Object Research and Interpretive Experience Assignment
133 Work of Art, Spring 2014

Think of yourself as an interpretation artist whose commission is to create a 20-minute experience with a specific object in the Portland Art Museum. Develop a close relationship with that object by letting it speak to you. Your understanding of the object should indicate an awareness of a cultural framework, which is not necessarily art historical. Interpretation must go beyond simply sharing a basic knowledge about the object. Be playful!

Your 20-minute interpretive experience must include two major components:

1) A conversational component and
2) An open/creative component

The creative (or ‘open’) experience must include an activity that creates and shapes understanding of the object and builds on the conversational interpretive experience.

⇒ Before class on Tuesday, April 8th
   Select an artwork that you would like to use as the starting point for a gallery experience.

⇒ Before Thursday, April 17th
   Complete the following assignment.
Format
At the top of your page, please provide the following information in this order:

- Theme/Big Idea
- Intended audience
- Artwork Image
- Artwork Title, Artist, Date
- Materials

Then provide the following sections for your assignment:

Theme/Big Idea
Briefly describe the theme or connection to the big idea.

Three Open-ended Questions
Include three open-ended questions related to the artwork in the sequence they would be presented.

Three Bullet Points of Information
Include three bullet points of information about the artwork that is related to the theme/big idea.

Interpretive Activity
Include an interpretive activity for this artwork and include the following:

1. Brief description of activity: What will your audience do? (i.e writing, drawing, movement)
2. Directions: How will you introduce this activity and what directions will you give visitors?
3. Goals: What are your goals for including the activity in the conversation?
What is Art? What is Not Art?
High school or college audience
Untitled (rucksack installation), 1993 (MoMA Collection)
Rirkrit Tiravanija (Thai, born Argentina 1961)
Multiple of backpack, map, camping stove, dishes, can opener, and ingredients for a Thai rice meal

Theme/Big Idea
What is Art? What is Not Art?

In 1964, philosopher and Columbia University Professor Arthur Danto saw Andy Warhol's famous Brillo Boxes for the first time, and he was dumbstruck. He wondered how something that appeared to be a 'mere thing' could actually exist as a work of art. (For an aesthetics lesson on this, see the Andy Warhol Museum Education page http://www.warhol.org/education/resourceslessons/Aesthetics--Arthur-Danto/. ) Arthur Danto's essay “Works of Art and Mere Things” is published in his 1981 book The Transfiguration of the Commonplace.

Rirkrit Tiravanija's Untitled (Rucksack Installation) places its viewers in a conundrum similar Arthur Danto's in 1964.

Three Open-ended Questions
What makes something art, and what is the difference between art and non-art?

Compare Tiravanija’s Untitled (rucksack) to another 'mere thing' or work of art.

Why might Tiravanija have included a map?

Three Bullet Points of Information

• This was created in an edition of six
• Tiravanija said that he loves the "idea that through the use the meaning arrives" (MoMA site).
• Tiravanija describes the map as a "combination of landscape and mental scape" (MoMA site).

Interpretive Activity

1. Ask visitors to pull out their backpacks or messenger bags, take everything out and display it as though it is an exhibition. If they do not have bags, they can pull everything out of their pockets. Photograph the display.

2. Ask visitors why we might have done this? Is the display of the contents of their backpacks art? When does something from the everyday become art? How?

3. The goal of this assignment is to ask visitors to think about framing and context, and to question what art does. By looking at our own backpacks and the stuff inside as 'art,' we step back from our everyday life and get some perspective. Isn't that what we do when we observe a work of art in a museum?