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**Art criticism: A "reading" of the visual arts**

**Johnston, Jerre Lynn, M.A.**

**The University of Arizona, 1987**

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ART CRITICISM: A "READING" OF THE VISUAL ARTS

by

Jerre Lynn Johnston

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ART

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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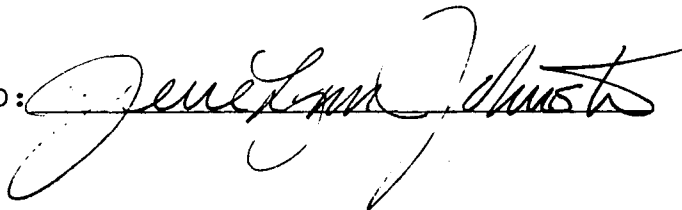
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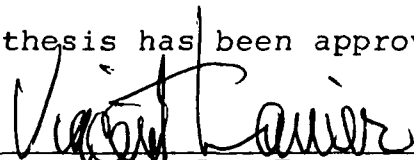
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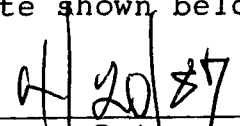
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## ABSTRACT

The art criticism model described in this paper has a structure derived from a semiotic (or linguistic), hermeneutic approach as well as from educational theory. Its purpose is to establish a rationale and theoretical base for an art criticism model that implements a questioning strategy emphasizing the visual and linguistic metaphor as an inroad to critical thinking about art. The dialogue model is developed on the hypothesis that an art criticism questioning strategy within the framework of Broudy's aesthetic scanning model fosters art critical skills and can be conducive to substantive question-answer dialog. Its methodology is developed from the findings of educational research. Because value judgments are placed not only on types of learning, but on learning responses as well, the relationship of value theories (subjective judgments) to the creative, interpretive responses made by students is also discussed.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The study of teaching-learning procedures as linguistic processes (Green, 1983; U. S. Department of Education, 1974, 1977) has its roots in disciplines such as linguistics, cognitive science (i.e. information processing), anthropology (i.e. ethnography of communication), and sociology. Research findings highlight methodological advances about the nature of the classroom as a communicative environment, the relationship between teaching and learning processes, and evaluation of learning and performance by adopting a linguistic perspective or approach to the study of educational events and processes (Green, 1983).

Every approach to research brings with it certain assumptions, procedures, and principles. Disciplines also contribute to approach differences. Schulman (1981) has stated the issues succinctly:

What distinguishes disciplines from one another is the manner in which they formulate their questions, how they define the content of their domain and organize the content conceptually, and principles of discovery and verification that constitute the ground rules for creating and testing knowledge in their fields. These principles are different in different disciplines (p. 6).

"While Shulman has presented these distinctions for different disciplines, an argument can be made that these distinctions also apply to the new perspective and approach that has recently emerged to the study of teaching and learning as linguistic processes" (Green, 1983, p. 181).

Linguistic terms are employed in the determination and analysis of the underlying system of the visual arts. Because art criticism or the structure of critical thinking demands language, art is a language-dependent thought process. Just as the artist finds or creates the structural, expressive, visual equivalent of an idea, so too, must the art educator create a structural, expressive verbal equivalent.

"How can words express what words can never express" (Eisner, 1979, p. 197)? How do we translate the rigor and exhilaration of an encounter with the artist's preternatural capacity for distilling visual sensation, when often the encounter more than compensates for the frustrating awareness that our experience of these enigmatic objects is almost impossible to put into words? Why, for instance, do we respond to certain forms and not others? What makes us think something is "just right?" Why do we so often need to invest abstract forms with meaning? Why is there always some lurking anthropomorphism in our response to freestanding vertical shapes?

Making sense of these experiences and their products comes about as we interact with our environment in our attempts to comprehend, construct, and convey literal and metaphoric meaning. The core of those attempts is what Feinsein calls, "The fundamental act of symbolic transformation" (1982). The successful resolutions of these attempts lie at the heart of the critical act.

Although other means of communication are at work in aesthetics, language can lead toward and indicate those other means. So that instruction may become a reality, the aesthetic educator must be conversant with the nondiscursive language or art. To be effective art educators, they should be familiar with the metaphorical, heuristic, and symbolic character of words to translate knowledge held in one mode, into another. This is the mode within which the artist works, moving into that with which the critic speaks. Developing abilities to express the language of expressive forms, or as Greer says, "to attend to works of art in recognized and shared ways, and to place them in their historical and cultural contexts is a feature of the discipline-based approach to teaching art" (Greer, 1984, p. 215).

The interpretive-hermeneutic orientation, originating in the philosophical stance of phenomenology illuminates the art criticism component of discipline-based art

education. Hermeneutics, the study of understanding and interpretation, states that meaning and meaningfulness are contextual (related to a perspective from which events are seen), and that phenomenological seeing entails interpretation to the extent that it elucidates, represents, translates, or somehow brings something to understanding (Pearse, 1983).

Discipline-based art education, initially a focus for the development and clarification of theory rather than a program of instruction, has become synonymous with curriculum development and program innovation. Taught sequentially, its instructional goals are based on four parent disciplines: art history, art criticism, studio art, and aesthetics. It introduces systematic instruction grounded in the principles of aesthetic inquiry.

This inquiry includes the analytic aesthetics of Monroe Beardsley (1958), Smith (1971, 1983) and Broudy (1983), the theoretical methods of Weitz (1956) and Eisner (1972, 1982), and the systematic formats of Feldman (1967, 1981), Lanier (1982), Broudy (1972), and many other art educators who provide adjunct approaches. Students are instructed in how to describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate works of art, providing a framework upon which to make later studies of judgement.

Of the four parent disciplines, art criticism is the conscious intention to create an expressive language or dialogue that interprets the expressive forms perceived in the visual arts. "Connoisseurship is the act of appreciation; criticism is the art of disclosure" (Eisner, 1979, p. 193). Criticism is the art of disclosing the qualities of events or objects that connoisseurship (or prior art historical knowledge) perceives.

Art criticism is the attempt to create an interaction between the actual work of art and ambiguity of its symbolic reference. "It is one thing to translate one language into another, and between languages there are difficulties. But to expect to translate what is known in a visual mode into a discursive mode is to use the term translate metaphorically" (Eisner, 1979, p. 197). Eisner continues:

What critics do or should try to do is not to translate what cannot be translated but rather to create a rendering of situation, event, or object that will provide pointers to those aspects of the situation, event, or object . . . that are in some way significant (Eisner, 1979, p. 197).

Or as Kozloff states:

Criticism's merit lies exactly in the fact that it is neither a work of art nor a response, but something much rarer, a rendering of the interaction between the two. Best, then, that it reconcile itself to virtual rather than actual meanings, the ambiguity of symbolic reference as opposed to the pidgeon clarity of signs (Kozloff, 1969, p. 10).



The dialogue model explicates the language of art criticism to guide students in responding to works of art. The language of the visual arts, a syntax that does not follow the forms of logic used in verbal and written discourse, can be revealed through dialogue. A review of the research on instructional questions which prompt dialogue indicates that questioning strategies developed within taxonomic divisions require a much-needed methodological specificity to art criticism (Hamblen, 1984). Art criticism formats provide only general guidelines and suggestions, omitting the nature of the linguistic metaphor as a fundamental component of the dialogue model.

Existing taxonomies and Broudy's perceptual scanning structure, with its emphasis on the expressive properties of the linguistic metaphor (Broudy, 1972), necessitate a level of critical inquiry that develops the nondiscursive language of art as an essential inroad to the aesthetic experience.

The art criticism model described in the paper has a structure derived from a semiotic (or linguistic), hermeneutic approach as well as from educational theory. Its purpose is to establish a rationale and theoretical base for an art criticism model, that implements a questioning strategy, emphasizing the visual and linguistic metaphor as an inroad to critical thinking about art.

The study will not attempt to examine the effect of verbalization on the processing and retention of visual art information, or develop a new taxonomy. This study does not evaluate learning performance, but instead poses a formal basis for linguistic processing in the visual arts vis a vis the dialogue model with an emphasis on the heuristic device of metaphor.

The first hypothesis is that art criticism as a dialogue model can be organized within a perceptual scanning structure.

The second hypothesis is that the nature of visual metaphor as a fundamental component of the dialogue is only inferred in a standardized taxonomy and must be elucidated if synthesis of the disparate meanings inherent in works of art are to be transferred verbally.

The third hypothesis is that value judgements are placed not only on types of learning, but on types of learning responses as well. Here the attempt to place art criticism models into classification systems brings into question the relationship of value theories to dialogue models. This attempt raises the hypothetical question, can the directed questions of teachers and the creative responses of the student be value free?

The definitions of the terms used in this study are divided into three examples or paradigms. A paradigm is

commonly described as any pattern, example, or model. They are the empirical-analytic, the interpretive-hermeneutic, and the critical-theoretic paradigms (Pearse, 1985).

The empirical-analytic paradigm is useful in investigating intellectual, and technical knowledge. Terms in this example are: cognitive, discursive, and taxonomy. Cognitive or cognition is the act or process of knowing usually associated with intellectual thought. Cognitive questions are concerned with intellectual understanding. The language of science is discursive, aiming at precise literal descriptions organized according to principles of ordinary logic. A taxonomy is a classification system and is the structure on which questioning strategies are based.

The interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm is a method that moves us from matters of scientific fact to essences or universals that search for the deep structure of human events and actions. Terms in this example are: metaphor, nondiscursive, and affective. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something that is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance. In the visual symbol system as in the linguistic, metaphor is a potent stimulus for generating associations and tapping new, different, or deeper levels of meaning (Feinstein, 1982). The language of art is nondiscursive, symbolical, and metaphorical, and is organized

according to the different logic of presented forms. Affective pertains to the emotional aspects of a mental process. Affective questions are concerned with emotions, attitudes, and values.

The critical-theoretic paradigm probes for tacitly held intentions and assumptions and questions underlying beliefs, ideologies, and practices. Terms in this example are: syntax, semantics, and epistemology. Syntax is the structure of a sentence and phrases from words in a particular language. Semantics in linguistics is the study and change of meaning. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowing.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature dealing with verbal guides to interpretation or dialogue models developed within taxonomic divisions indicates a much needed methodological specificity to art criticism and the heuristic use of metaphor. Art criticism dialogue models and taxonomies, the use of the linguistic metaphor as a heuristic device, and the relationship of value theories to dialogue models are three components pertaining to art criticism as a vehicle of instruction that examine the meaning and significance of works of art.

#### Art Criticism Dialogue Models and Taxonomies

Talking about art in the classroom occurs with increasing frequency in art education literature as a significant dimension of education in the visual arts (Lanier, 1968; Broudy, 1972; Clements, 1970; Ecker, 1973; Feldman, 1981; Hamblen, 1984; Hurwitz & Madeja, 1977; Mittler, 1972; Perkins, 1977; Smith & Smith, 1977; Johansen, 1982).

What has been lacking is a teaching methodology or model specific to the linguistic processes of art criticism.

The proclivity in art education is to define and organize its discipline-based content (in this case, art criticism models) according to standardized formats or taxonomies. Questions about content are then formulated according to categories or general taxonomic domains. To date the taxonomy has afforded educators a consistent, relatively precise, and commonly accepted language with which to describe learning behaviors that are readily transferable from context to context (Hamblen, 1984). The taxonomy is built on the type of thinking that is elicited, rather than the type of question used.

There is a variety of verbal guides to interpretation that gives the art teacher general guidelines upon which to base dialogues. Many of these formats are strikingly similar to the main thrust of Bloom's taxonomy. For each of the levels of Bloom's taxonomy, Cleeg et al. (1968), Sadker and Sadker (1977), and Sanders (1966) have identified key words, typical question words, and basic processes. The key word indicates the semantic term that is most descriptive of the category (Hamblen, 1984). The idea is to qualify a specific word as the organizer of a question.

Although some formats are more elaborate and there are semantic and theoretical differences, most include, in some manner, the basic components of critical thinking:

description, interpretation, and evaluation. For talented and gifted students, Sisk (1976) proposes a questioning model of art criticism that is composed of four interrogative models: empirical (description), relational (analysis and interpretation), valuing (judgement), and feeling (commitment). Within Gagne's theoretical framework of learning, Armstrong and Armstrong (1977) developed a model that calls for art criticism discussions in the following areas: informational (description), leading (classification and analysis), and probing (relationship formation and conclusions) (Hamblen, 1984).

Johansen (1982) describes an interactive dialogue between teacher and student that starts with what she calls impression (holistic description), proceeds to expression (description and interpretation of parts and relations), and then culminates with commitment (judgement). Johansen's dialogue methodology, based on questioning strategies, is directed toward art objects rather than the student's own art production.

Finally, the most familiar and referred to art criticism format is the Feldman (1981) model (also used by Mittler, 1982) that consists of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Feldman (1973) has described art criticism as "more or less informed, and more or less organized, talk about art" (p. 50).

Bersson has clarified this "more or less" stance, suggesting that:

Current models of art critical inquiry, like most current pedagogical approaches, tend to be primarily concerned with intellectual skills, the student being taught how to systematically describe, analyze, interpret, and judge works of art. What is needed is a level within the structure that motivates and gives meaning to the analytical procedures (Bersson, 1982, p. 38).

While standardized formats abound, the general lack of art criticism instruction suggests that both more organization and more information is necessary on teaching methodologies specific to the critical mode. Hamblen suggests that "a questioning strategy developed within Bloom's taxonomic divisions would offer a much needed specificity to current art criticism," and that "most of the art criticism formats discussed provide only general guidelines and suggestions" (Hamblen, 1984, p. 46).

