

Cantor Arts Center
Docent Training 2009-10
SIX WAYS TO LOOK

The artist is a decision-maker. How do different factors affect the choices s/he makes when creating a work of art and how do those choices affect how the art looks, how it is used, how it is valued and how we understand it?

Human Figure: This category may include subjects such as:

- Form: proportion; physique/build; anatomy; posture
- Male, female [gender]; age; race; facial features
- Body language, gesture, movement/motion, expression
- Human scale; foreshortening

Aesthetics and formal properties: This category may include subjects such as:

- Aesthetics (i.e., theories and judgments of beauty in nature & art; encompasses philosophical questions about the nature of beauty [and the accompanying cultural variations that this implies], psychological questions about the effects of beauty, and physiological data about sensory perceptions of beauty)
- Visual analysis of formal elements: form/shape, color, actual or implied line, texture; balance, movement; composition. Perspective. Picture plane.
- Style

Technology, techniques and materials: (*Note: “technology refers to the use of tools, not to computers or even machines of any kind. Tool use is one measure of intelligence—i.e., knowing which tool to use and how.”*) This category may include subjects such as:

- Media or materials used in an artwork (natural/manmade; what format; the support [e.g., canvas or paper]; the frame)
- The process[es] or method[s] by which something was created
- Changes over time, e.g., age; patina; damage; repair; restoration

Trade and artistic exchange: This category may include subjects such as:

- Similarities/references of form, style, subject matter across different cultures, times, places
- Evidence of introduced, non-indigenous materials
- Artistic influences (e.g., artists looking at work by other artists, within or across cultures or time)
- Economic factors
- Interaction of distinctly different cultures, societies, schools

Religion, spirituality, and symbolism: This category may include subjects such as:

- Personal or collective faith; beliefs
- Monotheism, polytheism, animism
- Spiritual practices; ritual; ceremony; sacraments [sacred acts]
- Sacred, secular
- Philosophy; ethical and moral thought and action; quests
- Enlightenment; salvation; eternity; heaven, hell, afterlife, nirvana
- Iconography; allegory; allusion; attributes
- Relationships between *conception* and *perception* in and of art (can be thought of as a continuum between the extremes of the two)
- The artist as maker of meaning

Social and political issues: This category may include subjects such as:

- Domestic/household; community/local; regional, national, global; commonalities and distinctions. Lifestyles. Priorities.
- Environmental factors
- Patronage; function/purpose of object in its original context
- Significance, meaning, interpretation of subject matter
- Status/rank/power: social, economic, governing, spiritual, other
- Clothing/attire; accessories; settings/surroundings
- The artist as a member of his/her society; gender of the artist [known?]
- Social action, political protest

The Six Ways to Look was developed by Patience Young, Curator for Education and Lauren Silver, former Associate Curator for Education at the B. Gerald and Iris Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2006.