

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

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

Title: The Past Comes Back: Appropriation vs. Copying

Artists: Paco Rosic, Picasso, Michelangelo, Francis Bacon

Concept: Artists are storytellers. While some visually narrate real or fictional events in their artwork, others are inspired by myths, religious stories, folklore, and scientific principles that seek to describe the mysteries of our world. This lesson will explore how artists draw from and reinterpret historical events, biblical stories, and other cultural records to create contemporary stories and characters. This activity suggests a way to involve students in creating their own visual story based on personal experience and creative interpretation of visual and literary sources. (source: PBS <http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/naturalworld/lesson2.html>)

Level: Grades 7 – 12

Themes:

NATIONAL STANDARDS:

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

IOWA STANDARDS:

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
2. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
3. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
4. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and work of others
5. Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Objectives

- Students will research how conceptions of history are embedded in visual art forms.
- Students will explore how artists are inspired by world myths, religious stories, historical events, etc. and use these sources to create contemporary stories and artworks.
- Students will look at the work of visual artists who integrate Biblical, mythological, or historical narratives into their work to explore the relationships between artists and historical works of art, as well as the distinction between “appropriation” and “copying”.
- Students will create their own works of art incorporating appropriated images that illustrate a conversation between ideas of the past and present.

Materials and Resources

Iowa Master Artists DVD (IPTV Web Site, AEA's)

Paco Rosic interview and clip -

Website - <http://www.pacorosic.com/>

Prints/Slides of Picasso's *Guernica*, Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel*, Francis Bacon's *Pope Innocent X* and Velazquez' *Pope Innocent X*. Have available a number of art history texts, prints, or other media resources for student research.

Classroom Materials

List on the chalkboard the media options available to the students for use in this lesson. To save time or with younger students, you may want to strictly limit the options to one "modern" medium, say colored markers on 18 x 24 sulfite.

Activities

1)Retelling Stories

In this activity, students explore the mythological, biblical, and historical sources that inspire **Paco Rosic's** work. Through discussion students reflect on their own understanding of Paco's re-telling of traditional stories.

Appropriation in Art

Show the Iowa Master Artists interview with Paco Rosic. Many contemporary artists appropriate images from previous works. "Appropriation" has sometimes been used as a derogatory term for the practice of reworking well known images from paintings or photographs and incorporating them into their own work. Paco Rosic has recreated parts of Picasso's *Guernica* into his own statement about the effects of war. He does not attempt to fool us into thinking that this is Picasso's work; in fact he includes his own signature in the form of an aerosol can. Rosic also recreates Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel but places it in a modern café context. Ask the students to consider connections between the two contexts. For example, consider that humans share a meal in both settings. How are these activities the same? How are they different? Has something new and original been created by Rosic or is he just copying?

The Past Comes Back

The video shows a graffiti-like mural that Rosic says refers to the idea that "*the past comes back*". Ask the students what they think he means. Ask them why they think that Paco Rosic chose these particular works from art history to "come back" and "inform" his own work. How does Rosic use the art of the past to help him make sense of his own world in the 21st century? Show students some other examples that reflect religious and political agendas, especially those that appropriate images from other works. A good example is Francis Bacon's *Pope Innocent X* at the Des Moines Art Center which appropriates from an earlier Velazquez portrait. Discuss the idea of rewriting or

reinterpreting history from a fresh point of view.

Contemporary Artists and their Relationship to Art History

All trained artists study the history of art and are affected by some artworks more than others depending on their own life experience and concerns. Identify some topics or themes that are typically of concern to students. Adolescents may be concerned about personal or identity issues and at the same time about larger issues like the environment, immigration, religion or war. Ask the students if they have seen an artwork (in the classroom, at art museums, in other media) that speaks personally to their own life experience. Ask them to articulate the meaning they get from the work and how it informs their own thinking. **They may agree strongly with the artists point of view or they may disagree.** How might these images participate with their own images in a new artwork? Could they be used to create a contemporary conversation on the topic? What is the conversation about? What is the tone? Where is it going? What is their personal rational and emotional response to this topic?

(Time: One 45 minute session)

2) Research, Think, Plan.

Select an artwork that has informed your thinking and identify the issue, topic or theme that it explores. Using magazines, newspapers, the Internet and other sources, create an archive of contemporary images that participate in a visual conversation on the same issue, topic, or theme. Make a series of sketches showing how you might combine the new view with the old view and create a visual conversation between the historical work and the images of “now”. In a small group, look at each others compositions and help each other choose your best sketch to enlarge. What criteria did you use? What modern medium would best suit your composition?

(Time: One 45 minute session)

3) Create a Visual Conversation

Discuss with your teacher what media options you are allowed to use. Unfortunately, many schools do not allow the use of aerosol. Many do not have the required ventilation equipment. Use a medium that is NOT the same as the historical work. This helps to create a distinction between your work and the appropriated work.

(Time: Two 45 minute sessions)

Critical Questions:

- How does art illustrate the connections between humans and history?
- How are conceptions of historical events embedded in art forms?
- How do the stories about conflicts or wars change with the storyteller?

Consider the statement, “History is told by the winners”.

- What are the distinctions between inspiration, appropriation, and copying?
- What are the ways that art serves as a form of communication? Does art tell “the

truth"? Whose truth does it tell?

- How do particular artists of the past create conversations with people today?
- How will the visual images we create today be interpreted by future viewers?

Reflection and Evaluation:

- Have students demonstrated an understanding of how conceptions of history are embedded in visual art forms and change with the storyteller?
- Have students demonstrated a critical perspective about the ways that artists have represented the relationships between humans and history?
- Are students familiar with a range of contemporary visual artists who integrate mythological, historical, and/or religious stories into their work?
- Have students demonstrated an understanding of the role of appropriation in the making of new artworks?
- Have students created a composition that combines their own ideas on a topic in conversation with a historical artwork?

Credits:

Some of the above is taken from PBS.org Art 21 Educational Materials (<http://www.pbs.org/art21/education/naturalworld/lesson2.html>) Look for other artists in the Art 21 series who use appropriated images in their works.