As a result Hamblen has formulated an art criticism questioning strategy implemented within the framework of Bloom's taxonomy. Hamblen proposes that Bloom's taxonomy provides a framework for sequenced, analytical and problem solving learning that is consistent with current but more generalized art criticism formats (Hamblen, 1984). According to her own assessment, however, a major problem with Bloom's taxonomy is "the separation of the affective (discovery learning) from the cognitive, and the use of cognition to mean essentially intellectual and logical



thought processes rather than all knowledge modalities" (Hamblen, 1984, p. 43). With the art criticism model developed by Hamblen, an attempt is made to integrate the effective and cognitive taxonomic divisions by incorporating elaborative questions with values, attitudes, and affective commitments (Hamblen, 1984).

Because questioning strategies are based on key categories in the taxonomic, domain, definitions are required. Cognitive questions are concerned with intellectual understanding, affective questions with emotion, attitudes and values. Each domain contains a hierarchy of levels that represents different types of thought or valuing processes. These two classification systems separate semantically the affective from the cognitive, and according to Kissock and Iyortsunn, "the cognitive domain is the most commonly used of the two domains" (Kissock and Iyortsunn, 1982, p. 9).

The value of these taxonomies, for questioning, lies in the categories of thinking and valuing. In the cognitive domain the categories include knowledge, or recall, comprehension (including translation and interpretation), application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). Affective domain categories include receiving, responding valuing, organizing a value set, and characterizing by value complex (Krathwohl et al., 1964, p. 9).

When referring to a taxonomy level concerning the valuing process (affective domain), where the sample question and the action taken are presented, Kissock and Iyortsunn indicate that it is

. . . often difficult to exactly distinguish the five levels of this taxonomy from each other, especially when trying to classify a particular question or action. Teachers need only concern themselves with understanding the general characteristics and actions that represent each of the levels in developing and demonstrating attitudes (Kissock and Iyortsunn, 1982, p. 12).

The value domain, with its placement of value judgements, is of critical concern; but synthesis is the only category where the student is required to communicate in an original way. Here it is separated from the affective domain and placed in the cognitive. It is also removed from the level of comprehension, which includes translation and interpretation. This further confuses, in that synthesis or creativity could conceivably be realized in this area. In Bloom's taxonomy, the synthesis category is the only place where a unique form of communication is required. It is the only category where metaphor may be inferred, and where varying levels of abstraction can be processed and verbalized.

The distinctions between divergent thinking, or multiple levels of thinking that are found in the affective domain, and conceptual thinking, found in the cognitive domain, also separate rather than integrate understanding and interpretation, which lead to discovery learning. This

methodological approach would suggest a breach or "frame clash" where the flow and rhythm of creative thinking is disrupted.

Another limitation, in addition to semantic separation, is the idea of subsumption or generalization. In each of the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, for example, key words have been identified as typical question words and basic processes. The key word indicates the semantic term that is most descriptive of the category. One example is the key word for the synthesis category, create; "this word subsumes the many new ways new and unique combinations are formed" (Hamblen, 1984, p. 46).

Inasmuch as most of the art criticism formats discussed provide only general guidelines and suggestions and require specificity, terms, key words, or typical question words must be meaningful and complete. Definition and classificatory analysis affect the teaching-learning process (Kuhn, 1980). Unless distinctions are carefully made, and categories and their terms elucidated, questioning strategies cannot be rightly interpreted and their intended meanings will be missed or distorted.

Complex learning processes require an investment of student interest and involvement that questions can elicit. What is needed, however, is a level within the structure that motivates and gives expression to these analytical

procedures. This is the articulation of critical strategy; a rendering of the work of art's facticity explicit, and its meaning implicit.

### The Use of Linguistic Metaphor as a Heuristic Device

Linguistic terms are employed in the determination and analysis of the underlying system of the visual arts. In the past decade, there have been numerous scholarly publications on the topic of metaphor (e.g., Haynes, 1975; Goodman, 1976; Pollio, Barlow, Fine, and Pollio, 1977; Ortony, 1979; Sacks, 1979; Honeck and Hoffman, 1980; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Johnson, 1981; Gardner, 1982, 1983; Feinstein, 1982, 1984, 1985; Hausman, 1983; Perry, 1984; Diblasio, 1985).

Because art criticism or the structure of critical thinking demands language, art is a language-dependent thought process. Langer contends that the metaphor is not only an essential process and product of thought, but that art is also metaphor. Her views serve to justify arts education on epistemological grounds, thus establishing arts education as basic to the cultivation of intelligence (Feinstein, 1982).

In her introduction to Meaning and Visual Metaphor, Feinstein (1982) explains:

The power of metaphor lies in its potential to further our understanding of the meaning of experience, which in turn defines reality. In art and in language, metaphor urges us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and to tap new, different, or deeper levels of meaning. The metaphoric process reorganizes and vivifies; it paradoxically condenses and expands; it synthesizes often disparate meanings. In this process, attributes of one entity are transferred to another by comparison, by substitution, or as a consequence of interaction (Feinstein, 1982, p. 44).

Because there are separations in generalized taxonomic domains between divergent thinking, or multiple levels of thinking (which include the metaphor), that are found in the affective domain, and conceptual thinking, found in the cognitive domain which lead to discovery learning, a framework that integrates and displays linkage to cognitive structures like concepts is necessary. According to Perry (1984):

Language makes use of and issues in cognitive structures, and these have primacy as a state of mind. Hence, if there are other things to communicate in the arts, then either they must, as structures, display linkage to cognitive structures like concepts, or else they don't have structures and are peripheral to a cognitive core (Perry, 1984, p. 21).

Broudy's aesthetic framework and perceptual approach to scanning works of art involves four properties for the elucidation of discovery learning: The sensory, formal, expressive, and technical. The purpose of this approach is to increase the student's range of response to works of art by learning to see what there is in the work (this is the sensory property). As a methodology, this format differs

semantically in that the basic components of critical thinking--description, interpretation, and evaluation--are centered in the expressive properties level. This level translates metaphorical and presentational characteristics into the pervasive qualities of what Broudy calls "mood language," which includes "idea and ideal language and dynamic states" (Broudy, 1972).

This format specifically addresses the cultivation of the student's receptivity to expressiveness via metaphor. Broudy states, "This expressiveness is achieved by giving form to a sensory content, creating a surface on which meaning and value import are presented directly for imaginative perception" (Broudy, 1972, p. 43). In Broudy's expressive property area we encounter the level of language which is the divergent idea of aesthetic experience not found in the cognitive, affective taxonomic domains.

This investigation of current taxonomies reveals that art criticism as a methodology requires the linguistic metaphor which has previously only been inferred or subsumed at the synthesis level, but not specifically elucidated.

For each of the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, Cleeg et al. (1968), Sadker and Sadker (1977), and Sanders (1966) have identified key words, typical question words, and basic processes. The key word indicates the semantic term that is most descriptive of the category. For example, the key word for the synthesis category is create; this word subsumes the many ways new and unique combinations are formed (Hamblen, 1984, p. 46).

The linguistic metaphor, a level of interpretation that urges us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and tap deeper levels of meaning, is essential to the aesthetic response that is inherent in art critical skills. This is the divergent idea of aesthetic experience, the major goal of discipline-based art education (Lanier, 1963).

#### The Relationship of Value Theories Dialogue Models

Models of dialogue and the instructor's response to students are subjective, and at times biased. According to Eisner, the potential liability of such a repertoire is that classification and recognition abort perception. We may, as he says, "overlook what is unique by the precocious application of preconceptions. To avoid this, what we seek is a balance between the inclination toward perceptual exploration and the use of a repertoire of expectations that make exploration fruitful" (Eisner, 1979, p. 319).

Some of the more questionable aspects of Bloom's taxonomy, according to Hamblen, are the "pretensions of universalism, strict linear categorization, claims of complete coverage of learning behaviors, and the placement of value judgements on types of learning" (Hamblen, 1984, p. 44). When this occurs, value judgements are placed not only on types of learning, but on types of learning

responses as well. Here the attempt to place art criticism models into classification systems brings into question the relationship of value theories to dialogue models.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS OF ART CRITICISM

The critical climate of today is considerably more diversified from that of the previous two decades, both in terms of the kind of writing it has produced and the interdisciplinary thought and study of its writers.

Philosophical, Structuralist, Deconstructive, Impressionist, Political: Marxist, and Feminist--each form of art criticism has as its bedrock sources ranging from Heidegger and Sartre, to Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, and Adorno, to mention only a few. Each form of criticism takes a set of widening circles, from the uniquely particularized placement in terms of broad cultural developments, to absolutes of relationships between language, speech and action. Each form reveals itself however, as a choice, pluralistic and contingent. Philosophy (including the philosophical stance of phenomenology), linguistics, anthropology, applied and behavioral sciences, among others, serve as a point of reference, a model, and become incorporated into the fabric of dialogue. Art criticism is thus linked to a larger world of intellectual endeavor and is likely to include political, cultural, and sociological, as well as purely formal analysis.

Seen as a kind of "wild-life preserve," criticism becomes a form of narrative that depicts a conflict and functions through mediation between one or more set of opposites.

The interpretive-hermeneutic study of understanding and interpretation is used as an operational approach to this critical mediation of the visual arts. Central to hermeneutics is the concept "that meaning and meaningfulness are contextual (related to a perspective from which events are seen), and that the consciousness of the individual is relevant to the interpretation" (Pearse, 1983, p. 161). Consciousness is connotative as well as cognitive. In suggesting avenues of approach to the work, the critic must acknowledge the contingency of his or her own consciousness and not attempt to capsule the work in a hermetic description. "Art criticism is a branch of criticism in general, and like criticism in general it is a way of educating consciousness, of making one aware of invisible significance behind visible reality, whether in art or anything else" (Kuspit, 1977, p. 41).

This interpretive-hermeneutic orientation originates in the philosophical stance of phenomenology, where the interest is in experientially meaningful, authentic, intersubjective understanding. The root activity of this orientation is communication. As a method of inquiry,

hermeneutics and phenomenology speak to the repeatability and identity of meaning instead of generalizability, reliability, and validity (Pearse, 1985). It is the attempt to "break through the surface of everyday utterances, actions, and interactions to the structures which are embedded on deeper levels" (Van Manen, 1978, p. 47).

The chief advocate and practitioner of this method of inquiry in art education has been Beittel (1973, 1978). His research on the nature of the drawing process of individual artists, both professional and untutored and his related writings demonstrate that disciplined inquiry can be compatible with artistic sensibilities" (Pearse, 1985, p. 12). Another current approach to research in art education that can be situated within the interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm is Eisner's method of educational criticism (Eisner, 1979). His concern is for the understanding of contextual meaning from the perspectives of the participants.

In his discussion of, The Forms and Functions of Educational Connoisseurship and Educational Criticism, he states that, "not only can the 'perceptive' side of educational decision making be regarded as an artistic activity, but the expressive side can be, as well" (Eisner, 1979, p. 197). Educational criticism, a form of educational inquiry that is qualitative in character, Eisner says,

"takes its lead from the work that critics have done in literature, theater, film, music, and the visual arts" (Eisner, 1979, p. 197). One of the most significant differences that the word criticism is intended to convey is in the conscious intention to create an expressive language in criticism that artistically renders the character of the expressive forms perceived in the classroom (Eisner, 1979).

One aspiration of Eisner's is to "contribute to the legitimation of artistic forms for describing, interpreting, and evaluating what goes on in classrooms and schools" (Eisner, 1979, p. x). He states that,

. . . we have been taught to use a language in education that attempts to emulate the language used by our colleagues in the natural sciences, on the one hand, and that of those working in the industrial-military areas on the other. . . . Our language, we have been told, should be precise, operational, unambiguous, and technical: Entry and exit behaviors, reinforcement contingencies, retroactive inhibition, target populations, mathemagenic behavior, and the like; these have been part of our language, a language criticized by many literate people as incomprehensible jargon (Eisner, 1974, p. xi).

Eisner's claim is not that technical language has no place in educational discourse, but rather that there are other expressive modes that also have a place. "Surely," he says, "there needs to be a place for metaphor, poetic statement, the non-operational comment or insight, the descriptive assertion that one cannot measure" (Eisner, 1974, p. 52).

Although the forms and functions of educational connoisseurship and criticism are linked to the essences and significance in the observation of educational events, or the activities of teachers and students, Eisner does believe that "criticism itself is an art form" (Eisner, 1979, p. 1). The same qualitative inquiry that is made into the classroom is found in the work of those who inquire into the work of artists--namely the art critics. The art critic realizes the difficult task of rendering the essentially ineffable qualities constituting works of art into a language that will help others perceive the work more deeply. Here Eisner's interest in the critical analysis of the classroom dynamic, using expressive language, further examines the way general education instruction is to be delivered and described.

Art is already an interpretation in the broad sense. It is impossible to assign any objective reality to it. The critic, meaning the student as well as the viewer, can find the style of the interpretive function of creating in the transformation which that creation inflicts on everyday communication. "The art critic is the collaborator of the artist in developing the culture of visual works as a resource of human sensibility; the basic function is to extend the artist's act into the realm of meaningful discourse" (Rosenberg, 1975, p. 142).

With this critical discourse, the artwork may be critically comprehended and culturally appropriated in terms other than the artist's stated intention, which does not so much safeguard the meaning of the work as shrivel it. If the work is left to its own obvious appearance and to that of the artist's intent, it will never become significant. Kuspit speaks of the work which, if left to itself behind the fence the artists builds for it, "becomes dust" (Kuspit, 1977). The force of criticism, he states, "rips that fence away and the work shows its power by surviving the onslaught of a criticism that seeks to 'undermine' it--to prove that it is something other than it appears to be, to exhibit it in unexpected ways" (Kuspit, 1977, p. 41).

