

LSWA 228: Telling Stories: The Rhetoric and Representation of Race and Ethnicity

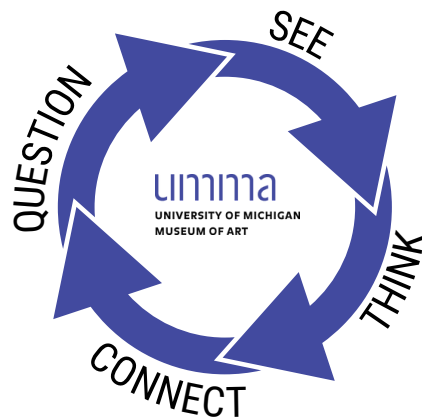


Guiding Questions:

- What stories about race, ethnicity, and intersectionality do you notice on this tour?
- How do these artworks engage in emerging/transforming (and also possibly resistance) storytelling in order to reconsider and reshape understandings about race/ethnicity?
- What issue(s)/subject(s) do they address? How do they address them?
- What can you learn about the social, historical, or artistic contexts for the creation of these artworks?
- What do you understand to be the audiences for these artworks? How do you know that?
- What relationships do you see between context, the work, genre, and audiences?

Your task (in pairs or small groups):

1. Follow this tour with the Guiding Questions in mind. Use the prompts for viewing, describing, and connecting to each piece included in this handout as a kind of treasure hunt to help you approach each piece with curiosity and capture some ideas about it. **2.** After you have followed the tour and taken notes in this handout, choose 1-2 pieces from any part of the tour that are especially interesting to you, and take a photo of it/them. **3.** Then head over to our Canvas site and complete the Discussion Board prompt in our Modules due on Thursday in class.



Elements of Art

LINE	FORM	COLOR	SHAPE	SPACE	TEXTURE

Principles of Design

BALANCE	EMPHASIS	HARMONY	MOVEMENT	RHYTHM	PROPORTION	VARIETY

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHILE LOOKING AT ART:

Symbols—things that have a specific meaning or that represent something else—are a powerful part of how we understand the visual world. We recognize symbols by using personal knowledge gained through memory and lived experience.

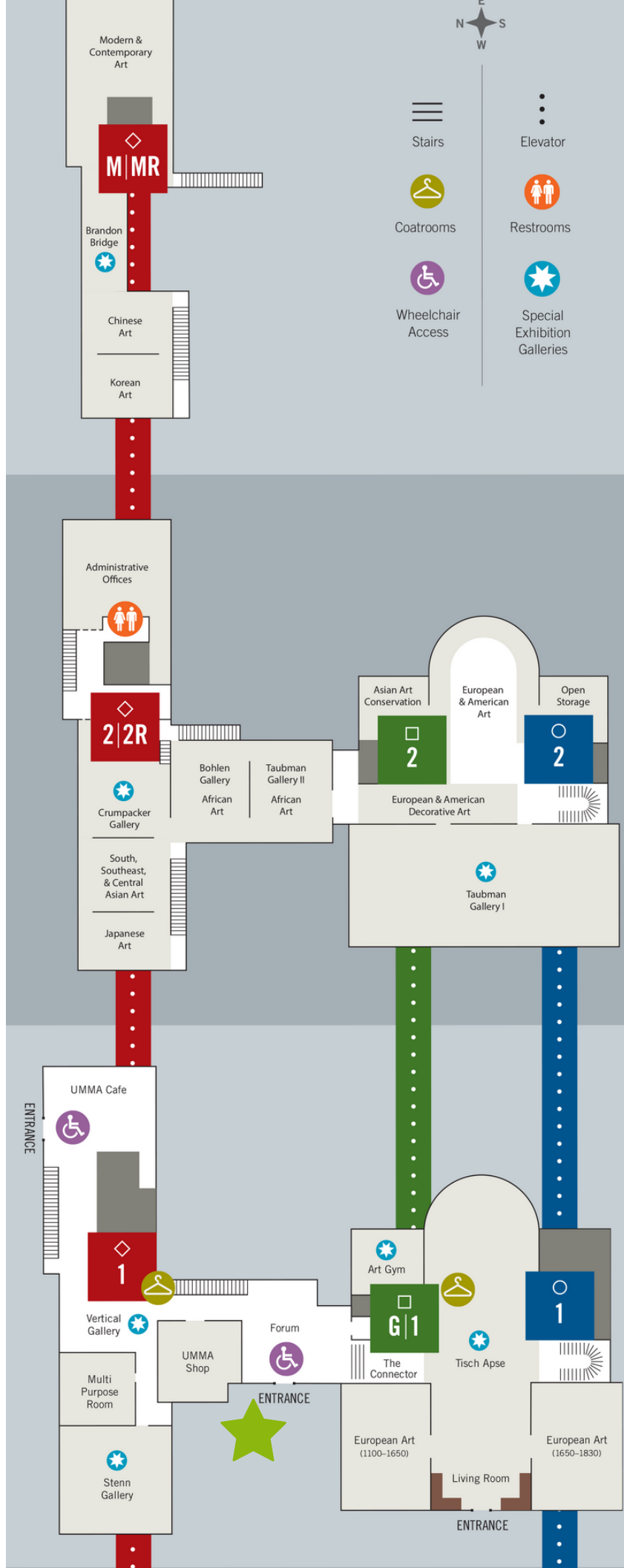
Context: Culture and history influence how and what we see. Much of our reaction to an image depends on the context we see it in. What was the artist trying to convey and how does this relate to the time and place in which the work was created? Similarly, how do the values and beliefs of our own society shape our understanding of an image?

