

Iowa Master Artists in the Twenty-first Century: Online Lesson

Goals: To introduce contemporary Iowa artists
To explore themes, ideas, topics, and media

Title: Landscape and Place--IOWA

Artists: Fred Eaker, Margaret Stratton, Grant Wood, Marvin Cone

Concept: A sense of place is a geographic concept that attempts to define our human relationship with the environment. To help us understand this idea, the writer and philosopher Wendell Berry said, "you can't know who you are if you don't know where you are," and the writer Wallace Stegner said in an essay titled "Sense of place," that "no place is a place" until two things have happened: one, "things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, yarns, legends, or monuments;" and two, "it has had that human attention that at its highest reach we call poetry." Visual artists have a long tradition of recording the relationship between humans and nature whether it is through landscape painting, photographic record, or sculptural tribute. How do their images relate our human sense of dominance, obligation or admiration for the natural world? Looking at three distinct time periods, this lesson will explore the relationship between evolving philosophies about nature and landscape and representations in visual art. (source: PBS <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/naturalworld/lesson2.html>)

Level: Grades 9 – 12

Themes: Place, Time

NATIONAL STANDARDS:

1. Media, techniques & processes
2. Knowledge of structure and functions
3. Choosing and evaluating subject matter, symbols & ideas
4. Understanding visual arts in relation to history & cultures
5. Making connections between visual arts & other disciplines

IOWA STANDARDS:

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
2. Using knowledge of structures (art elements, principles of design) and functions
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and work of others
6. Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Objectives

- Students will research how conceptions of nature are embedded in visual art forms.
- Students will look at the art of specific artists to explore the relationships between humans and place.

- Students will look critically at the images we create today to describe our relationship to landscape and the environment.

Students will create their own works of art that integrate both elements of the landscape-place and time--into the work of art itself.

Materials and Resources

Iowa Master Artists DVD (IPTV Web Site, AEAs)

Fred Easker interview and clip

<http://www.easkerart.com/>

Margaret Stratton interview and clip

<http://www.margaretstratton.com/>

Additional Web Sites

- <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/2aa/2aa15.htm>
Visions of the Frontier: American Landscapes..., High Museum of Art
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/americansublime/>
American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820-1880, Exhibition at the Tate, Britain
- <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/udsonriver.html>
Hudson River School
- <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/M/moran.html>
Thomas Moran
- <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/B/bierstadt.html>
Albert Bierstadt
- http://www.madbbs.com/~rcw/US_history/manifest_destiny.htm
Manifest Destiny
- <http://www.americanwest.com/pages/wexpansi.htm>
History of western expansion

Prints/Slides of Grant Wood and Marvin Cone landscape paintings

Classroom Materials

- Current Newspapers and Magazines

Activities

1) Evolving Visions of Landscape in the Midwest

Manifest Destiny and the American Sublime

Show students some examples of 19th Century landscape painters like the [Hudson River Group](#) who were creating landscape images that reflected religious and political agendas such as Manifest Destiny and westward expansion. The term “sublime” refers to the aesthetic experience of being overwhelmed, filled with awe at something so majestic that it evokes a sense of infinity. The paintings created by the Hudson River Group in the

1880's, including artists such as [Albert Bierstadt](#) and [Thomas Moran](#), were typically large in scale, depicting vast mountain ranges, sunsets, waterfalls, and storms. The work of these 19th century artists responded in large part to the physical features and scale of nature in the New World as well as to the aspirations of Americans in the century following their independence from Britain. Ask students to identify specific connections between particular landscape images from the 19th century Hudson River Group artists and the policies of [Manifest Destiny](#) and Westward Expansion being created and advocated for at the time. .

Taming the Wilderness and Making it Productive

Show students some examples of the work of Grant Wood and Marvin Cone. Grant Wood and Marvin Cone both celebrated the Iowa landscape and documented the patterns and rhythms of plowing, planting, and harvesting. They graphically illustrated the marks that humans made upon the land. Both painted the Eastern Iowa landscape as a swelling, fertile, rolling, fruitful place peopled by serious, hard working people who cared for the land because they lived intimately with it. Ask the students about their connection with the Iowa landscape. What is their experience of the Iowa landscape compared to that of Grant Wood and Marvin Cone?

Contemporary Relationships between the Midwest Land and People

Show the Iowa Master Artists interviews with Fred Easker and Margaret Stratton. Discuss the work of these contemporary artists. How might their images and artistic projects translate into political or moral agendas, philosophies or policies about the environment? How are the images they create participating in a conversation about the environment? What is the conversation about? What is the tone? Where is it going? Are these conversations political? If so, how? What is your personal emotional response to the Iowa landscape? Do you have a political point of view?

(Time: One 45 minute session)

(source: PBS <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/naturalworld/lesson2.html>)

2) Make an Archive

Using magazines, newspapers, the Internet and other sources, create an archive of images that depict the natural landscape and our relationship to the natural world. Categorize and organize your archive according to the major themes that surface in the images you collect. One way to organize them is by the connections they make to current environmental issues and policies.

(Time: One 45 minute session)

3) Create a photo-montage

Using your image archive, tear or cut then arrange and glue selected images on a background. You may want to focus your montage on a single environmental, social, or political issue. Share your unused images with other student artists. Option: Add words or phrases torn from the same sources to your montage.

(Time: Two 45 minute sessions)

Critical Questions:

- How does art illustrate the connections between humans and place?
- How are conceptions of nature embedded in art forms?
- What are the relationships between (environmental) ethics and aesthetics? Between politics and art?
- What are the ways that art serves as a form of communication and as moral education?
- How do particular artists and art movements engage in the issue of environmental ethics?
- What are the visual images we create today that reflect current environmental issues, concerns, and agendas?

Reflection and Evaluation:

- Have students demonstrated an understanding of how conceptions of nature are embedded in visual art forms?
- Have students demonstrated a critical perspective about the ways that artists have represented the relationships between humans and place?
- Have students created a visual montage of images that describes their ideas on relationships between humans and place in the natural environment?

Credits:

Much of the above is taken from PBS.org Art 21 Educational Materials
<http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/naturalworld/lesson2.html>)