthily in the same moral, than all the variety of plants can in the same physical, atmosphere and climate. The same things which are helps to one person towards the cultivation of his higher nature, are hindrances to another. The same mode of life is a healthy excitement to one, keeping all his faculties of action and enjoyment in their best order, while to another it is a distracting burthen, which suspends or crushes all internal life. Such are the differences among human beings in their sources of pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation on them of different physical and moral agencies, that unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable. Why then should tolerance, as far as the public sentiment is concerned, extend only to tastes and modes of life which extort acquiescence by the multitude of their adherents? Nowhere (except in some monastic

institutions) is diversity of taste entirely unrecognised; a person may, without blame, either like or dislike rowing, or smoking, or music, or athletic exercises, or chess, or cards, or study, because both those who like each of these things, and those who dislike them, are too numerous to be put down. But the man, and still more the woman, who can be accused either of doing "what nobody does," or of not doing "what everybody does," is the subject of as much depreciatory remark as if he or she had committed some grave moral delinquency. Persons require to possess a title, or some other badge of rank, or of the consideration of people of rank, to be able to indulge somewhat in the luxury of doing as they like without detriment to their estimation. To indulge somewhat, I repeat: for whoever allow themselves much of that indulgence, incur the risk of something worse than disparaging speeches—they are in peril of a commission *de lunatico*, and of having their property taken from them and given to their relations.”

John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) Full text may be found at:
<http://www.constitution.org/jl/tolerati.htm>

An interesting and provocative article by scholar Bernard Lewis from The Atlantic Monthly, May 2003: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/05/lewis.htm>

In this article he writes: “Tolerance is, of course, an extremely intolerant idea, because it means "I am the boss: I will allow you some, though not all, of the rights I enjoy as long as you behave yourself according to standards that I shall determine." That, I think, is a fair definition of religious tolerance as it is normally understood and applied. In a letter to the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island, that George Washington wrote in 1790, he remarked, perhaps in an allusion to the famous "Patent of Tolerance" promulgated by the Austrian Emperor Joseph II a few years previously, "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights." At a meeting of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Vienna some years ago the Cardinal Archbishop Franz Koenig spoke of tolerance, and I couldn't resist quoting Washington to him. He replied, "You are right. I shall no more speak of tolerance; I shall speak of mutual respect." There are still too few who share the attitude expressed in this truly magnificent response.”

ART AND DISCOURSE:

Art Education in the Social Studies. ERIC Digest

http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed393787.html

Other Social Studies, Art, & Music Internet Resources:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~ssdc/links.htm>

An ART CRITICISM CHECK SHEET: A WAY TO TALK ABOUT ART (pdf file):

<http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us/isu/art/artcriticism.pdf>

Other programs of interest in Minnesota and the USA:

TOLERANCE MINNESOTA: LISA LANE or JODI ELOWITZ: 612-338-7816

WORLD OF DIFFERENCE: Anti-Defamation League Program formerly implemented through Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas. Materials still available from ADL in New York. <http://www.adl.org/adl.asp>

SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER: <http://www.tolerance.org/> or <http://splcenter.org/>

Black Leadership Forum: <http://www.blackleadershipforum.org/>

FOUR-STAGE ART CRITIQUE

AESTHETIC STATEMENT

Too often, we, as art viewers (and consumers) make quick judgments about works of art based on only a few seconds of observation. By practicing this four- step process of critiquing a work of art, we can become more proficient in good observation habits that will serve to make us better consumers and viewers of artworks. We will be able to justify our responses to works of art, based on clear guidelines as related to the elements of art and principles of design.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

The student will view an approved piece of artwork and write a two-page critique about the artwork. The written critique will include the four-stage process of description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

VOCABULARY

Critique - art criticism that involves explaining an artwork and judging it. It attempts to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate works of art.

Concept - something conceived in the mind; an idea or thought that is abstract or realistic

Criticism - the process of making judgments about the merit, value of significance of works of art

Objective Criteria - an unbiased standard on which a judgment or decision may be based

Aesthetic - relating to the beautiful and pleasing to the senses

Craftsmanship - the skillful practice of constructing or making well-designed objects of quality, durability and function

All people who look at art make judgments about it. Some of these are essentially statements of preference, statements that describe what pleases or displeases us. However, there are differences between what we like and dislike, and what we regard as artistically excellent. In the art critique process, we attempt to explain these differences. We also attempt to discover “What is Art?” and “Why do we value some creative products more than others?” This process of looking at art is known as Art Criticism and involves explaining an artwork and judging it. Art criticism attempts to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate works of art. In order to make an intelligent judgment, one needs to have a foundation in art criticism. Knowledge and objective criteria are essential for analysis, interpretation and judgment.

The following is an introduction to the four-stage process of art criticism. The four stages of art criticism, description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation are performed in the order in which they appear.

1. DESCRIPTION

The purpose of description is to point out what can be seen and to slow down the viewer's tendency to form conclusions too quickly. In this initial state of looking at an artwork, the critic/viewer makes a list of that which the art object appears to be made of. Making a list, or a "visual inventory", forces you to notice things that might have been overlooked. The visual inventory includes the elements of art, such as line, shape, color, texture, volume/form, space, and value. The visual inventory also includes what the artwork seems to be made of, (the media), such as paint, clay, pencil, paper, etc. At this point, no mention is made of subject matter, and no judgments are made. In your description, avoid using loaded words or expressions that reveal feelings or preferences. Description is an impartial inventory. Examples of neutral words okay to use in a description are: straight, large, rough, smooth, light, dark, and colors.

2. ANALYSIS

Analysis is another type of description. We are no longer naming or describing the technical features of the artwork. This stage brings into focus the relationships among the elements of art as described in the previous state, with the principles of design such as contrast, balance, proportion, rhythm, movement, emphasis, unity, and repetition/pattern. In the analysis stage, you will describe how the media and elements of art were used to create the special effects that the principles of design produce in art. For example, you may discuss the way the paint is brushed on, or the kind of tools or manipulation used to create a surface. Describe whether some areas are flat and others are modeled. Is there a gentle transition of color or is there a sharp contrast between one area and another. Is the force of gravity natural or do the objects seem to be falling. Is the object believable or is it primitively executed. How are the colors used, and do they create a mood.

Once you determine the answers to some of these or other questions about an artwork, you need to support your statements. For example, if you decide that a painting is abstract, then explain why you feel it is abstract by looking at how the shapes or objects and how they were used to make the artwork.

3. INTERPRETATION

This stage of looking at art is the most difficult, the most creative, and the most rewarding. It is the stage when you have to decide what all your earlier observations mean. In this stage, you attempt to determine what single large idea or concept seems to sum up all of the traits in the artwork. This stage can also be called the explanation of the work of art. What is the artist trying to say?

Some works may be purely decorative and the meanings lie in the optical enjoyment of its surface; other works may symbolize historical events.

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