Art Criticism and Aesthetics Lesson Plans

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ARE 6195 Teaching Art Appreciation and Criticism

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Lesson Plan 1: An Introduction to Feldman – Grades 9-12

Objective

After the completion of this lesson the students will know how to use the Edmund Feldman method of art criticism. They will be able to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge a work of art based on the visual facts that it contains.

Sunshine State Standards

VA.D.1.4 The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.
1. Understands and determines the differences between the artist’s intent and public interpretation through valuative criteria and judgment.

Procedure

1. As a class we will go through the process of describing and analyzing the visual facts of the piece Blood Connection by Aviva Beigel.

Describing and Naming the Visual Facts

As a class the students will use form descriptors like line, light, shape, color, temperature, size, quantity, space, location, surface, and texture to describe the work. They will continue to make further observations about similarity, closeness, contrast, sequence, direction, rhythm, symmetry, balance, completeness, and closure. Finally the students will make observations about the technical process of the work based on what they can draw from the visual facts (Feldman, 1994).
2. As a class we will go through the process of interpreting the visual evidence of *Blood Connection* by Aviva Beigel.

*Interpreting the Evidence*

The students and I will come up with a critical hypothesis about the piece. We will do so by asking the following questions. Where is this happening? Who lives here? What did they do? Why did they do it? Are the represented events real or potentially real? Was this place seen remembered or invented? Where are we in relation to what we see? What happened before we arrived? What will happen afterward? If this were real how would our world be different (Feldman, 1994)? After asking these questions our critical hypothesis will reflect our answers.

3. As a class we will go through the process of judging the work *Blood Connection* by Aviva Beigel.

*Judging the Work*

After going through the early steps of the Feldman process, describing, analyzing, and interpreting, the students and I will complete of final step of judging the work. We will use the critical hypothesis we created to ground the judgment that we make.

4. After participating in the criticism process student will spend the rest of the class period describing, analyzing, interpreting, and judging the piece *Scared Dead* by Aviva Beigel in a written critique.

*Assessment*

The students will be assessed on their understanding and use of the Feldman method of art criticism through the written critique they complete on the piece *Scared Dead* by Aviva Beigel. They will be evaluated on their abilities to describe and analyze the piece based on the
visual facts, come up with a critical hypothesis based on those facts, and judge the piece against that critical hypothesis (House, 2008).

Statement of Origin

The idea for this lesson plan came from Feldman’s text *Practical Art Criticism*. Going over the Feldman method as a class will provide a good introduction to the methods and techniques of Feldman.

References


http://www.avivabeigel.com/


http://www.avivabeigel.com/


Lesson Plan 2: Finding a Message – Grades 9-12

Objective

After completing this lesson plan students will be able to use the Edmund Feldman method of art criticism to find and understand social and political messages within works of art. Using art criticism students will be able to think critically about art and its meanings (Anderson, 1993). They will also be able to analyze the impact of these messages and what makes them effective or ineffective.

Sunshine State Standards

VA.C.1.4 The student understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture.

1. Understands how social, cultural, ecological, economic, religious, and political conditions influence the function, meaning, and execution of works of art.

2. Understands how recognized artists recorded, affected, or influenced change in a historical, cultural, or religious context.

Procedure

1. The students will be introduced to the idea of art that can convey social, cultural, religious, or political messages.
2. As a class we will critique Paul Marcus’ 2003 etching *Capital Dunking*, paying specific attention to the message he is portraying. After describing and analyzing the visual facts of the piece the students will focus on the interpretation step of the Feldman method.

3. The students will ask the following questions. What does the artist want to say? What strategies and techniques does the artist use to convey that message? How effective are those strategies and techniques? What would have to change to give the piece more or less impact? Rate the overall impact of the piece and explain why.

4. After completing the critique on *Capital Dunking* as a class the students will choose either *Gun Karma* or *And Every Time He Told a Lie*... by Pieter Myers to complete their own critique focusing on the same questions we used as a class.

**Assessment**

The students will be assessed on their ability to use the Feldman method of art criticism to understand and interpret social, cultural, and political messages within works of art through the written critique they complete on either Myers piece. They will be evaluated on their abilities to describe and analyze the piece, but mainly on their interpretation as guided by the questions from the in class critique.