Criticism, then, calls into crisis what we look at and how we think about a work of art. It is a genuine dialectic, a contest in the Greek sense of word agon. The contest that the viewer/critic sets up is between the work and its intention or meaning. Without intention there is no contest, no crisis of meaning (in the Kantian sense), for all works are essentially without purpose in the way that they are removed or isolated from reality and personal survival. To grasp the work's intentionality, the critic's own intentionality must be dialectical. The critic, as Kuspit suggests, becomes a participant observer (participant creator, even) in the work, witnessing his or her own

intentionality, as well as the works, as a complex, or construct (Kuspit, 1977).

One can speak of a certain artist or style of work; but there are collective works as well. A work can be set free from its producers and from its virtuoso art-marks. The claim of the artist's intention upon the critic's judgment has been repeatedly challenged in various theories dealing with the intentional or extrinsic approaches to art. But, according to Kraus, "criticism is understood through the forms of its arguments, through the way that its method, in the process of constituting the object of criticism exposes to view those choices that precede and predetermine any act of judgment" (Kraus, 1985, p. 1). This is the structuralist contention that cultural production is primarily a matter of codes and conventions, rather than of such discredited concepts as "intentionality," "originality," "subjectivity," etc.

Meaning, therefore, need not coincide with what the artist invested in it. It will depend upon who looks at the work and in what circumstances. In this light, one must also make the distinction between "meaning" and "significance." Meaning is that which is presented by a collection of images or signs (text). Significance, however, differs from meaning in that it names a relationship between meaning and the person looking at the work; it can be a concept or a

situation as well. Meaning is always interior, internalized in the work (indirect and direct); significance differs as it is chosen, taken perhaps with other signification and carefully placed within, as Montaigne said, our private dictionaries.

So a work of art depends on the viewer's purpose. One student may relate to a work of art, or a form of useful criticism, because of a particular interest; another will construe a work or method in such a way that it accords as much as possible with his/her own views and maximizes aesthetic value. But statements and questions about a work or method can be justified as well in terms of a particular standard or standards of interpretation. This calls for the viewer to make an implicit or explicit decision as to how a work should be looked at.

The meaning of a work can be chosen because it has been said to have a class of experiences that are shared by all people; that the work ought to make the viewer respond in a certain way; should be based on artistic intention, should be looked at from its various parts to form a collective whole. These shoulds give "factual claim" to the class of experiences within interpretation.

Yet phenomenologically, the interpretation of a work as well as its methods of explication is determined by the "historical situation" of the viewer. The process of



understanding is a fusion between the viewer and the work. This is based on the hermeneutic thesis that understanding the whole (work) depends upon the understanding of the parts. There is no objective understanding; the only criterion for determining whether or not interpretation is correct is the coherence of the various parts of the work under the interpretation in question.

The most widely accepted notion, of course, in looking at a work of art is that the work depends on rules of public convention, and that coherence and complexity (i.e. "taste," "aesthetic value") are to be understood by these rules. The question arises: How can one guide students through the maze of critical methods so that they can respond on their own, both intelligently and creatively, to a work?

There are many methods available to the art critic as well as to the viewer. However, simply stated, there are two: The descriptive (contemporary empirical) form of criticism and the idealistic form of criticism. The descriptive form is factual, neutral in its process, and down-to-earth; there are no flights of fancy. Description is a limited immediate response to the work that precludes further reflection on it and forces all reflection to one level; it also inhibits the capacity to create the general ideas that can. If one bases response solely on what is

known or grasped, then the work's locus as a springboard is severely hampered. There will be no leaps and bounds in thinking.

Yet, in the pluralistic art world of today, particulars do seem better because of the variety and mass of art production, limiting the ability to make presumptions about its general nature. This empirical criticism of particulars allows the work its independent nature, outliving all the ideas attached to it. Proponents of idealistic criticism would argue, in response to this belief, that the reason any work of art outlives the moment of its making and seems to transcend its own particularity is because it is critically mediated. In the last analysis the presence of the work, its way of being present, depends upon critical reflection.

Traditional idealistic criticism, geared to judgment, subsumed the particular work under a general idea of art, in effect assuming that the work was vital and viable only to the extent that it exemplified the idea. But a "revitalized idealistic criticism" (Kuspit, 1977) allows a work its eternal quality; it outlines its particularity. It is Emersonian, so to speak: Transcendental, ephemeral, and at times, equally conventional and pre-established. Idealistic criticism is, however, more than a recording of facts. It can be an active endeavor, a creative process

akin to the making of the work. Idealistic criticism counters descriptive criticism by speaking about topicality, undisclosed depths of meaning, and untold presences, in which the critic/viewer can probe and yet never complete because the work continues to change, continues its immediacy through any number of methods, strategies, and subversions. This is the way of Erato, who presides over lyric and amorous poetry. Her look is the look evoked by lovers. Idealistic criticism is forever in love.

Deadly to idealistic criticism is closure. Even when there is the exhaustion of possibilities, idealistic criticism sees something else, fanning the flame of thought, of desire. The danger of this form is that it can be a dumping ground of ideas, theories, and tired poetics. There is a part of us, however much we desire the ideal, that agrees with Cortazar's character, Lucas, in The Fate of Explanations: "Somewhere," Lucas remarks, "there must be a garbage dump where explanations are piled up. One disquieting thing in this proper panorama, what would happen on the day someone also succeeds in explaining the dump?" (Julio Cortazar, 1984, p. 45).

What we want the students to have is a strong reading. A "spirit storming in blank walls" as Wallace Stevens would perhaps refer to it. The same power with which Milton endows Satan: A "quickenning power." The

highest form of criticism, Oscar Wilde writes in The Critic as Artist, is the record of one's own soul, spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind. It is the same claim Kuspit makes about criticism restoring "contingency to the vision . . . so that it might become visionary" (Kuspit, 1977, p. 39). He claims the critic must "acknowledge the contingency of his own consciousness, and not attempt to capsule the work in a hermetic description" (Kuspit, 1977, p. 39).

Instead of pitting undisclosed depths of meaning against disclosed surfaces of meaning, students must learn to appropriate their own meaning. The important thing is to transcend the habit of understanding. This can be done in the following ways: By (1) exploration of intention of a work, (2) realizing collective and individual conventions, ideas, systems of response, (3) establishing a dialectical process (as in the dialogue model) to facilitate questioning, (4) educating consciousness through the use of language, i.e. metaphor and syllogism, and (5) practicing the idea that context depends upon perspective. These steps will help complete the work.

Putting it in another way: (1) having the students judge a work according to a more or less subjective taste or conservative norm, (2) assess it for ideological probity according to some predetermined political agenda, like

Marxism or Feminism, (3) delve into humanist hermeneutics to enliven the work by interpretation, i.e. reading for levels of meaning (as if it were dead or deficient), (4) reconstruct the work as a system or algebraic equation, i.e.,  $2 + 3 = 5$ , clarifying its logic according to language or mathematics, and (5) investigate the work for its own sake, its own place and function, separating the various practices of criticism, art history and art education critically and then connect them discursively in order to call them into conflict. In short, engage the work.

The ideal form of teaching would be to extend the whole integrated methodology just as far as its individual component methods are capable of extension. An ideal form of teaching would be to show the student how to deinhibit interpretation, thereby allowing the student to relate to the work democratically and in a way that is totally undoctinaire, gathering meaning as he/she goes along. In this way, a dialogue model of art criticism can help explain to students the diverse ways to inform works with meaning.

A dialogue model of art criticism, that is, the familiarity and use of criticism as a tool kit, can help students circle around a work of art, assisting each other and each generation to see these works from a different point of view and with fresh eyes. It is a simple way of multiplying the student's choices, and in the action of

looking, create something that the work perhaps does not say; the students accepts the discrepancy between the work and the critical discourse, thereby adapting new schemas to old dogmas. This is a process of accommodation and assimilation (Piagetian terms), in which the incompatibility of a work must first be recognized in order to understand the meaning between image and content, context and viewer.

This will produce its own exclusiveness and completeness, and will deny any partialness or falsification by convention. When one looks, it will be through one's own eyes, not the eyes of another. If there is an "error," this "error" will produce a further, strong reading of the work because it will have no closure. "Error," it should be stated, is necessary if there is to be further exploration and self-discovery. It is a necessary "misreading."

The art criticism model provides an open work. We may wish to close it, but the best dialogue seeks completeness only in the sense that one moves from one stance to another, and yet to another. To paraphrase Novalis: Who has declared a work of art complete? Should any work not be still in the process of growth? Nietzsche likewise realized that understanding lies in how one defines "interpretation." Interpretation, he writes in The Will To Power, is the introduction of meaning and not "explanation" (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 267). In most cases, he said, a new interpretation

over an old interpretation will produce incomprehensible signs. What is important, he felt, is that there are not facts, that everything remains in flux, incomprehensible, elusive; what is most enduring, he thought, is our opinions. In a manner of speaking, a meaningful dialogue model can even be stronger than the work it is based on.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEORIES OF METAPHOR

"The 'most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent' (Vico) of all tropes, the metaphor, defies every encyclopedic entry. It has been the object of philosophical, linguistic, aesthetic and psychological reflection since the beginning of time" (Eco, 1984, p. 87). The metaphor, as the venerable Bede put it, is "a genus of which all the other tropes are species" (Eco, 1984, p. 87).

There are many theories of metaphor as there are forms of criticism. Most recent interpreters of metaphors agree that metaphorical expressions seem puzzling if not paradoxical (Hausman, 1983). Goodman says that metaphors reassign labels in "an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting" (Goodman, 1968, p. 69). "Beardsley points out that the problems in understanding metaphor occur because what may be construed as nonsensical expression seem to make sense" (Hausman, 1983, p. 182). The paradox is further illustrated by Black when he calls attention to the mystery of metaphor "that taken as literal, a metaphorical statement appears to be perversely asserting something to be what it is plainly



known not to be" (Hausman, 1983, p. 181). "Black also entertains the possibility that some metaphors create and do not simply reveal antecedent similarities. Some metaphors offer cognitive insights that are unique in relation to established knowledge" (Hausman, 1983, p. 193).

Hausman points to the reason for this paradox of metaphor when he states that "metaphors are sometimes creative and at the same time appropriate or adequate to something in the world" (Hausman, 1983, p. 181). This paradox is continued when interpretations of metaphor focus on their senses or connotations rather than their references or denotations. This concern has to do with the "intentionalist" and "extensionalist" theories of metaphor (Hausman, 1983). While both theories skirt the issue of exactly what sort of referent, that is non-linguistic and non-conceptual (ontological thing) might be created by metaphor both theories try to show "how metaphors function by analysing the way their senses (or linguistic terms) yield new senses (or linguistic terms)" (Hausman, 1983, p. 181).

The creative designation of metaphor and the differences between visual and linguistic metaphors are applicable to the visual arts. The creationist view claims that some metaphors can create unique insights. Uniqueness is necessary to the idea that the referent of a creative metaphor is

new. This is the linguistic use of the extended metaphor," for example, the traffic jam as a metaphor for the impotence of a "powerful" man and of contemporary urban man in general. It is proposed that a theory of metaphor moves a stage closer to treating metaphors as creative designations of extra-linguistic conditions that are faithful or appropriate to more than established concepts and language. Extra-linguistically it is necessary to justify saying that a creative metaphor is "appropriate," or "faithfull," or "fits" the world (Hausman, 1983, p. 186). Thus, the significance of creative metaphors is not reducible to one or more systems of senses, and their significance is not limited to linguistic or conceptual conventions. They can be creative in interacting with an independent reality that they create. This is the theory suggesting that metaphors may be reference fixers of something extra-linguistic, that metaphor serves as a non-definitional mode of reference-fixers, providing access to a particular sort of thing or natural phenomenon (Hausman, 1983).

In the contemporary arts there is a tendency for the different art forms to exchange properties, in particular for music and literature to gravitate together. Throughout his journal, which he kept from 1882 to 1863, Delacroix compares his own art of painting with the other major art forms of literature and music. In most of these comparisons

he attempts to define the unique attributes of painting as an aesthetic form—the aspects of the medium itself which distinguish the act of looking at a painting, from the act of reading a novel or looking at music. In most cases his comparisons tend to emphasize the superior concreteness of a painting as a form:

The type of emotion peculiar to painting is, so to speak tangible; poetry and music cannot give it. . . . These figures, these objects are like a solid bridge on which imagination supports itself to penetrate to the mysterious and profound sensation for which the forms are, so to speak, the hieroglyph, but a hieroglyph far more eloquent than a cold representation, a thing equivalent to no more than a character in a printer's font of type: it is in this sense that the art is sublime, if we compare it to one wherein thought reaches the mind only with the help of letters arranged in an order that has been agreed upon; it is a far more complicated art . . . since the font of type is nothing and thought seems to be everything . . . but the visible sign, the speaking hieroglyph . . . becomes a source of liveliest enjoyment in the work of the painter (Johnson, 1980, p. 11).

What Delacroix so eloquently puts into words is the particular difference between literature and the visual arts: "literature he feels, is at once removed from the reader, who must use the cold hieroglyph of the printed alphabet as intermediary signs for the real experience" (Johnson, 1980, p. 11). Or as emphasized by Lessing in the *Laokoon*: "literature is successive and painting is perceived all at once" (Johnson, 1980, p. 11).

One of the first moderns, Baudelaire also understood the failure of language to engender the fullness of sensation, and in imitating Delacroix, tried to "free language from its traditional linear and casual description of experience . . . into new patterns that can produce a particular state of consciousness directly in the same way that a Delacroix painting can silently radiate meaning" (Johnson, 1980, p. 3).

The metaphor as hieroglyph (pictograph or ideogram), a form of thought which creates an image that can be used as a vehicle, (the idea of transfer is a basic tenet of metaphor) to interpret or discover levels of meaning in works of art, does more than transfer; it creates. This is illustrated in the works of Sergei Eisenstein, who before he became a film director studied oriental languages. This experience strongly influenced his later theoretical investigations of the sign nature of film language and his practical experiments in constructing cinematic "hieroglyphs" (Blonsky, 1985). Upon studying the Japanese language, Eisenstein concludes his description of the linguistic tortures he endured with the words:

How grateful I was later on to fate for having subjected me to the ordeal of learning an oriental language, opening before me that strange way of thinking and teaching me word pictography. It was precisely this 'unusual' way of thinking that later helped me to master the nature of montage (Blonsky, 1985, p. 222).