Meaning: What is the artist's meaning or purpose for this work? We begin to understand the purpose of the artwork, discover the artist's intended meaning, and expand on the number of other interpretations based on the composition, memory, life experiences, history, culture, etc.

Mezzanine

2nd Floor

1st Floor



1st Floor - Apse



Kehinde Wiley, United States, born 1977
Saint Francis of Assisi
2008
Oil wash and graphite on paper, in artist's frame
Collection of Michael Frishberg

Without reading the label, take a moment and write down everything that you see.

Now think about what meaning your brain makes with these forms you described. What is this work of art trying to communicate? What is the artist's emotion, and how can you tell? What previous knowledge helped you interpret the work?

For this portrait, Wiley's model Keshawn Warren chose the stance of Saint Francis in Italian Renaissance painter Giovanni Bellini's (1430–1516) *St. Francis in the Desert* (right).

How have Warren and Wiley adapted this renaissance painting?



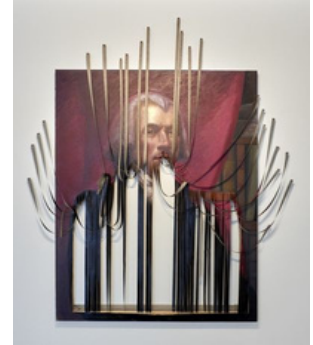
Jess T. Dugan, United States, born 1986
Collin at sunset, 2020, From the Every Breath We Drew series
2019–2021
Archival inkjet prints
Museum purchase with funds from the Estates of Robert Metcalf and James van Sweden, by exchange

Take a moment and read the label for this work. Compare and contrast this work and the Kehinde Wiley.

1st Floor - Davidson Gallery

Locate the following work by [Titus Kaphar in the Davidson Gallery](#). The title is specifically not named for the purposes of the exercise.

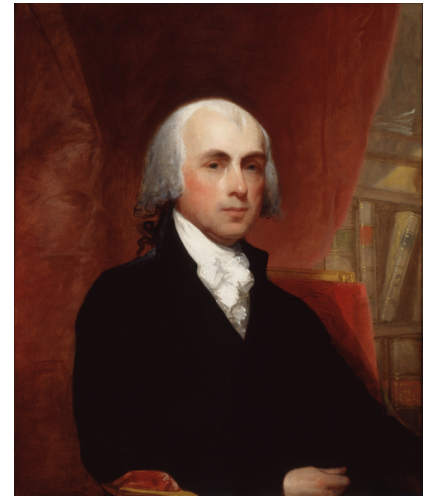
Without reading the label, take a moment and write down everything that you see. Avoid interpretation at all costs!! For example, if you start to describe an emotion, ie. "He looks angry, or proud", that is in fact an interpretation, you are perceiving something in the form to make you say that. So make sure to slow down and describe what you actually see (eyebrows are furrowed, the mouth is not upturned in a smile, etc.)



Now think about what meaning your brain makes with these forms you described. What is this work of art trying to communicate? What is the artist's emotion, and how can you tell? What previous knowledge helped you interpret the work?

Reading the label tells us that this work is titled *Flay (James Madison)*, which resembles Gilbert Stuart's 1804 presidential portrait of James Madison in oil paint, but the canvas is ripped apart where Madison's mouth begins, so that although most of his face is visible, his body appears shredded.

How does Titus Kaphar's manipulation of the portrait of James Madison affect how you think about him and his history? About the history of founding fathers?



Now take a moment and locate these works below, and identify one you want to dig deeper on. Resist reading the label at this point!



Choose: Identify a person or agent in the situation you are examining.
Step In: Given what you see and know at this time, what do you think this person might feel, believe, know, or experience?
Step out: What else would you like or need to learn to understand this person's perspective better?
Step back: Given your exploration of this perspective so far, what do you notice about your own perspective and what it takes to take somebody else's?

Choose (identify a work from the list above in *Unsettling Histories*. DO NOT READ THE LABEL YET)

Step In

Step out (Now read the label. What additional information did the label provide that visual did not?)

Step back

1st Floor - Vertical Gallery



In *Andrea Carlson Future Cache*, a 40-foot-tall memorial wall towers over visitors, commemorating the Cheboiganing (Burt Lake) Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians who were violently burned from their land in Northern Michigan on October 15, 1900. Written across the walls above and around the memorial, a statement proclaims Anishinaabe rights to the land we stand on: "You are on Anishinaabe Land." Presented alongside are paintings of imagined decolonized landscapes and a symbolic cache of provisions. *Future Cache* implicitly asks those who have benefited from the legacies of colonization to consider where they stand and where to go from here and seeks to foster a sense of belonging for displaced Indigenous peoples fighting for restitution.



