

PRE-LESSON

#3 - Identity in Art

This fall's tour pre-lesson explores **Identity in Art and Culture** through a series of short 10-minute “**bell-ringer**” activities.

You can do one activity each day the week before your UMFA/NMHU tour or do them all at one time!



Talking about Visual Language in Art

What is visual language?

- Visual language is a form of communication using art, images, and/or symbols to understand something.
- Different time periods, cultures, and places have their own visual languages.

Let's see how artists give visual language clues to help people understand works of art!

Investigating Art Using Visual Language



Describe some of the details you see in this artwork.

What clues does this piece give you about the identity of the main figure? Who is he?

Clue #1: The figure is seated on a jaguar pelt cushion. What are some characteristics of a jaguar? In Maya culture, the jaguar represents leadership, power, and control. Why is it significant that the figure is seated on a jaguar pelt?

Clue #2: How is the figure dressed? What is he wearing? Do his jewelry and elaborate hairstyle give us clues about his identity?

These clues tell us that this person has high status and power.

Investigating Art Using Visual Language

Let's investigate the identity of the person who would use this artwork.
What symbols and images do you see?

Clue #1: How is this artwork meant to be worn? What kind of person would wear something as elaborate as this?

Clue #2: What materials is this artwork made of? Who could afford to have something this detailed made?

The faces on this artwork represent ancestors, and the bird on the top represents a connection to the heavens. This artwork was worn by a king and is therefore called "King's Hat."



King's Hat, Yoruba, mid-20th century, cloth, basketry, glass beads, UMFA2008.32.31

Investigating Art Using Visual Language

Artists sometimes use visual language to show a mood or feeling, rather than identity.

What clues does the artist give you about the figure in the middle?

What is the mood or feelings of the person?

How does the artist use color in addition to images as visual language to express a feeling or idea?

Have you ever been in the same mood as this person?
How did you feel?



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *Periphery*, 2013. oil on canvas, UMFA2013.3.1

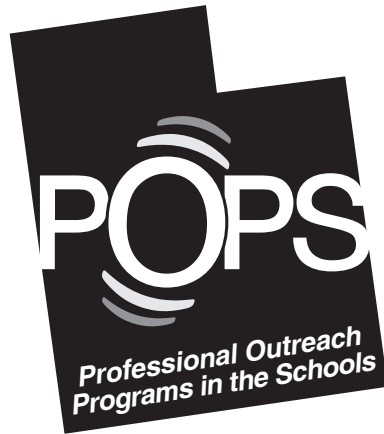
WRAP UP!

Discuss as a class some of the ways artists use visual language in art.

How do artists show the identity of their subjects through visual language?

What kind of visual language clues do you see in every day life?

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