

The Moral Responsibilities of Artists and Museums.pdf

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A Curriculum Unit for High School Art Students Grades 9-12

Ellen S. Goldberg

Unit Overview:

In this six-week unit high-school art students will learn about and question the expectations of artists and museums to contribute to a dialogue of social commentary that includes moral and ethical viewpoints. They will decide if artists and museums should be held accountable for their practices in that they do influence great numbers of people including those who may be viewing art from different cultural perspectives. Students will also learn that they too are influenced by visual culture and art. It is the duty of educators to make sure students question what they see and through research and guidance interpret the works they view from an informed point of view. In turn when students create their own artworks they will be responsible and accountable about what they produce in terms of how they are being conscientious global citizens. Additionally students will consider how these artworks will be viewed in the future and how they will be considered both morally and ethically. Their final project will be a group mural that will be viewed by the public.

Unit Understandings and Essential Questions

Overarching understandings:

- In times of moral challenge, war, and political distress there is a need for moral guidance.
- Museums, artists and collectors of works exhibited publicly need to be held accountable.
- Cultural perspective determines how artwork is interpreted.
- Ethical practices are continuously questioned in our society, even in the arts.
- Powerful statements can be made through visual communication and art.

Overarching essential questions:

- Should artists communicate about moral and ethical issues?
- Does art have a social, political, or aesthetic responsibility?
- Should ethics and morality determine what is exhibited in a museum?
- Do images taken in before they come to consciousness influence ethical responses?
- How does art or visual imagery deploy cultural codes to solicit empathy?
- Can art be made to encourage ethical reactions from viewers?
- Does art lose its quality in moralism?
- How do value systems matter in the production of artworks?
- Why does cultural affiliation cause different response to art?
- Is it right to create and show images of people during moments of vulnerability?
- What will people in the future think about the artwork of the 20th and 21st centuries in terms of morality and ethics?

Unit Goals and Focus Questions

Students will understand as a result of this unit:

- That people look to artists and museums and their ideas in times of moral challenges.
- Visual images need to be pulled apart in order to understand their place in today's culture.
- Images are interpreted differently dependent upon the cultural perspective of the viewer.
- Artists have different voices depending upon their experiences and cultural backgrounds.
- Artists in the past few centuries have been influential and perpetuate moral and unethical ideas and have risen to fame for both.
- We may be easily influenced by something we don't understand.
- Students should be concerned about their moral responsibilities when they create art and how it may influence viewers.
- Powerful statements can be made through visual communication and art.

What essential and unit questions will focus this unit?

- Do artists and museums of today have a moral obligation and responsibility to their patrons?
- How do images influence our ethical and moral behaviors?
- How does cultural, religious, national, gender, political, socio-economic and racial background determine reaction and moral response to art?
- What does the artwork of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries tell us about European, American and Western society in these times?
- Who are some of the artists in the 19th – 21st centuries that have influenced ideas about and commented on our society?

Projects

Project #1:

Artists and Their Subjects: Social Commentary or Shock Value?

Introduction:

What was considered shocking in the societies of the 19th and early parts of the 20th century is considerably different than what provokes reaction today. In that art before Modernism was more about the object, its function, or the imitation or recording of people, places and events, today's art contains much commentary and expose. Toulouse Lautrec recorded scenes from the free society of Paris in the 1800's. Today's portrayals of the same scenarios are more graphic, assisted with film and photography and reassembled for public display. Should we ask ourselves if these are moral and ethical representations fit for public consumption or just examples of art produced to shock? Diane Arbus photographed her subjects in their element, but portrayed those who were considered different, vulnerable or misfortunate members of our society. Today photographers exhibit work of an even more provocative nature. Salvador Dali created his own iconography and equally outrageous, visual commentary about his times and ideas. In an effort to create fame for himself he used his supreme draughtsman abilities to create works that gained him public attention and fame and also displayed his bizarre behavior in his dress habits and lifestyle. His film *Un Chien Andalou* also created a stir, though when shown today it may not have quite the same shock appeal. In 1998, at the Manege Art Hall, an artist performed *Young Atheist* in which he attacked mass produced icons that belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. This performance brought public outcry and the curator of the exhibit was fired and tried for activities aiming to rouse religious hostility in public. The artist was exiled. And in 2007, at the Sakharov Museum in Russia, artist Yuri Samoduro co-curated an exhibit *Forbidden Art* showing all the artworks censored by Russian museums and galleries in 2006. Many religious in theme, by 2010 the curators were fined \$5000 each for inciting national and religious hatred. There are many more examples. In other countries censorship may have been part of the culture for hundreds of years and remains so to this day. In our society and other Western nations, laws are somewhat different and

allow for freedom of speech. But nonetheless, citizens in many countries do rebel in protest against such artwork that they find morally and ethically repelling. The question is do these artists actually see benefit in the production of these visual commentaries or are they producing work for their own self involvement, shock value or to become famous? People also attach a certain kind of value to objects or ideas and do not want to see them publically desecrated.