Margritte discussed the deployment of words and images in the following way: "Between words and objects one can create new relations and specify characteristics of language and objects generally ignored in everyday life" (Foucault, 1983, p. 38). Or again, "Sometimes the name of an object takes the place of an image. A word can take the place of an object in reality. An image can take the place of a word in a proposition" (Foucault, 1983, p. 38). And the following statement, conveying no contradiction but referring to the inextricable tangle of words and images and to the absence of a common ground to sustain them: "In a painting, words are of the same cloth as images. Rather one sees images and words differently in a painting" (Foucault, 1983, pp. 38-39).

An example of this visual/verbal channel switching is Margritte's painting Le Soir qui tombe of which Foucault explains:

Le Soir qui tombe which cannot fall without shattering a windowpane whose fragments (still retaining, on their sharp edges and glass shards, the sun's reflections) are scattered on the floor and sill. Referring to the sun's disappearance as a "fall," the words have swept along, with the image they evoke, not only the windowpane but the other sun, the twin sun perfectly outlined on the smooth and transparent glass. Like a clapper in a bell, the key stands vertically in the keyhole: it rings forth the familiar expression until it becomes absurd (Foucault, 1983, p. 38).

The Relationship of the Linguistic  
Metaphor to the Visual Symbol

Feinstein elaborates the relationship of the linguistic metaphor to the visual symbol by explaining that "the building blocks of language are linguistic and visual symbols that yield literal metaphoric meanings" (Feinstein, 1985, p. 27). She defines the metaphoric process as "the transfer of attributes that become filters for highlighting, suppressing, and redefining associations" (Feinstein, 1985).

The understanding of visual metaphor is a complex mechanism; to explain it is even more so because it begs the question: How can one do justice verbally to that which is by nature nonverbal and visual? "Construction of metaphoric meaning begins by viewing the work as a whole, becoming aware of the visual attributes and nuances, and then by asking, other than the obvious, what do these works suggest?" (Feinstein, 1985, p. 28). It also begins with a process of transfer illustrating that two things are dissimilar, and secondly, by asking in what ways could they be similar? That very question enables us to transfer attributes from one thing to another.

A linguistic or visual symbol is either one thing that stands for another thing or one that stands for other things. It is through those symbols that we convey and understand meanings. Symbols can be interpreted in two general ways: literally and metaphorically. Through

literal symbols, we understand one thing in terms of another thing; through metaphoric symbols, we understand one thing in terms of another of a different kind.

Literal meaning denotes, in one-to-one correspondence with its referent, and is consensually agreed upon in a given culture, which is to say that it is usually the same for everyone. In contrast to literal meaning, metaphoric meaning subsumes literal meaning and connotes. A metaphoric symbol, therefore, stands in one-to-many correspondence with its referent and is not necessarily the same for everyone; opposite and contradictory meanings can be derived from the same symbol.

The word metaphor comes from the Greek *metepherin*: meta involving change, and pherein meaning to bear or carry. A change occurs when attributes ordinarily designating one entity are transferred or carried over to another. Symbol transformation as it relates to metaphor is crucial to an understanding of the visual and linguistic metaphor. "The semiotic mind asks not what signs mean but how they mean" (Blonsky, 1985, p. 27).

As a preface to the discussion of signs, it is important to note that the arbitrary is a fundamental concept of semiotics, which is "the pivotal branch of the integrated science of communication" (Blonsky, 1985, p. 450). This semiotic "head," or eye, sees the world as an immense

message, replete with signs that are entirely independent of the objective, natural properties of the entities toward which they point (Blonsky, 1985). As Blonsky illustrates, "Literary language isn't based on sensation, the referent of wood isn't the sensation of wood. The horror of the forest (Mallarme's reference to forest symbolism) isn't the thing itself. The text can at most suggest the sentiment associated to the thing" (Blonsky, 1985, p. 1).

A sign is a paired relationship (merely observed) that indicates the existence, past, present or future, of an event, a thing or condition (nimbus clouds signify rain fever, illness). "Signs are not related to the things or states of the world they appear to designate, but they stand for, they stand in front of, quieter intents, words and deeds" (Blonsky, 1985, p. 2). Signs can be employed as symbols. In contrast to signs they are "conventional" messages whose power to signify is thought to depend on some prior agreement, presumed to have been reached at some temporal juncture and thereafter accepted as a matter of custom. Clouds, then, can become a symbol on a pilot's flight chart or a symbol for metamorphosis.

Feinstein notes that "People group symbols together and develop symbolic end-products" (Feinstein, 1985, p. 27). She goes on to discuss Langer's assignment of such end-products to two broad classes of symbolization: discursive



and presentational (Feinstein, 1985). She states "For that contribution, art educators owe Langer a great debt. With the addition of presentational symbols as a distant classification, Langer honors the subjective aspect of experience, and its metaphoric end-products, the arts" (Feinstein, 1985, p. 27).

Langer's contention is that experience, to be understood and conveyed, must be transformed into symbols. While discursive symbolization describes experiences that are sequential, logical and rule-governed, the felt aspect of experience--the subjective alogical, holistic, structure/seeking experience--belongs to the presentational class of symbolization (Feinstein, 1985).

The use of metaphor can assist the development of meaningful dialogue. It can provide a common ground for both the embedded structure of language signs and for cursory surface investigations. The use of metaphors can help give time-worn works a new, emergent meaning, a new frame of reference, a new focus, a new sense of enchantment. The Spanish Kabbalist said that God wrote the Scriptures for each person of Israel--that there are as many Bibles as there are readers of Bibles. For the same viewer of a work the same work changes because we change; we are the person Heraclitus speaks of: the person of yesterday who is not the person of today who is not the person of tomorrow. The

work changes because we change. We can never step into it twice and remain at the previous spot.

Metaphor expands and transforms proportionately verbal categories: tenses, aspects, moods, etc. As part of a narrative, metaphor functions vertically to the narrative's horizontality. Meaning is never fixed, but changing; meaning is not at the end of the line of narrative, but runs through it.

The metaphor and its use gives the student choice. "Everything is metaphor; there is only poetry," writes Norman O. Brown (Brown, 1966, p. 226). Poetry, or the insight into meaning, becomes originality when it is coupled with the use of metaphor and misreading. This, however, requires suspension and a measure of disintegration of the habitual. The shift of attention (trope, turn) in thinking metaphorically about a work is most important because it can lead students to ask whether what one is talking about is open and should indeed, be listened to. The work is then potentially transformed not only optically and spatially, but linguistically.

Metaphors test works for this reflective activity, whether silently or conversationally. Looking at a work metaphorically entails listening to one's thoughts and feelings. Hannah Arendt was correct in calling works of art "thought things." In this manner, works must be thought

through. Thinking through a work means re-creating it, listening to it and one's own dialogue. This will give the student an "inner style," as Cocteau aptly called it--an idea not only about the work, but about life.

The use of metaphor is the channel of communication linking the work with the student. The metaphor can pull a deep image to the surface; it can also form a group of images or signs into a single one. This language of signs is a theoretical system or structure that communicates what is absent. It is deeply embedded in the work, and unlike "speaking about a work," which tends to ride the surface, language (metaphorical thinking) exceeds the individual and asks the viewer to surrender a portion of the work's uniqueness as well as some of their own. There is always an abyss between the statement (work) and the insight of meaning (viewer). But if the student as viewer can continue the metaphors of the work without sacrificing the pleasure (of looking), the work will express itself both semantically and syntactically.

## CHAPTER 5

### METAPHOR AND THE NECESSITY FOR MISREADING

Models of dialogue and the instructor's responses to students are subjective, and at times biased. According to Eisner, the potential liability of such a repertoire is that classification and recognition abort perception. We may, as he says, "overlook what is unique by the precocious application of preconceptions. To avoid this, what we seek is a balance between the inclination toward perceptual exploration and the use of a repertoire of expectations that make exploration fruitful" (Eisner, 1979, p. 220).

Some of the more questionable aspects of Bloom's taxonomy, according to Hamblen, are the "pretensions of universalism, strict linear categorization, claims of complete coverage of learning behaviors, and the placement of value judgements on types of learning" (Hamblen, 1984, p. 44). When this occurs, value judgements are placed not only on types of learning, but on types of learning responses as well. Here the attempt to place art criticism models into classification systems brings into question the relationship of value theories to dialogue models.

To ask for a positive function of art locates analysis in the most problematic territory of aesthetic inquiry; the questions stubbornly defy attempts at mapping and precise understanding. Because art is metaphorical, its "meanings" are caught in a chain of relationships and differences, and any search for common truths or common meanings is both tyrannizing and illusory at the same time. Metaphors contain unruly energies of meaning, being self-engendered paradoxes or ironies. They can be used, therefore, to show how we look at works of art from a hierarchical view of importance, taking others' opinions instead of our insights.

The understanding of metaphor used in any work, and in the explanation, can be conceptualized as a cluster of images that allows us to see what we do not see, as well as how our thoughts are preconditioned to a set of culturally coded forms. All one can do when looking at a work of art, is to look for traces that lead one, not to a reduction of meaning--an ultimate meaning--but to make meaning an intuition of the viewer's lived experience. Again, there can never be any privileged ground of reflection.

In developing a sound conceptual base for a theory of teaching art vis-a-vis the dialogue model, it is impossible to escape valuation theory, or the value theories of aesthetic educators and aestheticians, one of which states

that aesthetic response is the placement of intrinsic value on an object or event. "The concept of valuation itself suggests desirability, which carries the obvious connotation of some degree of emotive investment" (Lanier, 1983, p. 40). Aside from the obvious limitations of such a theory, those that have to do with individual differences and the specific mechanics of value investment, there is the general attribution within the context of valuation that sees the aesthetic experience "as both cognitive and emotive, both objective and subjective, both formal and representational, depending for its parameters on the specifics of the particular situation" (Lanier, 1983, p. 41).

The notion of aesthetic value, or rather the experiencing of it, is formed within the contexts of an individual's dialectic with the world. According to Lankford, "no synthesis of significance is absolute; it is always subject to reinterpretation and verification. For these reasons any judgement, especially in a classroom situation, should be pronounced with caution if at all." He goes on to state that:

Perhaps the most appropriate solution to the problem would be a simple preface that would place the valuation in its proper perspective: I think based upon my experience of the work, that this is a good painting. The reasons for this valuation should have already been provided through the critical process (Lankford, 1984, p. 158).

Most criticism formats or taxonomies include valuing (judgment) as the decisive moment of art criticism. Here Lankford stresses, "A judgment issued as a proclamation of value may prejudice other viewers. This is especially unfortunate in classrooms where a teacher passes judgment upon a work of art instead of leading students to judge its value for themselves" (Lankford, 1984, p. 154). He continues with, "A judgment is appropriate only if it follows rather than precedes description, is stated in an open-ended context, and is supported by evidence in the work itself."

Lankford also discusses the significance of aesthetic objects as they are constituted within the dialectic of a subject and that object and explains that, "What an object means depends as much upon a viewer's perception as upon the properties of the object" (Lankford, 1984, p. 152). This idea of subject and object is fundamental to the interpretative-hermeneutic orientation and to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological stance which has to do with "the notion of perception involving those processes by which people distinguish and understand things within their scope of experience" (Lankford, 1984, p. 152).

With the use of metaphor to promote dialogue comes the necessity of misreading. A misreading or "error" does not indicate a student is wrong in his/her perception, or that a work of art is "this" or "that." There is only a

strong reading and a weak reading, and a misreading that displaces an earlier one. Strong readers (that is, strong viewers) "revise" what they see, thereby making the work fresher than previously. To be gratified is to be gratified by sequence. Correctness of vision is already impossible; a strong reading, or a misreading under the best of circumstances, discloses the unseen.

The very act of misreading is epitomized by Bettelheim and Zelan's (1982) study on misreading: "The nature of a teacher's response to a reading error has a great deal to do with its consequences for a child: whether a teacher views such an error as an undesirable failure or as an interesting performance determines whether the child will feel discouraged or encouraged about his (sic) reading."

While the subjective judgements of the teacher directly affect the child's attempt to become literate and "indirectly his general attitudes about learning and himself," hundreds of hours of classroom observation and conversations with teachers proved that most teachers consistently view misreadings as a "simple error, or a silly mistake. Teachers believe the causes of such errors to be a lack of attention or an inability to decode the word correctly, a deficiency they relate to a variety of undesirable sources, from lack of experience to genetic defect"



(Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 131). In addition they "did not concern themselves with the child's possible feelings about what was being read, or with the change in content and meaning that resulted from the replacement of one word by another" (Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 131).

These conscientious teachers also "had never considered the possibility that the misreading may have been the deliberate result of some pertinent thinking on the child's part" (Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 131). Many causes were considered by the teachers, with two exceptions: "that the error may have been an appropriate reaction to the text's content as printed, or a response to the meaning of the text as ascribed to it by the child as he (sic) was reading it" (Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 131). According to the study,

. . . it did not occur spontaneously to a single teacher that what the child had done might have meaning, so deeply are teachers committed to their obligation to teach children to read words exactly as printed on the page, and so convinced are they that is the child's task to do this (Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 134).

Of the errors that first graders made in reading, it was found that "out of 1,943 ascertainable errors, 1675--or 86 per cent--were substitutions that made equal or better sense than the original text" (Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 132). Any reading can produce a new reading, a new way of looking. For example:

The girl made only one substitution in what, for a third grader, was a difficult passage, as she read "deadful" for "dreadful." Asked what had happened, she answered: "The horse was shot because it had a broken leg." "Since the horse was shot," we replied, "its shriek certainly was deadful." In reaction to this, she looked at the text and said: "Oh, no, it says dreadful."

