

Domestic Life

Theme 7: Domestic Life

Introduction

From furniture and tapestries to bowls and baskets, art has figured prominently in domestic life for thousands of years. Within the space of the home—be it a palace or a hut—aesthetically and culturally significant objects have fulfilled purposes both mundane (e.g., storage and service) and transcendent (e.g., the facilitation of prayer). Moreover, the activities and events taking place within these domestic spaces have been the inspiration for countless artists. Their depictions of everyday life are best understood as complex documents melding real-world observations with ideal social expectations.

Session

Review:

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

Watch the Domestic Life video (30 minutes).

Consider/discuss the following:

1. How does the art featured in the program convey a sense of pride in domestic life?
2. Many art objects exhibited in museums were once used as domestic objects in people's homes or as tools for their work. What makes a functional object of everyday life, such as a quilt, a chair, or a porcelain vase, an art object?
3. Fine art is usually associated with mediums such as painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, etc. Crafts are usually associated with techniques such as weaving, ceramics, or metalwork. Should there be a distinction between art and craft?
4. How was everyday domestic life documented in ancient civilizations?
5. The Industrial Revolution in nineteenth-century Europe, and subsequent technological developments, changed the way many functional objects, such as clothing, fabric, furniture, tools, and household items were made or manufactured. What are the positive and negative repercussions of mass production?

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 Domestic Life 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.