**Statement of Origin**

The idea for this lesson plan came from Edmund Feldman’s *Practical Art Criticism*. After reading his section in interpretation I thought an effective way to introduce interpretation to a class would be to use works that are heavy with meaning like those of Paul Marcus and Pieter Myers.

**References**


http://www.washprintfair.com/imagegallerycontemporary.htm


http://www.psmyers.com
Lesson Plan 3: Initial Reactions – Grades 6-8

Objective

After completing this lesson the students will be able to use the principles of design and elements of art to justify and support initial reactions to works of art. The students will be able to think critically about the work and use visual facts to justify their own, and others’ interpretations.

Sunshine State Standards

VA.D.1.3 The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.

1. Understands how a work of art can be judged by more than one standard.

2. Uses research and contextual information to identify responses to works of art.

Procedure

1. The students will look at Chara Rose and Hysophia by Anne Ggrich for 5 minutes. They will be asked to consider questions like the following. Who are the people in these paintings? Why did the artist choose to paint them? How do these pieces make me feel? What do these pieces make me think? Do I like them?

2. The students will then have 5 minutes to write their initial reactions and answers to the questions they were considering for one of the pieces.
3. When that five minutes is up the students will trade papers with another student with wrote on the same piece and read that student’s reaction.

4. The students will then write and paragraph or two comparing and contrasting their own reaction with that of their peer. If their peer has a different reaction the student should give justifications for what the other student could be thinking based on the visual facts of the piece. If the peer has the same reaction the student should explain what visual facts within the piece communicate that idea or feeling so universally.

Assessment

The students will be assessed using both the writing on their own reaction and their writing in response to their peer’s reaction. They will be evaluated on how clearly they are able to answer the initial questions about the piece and communicate their thoughts in their initial reaction, as well as how well they use the visual facts of the piece to support their comparison of reactions.

Statement of Origin

The idea for this lesson plan came from the class reading Professional Criticism in the Secondary Classroom: Opposing Judgments of Contemporary Art Enhance the Teaching of Art Criticism by Sun-Young Lee. I thought to make the concept presented in this article approachable for middle school students it would be interesting to have them look at each other’s responses and ideas about works of art. It shows them that most of the time in art criticism there isn’t one right answer, but instead the importance lies in being able to support your ideas or theories with the visual facts of the piece.

References


Lesson Plan 4: Using Narrative as Art Criticism – Grades 9-12

Remember When We Used to Make a Fort, Heather Merckle  
Toast Served with a Smile, Heather Merckle

Objective

After completing this lesson students will be able to use narrative to further understand and explain the meaning of a work and the artist’s intentions based on the visual facts of the piece of art. They will become active learners seeking answers to the meaning of the piece using the visual facts of the work (Anderson, 1993).

Sunshine State Standards

VA.D.1.4 The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.
1. Understands and determines the differences between the artist’s intent and public interpretation through valuative criteria and judgment.

Procedure

1. The students will look at two examples of the work of Heather Merckle, Remember When We Used to Make a Fort and Toast Served with a Smile. As a class we will go over the principles of design and elements of art that are evident in the piece.

2. After describing and analyzing how the elements and principles are used the students will work on their own approaching the interpretation aspect of the critique from a narrative perspective.
3. Each student will choose one painting to focus on and they will write a story as if they were Ms. Merckle, describing what happened that made her create this painting. The students will be asked to consider the story behind this painting and what prompted them to create it. The students will also be asked to include a little bit about themselves as the artist of this painting and how that effects what they create. Finally the students will be expected to discuss how each of these elements are represented in the elements of art and principles of design in the painting they have chosen to discuss.

Assessment

The students will be assessed using the written narrative they turn in at the end of class. It will be evaluated on their use of the elements and art and principles of design to support and justify the narrative they created.

Statement of Origin

I got the idea for this lesson plan after finding the artist Heather Merckle. I found a very strong open-ended narrative component to her work and thought that it could be used in examining the interpretation stage of Feldman.

References


http://gallery.mac.com/hmerckle#100047/DSCF0699&bgcolor=black

Lesson Plan 5: Decoding Messages in Media – Grades 9-12

Objectives

After completing this lesson students will be able to think critically about messages in the media. They will be able to use the Feldman method of art criticism to examine meaning in advertisements. They will also be able to communicate their finding through a visual critique.

