

Dreams and Visions

Theme 2: Dreams and Visions

Introduction

Art, of course, is about seeing. But it is not always about representing the world as it exists, and sometimes it can allow us to see with more than our eyes. From Aboriginal artists who paint the unseen forces of the universe to Surrealists who looked into the recesses of the unconscious mind for inspiration, people have found many ways to record ephemeral feelings, unknowable mysteries, personal fantasies, and inner visions. At the same time, art has been used as a tool to inspire and guide dreams and visions, both secular and spiritual.

Session

Review:

1. Share your responses to the comparison questions for Converging Cultures.
2. Share any other questions or ideas prompted by the previous assignment.

Watch the Dreams and Visions video (30 minutes).

Consider/discuss the following:

1. Dream imagery is found in the art of many cultures and eras. What similarities are there in works shown in the program? For what different purposes were the dream images created?
2. Throughout history, many artists represented people and things in the world around them. The work of other artists is an expression of the inner self. Explain how Sandy Skoglund uses objects from the real world in her work, and what she is trying to convey.
3. Some works of art depicting the dreams and visions of religious figures were made by deeply religious artists to express their personal reverence and belief. Other works were commissioned by the religious establishment to promote their faith. What examples from the program would fit into the former category, and what other might fit into the latter?
4. How did the Surrealist works in the program reflect Sigmund Freud's theories of psychoanalysis and the unconscious or subconscious mind?
5. Aboriginal artists have said that the true value of their work lies in the personal experience of "dreaming," and not in the resultant visual images that are created. How is this view similar or different to non-Aboriginal artists who have represented their dreams in works of art?

Between Sessions:

Go to the Web site at www.learner.org/courses/globalart and:

1. Explore featured artworks from this program, including the descriptive text and the expert perspective commentary.
2. Read the chapter about Dreams and Visions in the downloadable text.
3. On the Web, compare selected artworks by considering the questions posed. Prepare to share your responses by taking notes. Bring your notes to the next session.