

Finding Meaning in Contemporary Art

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Meaning in a work of art evolves from the interaction between the artist's choices and intentions and each viewer's unique knowledge, perspective, and experience. Finding meaning in contemporary art can be challenging for beginning viewers, especially when the artist employs personal symbolism, nonrepresentational subject matter, or unconventional methods in creating the work. The following sites offer artist information, lesson ideas, questioning strategies, and other useful resources for teachers and students interested in exploring contemporary art.

Art:21 Art in the Twenty-First Century

www.pbs.org/art21

This is the Web companion site for the PBS documentary series about contemporary visual art in America and the artists who make it. The site includes biographies, interviews, an online lesson library with over 100 activities, slideshows, and video clips on featured artists from each of the show's four seasons.

Arts Curriculum Online

www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/start.php

This area of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's website features a growing number of curriculum resource units designed to support use of the museum's collections and exhibitions, both during school tours and in the classrooms. Focusing on either modern or contemporary art, each unit includes an introductory essay, background information, a short artist biography, information on specific works of art, printable color images of the works of art, discussion questions,

follow-up activities, a listing of additional resources, and definitions of words that may be new to students.

ArtThink

www.sfmoma.org/artthink

ArtThink is the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's curriculum gateway to its rich collection of interactive programs covering twentieth- and twenty-first-century art and artists. It provides teachers and students with a variety of theme-based activities and resources in visual arts, language arts, history, and social studies. The site includes special features that focus on questions like "Who says it's art?" as well as lessons, hands-on activities, interactive tools and games, and a glossary of art terms. Whether you teach young or older students, you'll find it easy to locate content and lessons that are best suited for your students' developmental needs.

Art Today

schools.walkerart.org:8083/arttoday

This website examines several themes related to understanding contemporary art, which are linked to K–12 school tours at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. In addition to background information and links to selected artworks in the Walker's collections, the site includes discussion questions, classroom activities, and resources to download. While the site can be used to complement school tours at the Walker, the content and activities can also be used on their own to support classroom explorations of contemporary art.

Junior Centre Pompidou

www.junior.centrepompidou.fr

The Centre Pompidou in Paris designed this interactive website to introduce young audiences to the



world of contemporary creation. The site is divided into three areas: "More art" focuses on the "big ideas" behind the work of selected artists and do-it-yourself activities for children to try in the classroom or at home; "Media box" includes video and audio files featuring artist interviews and works; and "Click art" offers short interpretive narratives and background information on certain artists and their works. The site is available in French and English.

Young Tate Project Gallery

www.tate.org.uk/youngtate/projectgallery.htm

This link will take you to the Project Gallery, a part of a larger site titled Young Tate—a youth art initiative sponsored by the Tate Galleries in Britain. The Project Gallery features a variety of activities and projects involving young people who were inspired by visits to the galleries, and the work of certain contemporary artists. Several of the projects are adaptable to a classroom setting. ☺

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