Activity:

This lesson will begin with the introduction of the artists Toulouse Lautrec, Diane Arbus, Salvador Dali, Russian artists including Yuri Samaduro and the very visual oriented performing artist, Gene Simmons from the rock group *Kiss*. With the viewing of examples of their artwork and performance covering a period from the 1800's and onward, including images from *Art 21*, we will discuss questions in a discussion format, and create a list of topics from which we will choose a social issue to be the inspiration for a poster design. We will also view episodes of the PBS documentary *Culture Shock*.

Images: <http://pinterest.com/ellensgoldberg/>

Assessment #1: Discussion. As we view this art work we will discuss the following questions: How would you feel about living in a society where the government makes decisions about what art should be displayed? What do you think about the freedoms we have in our society where people have the right to express themselves? Are there any negative drawbacks or positive outcomes that come with having these freedoms? What do you think of these individual artworks in terms of their expressions, commentary, or shock value? Show *Culture Shock* sites.

Assessment #2: Writing. In a sketchbook write a list of topics (**Handout 1**) on which one could create a visual social commentary. Ask yourself and answer these questions: What is art's moral obligation? Does art have social, aesthetic, or political responsibility? Should art reflect the visual consciousness of a nation, the world or just the ideas of its creator, or all?

Assessment #3: Through research find examples of poster designs (**Handout 2**) that offer commentary, ideas and visual depictions of a controversial event, idea, or action that is taking place in our times. Record research and preliminary sketches into a

sketchbook. Use poster board of 11" x 14" size to create final design. You may use drawing, painting and/or collage media. Text can be computer generated or hand lettered. Create a poster and text that will draw attention to and engage an individual or audience to react (non-violently) and get involved in a local, national or global cause you are promoting through your design. Consider how you may be influencing the viewer one way or another. Visual communication is strong!

Assessment #4: Critique. Group discussion about the posters guided by questions in this unit. Should artists communicate about moral and ethical issues? Should artists take responsibility for the actions that may be produced from viewing their visual messages? Will a viewer be able to understand your poster's message without assistance? Are you trying to influence your viewer one way or another?

Assessment #5: Self-evaluation rubric (Class develops this first rubric with some teacher presented guidelines).

Materials: Sketchbook, drawing and painting media, poster board, collage materials, computer access.

Handout 1 and 2

Website; and internet sources:

Diane Arbus: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/jul/26/diane-arbus-photography-sideshow>

Toulouse Lautrec: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_de_Toulouse-Lautrec

Art and Morality: <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100217214308AA7zAv>

Salvador Dali: <http://www.biography.com/people/salvador-dal%C3%AD-40389>

Un Chien Andalou: <http://www.zappinternet.com/video/danPvuMpaX/Un-chien-Andalou-1928>

Kiss: <http://www.kissonline.com/>

Armory Show: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/flashpoints/visualarts/armory.html>

Poster design: <http://speckyboy.com/2010/08/10/30-creative-and-inspiring-poster-designs/>

Culture Shock: See Bibliography for several topics.



Andrei Sakharov Museum

Forbidden Art: The *Young Atheist* performance launched a series of the most incendiary cases of censorship in post-1989 Russia. In January 2003, the exhibition, *Caution: Religion!*, at the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Center in Moscow was vandalized by followers of the ultra-rightwing Orthodox priest, Alexander Shargunov. Criminal charges were brought against the museum director, Yuri Samodurov, the curator Ludmila Vasilovskaya, and the artist Anna Mikhailchuk for "incitement of ethnic, racial, or religious hatred"—a violation of Article 282 regarding blasphemy in the Russian criminal code.

