MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART:

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



GOALS OF THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

This guide is designed to help teachers and students prepare to visit the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where they will participate in a docent-guided tour entitled Modern and Contemporary Art. A second goal of the guide is to help teachers relate aspects of the tour to their school's curriculum and to the state frameworks for history/social science and visual arts.

ABOUT THE TOUR

This tour is designed for students in grades 6–12. The docents engage students in active looking and a discussion of observations and ideas by focusing on a select number of works. The ninety minute tour, centered in the museum's Ahmanson and BCAM Buildings, features European and American works from the 19th century to the present and examines the materials, techniques, and functions of those works. Students will also consider some of the major developments in modern art and the changing role of the artist in society. This tour meets state content standards for visual arts for grades 10 and 11 and for history/ social science for grades 10 and 11.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

LACMA is the largest



encyclopedic museum in the western United States with more than 100,000 works of art. Through its far-reaching collections, the museum is both a resource to and a reflection of the many cultural communities and heritages in Southern California. The collection includes artworks from various cultures from the prehistoric to the present.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE MUSEUM VISIT

After reviewing the glossary, discuss with the class some general questions about art:

- What is your definition of art? What are the traditional subjects of art? What are the tools and materials of art?
- For what different purposes or reasons do artists create art?
- In what ways can works of art reflect the society in which they were made?

When viewing and discussing contemporary art, some entry points to consider may include:

- Does the artist use distinct working methods and processes?
- Has the artwork been created in isolation, in collaboration, with a fabrication team? What kinds
 of materials were used? Traditional, unconventional, or a combination?
- Does the artwork reference elements from popular culture, mass media, or art history?
- Does the artwork serve as a form of critique, questioning or reframing debates about art or society?

In addition to discussing formal qualities (such as color, line, shape, or scale) other themes to consider may include ambiguity, appropriation, humor, irony, and juxtaposition.

GLOSSARY

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

A movement that evolved in New York in the late 1940s and 1950s stressing the physical act of painting and the expression of a feeling or idea

APPROPRIATION

Borrowing imagery or forms to create something new

ASSEMBLAGE

The use of found objects and other unconventional materials to create threedimensional works of art; this technique dates to the 1910s in Europe and the 1930s in California

COLOR

One of the elements of art; artists use color in different ways—to describe nature, to express an emotion or mood, or to symbolize meaning

COLLAGE

The use of paper, found objects, and other non-traditional art materials to create twodimensional works of art. From the French verb coller (to glue), this technique dates to the 1910s in Europe.

CONTEMPORARY

A time period sometimes defined as post-World War II or even as "now."

GLOSSARY

CUBISM

A movement that emerged in France in the early 20th century in which artists attempted to represent various aspects or views of three-dimensional subjects simultaneously

EXPRESSIONISM

A movement in modern art in which artists are more concerned with communicating emotional responses to their subjects than representing how things actually look.

IMPRESSIONISM

A movement, which originated in France in the 1870s, characterized by visible crush strokes, ordinary subject matter, and an emphasis on light and color and their changing qualities.

JUXTAPOSITION

Being placed close together or side-by side, permitting comparison or contrast; visual artists often suggest new meanings through the juxtaposition of existing images or ideas.

LINE

One of the elements of art. Lines vary in length, width, and direction. They can describe structure, define the outline of a shape, or create patterns.

MODERN

A time period sometimes defined as beginning in the 1880s, when major changes in art were taking place

GLOSSARY

NONOBJECTIVE

Work of art having no recognizable subject

POP ART

A movement important in the 1960s in which artists used popular or commercial images found in newspapers, comics, advertising, and consumer goods

REALISM

Techniques by which recognizable subjects are depicted with accuracy or naturalism

SHAPE

One of the elements of art. Shapes may be geometric or organic (irregular). They may form the underlying structure of the composition, or define certain parts (the shape of a man, for example). Shapes that are repeated establish patterns.