Completely engrossed in a story she understood well, the girl had spontaneously and without knowing it invented the neologism "deadful," which accurately sums up what she had just read. When given credit for what she had read, although "deadful" was a non-word, on her own she successfully brought to bear her good cognitive abilities to read what was printed. As a result, she was left with the feeling that her mastery of language was so good that she could even invent new words which--while not acceptable English and thus to be discarded--were more expressive than those used in the book she liked so much. All this made the girl feel good about herself and gave her a new view of language, and it would enhance (if that were possible) her interest in the story she was reading (Bettleheim & Zelan, 1982, p. 166).

Here the student is revealed by her misreading. With this misprision she swerves or turns away from her precursor, executing a corrective movement in her own reading of the work. This implies that a student accurately goes to a certain point with the teacher, then swerves or turns through the use of metaphor, thereby imagining a new reading. To imagine is to misinterpret, which makes all works of art and readings antithetical to what has been previously stated about those works. To imagine (imago = image) is to learn one's own metaphors for the act of reading. Criticism then necessarily becomes antithetical

also, a series of swerves after unique acts of creative misunderstanding.

Any misreading that will lead to a strong reading of a work naturally depends upon the mutability of the work. It is enough that the "archives of Eden," as George Steiner once remarked, became for the world the scapegoat of change. There is no sin in seeing a work in a way different from those who are supposed to be "in the know." A work functions on many levels. Change attests to a work's mutability in any number of ways. For example: There is change in a work; awareness of change in a work expands with our knowledge of that work. Change depends upon a sense and scale of time--when and from what position we look at the work. Change appears as a function of the active imagination and desire; metaphor and construct, as well as affective interest.

The perception of change depends upon the language the student uses and therefore can possess a hermeneutic dimension previously unaware of. A most powerful agent of change is the mind acting upon itself; it is self-transforming and exponential. There is, however, no universal pattern of transformation. There is no essentialist stance in looking at a work of art. Some change is cyclical, some speedily linear, some slowly algorithmic, some dialectical. Each viewer has a position afforded to a

potentially creative series of responses. This is where the forms of art criticism and a creative dialogue model can explicate the meaning of a work. The change is at once ludic and deadly-serious.

For Bloom, criticism is a kind of poetic reenactment. He sets a program for criticism with the act of creative misprision, or "swerves from origin" (Norris, 1982, pp. 117-118.) "Misprision (meaning mistaking, misreading, and misinterpreting), both necessary and inescapable, occurs between one poet and another and between a critic and a text because, essentially, exact repetition or identification is impossible and because, quintessentially, identity is slavery and death, difference is freedom and vitality" (Leitch, 1983, p. 137). Bloom acknowledges three levels of misprision. The latecomer misreads the precursor; the critic misinterprets the text; and the poet mistakes his own poem. On each level there are various forms of misprision. Bloom says: "There are no interpretations but only misinterpretations" (Bloom, 1978, pp. 94-95).

To understand the theory of misprision is to learn that there is only always misreading. In this sense Bloom is attempting actually to restore meaning, but through the latecomer's, the critic's and the poet's creative procedures. Meaning, in Bloom's work, is ultimately restored in disruptive and tattered intertextural forms . . . done in a

typology of language. There are five basic types of activities: (1) psychological, (2) rhetorical, (3) poetic, (4) revisionary, and (5) dialectic. To Bloom (1975) a "text" (read, a work of art) is a psychological production: an affair of two or more people, not simply a play of tropes. It is a "contest" of sorts between the "latecomer" (one with little knowledge, in this case) and the strong-willed other or "precursor" (the teacher, docent, etc.). For the "latecomer" to succeed, they must possess a strong will-to-power (Nietzsche), a will-to-knowledge, or discourse (Foucault); and they must hunger or desire independence (Kristeva). This makes their "text" an intertext with the teacher, etc.

The claim that all readings are misreadings can also be justified by the most familiar aspects of critical and interpretive practice. Given the complexities of texts, the reversibility of tropes, the extendibility of context, and the necessity for a reading to select and organize, every reading can be shown to be partial. According to Culler:

Interpreters are able to discover features and implications of a text that previous interpreters neglected or distorted. They can use the text to show that previous readings are in fact misreadings, but their own readings will be found wanting by later interpreters, who may astutely identify the dubious presuppositions or particular forms of blindness to which they testify. The history of readings is a history of misreadings, though under certain circumstances these misreadings can be and may have been accepted as readings (Culler, 1986, p. 176).

Criticism and interpretation, although commonly regarded as part of DBAE does little or nothing to lend itself readily to a tidy system of description or classification. As soon as we begin to examine various concepts of interpretation to analyze the act of understanding the student's relationship to the work, we encounter several basic problems of definition and terminology. These difficulties are partly ascribable to unresolved questions concerning the "status" of the work of art, the way the work "exists" within the discipline; but they are also deeply rooted in the conceptual confusion which surrounds attempts to explain the process of attaching meaning to work.

One difficulty arises when we try to fit the art of art criticism into some broad statement concerning the aims and methods of art education or aesthetic education. A problem also arises with the idea that there is a custodianship over a body of works, the understanding of which is considered to possess what we call "cultural value." This means that works are determinate and accessible, and that an expert or value exemplar, scholar, or the like, can qualify the work and correctly present it, making it intelligible to others. This is the Renaissance concept of humanistic scholarship, which in turn poses two fundamental problems: (1) is it really possible to recover past meaning with any degree of authenticity and objectivity; and (2) even if this

could be accomplished, with what justification can it be recommended as an appropriate approach to works of art which are "immediately present?"

Looking at it in another way, the monist says: there is only one real way of looking at a work. The dualist postulates the existence of two ways, insisting on many irreducible principles and therefore, in one work are seen many works. The monist counters by saying that the unity of the work is important because it is value-laden. It is based upon certain choices of analyses, ultimately leading the viewer to the one, true interpretation--a scale of values, a totality, a simplicity and universality of meaning. It is certainly not the multiplicity, fragmentation, intricacy or diversity of meaning of the pluralist.

There are four modes of a work that can be understood within the critical component of DBAE. (1) A work is a product a given community which exists at a certain time. Its meaning is determinate and should be identified with meaning attached to it by its historical contemporaries. The task of the viewer is to reconstruct these time-bound meanings. (2) A work is to be identified with the intentions of the creator, and not with the endless possibilities of meanings that the artist's contemporaries have constructed. This obviously omits any number of

critical theories. (3) Criticism (therefore, interpretation) is inherent in the semantic and syntactic structure of the work, within language, and the two meet in what we call a "grammar of art." (4) There is no such thing as a determinate meaning. If a student succeeds in constructing any meaning which he/she deems interesting or valuable, then the student has explored the work, enjoyed the work, disclosed the work.

To deal meaningfully with both the unity and diversity of intended meaning, a dialogue model needs to account not only for what is stated in the work, or works and their reciprocal relationships, but also who makes such statements and why (for what purpose and in whose interests); and how, and on the basis of what authority.

A dialogue model must never seek to be esoteric or exclusively used by "value exemplars." A dialogue model can be a form of criticism in itself with the use of a language that is at once magical and reasoned. Each person looking at a work, each teacher using an explication model to teach students about works of art, must find the language for themselves. But not the given language of formulae, or of the hierarchy of meaning. Language is not a given in this form of dialogue model; it is an object of conquest.

A dialogue model must also demonstrate the capacity for making what was once unfamiliar, familiar. When the



application is extended to the "tension of thought," to discovery, or what Jouffroy calls "the grasping of a poetic continuum in propagation," the work takes on a deeper and broader meaning (Jouffroy, 1966, p. 120). The vision becomes clear only when the responding is not simply "sketching" what has been seen, but in collaboration with the outpouring of words. This type of explication model makes for an uninterrupted work, the re-capturing of the artist's, or critic's, or teacher's vision induced in the viewer. This re-creation, in other words, is the movement from inside outward.

Meanwhile, evaluation takes its necessary shape and direction from the viewer's dedication to the goal of self-discovery. What the dialogue model does not do, in the words of the Dada poet, writer and artist, Tristan Tzara, is to furnish us with an "exquisite corpse." The model should, however, encourage progress in understanding the work, but through joyful experimentation even in those domains where experimentation and change seem to be out of the question. As Holland states, "There can be as many readings as there are readers to write them. Can be and should be" (Holland, 1976, p. 233).

## APPENDIX A

### ART CRITICISM AS DIALOGUE

The dialogue model described in this study is based on a formalist or historicist model which calls for the assumption of unity, i.e. that it is possible to circumscribe the work, or as Kraus explains: "starting with this work within its frame, and the formal decisions it manifests; moving to this medium, with the conditions that both unify it and separate it from other media; and continuing to this author and the unity or coherence of his oeuvre" (Kraus, 1985, p. 4).

While the following model proposes a methodological base for critical thinking, it is important to note that the methodological status of these concepts: work of art, medium oeuvre, questions of origin and authorship, are always open to critique, and that there is no model for meaning. Meaning is pluralistic, revealing itself as a "product of what a given method (of criticism) allows one to ask or even to think of asking" (Kraus, 1985, p. 5).

The model then, should be used as a grid, a structure, that at the same time elucidates and rejects a narrative, sequential, or hierarchical reading of the work in terms of meaning, pointing the way to contradiction, to the arbitrary, and thereby "compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame" (Kraus, 1985, p. 18). The following is based on the aesthetic, perceptual approach developed by Professor Harry S. Broudy.

## UNIT OVERVIEW

Sequential, systematic lessons for one hour per week, for four weeks will stress the aesthetic, critical, and historical concepts inherent in works of art, with an emphasis on expressive dialogue and the museum experience. The unit is based on Audrey Flack's "Marilyn," (VANITAS) 1977. Unit concepts are designed for young adults in grades 7-12.

## UNIT OUTCOMES

During the course of these activities, students will learn the following concepts which involve verbalizing the principles of visual analysis.

## CONCEPTS

1. The first concept will focus on the realization of art as experience, formulating an aesthetic base for future instructional tracts, and the verbalization of visual information. This process deals with the questions of perception, understanding how other levels of meaning are present in the work.
2. The second will focus on the observational: learning to look at a work of art using the specific information at hand (facts about the work in a cultural, historical context -period, style etc.) and analysis of sensory, formal, and expressive properties of works.
3. The third concept will focus on learning to communicate information and aesthetic perception, moving beyond description and interpretation into aesthetic judgment.

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The units are divided into four instructional activities. These activities involve four stages of dialog based on an aesthetic perceptual approach developed by Harry S. Broudy (see chart). They are as follows:

STAGE I      Sensory Properties: The aim is to increase the student's ability to receive an objective initial comprehension of the pervasive qualities of the work by describing and interpreting its sensory properties (the nature of elements such as shapes (square-round), lines (thick-thin), values

(dark-light), textures (coarse-smooth), colors (bright-dull), size (large-small), space (deep-shallow), etc. This dialogue model includes instruction in interpreting the works expressive properties (see stage III) to provide an initial comprehension of art as an experience. The model also includes instruction in the works technical properties, the various techniques and skills used by the artist.

- STAGE II    Formal Properties: The aim is to enhance the student's comprehension of parts and relations, its formal properties. To what extent are the sensory properties organized within the work, thereby creating compositional design elements? As the work is experienced the dialog model is structured to build a logical progression of information and to bring the diverse elements into a unified whole.
- STAGE III    Expressive Properties: The aim is to contemplate the nature of the existing sensory properties and the way they appear to be organized, (formal properties) speculating about the possible meanings of the work by identifying the metaphoric-symbolic characteristics that evoke responses from the student's storehouse of visual images.
- STAGE IV    Aesthetic Criticism: The aim is a developmental ability to discern and verbalize about aesthetic qualities, making the contemplation of overall expression more objective, and at the same time expressing imaginatively what the artist has expressed in a specific work of art. Also determined is the nature and expressive intent of works of art within their historical context in relation to period, style, and culture. Aesthetic criticism is the unifying aspect in every stage.

The purpose of this approach is to increase the student's range of responses by teaching them to see the visual elements basic to any work of art, its sensory properties (Stage I). The organization of these elements, the repetition of patterns, subtleties in color, and variations in lines and textures become the formal properties. Because visual elements are manipulated with shifting emphasis to achieve expressive power this stage (Stage II) requires an introduction to such visual language terms as: contrast, harmony, unity, and variety, etc. Visual elements, and their relationships are expressive characteristics that when combined with sensory and formal properties, translate into the pervasive qualities of meaning. These expressive properties draw upon a store of visual images that are a part of the student's thinking and imagination (Stage III). In this process the student becomes more discriminating and develops a basis for making judgments about what he/she likes or dislikes. An aesthetic response can then be cultivated (Stage IV).

Each unit consists of questioning strategies developed to guide the students in an experience of the work by augmenting their visual language skills. They correspond with the Teacher's Guide to Properties section. A discussion of the properties of art may be introduced in the classroom prior to the museum visit. The chart on Aesthetic Perception may be used in relation to the slide packet available from the Museum's Education Department.

Questioning strategies are divided into sections:

WHAT DO YOU SEE? and WHAT DO YOU THINK AND WHY?

What do you see? is a teacher directed dialog intended to stimulate careful observation. In all stages of the dialog it is the role of the teacher (facilitator) to make corrective moves based on the student's verbalization of their experience.

What do think and why? is a student developed and directed dialog. The descriptive, interpretive responses by the students should be logically expanded around circular areas. Without intending to, the student may touch on the most abstract and universal meaning embodied in the work. The interpretation may be explained by the teacher, who in turn may attempt to guide the class toward continued discovery with further questioning.