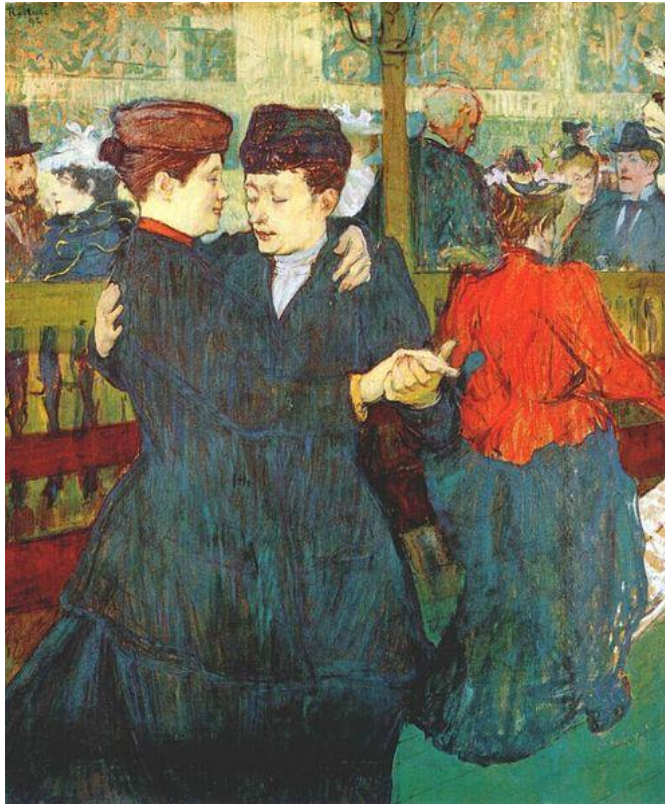
Although charges were ultimately dropped against Mikhailchuk, Samodurov and Vasilovskaya were convicted in 2005 and each fined 100,000 rubles. Tragically, in 2008, Mikhailchuk was found dead, presumably from suicide.

Students will need to know:

- How to research on the internet with provided websites.

Students will be able to:

- Identify the difference between artworks that are merely shocking and ones that make a comment or send important messages.
- Portray an idea on a poster that depicts an item of controversy and social concern and spurs the viewer to become interested and involved.



Henri Toulouse-Lautrec



Salvador Dalí



Self Portrait by Albrecht Durer

Project #2:

Artists, Museums, and Censorship/Public Outrage

Introduction:

In the *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) exhibit of Germany in 1937, 5000 works of art from 32 German museums were seized. These artworks were considered degenerate. The time period these works were shown in Germany was pre-World War II and a time when the Nazis were rising to power. Taking a look at some of the artworks of some of the artists included in the show we will discuss why these works may have been seized and withheld from public view in Germany at this time. There have been other controversial artworks and exhibitions in contemporary times. We will look at some of these exhibits and decide why they may have been seen as controversial or immoral and how the public reacted after viewing the works contained in these exhibits.

Activity:

Students will view artwork from the above exhibition and take part in a facilitated discussion with key questions. They will then research pre-selected sites to find artists or exhibits that have been controversial, and create a four slide power point presentation using criteria on the guideline. Students will present their power points and be assessed with a short rubric.

Image: <http://pinterest.com/ellensgoldberg/>

Assessment #1: Discussion. Consider these questions as you view some of the artworks: Do you think art should be censored by the government if it is on public display and deemed offensive? If so, what criteria should be used to withhold it from public view in an institution? Do you think the artworks shown in Germany in 1937 would be considered shocking, or degenerate today? Why were these artworks considered degenerate? What is it about the passage of time that makes our viewpoints change or causes us to become more hardened? Are we as a society more

accepting of criminal and violent acts and immoral and unethical behavior today? Do we interpret art based upon our cultural backgrounds?

Assessment #2: Using supplied websites (**Handout 3**) research an artist or exhibit that has been considered controversial in ancient to modern times in any country or culture. Answer the following questions: What was it about the time period, or culture in which this artist (or exhibit) created work that would cause it to be controversial or offensive? In your opinion, and with some research, do you think this artist or exhibition had something important to say and if so what? Create a four slide power point presentation with appropriate text to explain your selected artist or exhibit. Include artist's name and background; what the artist or exhibit was trying to communicate; what those who objected said; and include either links or a Pinterest board of labeled photos of artwork. Students will share power point presentations.

Assessment #3: Teacher generated short rubric for power point presentation.

Materials: Computer access, internet and Power Point, sketchbook or journal, writing tools.

