

# VIEWPOINTS

## Exploring How You Understand Art

By Faith Clover and Mary Erickson

### BASIC INFORMATION

Artwork Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Artist (if available): \_\_\_\_\_

Artist's Culture: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials used: \_\_\_\_\_ Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Location \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTIONS

Look at the artwork you chose. Circle one or more responses to each of the following questions.

#### 1. What do you think the artwork is about?

- A. It expresses general human conditions: feelings like joy, sadness; ideas like justice, the difficulties of life, spiritual values.
- B. It is about ideas and issues that are/were of interest to artists and other art specialists of that culture.
- C. It shows how things (real or imaginary) really look.
- D. It's about the artist's original arrangement of elements and innovative use of media.
- E. I just like it. It reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 2. What can you say about the lines, shapes, colors, and textures and how they are organized?

- A. I think the artist has skillfully used line, shape, color, and texture to make the artwork look just the way it would in real life.
- B. I really like the colors (or textures, etc.). For example, certain colors (textures, etc.) just make me feel good.
- C. The organization of the elements (the lines, colors, shapes, textures) reflects the standards of artists and other art experts who lived when and where the artwork was made.
- D. Elements (the lines, colors, shapes, textures) seem to be organized for the maximum emotional impact or to best convey the artist's ideas.
- E. The organization of the elements (the lines, colors, shapes, textures) creates an expressive, or original effect.

#### 3. What about this artwork do you think would have been difficult to do?

- A. It would be hard to make things look so real. It would take a lot of skill and practice and patience.
- B. What is hard is mastering the art traditions of the culture.
- C. What is hard is finding ways to express ideas and feelings effectively.
- D. I've never really thought about it and don't have an opinion.
- E. What is hard is creating a style that is new and/or that expresses one's individuality.

#### 4. What feelings or ideas do you see in the artwork?

- A. To me this artwork really expresses strong feelings or ideas. I'm also interested in what the artist intended.
- B. The artist has mastered the art tradition of her/his culture so as to express the values of her/his time and culture well.
- C. It makes me feel happy (tired, sad, excited, etc.). I like the colors (texture, etc.).
- D. It is pretty/beautiful. Or the ideas or feelings are evident in the people's faces or in the story that is being told.
- E. The artwork evokes an aesthetic response through its significant form.

#### 5. What do you think art experts would say is the meaning of the artwork?

- A. It expresses ideas that are important to artists and other art specialists.
- B. I've never really thought about it and don't have an opinion.
- C. It expresses something about the feelings of an individual or ideas about the general human condition.
- D. It's about the things (people, objects, and/or activities depicted) you see in it.
- E. Specialists' interpretations may vary depending on their knowledge about art ideas of artists and other art experts who lived when and where the artwork was made.

#### 6. By studying the artwork, what can you tell about the artist who made it or the culture in which it was made?

- A. I've never really thought about it and don't have an opinion.
- B. Because I am familiar with standards of and expectations for artists in that culture, I can make an educated guess about the artist's skills, training, and ideas.
- C. I am most familiar with the ideas of artists and other art experts in my own culture.
- D. I think the artist is showing us what life was/is like in that culture.
- E. I know some general information about the artist and culture, but I'm not sure they relate to the artwork.

#### 7. How can you tell if this is a good artwork?

- A. If it looks so real; if it's pretty/beautiful; and if it took a lot of skill to make it.
- B. If it is original, has a strong composition, and exploits the qualities of the medium.
- C. If I like it.
- D. My judgment depends on how well I understand the art values and standards of the culture in which the artwork was created.
- E. If it says a lot about human emotion and experience.

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### SCORING GUIDE

Each response you chose is associated with one of five viewpoints. Circle the viewpoint you chose.

**Question 1**

- A. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- B. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint
- C. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- D. Artworld Viewpoint
- E. Non-Reflective Viewpoint

**Question 2**

- A. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- B. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- C. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint
- D. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- E. Artworld Viewpoint

**Question 3**

- A. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- B. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint
- C. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- D. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- E. Artworld Viewpoint

**Question 4**

- A. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- B. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint
- C. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- D. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- E. Artworld Viewpoint

**Question 5**

- A. Artworld Viewpoint
- B. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- C. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint
- D. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- E. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint

**Question 6**

- A. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- B. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint
- C. Artworld Viewpoint
- D. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- E. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint

**Question 7**

- A. Beauty, Realism, & Skill Viewpoint
- B. Artworld Viewpoint
- C. Non-Reflective Viewpoint
- D. Plural Artworlds Viewpoint
- E. Expression of Feelings and Ideas Viewpoint

## RESULTS

Count the number of times you used the following viewpoints:

Non-Reflective Viewpoint

Beauty, Realism, and Skill Viewpoint

Expression of Feelings or Ideas Viewpoint

Artworld Viewpoint

Plural Artworlds Viewpoint

According to the results above, which one or two viewpoints did you use most often?

Viewpoint

Viewpoint

## FIVE VIEWPOINTS FOR UNDERSTANDING ART

No set of seven multiple-choice questions can address all diverse artworks. The purpose of this exploration is to stimulate your reflection. As you read about the five viewpoints, you may realize that you apply different viewpoints depending on different situations in which you experience art. For example, you might adopt the Beauty, Realism, and Skill Viewpoint or Artworld Viewpoint when looking at art in a museum. While choosing art for your home, you might use the Non-Reflective Viewpoint or the Expression of Ideas and Feelings Viewpoint. As you study art, you learn to move more easily across all five viewpoints depending on the different contexts in which you experience and understand art.

### Non-Reflective Viewpoint:

People using the Non-Reflective Viewpoint have an immediate positive, non-reflective response to their choice, which is not based on any information beyond the artwork itself. While all viewers experience an attraction to particular artworks, more experienced art viewers generally have specific reasons for favoring some artworks over others. Upon reflection they are able to explain their reasons.

### Beauty, Realism, and Skill Viewpoint:

People using the Beauty, Realism, and Skill Viewpoint believe that good artworks must show beautiful things, be realistic, and exhibit skill. They find that the more the artwork approaches the reality of a photograph, the better the artwork. A great many young people and adults in the United States hold this viewpoint. Different cultures may pass on other standards that may not reflect this viewpoint.

### Expression of Ideas and Feelings Viewpoint:

People using the Expression of Ideas and Feelings Viewpoint see an artwork as a communication between an artist and a viewer. They believe that an artwork must express something significant about the human condition (like joy or tragedy) or ideas (like justice or spiritual values), which is conveyed through the artwork to the viewer.

### Artworld Viewpoint:

People using this Artworld Viewpoint value originality, individual genius, respect for materials, and the idea of the avant garde. "Significant form" and "Art for Art's Sake" are ideas from the Modernist European and American artworld (approximately 1890 to 1960). Until recently this has been the dominant view reflected in art schools, museums, galleries, and art publications in much of the world.

There are many other artworlds, for example traditional Asian, folk, tribal African, indigenous American, postmodern, etc. Specialists (artists and other art experts) in each of these artworlds hold certain ideas and practices in common that may not reflect this viewpoint.

### Plural Artworlds Viewpoint:

People using the Plural Artworlds Viewpoint have knowledge and ability to apply standards and values used by artists and other art experts in different cultures. They consciously make choices among alternative viewpoints, selecting the most appropriate for the artwork they are seeking to understand. They consider how differently the original audience would have understood the artwork from people thinking in today's context would. They recognize ways they are affected by their own cultural background and how that might affect their understanding of art.