

# POSTCARDS FROM UTAH ARTISTS

## Yes, No, Maybe So

Grades 6-12

**Follow-up:** This lesson can be a basis for almost any lesson on aesthetics.

**Adaptations (Special Needs population):** Do the homework in class with a peer tutor. Do worksheets in groups.

**Extensions (Gifted):** Have students interview other faculty about what art is to them and how they came to that conclusion.

Concepts/Foci: What is Art?; Introduction to aesthetics; Define what art is.  
Critical/Creative Skill: Write definition of what art is.

Vocabulary: Aesthetics

Multiple Intelligences: Interpersonal, Linguistic, Touch, Auditory, Spatial

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Give examples of what they think is art, not art, and what could be art,
- Summarize their own ideas of what art is in a brief definition,
- Categorize objects as "Art," "Non-art," and "Maybe Art,"
- Appreciate that others define art differently,
- Recognize that not everything is art,
- Identify postcard images with aesthetic clusters. (Utah Art Core Standard 3.A.1)

### **Motivator:**

Place in front of the class a large wrapped box. Talk with the class about occasions when they receive gifts. Lead the class to discover it is when people want to share something of worth with others. In this box are six smaller boxes as well as objects that are art, not art, and could be art. Examples for objects are a small ceramic pot, flashlight, bar of soap, a wood craft/Christmas ornament, geode or crystal or some type of decorative rock, a real art work, a Brillo box, model airplane, unusual looking shoe, and so forth. Inside the smaller boxes are postcard examples and questions for the six clusters of aesthetics. They are as follows: What is art?; What is beauty?; Artist Intent; Aesthetic Experience; Artistic Creation; Art and Other Values.

Pass out the small boxes. One by one have students open them. Show the postcards or have large images up front for the class to see. Let the students read the questions in each box. Answer and discuss the questions together. Spend about three to five minutes per box. Do the What is Art? Box last. For each box use the postcards to engage in discussions. This last box is the focus of the lesson.

### Lesson steps:

- Motivator.
- Pull the objects out of the box. Have students decide if it is art, not art, or could be art. Pick specific objects to discuss.
- If students are not engaging in the discussion use objects that are part of popular culture such as a car, clothing, designer shoes, and so forth.
- Give homework assignment worksheet “Yes, No, Maybe so.”
- Discuss with class what they found on their worksheets.
- Lead students to verbally express what they believe art is. In doing so, help the students recognize that not everything is art. Example, the toilet in the bathroom.
- Have students choose a postcard. Students will use the postcard to help them fill out the “Making Distinctions” worksheet. Use the Barbie article to help fill out the worksheet. The last step of the worksheet is to write a personal definition of what art is.

### The small boxes:

#### What is art?

John Chamberlain, *Delores James*, 1962

- Who makes art?
- Where is art?
- When is art?
- Why is art?

#### What is beauty?

Emily Carr, *Shoreline*, 1936

Francis Bacon, *Study After Pope Innocent X by Velazquez*, 1951

- What is beauty?
  - Subjectivism– beauty is in the eye of the beholder
  - Objectivism–only one universal definition
  - Is there an ugly or are there just degrees of beauty?

#### Artist Intent

Any work of art by Andy Warhol

Any work of art by an animal. These can be found on the Internet. I use Singgah the Asian Elephant.

- Can anyone or anything make art?
- Is anything an artist makes art? What about pizza or cookies?
- Does it have to have intent to be art?

#### Aesthetic Experience

Most paintings by van Gogh

Collin McCahon, *Will He Save Him?*, 1959

- What are your reactions to a work of art. Are these similar to your reactions to nature?
- Is it good art if you have a negative reaction to the art, or if you don't have a reaction?

## Artistic Creation

George Segal, *Bus Riders*, 1962

Clive Arlidge, *Heke Meets the Guv*, 1962

- Does the process of making art matter?
- Does the artist have to make something or can he/she just put a stick on a pedestal and call it art?

## Art and Other Values

- Ethical  
Chris Burden, *Doorway to Heaven*, November 15, 1975
- Political  
Faith Ringgold, *The Flag is Bleeding*, 1967
- Religious  
Salvador Dali, *Crucifixion*, 1954
- Historical  
Lascaux Cave Paintings, *Gallopig Horse*, 15,000 B.C.
- Economical  
Jasper Johns, *Three Flags*, 1958
- Social  
Any work by Shirin Neshat

## Questions:

- Can values affect the viewer's perception?
- Should people spend \$17 million for a Jasper Johns' painting?
- Is it good art because it's old?
- Do art and politics mix?

## Helpful Articles:

"N.Y. Artist's Cheesy Idea Fails to Melt Wyoming City Officials' Hearts." Brandon Grigg., *The Salt Lake Tribune*, A-1, A-6

"All-Consuming Barbie," Joan O'Brien. *The Salt Lake Tribune*

# Making Distinctions Activity

Name one way certain things are LIKE art (or specific art forms)

Name one way certain things are NOT LIKE art (or specific art forms)

1. One way a Barbie doll is LIKE art is

One way a Barbie doll is NOT LIKE art is

2. One way a flower is LIKE sculpture is

One way a flower is NOT LIKE sculpture is

Continue with the above pattern of distinction statements with objects like a rock, a new car, a cereal box, and so forth.

3. One way a \_\_\_\_\_ is LIKE art is

One way a \_\_\_\_\_ is NOT LIKE art is

4. One way a \_\_\_\_\_ is LIKE art is

One way a \_\_\_\_\_ is NOT LIKE art is

5. One way a \_\_\_\_\_ is LIKE art is

One way a \_\_\_\_\_ is NOT LIKE art is

After making these distinctions you are ready to write a personal definition of art. On the back of this paper please write your personal definition of art is. Please use complete sentences. On a separate piece of paper, create a work of art that fits your definition of art.

# Yes, No, Maybe So

Look around your house, outside in a building and find 5-10 objects for each category.  
Yes, this is art. No, this is not art. Well maybe, but I'm not sure if this is art.

**Yes**

**Maybe So**

**No**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.