SURREALISM

A movement in modern art and writing in which the subconscious, dreams, and chance were sources for inspiration

TEXTURE

One of the elements of art. Texture is the way a surface feels or appears to feel. Textures can range from smooth and soft to rough and hard.

THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES 1929

René Magritte



ABOUT THE IMAGE:

magnitte

The Treachery of Images explores the linguistic rule by which an images of something is identified as the thing itself. At first Magritte's point appears simplistic: a painting of a pipe is not the pipe itself. But in fact it is highly paradoxical. The painting's realistic style and picture-caption format recall advertising, a field in which Magritte worked. Yet advertisements are intended to bring out recognition without hesitation, while this painting provokes the viewer to question. Inevitably the viewer must confront the image of a pipe and the contradictory message "This is Not a Pipe."

WEEPING WOMAN WITH HANDKERCHIEF 1937 Pablo Picasso



ABOUT THE IMAGE:

The weeping woman's face is gnarled and discolored and appears folded and crushed against a dark background. She holds a handkerchief to her face while the other hand rests on her chest. Her eyes and nostrils are stylized, and her tears leave heavy tracks. Her furrowed brow splits her face in two, and her gaping, green mouth reveals agony. Her head teeters atop a pointed neck. The image resembles the *mater dolorosa* (grieving mother of Christ) a theme that was common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish painting, and the sobbing woman with her characteristically Spanish mantilla or head covering is regarded as illustrating the country's devastation from war. Pablo Picasso was one of the most prominent modern artists of the twentieth century. He pioneered cubism, an early modern art movement in which realistic representation is rejected, and several sides of an object are seen simultaneously. Picasso also worked in expressionism, utilizing emotion to distort images, and in surrealism, merging depictions of reality and dream-like imagery. These three styles are seen in the artist's 1937 weeping women series alongside his use of ideograms, conventionalized pictures that stand for a compositional part, such as the drop-like eyes and pendulous tears.

COLD SHOULDER

1963 Roy Lichtenstein



ABOUT THE IMAGE:

Cold Shoulder borrows from the comic strip imagery and mechanical reproduction through the use of Ben-Day dots (the technique where small colored dots are closely-spaced, widely-spaced or overlapping to create colors or optical illusions). The faceless greeting, the iciclelike forms dripping down from the balloon and the depersonalized nature of the Lichtenstein's style all contributes to the cool emotional tone of the painting.

KELLOGG'S CORN FLAKES BOXES 1971 Andy Warhol



ABOUT THE IMAGE:

In Warhol's installation of Kellogg's Corn Flake Boxes, the boxes are stacked in a seemingly haphazard way. They rest on the floor without a base. Since it is impossible to count the boxes. there is an impression of a continuum. This sculpture is considered Pop Art due to its use of a mass-produced, man-made subject matter; the finished sculpture is virtually indistinguishable from its cardboard counterpart. In reference to his boxes, Warhol once said that he "wanted something ordinary," and it was this commonplace, commercial subject matter that angered many of his critics.

BAND 2006 Richard Serra



ABOUT THE IMAGE:

Band is one of the most elegant and complex works by American minimalist sculptor, Richard Serra. Standing roughly 12ft tall and more than 70ft long, *Band* is comprised of four very different cavities whose surface curvature continually changes. Serra has said that he is more interested in shaping space than in making objects; these artworks, in fact, are meant to be experienced by visitors walking in and around the sculptures. Although *Band* is a massive piece of steel construction, its gentle folds and undulations create a flowing rhythmic ease.