Sunshine State Standards

VA.B.1.4 The student creates and communicates a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts.

2. Understands that works of art can communicate an idea and elicit a variety of responses through the use of selected media.

3. Understands some of the implications of intentions and purposes in particular works of art.

Procedure

1. As a class we will look at different examples of print advertisements found in teen magazine like the teen vogue fashion spread, the lacoste advertisement, and the journey’s advertisement.

2. We will continue to go through the describing, analyzing, and interpreting steps paying
close attention to some of the questions that Feldman puts forward like: Who does this work think I am? What is this work trying to sell me? What does is want me to admire? Whom does it want me to be? What does it ask me to do? What does it want me to think? How does it want me to feel? (Feldman, 1994)

3. The students will create a collage using the material they find in teen magazines that answers the questions we discussed as a class.

4. The students will write a short paragraph describing the work they created and how they used the elements of art and principles of design to answer Feldman’s questions.

Assessment

The students will be assessed based on the artwork they create and the short paragraph they write. They will be evaluated based on their ability to use visual strategies to answer Feldman’s questions.

Statement of Origin

The idea for this lesson plan came from examining the section of Feldman on interpretation as well as the ideas presented by Paul Duncum in his article *Holding Aesthetics and Ideology in Tension*.

References


Journey’s Advertisment (November 2008) Seventeen Magazine

Lacoste Advertisment (November 2008) Men’s Health Magazine

Teen Vogue Fashion Spread (November 2008) Teen Vogue Magazine
Lesson Plan 6: Aesthetic Distance – Grades 9-12
Objective

After completing the lesson the students will be able to use the principles of design and elements of art to analyze and critique films as visual arts pieces. The students will be able to look beyond the concept of story to see films as art objects and not as mere representations of real life.

Sunshine State Standards

VA.D.1.4 The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.
1. Understands and determines the differences between the artist’s intent and public interpretation through valuative criteria and judgment.

Procedure

1. The students will view a two-minute scene from the film *Serenity* by Hollywood filmmaker Joss Whedon.

2. As a class we will discuss what we saw in that film clip, more than likely focusing on the story elements of a spaceship flying through a midair space battle trying to reach its destination.

3. The students will then view the non-narrative, hand painted film *Stellar* by experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage.
4. As a class we will discuss what we saw in Brakhage’s film, more than likely focusing on colors, time, light, texture, and rhythm.

5. I will introduce the students to the concept of aesthetic distance using the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looking At</th>
<th>Looking Into</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding meaning in visual expression.</td>
<td>Perfunctory aesthetic judgment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking beyond narrative to the same language used in describing, analyzing, interpreting, and judging other art pieces.</td>
<td>Looking only at narrative limits your ability to describe, analyze, interpret, and judge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. I will ask the students questions about how we look at painting and other fine arts mediums and how we regard their aesthetic value. How does this aesthetic distance change when we look at film? Shouldn’t we give films the same artistic judgment by using the same strategies of criticism?

7. I will screen the excerpt from *Serenity* again and ask the students to reconsider how the responded to the question of what did we see?

8. Finally the students will complete a written critique of the excerpt from *Serenity* using the visual facts of the scene to support any interpretations of narrative or judgments of the film.

**Assessment**

The students will be assessed on their ability to use the Feldman method to interpret and judge a narrative film without relying on narrative. They will be evaluated on their use of the elements of art and principles of design to support their interpretations and judgments of the film.

**Statement of Origin**

I got the idea for this lesson plan from the article *The Critic as Educator* by Clement Greenburg. He describes the way that small children look into paintings and only seem them for
their subject matter without considering them as art objects (Greenburg, 1987). This is very similar to how the majority of people look at motion pictures. Braudy and Cohen support this idea in their text suggesting that people have a hard time looking at film as art. They suggest that we don’t think of them as art objects that have been created, but instead we look into them getting lost in their “realities” (Braudy & Cohen, 2004). I wanted to create a lesson plan that would encourage students to look at a film the same way they would look at a painting, asking questions and looking for meaning.

References


   http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/serenity2.htm