Handout 3

Website; and internet sources:

Controversial paintings: [Top Most Controversial Paintings.docx](#)

Marriage to a tree: <http://houston.culturemap.com/newsdetail/12-03-11-15-17-controversial-art-guys-tree-project-at-menil-park-is-vandalized/>

Images:

http://www.google.com/search?q=ancient+controversial+art&hl=en&rlz=1W1TSND_enUS400US401&prmd=imvns&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=9id3UNnCF5KY9QTjkoCgBg&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ&biw=1366&bih=555

Museum controversy: <http://modiya.nyu.edu/handle/1964/256>

Censorship: <http://www.icaphila.org/events/mapplethorpe.php>

Contemporary Saudi artists: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/oct/04/saudi-artists-find-outlet-in-britain>

Students will need to know:

- How to research on the internet and put a Power Point presentation together.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze why certain artists and artworks were considered controversial, taboo, or degenerate in their own time or cultures and what ideas the artists were trying to convey.
- Understand that with the passage of time reactions to the same artworks may change.



Gross Clinic, Thomas Eakins, 1874

Project #3:

Individual Artists Speak Out and are Instrumental in Making Change

Introduction:

Should artists be expected to speak out (through their art) about social, political and global issues of our time? And if so, why should people take notice? Are artists expected to be moral and ethical leaders? Are artists who draw attention to themselves and their ideas through outrageous acts more successful in getting their messages delivered? We will explore several contemporary artists who have through their work and its commentary brought attention to important issues. Public display of their work in museums, film and other venues where people gather has given exposure to these artists' ideas. We will look at one of these artist's techniques and create our own expressions and commentary using a similar approach.

Activity:

Students will view and discuss the artworks of Richard Serra and Kara Walker. We will view film and sites about these artists and learn how they have brought attention to major issues through their art.

Images: <http://pinterest.com/ellensgoldberg/pins/>



[Kara Walker: Google Image Result for blog.artpace.org/...](#)

Assessment #1: Discussion after viewing artworks and film interviews with Richard Serra and Kara Walker. Students will consider the styles of these artists' message delivery and how these artists have drawn attention to major issues. Are their ideas ethical and moral? What do they have to say? Discussion about local, historical, cultural, national, and global issues will also transpire.

Assessment #2: Students will view Kara Walker's work and focus on her technique and why she uses this silhouette style for her work. Guidelines for creating silhouette style cutouts and storyline are located on **Handout 4**. Using reference material or other images to draw from create outline drawings in a sketchbook for final silhouettes to be drawn onto black paper. Cut out shapes and used to create a story about an issue of today that needs attention. Glue black silhouette images onto foam board in storyboard order.

Assessment #3: Share a one page hand written story about your silhouettes and the issue on which you are focusing.

Assessment #4: Group critique with the following points: Discuss how successful the visual imagery tells a story without words or explanation. Students will also comment on scale and craftsmanship of cut out images.

Materials: Black construction paper, scissors, exacto knives, pencils, research materials, sketchbooks, white foam core board, glues (Mod Podge or other water based paper glue).

Handout 4

Website; and internet sources;

Kara Walker: <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/225>

Richard Serra: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/flashpoints/visualarts/tiltedarc.html>

Students will need to know:

- How to research an idea, sketch and create/write a story about an issue that needs to be brought to the public's attention.

Students will be able to:

- Identify some local and global issues of major concern and construct a written commentary about the one they select.
- Create a visual story about the issue they are commenting on by using the silhouette technique of artist Kara Walker.



Richard Serra: Google Image Result for images.nymag.com/...

Project #4:

Artists and Public Art – Murals, Empty Spaces and Other Unique Venues: How Can We Bring Attention to Social and Global Concerns in Our Own Communities?

Introduction:

Students have been learning about artists in history and present times that have produced artwork that communicates a message or expression. Artists and museums present works that may or may not have ethical content or be perceived positively by the public. Yet some of this work does comment on social and global issues that bring these issues to the forefront. But some may be deemed offensive or art for shock value. In other societies and cultures where censorship may exist what may seem mild in our society would be seen as provocative, or offensive to the viewer. But we are learning to question if artists and museums do have moral obligations to the public. In this last lesson for this curriculum unit we will explore mural art and other public art that does express concern for and wants to draw attention to topics of social concern in our communities and around the world. We will explore various public artworks and places where some of this controversial but social commentary is being displayed. Students will study the mural art of Manny Vega and create a design as a group for a mural about a local concern. The mural will be located in a place for public view.