URBAN LIGHT

2000–2007 Chris Burden



ABOUT THE IMAGE:

Urban Light consists of 202 castiron lampposts collected and restored by Los Angeles artist Chris Burden. The lampposts come from neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles County and are lit at night. Urban Light's lampposts date from Los Angeles' boom years of the early 20th century. As more and more people moved here, the city spread out to accommodate them. Every new area chose its own design for it's new street lights. Potential homebuyers could gauge the quality and wealth of a neighborhood by the ornate-ness of the lamps that lined its streets. Often, when prospective homebuyers toured a neighborhood, the street lamps were all there was to see.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

After the museum visit

- Following your museum visit, discuss whether or not the students definitions of art and the subject matter and materials of art has changed.
- How do students now define Contemporary Art?
- Does Contemporary Art have specific boundaries? If so, what are they? If not, have students explain.
- What are some of their questions about Contemporary Art?

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

After the museum visit

MAKING MEANING THROUGH MOVEMENT

In art works like *Cold Shoulder*, by Roy Lichtenstein, comic images are removed from their context in order to suggest a number of possible narratives and reference. Similarly, choreographers reference images and popular figures in their work as symbols and metaphors for real life situations.

Divide class into four groups and give each group an image from the news, an advertisement or a comic strip. Each student should select a different part of the image such as a figure, piece of architecture or object to recreate with their body. Ask the students to try to recreate the image as closely as possible. Have the groups stage their scene and freeze as if their photo is being taken. How does their interpretation change the image? Have the other groups give the staging a title or a specific character a quotation. Then compare this title or quotation to the original image. How is the students' reinterpretation different from the original? Is their staging abstract or a literal translation?

ADDITIONAL IMAGES AND INFORMATION ABOUT OBJECTS ON YOUR TOUR CAN BE FOUND BY VISITING COLLECTIONS ONLINE AT WWW.LACMA.ORG

STILL LIFE WITH VIOLIN Georges Braque

BIRD IN SPACE Brancusi

SWEET WILLIAM John Chamberlin

LARGE STANDING WOMAN IV Alberto Giacometti

ANGER Hans Siebert von-Heister,

UNTITLED IMPROVISATION III Wassily Kandinsky

TWO WOMEN Ernst Ludvig Kirchner,

BLACK AND WHITE NUMBER 20 Jackson Pollock

STUDENT DROP OFF MEET DOCENT

6TH STREET

ILSHIRE BOULEVARD

FAIRFAX

LUNCH PICNIC AREA

BUS PARKING ON CURSON AND 6TH STREET

LACMA GENERAL INFORMATION

Please review these regulations with students before arriving at the museum.

MUSEUM RULES

- No touching works of art including outdoor sculpture. Viewers must not come closer than 24 inches to any work of art.
- No touching walls or any parts of installations. No sitting on platforms in the galleries or gardens.
- No eating, drinking, smoking, gum-chewing, excess noise, or running in the galleries.
- All groups must comply with instructions or requests from docents, gallery attendants or security staff.
- Teachers and chaperones must stay with the students at all times and are responsible for student behavior.
- Student assignments that require note taking are not permitted during a docent tour.

ARRIVING AT THE MUSEUM

- Plan to arrive at the museum at least 15 minutes before the tour is scheduled to begin.
- The museum is located at 5905 Wilshire Boulevard where buses should arrive for students to disembark.
- Enter the museum at the BP Grand Entrance on Wilshire Boulevard in front of *Urban Light*. A docent will meet your bus when it arrives.
- Buses should park on 6th Street, which is one block north of Wilshire Boulevard.
- Cars may park on surrounding streets or in the pay parking lot at 6th Street.

LUNCH

Picnicking is permitted at the tables outside the Ahmanson Building, the BP Grand Entrance or in the park; students are welcome to bring sack lunches. Seating is not permitted in the Café or the surrounding patio. Box lunches may be purchased from the Café. Orders must be placed one week before your arrival. Please contact the Plaza Café (323) 857-6197.

MUSEUM REENTRY

If you are planning to visit the galleries after your guided tour please present a copy of their confirmation letter at the Welcome Center on the BP Grand Entrance, or the Los Angeles Times Central Court, to receive free admission tickets. Your group may not enter the galleries until 12 noon when the museum opens to the public.

ENJOY YOUR VISIT