These models are at all times collaborative. Learning that is reciprocal

establishes new unities between things and gives shape to interesting hypotheses.

Involve all your students in the discussion. Reinforce the use of art vocabulary in student's responses.

Evaluate their responses for correct information about the painting and the artist. Guide them to use more complex verbal skill with questions that require them to comprehend, interpret and evaluate the information.

## AESTHETIC SCANNING

### Sensory Properties

*visual properties: shape, color, texture, proportions, etc. (design elements)*

*aural properties: tone, pitch, tempo, dynamics, etc.*

Responding to ways in which objects or events are organized to achieve expressive power by identifying their

### Formal Properties

*Organic Unity: each element is necessary (unity in variety)*

*theme: apparent dominant characteristics*

*thematic variation: variety in repetition of characteristics*

*balance: equilibrium of opposites (balance plus thematic variation equals rhythm)*

*evolution: unity through relationships by moving from one part to another*

*hierarchy: elements which are more dominant than others*

Responding to the value import—what it has to say—of objects or events by identifying their

### Expressive Properties

*Objects and events which are aesthetic possess metaphorical and presentational characteristics which evoke responses from one's "magic store" and translate sensory properties into pervasive qualities such as:*

*Mood Language: forms which evoke nuances of feeling describable in terms such as sobriety, menacing, etc.*

*Dynamic States: forms which express a sense of tension, conflict, relaxation, etc.*

*Idea and Ideal Language: expressions of nobility, courage, wisdom, revolution, etc.*

Realizing the significance of the object or event by noting how it was created and identifying its

### Technical Properties

*Knowing how something is made is important to aesthetic perception even though aesthetic responses and judgments can be made without such awareness.*

*Historical: determining the nature and expressive intent of works of art within their historical context: school, period, style, culture.*

*Recreative: apprehending imaginatively what the artist has expressed in a specific work of art.*

*Judicial: estimating the value of a work of art in relation to other works using three criteria: degree of formal excellence, truth, and significance.*

Teacher's guide to directed dialog.

**Audrey Flack**  
**MARILYN (VANITAS). 1977**  
 Oil over acrylic on canvas, 96x96".  
 University of Arizona Museum of Art

**SENSORY  
 PROPERTIES**

"Marilyn" is an exceptionally large still life eight feet square (96x96"). A profusion of objects occupy a spatial maze, each object occupies a clearly defined area and is over life-size. The objects are highly defined, varying in shape, texture, tone and color.

Flack chose <sup>to paint</sup> a photograph of Marilyn Monroe which placed in a complex hierarchy of objects creates a labyrinthine spatiality. A lipstick in orbit overlaps the monochrome photograph of the star and recurs in a mirror reflection of it as if it were being applied to Marilyn's lips. Rouge jars and powder puff form a crown around her head. A Timex watch, candle holder, rhinestone-studded compact, hour-glass, a perfume bottle, a rose and fruit surround her. These individually dense objects, combined with lustrous closed surface colors which are intense, rich and exaggerated, involve the refraction of light on smooth and translucent surfaces. On a technical note, use of the air-brush, with the service function of blending well-produces a graphic style based on the medium's ability to produce smooth gradients of tone and color.

Flack does not believe in the existence of line: "...the history of vision is the history of losing line."

**FORMAL  
 PROPERTIES**

Rounded shapes in the painting contribute to a circular composition. Space is measured, controlled and finite-objects float and appear to be lifting off the surface. Space and color are intertwined and inter-dependent. The cross-indexing of volumetric objects, combined with lustrous color contributes to the tangle of the whole; but without loss of its specific contour and color-reflections in mirrors and surfaces permits a departure from vanishing point perspective and any reliance on a continuous ground plane. Objects are at once flat and cut-out and yet their volumes dominate and create a space that is difficult to separate from color. "Every color, receding or projecting forward, is attached to an object in the painting. Every object takes a specific position in the space of the painting. The picture plane is tilted-with the table top disappearing, altogether, establishing a picture plane parallel to the wall. It is not, however a two dimensional surface. The sanctity of the two dimensional picture plane is violated-objects are projected forward, breaking through the flatness of the vertical plane."

**EXPRESSIVE  
 PROPERTIES**

Flack has used Marilyn Monroe as a potent icon-like an icon she smiles out at us, the tools of her trade surrounding her. Countless symbols point out the objects that imply the passage of time. Highly symbolic and iconographic, an apple takes on meaning beyond itself-it is red or green or yellow or various mixtures depending on what she is trying to say. "Marilyn's" apple (Flack saw her as a peach color) and the apple used in the painting was a soft yellow mixed with a pinkish orange-red.



The work is also highly abstract and formalist—an apple not only becomes a color, but also a shape, a weight, a density, an abstract circle to be positioned in space at a very specific point. Marilyn is also flanked by a peach with a beautifully formed erotic pit. The orange is beginning to shrivel...decay is setting in...the sand is slowly trickling down inside the pink plastic hourglass. A very specific coral pink rose, open and delicate, is perched precariously over the book and very intentionally placed beside a deep violet satin sheet. Violet is a healing color. The particular pink suggests softness and love. Brilliant Kodachrome colors have permeated the modern vision, they are a part of our society and are used to equal the enormity of the subject.

Flack's composition and iconography use the artistic resources of "channel switching" - roving between photographic reproduction (she makes extensive use of photographs in the preparation of painting that simulate photographic image properties) and unique painting - drawing the viewer into a zone in which the sense of fact and illusion are activated equally. Just as we, in viewing are caught between two mirrors (the image projected and the illusive mirror on the canvas); Marilyn is forever caught between sunrise and sunset (youth and death) in a time-space continuum. Flack chose a photograph of Marilyn Monroe that shows her character in transition. Her face retains qualities of Norma Jean and has not yet fully become Marilyn Monroe- a universal symbol destroyed not by Hollywood, but from a basic deprivation of love in her early life. The movie world gave her the vehicle with which she could communicate and reach out to the masses for that love.

She is deeply involved in the human content of every image she paints—even in her use of scale; because objects are dilated in immense close-up, flaws and fissures that exist below the level of ordinary vision are not revealed. Her's is a non-destructive enlargement that celebrates the integrity of objects. In the "Vanitas" paintings (of which "Marilyn" is one), objects may be emblematic of death, but their unified surface, their wholeness, preserves our normal experience in the sight or handling of objects. Thus Flack's magnification does not lose the specific identity of objects, her sense of their completeness.

#### EVALUATION

For all its elements, its sensory, formal, expressive and technical properties, its abstract formalism etc...its objects were all carefully selected in terms of the feeling Audrey Flack hoped to evoke in the viewer—everyone at any level will understand the difference between a black rose and a white one... a rose that is open and full and a tightly closed young bud—in this way she communicates her keen interest in the sources of human strength and the causes of human suffering, in beauty, in the issues of her time...

## Warm-up\*

## A. Beginning to Begin: Action and Meaning

1. Allow student action to evolve from any number of "here and now" situations. An easy way to begin is simply to walk through a gallery asking "What do you think?" or "What do you see?"
2. Let any strategies arise from the students learning discrepancies, i.e. from what you did not initially intend (as a response).
3. Make the least possible effort to "teach". By this is meant: "The wise deals with things through non-interference and teaches through no-words". Be free from discursive thought and abstraction for its own sake.
4. Allow any undesired behavior of the student to extinguish itself through your non-judgmental action. Act receptively; receive it, change nothing as it offers itself. Once the situation is freed of all subjectivity, the situation will be grasped by the student and it will correct itself.
5. Freely associate with the group. Spend time talking, learning from them and learning about your own reactions. Enjoy the dialogue; see where it will lead the group. Move into their words and feelings, change the direction, let go and be pulled into their space seeing how the constellation of facts, experiences, and feelings manifests itself in their own unique becoming.
6. Give the students enough time for the integration of knowledge and experience through both mental and physical relaxation. Have them lie on the floor or sit in "lotus style"; teach them to follow their breath. Stretch or move about. In other words, let the prereflexive experience take hold. Private intuitions come by creative methods of loosening the grip of calculated and conditioned response.
7. Allow the learning situation to be open-ended and "unsolved". Never be in full control or completely tell all, otherwise there will be little more to experience and learn.

## UNIT I: "MARILYN" BY AUDREY FLACK

ACTIVITY I: DIALOG MODEL OF SENSORY PROPERTIES with an introduction to  
EXPRESSIVE PROPERTIES

WHAT DO YOU SEE? WHAT DO YOU THINK AND WHY?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The student is asked to describe impressions of the painting as a whole. Here the descriptive dialogue is pulled from Stage I, (Sensory Properties) and Stage III (Expressive Properties). The aim is to combine these two stages, providing an initial comprehension of art as experience. Stimulate careful observation by raising questions related to each of the basic design elements and encourage "what do you think" questions involving the expressive property term, symbol. This model includes questionings as to the paintings Technical Properties, the techniques and skills used by the artist.

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 Teacher introduced and directed dialogue of sensory properties:

 SHAPE LINE TEXTURE COLOR SPACE
 

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## SHAPE

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

What is a shape?

What are the three basic shapes?

What other kinds of shapes are there?

What kinds of shapes does Audrey Flack use?

Which shapes predominate?

How many are there?

What do shapes represent?

WHAT DO YOU THINK AND WHY?

Most of the shapes have volume or are round. Why do you think that is?

What are the shapes doing? Do you think they are sitting on something?

Are they on a grounded plane? Compare to another work where objects rest on a plane.

What is dimension?

Are the shapes two-dimensional or three-dimensional? Explain.

How would you describe a circle? A square? A triangle?

Do they have direction? How?

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 LINE

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

What is a line?

How many different kinds of lines are there?

Are there any lines in this painting?

What are the uses of line?

WHAT DO YOU THINK AND WHY?

Do you think its possible to make a painting without any lines? How?

Why do you think Audrey Flack used so few lines?

Why do some artists use only line and others don't?

\*To further a discussion of line the teacher may wish to make a comparison to another painting, or drawing in the gallery.

COLOR

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Describe the colors in "Marilyn." Are they warm, cool. Are there soft pinks, harsh reds?

What is the intensity of a color?

Are these colors bright or dull?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you think there is such a thing as noncolor?

What is the term meaning one color? Two colors?

Why do some areas of this painting have intense bright colors and other areas don't?

TEXTURE

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

What is texture? How do we recognize it? (Optical, Tactile)

What kinds of texture are there? Are there indentations, or raised marks?

What is the surface or texture of this painting?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are these objects really smooth or do they just look that way? Why?

Why do we have so many "do not touch signs!" Do you think its a good idea?

SPACE

What is the space of this painting? Is it deep or shallow?

Where is the background in this painting? The foreground? The middleground?

What happens when you move closer to the painting, farther away?

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How do you think space relates to dimension?

Why did we talk about dimension when we talked about shape?

How does a painter depict a three-dimensional object in a two-dimensional space?

## TECHNICAL PROPERTIES

## WHAT DO YOU SEE?

How did Audrey Flack paint this image?

What tools did she use?

What is the medium she used?

What kinds of pigment are there?

Oil or acrylic, gouache, pastel, watercolor, crayon, pencil, etc.

What kinds of pigment did Flack use?

What is the difference between the two?

How do you create texture with paint?

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why do you think Audrey Flack used a camera instead of drawing?

Why did she use an airbrush instead of a regular paintbrush?

Why did she want the surface of the painting so smooth?

To initiate the completion of this stage of dialog, the students are asked to describe the basic characteristics of shape, line, texture, color, and space, as they relate to the painting.

Teacher introduction to the expressive property: SYMBOL\*

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Remind the students that during the discussion of shape it was determined that they also represent objects and that objects can represent other things.

What is a symbol?

Who was Marilyn Monroe? Why do you think she is represented in a photograph?

What are the objects that surround her?

Do these objects symbolize something else? Name a few.

\*

See stage III

## VOCABULARY

- SHAPE Line describes shape. There are three basic shapes, the square, circle, and equilateral triangle.
- LINE A dot in motion, a path left by a moving point.
- TEXTURE The structure of the surface of any work of art, be it rough or smooth, tactile, or optical. We can appreciate and recognize texture either by touch or sight individually, or by a combination of both.
- COLOR Color has three dimensions which can be defined and measured. Hue is the color itself, or chroma, of which there are more than a hundred. The second is saturation or intensity, which is the relative purity of a color from the hue to gray. The third is achromatic, or the relative brightness, from light to dark, of value or tonal gradients.
- SPACE The area in which material objects are located, conceived as an expanse extending in all directions..
- VOLUME The size, measure, or amount of anything in three-dimensions. Shapes have volume.
- PLANE A flat or level surface on which objects sit, synonymous with two-dimensionality.
- DIMENSION Representation of dimension in two-dimensional visual formats is dependent on illusion. Two-dimensional representations of reality in painting and drawing etc., are not actualized, only implied.
- DIRECTION Every basic shape expresses three basic and meaningful visual directions. Each of the visual directions has strong associative meaning and is a valuable tool in making visual messages.

## UNIT II: "MARILYN"

## ACTIVITY II: FUNCTIONS OF DESIGN ELEMENTS

## DIALOG MODEL OF FORMAL PROPERTIES

Have the students respond to the ways that the sensory properties are organized to create VARIETY, EMPHASIS, and UNITY. The possible variations of a visual statement is literally infinite. The purpose of this activity is to interpret COMPOSITIONal elements such as: MOTION (in shapes, shape in space), RHYTHM, REPETITION, and BALANCE. This model is an elaboration of the first unit. The two can be cross referenced or combined, depending on the student's level of visual literacy.

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Teacher introduced and directed dialog of formal properties:  
 VARIETY EMPHASIS UNITY

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## WHAT DO YOU SEE?

What is the first thing you see when you look at this painting?

Do your eyes stop there?

Which objects or shapes keep your eyes moving?

