

Allen Memorial Art Museum (AMAM), Oberlin College
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[Below are sample group activities designed by L. Milkova and conducted with museum docents and premedical students, and as part of class visits to the museum and professional development workshops for faculty.]

Moore, *Reclining Figure, No. 1, 1945*

You are looking at a sculpture and a high quality photographic reproduction of it. Your task is to observe closely the two and analyze your viewing experiences of the original 3-D work and its 2-D photographic rendering. Consider what each item highlights and/or suppresses. In your report, present your *detailed findings* on the differences in viewing the two pieces. Below are some guiding questions.

- What kind of viewing experience does the sculpture command? What about the photograph?
- Do you perceive the human form through its voids or volumes?
- How does the photograph capture the sculpture's size, mass, volume, material, surface, edge, and visual effects?
- How does your sustained engagement with the sculpture and its photographic representation enhance or change your understanding of or thinking about the human body?

Hai, *Three Sisters, 1999*

Taken years apart, these two photographs show the same sisters, although in the image on the right one of them is missing. Your task is twofold: 1) to determine which of the three sisters is missing by using concrete visual facts such as shape of the nose, bone structure, hairline, etc. and 2) given your findings, to consider how this work might be understood as a specific commentary on China's history in the second half of the 20th century.

Ingres, *Odalisque, 1825*

You are looking at a print (a work of art made up of ink on paper and existing in multiple examples) made after Ingres's famous painting *La Grande Odalisque* (1814) in the Louvre. Identify the anatomical inaccuracies in the representation of the female body and speculate about the reasons why the artist (a highly trained draughtsman and painter) might have depicted it that way. Here are some guiding questions:

- How would the figure look if she were to stand up? Do the body parts cohere?
- Can you assume and maintain the exact same position as the figure?
- What is your implied position as a viewer? What does the figure's gaze say to you?
- The subject and setting are meant to appear exotic – how might the woman's reconfigured anatomy play a part in this, and more generally in the Western perception of the Middle East?

Hogarth, *The Death of the Earl, 1745*

You are looking at a print (a work of art made up of ink on paper and existing in multiple examples) that depicts an episode from a larger narrative. Your task is to use the visual data presented in the print to reconstruct the story – *accounting for as many details as possible* – that the image tells. Consider facial expressions, bodily gestures, physical attributes, and items lying around and their role in the narrative. Here are some guiding questions:

- How many figures do you see? How do they relate to and interact with each other?
- Where is the scene taking place? What clues do you see that indicate the setting?
- What is happening in the picture? What happened before the moment represented and what might happen next?
- How might this empirical approach reflect scientific practices in the 18th century?

Neshat, *Ghada, from the series Our House is on Fire, 2013*

Imagine that Ghada is a patient you are seeing for the first time and, conveniently, time has paused just long enough for you to study carefully her physiognomy. Your goal is to "read" her face and compile a brief psychological and physical portrait of her. Here are some guiding questions:

- What do you notice first about the face? And the head?
- What do you observe about her gaze? What about yours?
- What is not in the picture? How might that be significant?
- What can you infer about the sitter's psychology and social situation based purely on the visual cues that the photograph presents? What were your most initial assumptions about Ghada? Does the visual evidence support them?

ARTWORKS

1956.18 Henry Moore *Reclining Figure, No. 1* 1945 Bronze with green patina



2001.6A-B Hài Bõ *Three Sisters* 1999 Gelatin silver print



1969.24 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres *Odalisque* 1825 Lithograph



1964.9E William Hogarth *The Death of the Earl, plate 5 from Marriage a la Mode* 1745 Etching and engraving



1964.37 Jean (Hans) Arp *Château d'oiseaux (Bird Tower)* 1963 Polished marble



1952.16 Arshile Gorky *The Plough and the Song* 1947 Oil on canvas



2016.1.2 Shirin Neshat *Ghada, from the series Our House is on Fire* 2013 Digital pigment print

