

The Body

Theme 13: The Body

Introduction

From painting to sculpture, body art to performance art, the body has figured prominently in the creative expression of nearly all cultures from the beginning of civilization. Through art, the body becomes a site for defining individual identity, constructing sex and gender ideals, negotiating power, and experimenting with the nature of representation itself.

Session

Review:

1. Share your responses to the comparison questions for Conflict and Resistance.
2. Share any other questions or ideas prompted by the previous assignment.

Watch The Body video (30 minutes).

Consider/discuss the following:

1. While artworks depicting nude images have appeared throughout much of history, issues regarding their appropriateness have often been linked to predominant religious or spiritual beliefs, or the prevailing social mores of a society. Who should determine whether a work of art is obscene or immoral? Should an individual have the right to view art that others may find indecent or obscene?
2. How do idealized images of the body vary in the artworks of different cultures and in different time periods?
3. What do images of the female figure featured in the program convey about the role of women in their respective cultures?
4. How are such stylizations in prehistoric figurines and African figurative sculpture similar/different to Takashi Murakami's sculpture of Miss ko2 ?
5. What is the significance of body art—tattoos and scarification—and the pain individuals endure to acquire it?

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 The Body 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.