Activity:

In this project we will look at some interesting venues for public art display. Students will consider the ideas that these artworks relay and explore the mural art of Manny Vega. They will then, as a group, design a mural about a local issue that needs attention, and install it in a public place. Students will also document this project in the form of a book.

Images: <http://pinterest.com/ellensgoldberg/>

Assessment #1: Discussion about public art and venues. We will view several segments of *No Longer Empty* and other interesting venues around the world where public art is found. Students will discuss appropriate and successful locations, topics addressed, and question if the presentations are successful in drawing attention to the topics. So do these artworks suggest solutions, stimulate ideas, offer moral obligation or are they just intended to shock?

Assessment #2: Artwork of Manny Vega will be explored via his website. We will discuss his social concerns, work and mural design. We will then consider the concerns of our community. The class will break into groups to discuss possible ideas through a design thinking process of using post-it notes and sketches for a mural design that the entire class will create together. Students will come to a group consensus through elimination of ideas and synthesis of what they want their mural to express. It must be a local issue and two weeks will be allowed for the production of the mural from inception to completion. Students will use a method for creating individual pieces on flat canvas, or other material that can be waterproofed and painted for inclusion in the mural. While designing, the method of this mural construction will be an important constraint. Manny Vega shows an example of this type of group mural design on his website. Process for this Assessment and Assessment #3 is detailed on **Handout 5**.

Assessment #3: During construction students will create a book that uses photos and notes to document this project. (**Handout 5**).

Assessment #4: Students will write about (**Handout 6**) what they have learned in this unit and answer some key questions.

Materials: Post-its, sketchbooks, drawing materials, supplies for mural including water proof wallpaper or heavy weight or canvas sheet paper that can be waterproofed, acrylic paint, gesso, brushes, scissors, exacto knives and exterior glues.

Camera, computer, printer, Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, paper, drawing/painting materials and other to construct a large scale documentary book.

Handouts 5 and 6.



Manny Vega: Google Image Result for 3.bp.blogspot.com...

Web;ites; and internet ;ources;

No Longer Empty: Murals/This Side of Paradise: <http://nolongerempty.org/>

Manny Vega: <http://artbymannyvega.com/>

Public art controversy:

http://www.americansforthearts.org/pdf/networks/pan/doss_controversy.pdf

Public art about social concerns (Images-edited):

http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&rlz=1T4TSND_en_US402&tbm=isch&q=Public+Art+about+social+concerns&oq=Public+Art+about+social+concerns&gs_l=img.12...41685.41685.0.43371.1.1.0.0.0.58.58.1.1.0.cesh..0.0...1.1.NnZkexbwbYM&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&bpcl=35243188&biw=1366&bih=555&wrapid=tlif135006364789211

Students will need to know:

- How to use a camera and work with Photoshop.

Students will be able to:

- Identify local issues and translate sketches and ideas into a final group mural design through the use of the design thinking process.
 - Understand how art, museums, and artists can put ideas out for public display that elicit reaction, interaction, interest, and sometimes generate solutions.
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Appendix A

Handouts:

Handout #1: Topic idea for visual communication. [Handout 1.pdf](#)

Handout #2: Poster project and research guidelines. [Handout 2.pdf](#)

Handout #3: Power Point and research guidelines. [Handout 3 rev..pdf](#)

Handout #4: Silhouette technique. [Handout 4 rev.pdf](#)

Handout #5: Mural and documentary book guidelines. [Handout 5.pdf](#)

Handout #6: Student curriculum evaluation. [Handout 6.pdf](#)



Handout 3 rev.pdf



Handout 4 rev.pdf



Handout 1.pdf



Handout 2.pdf



Handout 5.pdf



Handout 6.pdf

Rubrics:

Assessment Rubric: Project #2-Assessment #3 [Power Point Rubric.pdf](#)

Assessment Rubrics: End of unit rubrics for group project and self-evaluation form for unit. [Group Evaluation Rubric.doc](#) and [End of Unit Self Evaluation Form.docx](#)



Power Point Rubric.pdf



Group Evaluation Rubric.pdf



End of Unit Self Evaluation Form.pdf

Florida State Standards: [Visual Arts Standards.docx](#)



Visual Arts Standards.pdf

Appendix B

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