Does the scanning of your eyes go up and down or around?

Do these objects which are shapes have direction?

What do all these objects and the way they are organized make?

What is a composition?

Which objects are closest to you in the composition, further away?

Which object is dominant?

Do any of the objects overlap? Which ones?

Are any of the objects repeated?

How does that effect the space?\*

How does the position of the shapes on the picture surface suggest space?

What do repeating shapes create in a painting?

\* What are the repeating characteristics that permit a departure from vanishing point perspective? Discuss V.P.P. and point out an example in the gallery.

---

 WHAT DO YOU THINK AND WHY?

What do you think would happen if you took one or two objects out or added some or changed them entirely and put your own in?

Would their removal alter the balance of the composition?

What are some of the elements that create balance in the composition?\*

Which objects are floating? Why?\*

Do you think the objects in this painting are flat or round? Even though their volume dominates, they appear to be flat and cut-out. Why?

Why do you think these objects are circling around Marilyn?

What do you think makes this composition circular and tangled?\*

Do you think the texture (optical or tactile ) establishes unity in this painting?

Would more variation in the texture (optical or tactile) effect the space of this painting?

How does the effect of simultaneous contrast of the many colors create movement?

\* Flack makes a complex balance of signs (printed words and photographs) and objects. Balance, or a back and forth relationship, exists between the photographs and the drops of paint are repeated in the pips of the orange. Discuss symmetry, asymmetry.

\* Ask the students to call out words that best describe the way the composition is arranged. These should be creative, interpretive responses. Reinforce them.

Upon completion of this dialog the students should be able to answer the following:

To what extent is each element necessary to the composition?

What is the nature of the MOVEMENT (real or imagined, implied, or inherent) from one part to another thereby contributing to a sense of unity?

How is the sense of unity maintained even though elements may vary, achieving UNITY through VARIETY?

Are there some visual elements that are more DOMINATE than others?

Do these dominate elements contribute to a major theme?

How is variety achieved in the REPETITION of these elements which results in movement?

How is equilibrium maintained between and among both similar and diverse parts which results in a sense of BALANCE?

What RHYTHMICAL qualities are created when balance and variety are combined?



## VOCABULARY

Several basic devices are used to achieve unity, variety, and order in art:

- REPETITION A relationship between similar or identical things. Repetition may appear in line, shape, mass, value, space, color, size, or even directional emphasis.
- RHYTHM A recurrence of variations, often in the form of accents and intervals, that have enough similarity to establish continuity and order. Rhythm may be extended indefinitely; it does not require limits.
- BALANCE The equilibrium of opposing forces, does involve limits and provides self sufficiency and unity. Balance may be symmetrical or asymmetrical.
- SYMMETRY Having similar or identical elements on either side of an axis.
- ASYMMETRY Having an equilibrium of elements that are dissimilar in size or shape.

## SYMBOL

## WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?

What is the difference between a symbol and a metaphor?

What is a symbol? Remind the students that some still-life objects in the Vanitas symbolize the passage of time. Refer to Northern Renaissance paintings in the gallery; point out some symbols.

Are the objects surrounding the photograph of Marilyn symbolic of other things?

Have you ever anyone say, "I have to save time?" Can one do that? Does time stand still?

What happens to things with the passage of time?

What is happening to the fruit?

To the photograph of the children? Who are these children?

Why isn't the photo in color like the rest of the painting?

What is happening to Marilyn? What is her expression?

What are some of the other objects that symbolize the passage of time?

Why is the candle burning? Has it been burning long?

Why do you think the orange is beginning to shrivel?

What does the pink plastic hourglass symbolize? Why is it pink plastic?

The watch and the calendar are also visual symbols for the passage of time. In what way?

What month does the calendar represent and why?

Why is the watch a man's and not a woman's?

Is a photograph representative of the past or the present?

What is the relationship between the photograph (of a recent event) and the objects (ancient symbols, but embodied in the present)?

What about the drops of paint and the water on the pears? Are they symbols?\*

What is an ICON? (A picture, image, or other representation that stands for some sacred personage, as Christ, or a saint or an angel).

Is Marilyn an icon? Point out religious icons in the gallery. How do they compare?

\* The drops of paint from the hovering brush correspond in their tear-shape to the pips of the divided orange and the water on the pears, a sequence that links art to nature.

\* Marilyn as a person is a metaphor, a reference for love as well as pain, suffering, loneliness, deprivation. As an icon she is a symbol for glamour, sex, beauty. "Like an icon she sits. The tools of her trade surrounding her. The rouge jars and powder puff form a crown around her head." This may lead to a further discussion of the stereotypes of glamour: blonde hair, warm flesh, inviting smiles...and the stereotypical symbols of femininity, perfume bottles, lipsticks, jewelry, flowers, pretty trinkets, certain fabrics etc.

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## COLOR

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What is the meaning of color? A coral pink rose, open and delicate, is perched precariously over the book and placed beside a deep violet satin sheet.

Why is the rose pink and open?

What if it was a tightly closed bud of another color?

What is your interpretation of the color?

Why are brilliant kodachrome colors used?

Why does the whole painting remind you of a photograph, or a slide?

What is the difference between the two? One is more luminous.

Is TV color realistic?

Is the color in this painting realistic?

\* Discuss the symbology of color. Ask the students what personal associations certain colors have for them. In a given culture, certain colors may be commonly understood as being expressive of particular feeling; we may speak of "seeing red" or "feeling blue,"

## ILLUSION

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Are these objects real?

Do they define the real as that which you can put your hands on?

Are they tangible? Tactile?

Is the fruit succulent?

Do they each have their own texture, temperature, or is each surface the same?\*

What is an illusion?

What do you see when you look at a photograph of yourself or in a mirror?

Is it a true reflection of you, or an illusion?

An illusion is a interpretation, or misinterpretation of a real appearance. It may be pleasing, harmless, or even useful, a mirage is an illusion.

What do movie stars use to create an illusion of beauty?

What do artists use to create an image, or illusion of reality?\*

\* The language of tactile expression is not as pronounced in this painting as in others (point these out in gallery). Due to its graphic style the sense of touch is restricted.

\* Tell the students Marilyn's real name was Norma Jean. Pass around one of the many post cards images of her as "Marilyn Monroe." Discuss the different images as realized in both the mirrored reflections and in the post card.

SCALE (Proportion)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Scale in this painting also becomes a metaphor for life. Lets talk about how large these objects are.

Why are they dilated?\*

What else dilates or becomes larger when exposed to light? One example is the pupil's, use this as an example of largess, of letting lots of light (life, the experiential) in. Ask the students to respond with their own examples.

What other words mean close-up? Magnify

What happens when you magnify something? When you shrink them?

What happens to their surfaces, their reality?

\* Flack's amplification of objects does not loose their wondrous sense of specific identity. In this sense the artists rendering of the emblems of death become a victory over mortality as she exemplifies the objects of the world as whole, lustrous, and full.

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Upon completion of this dialog related to identifying and interpreting the expressive properties, the student should be able to interpret the meaning of the parts and relations and their power to contribute to or detract from the work's overall expressive quality. The interpretive statements given should support and strengthen the pervasive quality recognized and described in stages I and II.

## VOCABULARY

- METAPHOR** A figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance. In the visual symbol system as in the linguistic, metaphor is a potent stimulus for generating associations and tapping new, different, or deeper levels of meaning.
- SYMBOL** The symbol-making function is the capability to decide that one thing shall stand for another. A symbol, in order to be effective, must not only be seen and recognized but also remembered and even reproduced. It cannot, by definition, have a great deal of detailed information. The symbol must be simple (visually) and refer to a group, an idea, a business, an institution, or a political party. Sometimes it is abstracted from nature.
- ICON** In Byzantine, Greek, and Russian Orthodox church art, a type of representation of Christ, the Virgin, or a saint in a painting, or mosaic, or bas-relief (but never sculpture). The image is represented in the severe, stylized forms of Byzantine art in which the presentation of the sacredness of a person or thing takes precedence over any naturalistic qualities.
- ILLUSION** The use of optical principals to create the illusion that a painted object is real. Among the techniques are perspective, foreshortening, chiaroscuro, (value contrasts) active, irregular forms suggesting constant change rather than stability, compositions with a minimum of stabilizing vertical and horizonal curves.

## LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES:

Marilyn  
 soul noisier than the world and more anxious,  
 timid as a shrimp's feelers,  
 model of womanhood,  
 your laughter  
 trickling out of Camelias  
 first announced a fairy tale  
 no Yankee had ever heard.  
 Then into the door revolving  
 between sleep and waking  
 you went  
 and never came back:  
 starting on both sides of the door  
 a crazy game of tag  
 so popular it soon made of you  
 a gentle it.

ŌOKA MAKOTO

How is this poem a metaphor for Marilyn's life and feelings?

How many metaphors are used to describe Marilyn in this poem?

Take two or more metaphors from the poem and see if they apply to the painting.

Use two or more metaphors to describe your experience or feelings about the painting "Marilyn," by Audrey Flack.

\* \* \*

Think of the objects that surround Marilyn in the Vanitas painting.

Go home and look at the top of your dresser, or desk, or in the drawers. Find at least three objects and describe them. What do they mean to you? Do they stand for anything in your life, any special experience, memory, etc.? Use a metaphor or symbol to describe each.

## UNIT III: "MARILYN"

## ACTIVITY III: MULTIPLE MEANINGS

## DIALOG MODEL OF EXPRESSIVE PROPERTIES

## WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?

The student is introduced to the metaphorical, symbolical characteristics that evoke responses from the students's storehouse of images. This dialog model includes instruction in the understanding of expressive properties, that when combined with sensory and formal properties, translate into the pervasive qualities of meaning. Here the dialog focuses on the use of Metaphoric Language: nuances of feeling describable in terms of the effect of the content on the student, applying metaphor to suggest a resemblance, which in turn, supply images that interpret social or psychological events and beliefs.

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Teacher introduced and directed dialog of the expressive properties:

METAPHOR SYMBOL ICON ILLUSION

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## METAPHOR

## WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?

Ask the students to recall from Unit I, the discussion of symbols, shapes, objects, and the style of painting that Audrey Flack based her painting on, the Vanitas. Reiterate that the Vanitas is a still-life. Flack paints still-life objects, painted over lifese and rich in allusion, they are vehicles for her sense of time. These shapes not only represent objects, but also visual metaphors for ideas and feelings.

How? Define and discuss metaphor.

Start out by reading the excerpt reproduced in the painting. Ask the students how it makes them feel. In this discussion pay particular attention to the words they use. Which words or metaphors evoke nuances of feeling that may or may not be inherent in the work? Words that don't work lead to learning too.

Which words in the excerpt evoke feeling?

How did the rain make Marilyn feel?

What kind of rain was it?

What did it remind her of?

What other objects are metaphors or signs for other things?

What do the pots of make-up represent? Is make-up a metaphor?\*

Why are they revolving around Marilyn?

Do these things belong to her?

\* This may lead to further discussion of the connotations of femininity, vulnerability, fragility, strength, the ways women try to speak themselves and are spoken of, the ways women represent themselves and are represented by culture. Marilyn used make-up to paint herself into and "instrument of her will," the will to be loved.

## UNIT IV AESTHETIC CRITICISM

## ACTIVITY IV

The aim is to further develop the ability to discern and verbalize about aesthetic qualities so that the student can describe and interpret the work expressively and critically, moving beyond description and interpretation into aesthetic judgement. Also determined is the nature and expressive intent of the work of art within its historical context in relation to period, style, and culture.

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY GUIDE

## PURPOSE:

1. To explore the stylistic qualities of Photo/Super Realism.
2. To compare the symbolic nature of Northern Renaissance Painting, and the Vanitas to Flack's Super Realist interpretation.
3. To place the expressive content of "Marilyn" within a socio-cultural context.

## CULTURAL/HISTORICAL COMPONENT

## SLIDES:

Late Medieval/Northern Renaissance Paintings

Fernando Gallego, The Creation of Eve 1480-88

Maria Van Oosterwyck's Vanitas 1668

Luisa Roldan's Macarena Esperanza, 17th cent.

Pieter Claesz, Still Life 1658

Abraham Hendricksz, van Beyern, Banquet Piece

Master of the St. Marein Altar, Saint Dorothy and Saint Agnes

Master of Flemalle (Robert Campin?) The Annunciation, center panel of the Merode Altarpiece 1425-28

Hubert and Jan: van Eyck. The Ghent Altarpiece, closed 1432

Jan van Eyck, Giovanni Arnolfini and his Bride 1434

Francesco Traini, The Triumph of Death 1325-50

Duccio, Annunciation of the Death of the Virgin, from the Maesta Altar.

Super Realists

Audrey Flack's Vanitas

Marilyn, 1977

Wheel of Fortune, 77-78

World War II, 76-77

## CENTRAL ACTIVITY-COLLABORATIVE DIALOG

Visual Analysis: Sensory, Formal, Expressive Properties  
The teacher and student facilitate a dialog that communicates the pervasive qualities of "Marilyn" as compared to the slides.

Critical Analysis: Teacher developed, descriptive summary of the symbols and their meaning in Northern Renaissance paintings. Descriptive, interpretive summaries given by students of the nature and expressive intent of the work within its historical context. The students will describe the style of the



painting as it relates to the iconography  
of Northern Renaissance Painting.

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#### CONCLUSION

Students are asked (as a result of the dialog  
in stages I-III) to verbalize their aesthetic  
judgment having been instructed in the use of  
the critical method.

Teacher questioning strategy becomes more complex.

For example:

How does "Marilyn" as an icon effect the expressive qualities of this  
painting?

How does Flack's concept of Marilyn Monroe compare in theme with "The  
Creation of Eve" by Fernando Gallego?

How do the compositional elements (formal properties) of "Marilyn"  
compare to examples of late medieval, northern renaissance works,  
Maria van Oosterwyck's Vanitas, for example?