Take a moment and find these two landscapes. After looking at them for a few moments, read the label, and share 2-3 points from the label:

Look at the following photographs of St. Mary's Cemetery, one of the few surviving locations of the Band's ancestral village. What do you notice compared to Carlson's painting *I'll Cut A Hole* (Left).

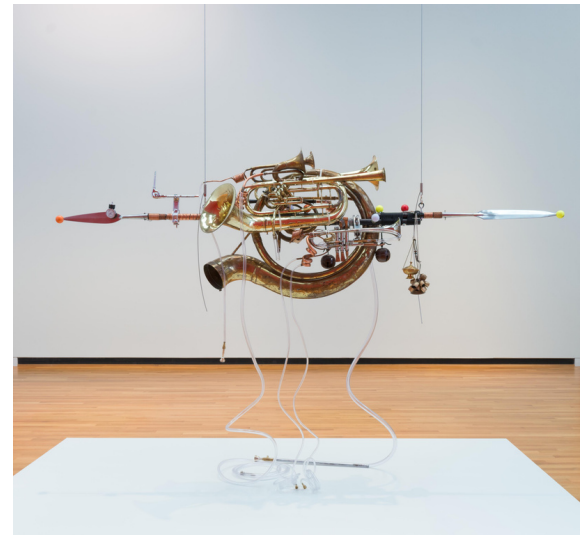


2nd Floor - African Galleries

Notions of power and resistance to power are at the forefront of Masimba Hwati's mixed-media installations. This one, titled *Ngoromera*—meaning “to fight” in Shona, the artist's mother tongue—consists of both found and sourced objects, many of which produce sound. Hwati, a recent graduate of the U-M Stamps School of Art & Design (MFA '19), is interested in the flexible nature of sound and the way it bends itself around obstacles, which he likens to the way individuals are forced to configure themselves around dominant powers:

“When people don't have enough resources or enough privilege to confront something, they move around it, they dance around it, they play around it, so that they modify the power of that thing. The idea of struggle and resistance for me as an individual has always been like sound ... Coming from Zimbabwe, I see people move like sound a lot, I see people think in very sonic ways.”

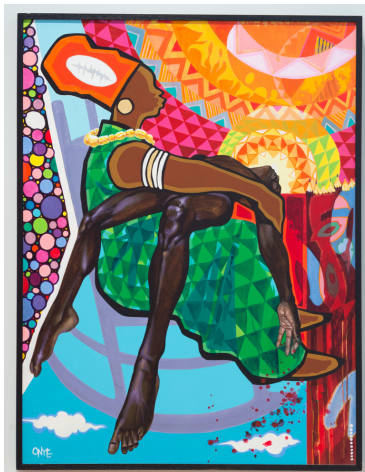
(Masimba Hwati, interview with Mayela Rodriguez, Penny Stamps Speaker Series, July 2020).



Scan the QR code to hear what this artwork sounds like when "activated."



Write down a few reflections about this sound based piece:



Jon Onye Lockard
United States, 1932–2015
Detroit/Soweto Pieta
1988
Acrylic
Loan from Leslie Kamil

Take the time to read the label for this piece by Jon Lockard. Provided below is an example of a *pieta* mentioned in the label. What reactions do you have to this comparison? What else do you notice about the artist's work?



2nd Floor - Crumpacker Gallery



Sonya Clark
Whitewashed
2017
digital file |
Museum purchase made possible by the
Director's Acquisition Committee, 2021
2021/1.169



Tyree Guyton
Untitled (Paint Cans)
1980 – 2010
paint cans, wooden crate, American flag,
rearview mirror, ceramic |
Gift of H. David Zucca
2013/2.310

Both of these objects use the American flag to communicate a personal narrative, a lived experience. Compare and contrast these two objects. What are these artists trying to communicate about it it means for them to be an American?

Mezzanine

Take a moment and read through the *Blue and White Wares* exhibition introductory text, and then locate this object:



Steven Young Lee

Icon

2019

porcelain, cobalt |

Museum purchase made possible by the William

C. Weese, M.D. Endowment for Ceramic Arts

2021/1.127A

Steven Young Lee's 'broken' ceramics provide an important entry point to reinterpret the practice of making porcelain wares. In museums of the global North, porcelain wares have become nearly synonymous with East Asian art and culture, often casting them as timeless, anonymous creations. Lee's *Icon* displaces these stereotypes by using this traditional artistic practice in an innovative way, inviting viewers to problematize their own assumptions regarding assimilation, expectation, brokenness, and identity. Born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago, Lee has worked and lived in both rural and metropolitan communities around the world, which has led him to contemplate his Korean roots differently. He remarks, "I am often situated between cultures looking from one side into another [...] I have experienced being an outsider in the country of my heritage to being one of a minority of Asians in Montana. My work allows me to re-interpret and confront questions of place and belonging."

How do these ceramics and other works get you thinking about stereotypes of the Asian-American experience? People often associate a label marked "Made in China" as something that is cheap and not well made, how does this exhibition get you thinking through the complexities of that statement?