What is iconography?

What is style?

What is the style of this painting?\*

\*See Connotations guide. This is teacher introduced and directed.

## CONNOTATIONS

## CONTENT

"Marilyn is an exceptionally large still life eight feet square (96x96"). A profusion of objects occupy a spatial maze, each object occupies a clearly defined area and is over life size. The objects are highly defined, varying in shape, texture, tone and color.

Flack photographs from the still life she creates, instead of drawing, in order to get totally accurate relationships among the objects. Colors are often changed, intensified, or subdued, but for the most part the composition is arrived at in the camera.

She uses a brush for underpainting and an air brush to spray pure primary colors identical to the gels of the slide onto limited areas of the canvas separated by masking tape and butcher paper.

On a technical note, use of the air-brush, with the service function of blending well, produces a graphic style based on the medium's ability to produce smooth gradients of tone and color.

## EXPRESSIVE

Flack has used Marilyn Monroe as a potent icon. Like an icon she smiles out us, the tools of her trade surrounding her. Countless symbols point out the objects that imply the passage of time. Flack chose a photograph of Marilyn Monroe that shows her character in transition. Her face retains qualities of Norma Jean and has not yet fully become Marilyn Monroe, a universal symbol destroyed not by Hollywood, but from a basic deprivation of love in her early life. The movie world gave her the vehicle with which she could communicate and reach out to the masses for that love.

## HISTORICAL

Flack was disposed by the development of her own work to respond to Maria van Oosterwyck's Vanitas which she saw in the exhibition "Women Artists 1550-1950" at the Los Angeles County Museum in 1976. The genre of still life known as the Vanitas developed in Northern Europe in the 17th Century, though some of its symbols, such as the human skull were familiar in earlier paintings of the penitent Magdalene, for example. Van Oosterwyck's painting, 1668, is a highly developed example, with its theme of morality as symbolised by objects. The objects in a baroque vanitas are of three sorts. There are those that stand for the active life (books, precious objects), objects that imply the passage of time (clocks, hour-glasses, full-blown flora, candles, skulls), and objects like a strand of ivy or a laurel branch to imply life after death. These may be omitted because Vanitas paintings are often pessimistic rather than consolatory.

Van Oosterwyck's Vanitas is divided into two zones: on the left, among other things, is a vase of flowers and a skull; on the other, a globe with astrological signs, and an hour-glass. On one side are objects denoting decay and death, on the other, signs by which life is controlled (the stars) and measured (the hour-glass).

## STYLISTIC

Audrey Flack chooses objects that are carefully selected and arranged to create the contemporary equivalent of the narrative of a 17th century Dutch still life. Her images of preciously Kitchy objects reflect personal sentiments regarding the passage of time, human vanity and mortality.

Flack's composition and iconography use the artistic resources of "channel switching," roving between photographic reproduction, and unique painting, drawing the viewer into a zone where the sense of fact and illusion are activated equally.

As a super realist, Flack combines realism with ideas, presenting a larger than life size world bringing it into sharp focus at some points and blurring it at others.

Flack has developed this expressive division in her second and third vanitas paintings. In one there is Marilyn Monroe smiling on one side, picked up, somewhat distorted, in a mirror on the other, as object and reflection, spanning the picture.

Correlative method for teachers or students of criticism:

1. Openly suggest, or have the student suggest, avenues of approach to the work whether stylistic, sociological, historical, or linguistic.
2. Does the description imply its own contradictions, or at least open-endedly suggest alternatives. Does it remain operational? Use literary devices: extended metaphor, simile, cliché, puns, oxymoron, paradox, analogy, humor.
3. A misreading is a device to be used in the dialogue between teacher & students. We can call this emplotment. There are three basic choices to be made: aesthetically, epistemologically (where does this "meaning" come from; what is this meaning, and is it my meaning; does the work diminish if I do not give it your meaning), and ethically (which deals with choice of employment, that is, what will be the results of my choice of activity).
4. Four tropes to use in misreading: metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. Develop strategies along these lines to INVENT traditional concepts. These four will also aid in tracing your viewers thoughts and reasons for choice, response, etc.
5. Is the interpretation myth generating? The illusion of art's autonomy in myth of depth. Criticism must generate this depth or the many levels of meaning. This is the attempt to get beyond the surface of the given by charging it with implicit meaning.

## VANITAS SYMBOLS

VANITAS (Lat., literally 'emptiness') is vanity in the sense, not of vainness or conceit, but of the evanescence or emptiness of earthly possessions. The surest indication that such a theme underlies a still life is a SKULL, the memento mori reminding us that we must die. An HOUR-GLASS, CLOCK or CANDLE all allude to the passing of time; an overturned vessel such as a CUP, PITCHER, or BOWL, to the literal meaning of vanitas -emptiness. A CROWN, SCEPTRE, in this case JEWELS, stand for the power and possessions of this world (represented by a terrestrial GLOBE) that death takes away. FLOWERS in this context, especially with drops of dew, are symbols of short-livedness and hence of decay.

The traditional Christian symbols of the apple, pomegranate, black and white grapes, nut and other fruit are commonly found in pictures of the Virgin and Child in the 15th and 16th cents. Other vanitas symbols include:\*

The BOOK

CANDLE

FRUIT

MIRROR

ROSE

VENUS: see the red rose.

VIOLET: Christian symbol of humility, Marilyn's rose is violet.

For complete descriptions of vanitas symbology see Hall, J., Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols, Harper & Row.

### Stylistic terms:

The terms photo realism, super realism, and hyper realism have been used to refer to a photographic sensitivity. They are categories that allow variety, and diversity concerning the interpretation of realism.

REALISM: The work of art as literal fact.

In their consciousness of the picture plane, awareness of scale, space and interval, in their urban detached feeling, or tone, and their often assertative textures, these artists tend to affirm the work of art as literal fact. The "new realists" look at the world of real people and specific situations. They are not necessarily concerned with visualizing in paint "the human condition" as a universal; their "feelings" generally mean their aesthetic convictions rather than their emotional or ethical feelings. Similar to studio painters of the 1920's and 1930's, they concern themselves with the same range of pictorial problems: light color harmonies, and spatial definition, or topographical exactitude. Character delineation as revealed through the face and body is less a characteristic of the "new realists" than of the more traditional realists.

### PHOTO REALISM:

The photo realists, realists who work directly from a photographic image or slide, emerged in the 1960's. The Photo Realists share with most other recent realists a concern with the specific, ordinary, and familiar forms before them, rather than remembered or imagined forms. Some Photo Realists are obsessed with detail; others simplify form the way bright sunlight eliminates detail in a snapshot. Since Photo Realist paintings are based on photographs, slides, and postcards, they can choose a broader range of subject matter including views of city sidewalks or vacation activities and sights. The photographic visual aids function as the preliminary on-site sketches did for nineteenth century painters. On the other hand, the visual aid (photograph, slide or postcard) by acting as an intermediary step, insulates the Photo Realist from the reality of a situation (whether contrived or objective) which he or she may not have personally witnessed. Thus, Photo Realists, on relying on preprocessed images, operate similarly to Pop artists.

### SUPER REALISM:

A style that indicates a heightened sense of reality. There is often a play between what is seen and the illusion of that reality. Super Real, in addition to illusionistic works, includes those artists who have combined realism with ideas. Audrey Flack presents a larger than life-size world, whose related objects play a part in a narrative. She intends for her work to exist on many levels, one is the simple fact of recognizable imagery. She does not consider herself a Realist, one who faithfully mirrors reality, nor a Photo Realist, one who works directly from a photograph. She prefers the

term Super Realist because she exaggerates reality, bringing it into sharp focus at some points and blurring it at others.

On a trip to Spain Flack saw and was moved by the emotional qualities of the painted sculptures done by the seventeenth century sculptor Luisa Roldan, as well as other Baroque sculptures. Most Photo Realists approach their subjects coolly, but Flack, whose preferred genre is the studio still life, includes objects that project an intensely personal meaning. Particularly in her recent work, these objects appear as retrospective symbols or archetypes standing in isolation, not as things which function or have an effect on the events of the world. Lawrence Alloway has referred to Flack's recent work as combining the "genre of still life with the humanist tradition of art as the vehicle of ambitious meaning."

## MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

- "READING" Rather than reading the labels on the works of art, have the students INTERPRET their own labels, ad-libbing them so that the feelings and interpretations come from the student instead of the authority of the label.
- Have the students modify or change the tone of their voice to give an indication of a key word or phrase that sums up the content of the work. Have the other students pick out these words or phrases and discuss the readers intention. This can also be done with the teachers and the parent.
- "ACTING" To understand is to experience and to experience is to feel. Have a few students act out what they see in the work of art, each in a different way. Have each student be a "character" in the work of art. How do the characters (if there is more than one) relate to the others? If there is only one character, how does this person relate to its background (in the work of art). Act out the mood of the work. Act out the experience of the artist.
- "REACTING" Single out one student as the subject of the work of art. This student will tell the others the nature of the experience (in the work of art). This can either be true or false; that is, the student can consciously deceive his or her audience. Have the others express their reactions to what is being told them. Does what is being said correspond to what is being seen? How can one know if there is deception? Can one trust emotion? What kind of reaction is there to a lie? To a truth? Are these reactions solely mental? Are they physical?
- "REMEMBERING" Through self-suggestion have past experiences of the students relate to the subject matter of the work of art. Have the students look at the work, close their eyes and visually construct an incident from their past. Relate this incident to a particular work.
- "WRITING" Imagining is seeing pictures in the mind and as such it is crucial to learning. Imagining can be used to facilitate many types of learning. The next day, in the classroom or at home, have the student (s) write down their impressions of a particular work. The teacher should first guide this "imagery journey" with key words and phrases. The following day, have the teacher repeat the exercises without key words or phrases. Let the students supply their own. Compare the writing of two days. Discuss the idea of authority of language, how people perceive and react differently to language, to visual imagery, to memory and emotion. Is this sexist, racial, biological, psychological conditioning?

Worksheet

NAME OF THE WORK OF ART \_\_\_\_\_

ARTIST \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: \_\_\_\_\_

LINE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SHAPE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TEXTURE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COMPOSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

HOW IT IS PAINTED OR MADE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WHY YOU PICKED THIS WORK OF ART: \_\_\_\_\_



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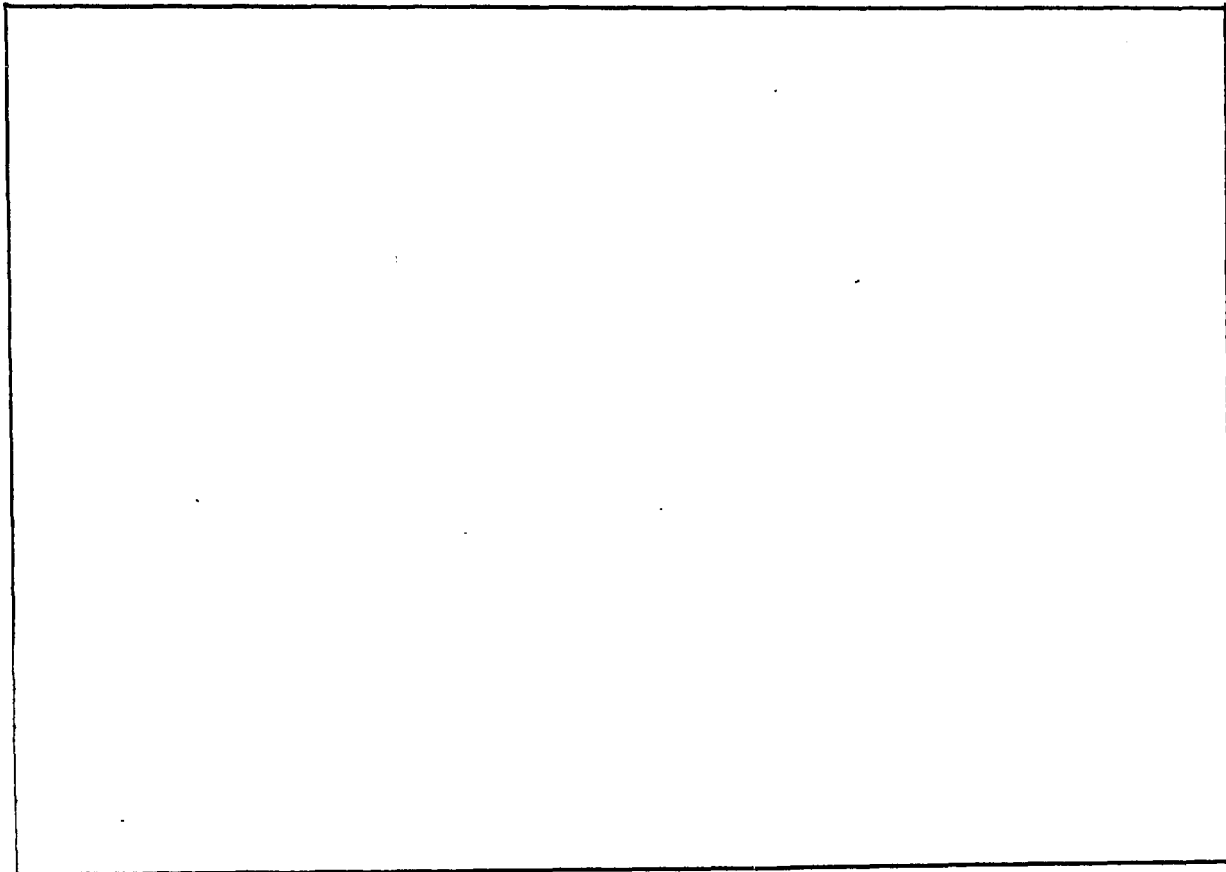
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DRAW IN THIS SPACE A SIMPLE VERSION OF THIS WORK:



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