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## **RESOURCES**

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE TEXT**

This text is a concentrated reference that covers all the arts. It is organized to provide consistency in treatment from one arts discipline to another. Thus, teachers and students can find numerous ways of drawing comparisons among the arts. Making such cross-disciplinary comparisons and investigations ought to be the crux of any interdisciplinary course. A series of truncated, “mini”-appreciation courses will not provide much satisfaction or much understanding of the arts as a special way of communicating and examining the world. One can create linkages among the arts in any number of ways and on any number of levels. For example, many terms, such as line, form, color, and so on, have both spatial and temporal inferences that can be explored in order to bring music, visual art, literature, architecture, theatre, cinema, and dance together. On a deeper level, elements of style can be compared in order to see (and hear) how much the components of style work together to create visual or oral statements that are very much like the statements of a similar style in a different medium. Determining how the characteristics of baroque visual art, for example, have equivalents in baroque music provides a great challenge as well as satisfying rewards. It also affords an opportunity for meaningful encounters with specific works of art. Making comparisons between and among works of art engages students directly. Noting how Painting A differs in its use of line from Painting B and how those differences might affect our responses gets students to the nub of the matter and provides a more substantive approach than asking them to respond to questions such as “How do you feel about it?” (Although that has its place in the response equation as well.) Ultimately, students find consistent and manageable threads among the arts and find the arts more accessible than they might have imagined. The British critic, Philip Radcliffe, says that we must disassociate ourselves from “this mystique” that the arts “are terribly special things for terribly special people.” *Perceiving the Arts*’ concentrated approach assures students that they have the basic perceptual skills to experience the arts meaningfully and confidently. Having confidence and appreciating meaning are important factors in making the arts lifelong companions.

*Perceiving the Arts*, with its compact, compendium-like approach, can be used either as a primary or supplemental text. As a primary text, it requires that the teacher engage students in actual works of art and in enhanced exploration of the artistic media. As a supplementary text, *Perceiving the Arts* can provide teachers and students with basic technical information about the arts that is usually not covered in primary texts dealing

with cultural and artistic history. For example, Chapter 2 has a wealth of information on painting and printmaking and on the color spectrum, hues, primary colors, and so on.

Whether this textbook is used as a primary or supplemental text, its content provides concise guidance for what can be seen and heard in works of art. Consequently, students will benefit from having their knowledge of the arts extended and the depth and value of their aesthetic experience increased.

## NOTES ON ARTISTIC STYLES

Here is an overview of important artistic styles that can assist in presenting the material in the “A Question of Style” feature boxes throughout the text.

**Abstract Expressionism.** Abstract Expressionism in **painting** (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) has two identifying characteristics. One characteristic is nontraditional brushwork, and the other is nonrepresentational content. This approach leaves the artist free to reflect inner life and to create works with high emotional intensity. Absolute individuality of expression and the freedom to be irrational underlie this style.

**Abstraction.** Abstraction (20<sup>th</sup> century) **painting** is “nonrepresentational” art. That is, it contains minimal reference to natural objects, the objects in the world we perceive through our senses. Abstract art, in many ways, stands in contrast to impressionism and expressionism in that the observer can read little or nothing in the painting of the artist’s feelings for anything outside the painting. Abstract painting explores the expressive qualities of formal design elements and materials in their own right, and these elements are assumed to stand apart from subject matter or content. Abstraction in **sculpture** pursues the goals of all abstract art, and that is to explore beauty in form alone; no other quality is needed. Abstraction as a style in sculpture is less concerned with expressive content than other sculptural styles. The subject matter may, in fact, be representational, having abstract relationships to other styles of the past. Typical of this style are highly finished surfaces and strong technique.

**Absurdism.** Absurdism in the **theatre** (20<sup>th</sup> century) reflects the loss of faith of its adherents in religion, science, and humanity itself. It sees the world as meaningless and translates that into plays that seem meaningless as well. It is an outgrowth of the philosophy of existentialism.

**Aleatory.** Aleatoric **music** (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) relies on the elements of chance. In chance music, composers choose pitches, rhythms, and tone colors by random methods such as throwing coins. The composer may ask the performer to choose the ordering of the musical material, or to invent it altogether.

**Archaic.** Archaic style (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) in **architecture** employs post-and-lintel structure and predominates in temples with imposing vertical posts or columns capped by heavy lintels and a pedimented roof. Fluted, or vertically grooved, columns are also typical. This style has Doric features. Archaic style in **painting** can be seen in Greek vases. Depictions of the human form appear in three-quarter position, between profile and full frontal. The human eye is depicted fairly realistically. This style also contains

graduated registers (bands) that contain intricate and graceful geometric designs. Pottery of this style can be divided into two types: *black figure*, in which the figures appear in black against the natural red background, and *red figure*, in which the figures appear in the natural red clay against a glazed black background. Archaic Greek style in **sculpture** mostly represents freestanding statues of nude youths, known as *kouroi*. They exhibit a stiff, fully frontal pose. The head is raised, eyes are fixed to the front, and arms hang straight down at the sides, with the fists clenched. The emphasis of these statues is on physicality and athleticism. The shoulders are broad, the pectoral muscles well developed, and the waist narrow. The legs show the musculature of a finely tuned athlete with solid buttocks and hardened calves. Features are simplified, and the posture, despite the movement of one foot into the forward plane, is rigid. Fully dressed female forms in this style are known as *kore*.

**Art Deco.** Art deco (early 20<sup>th</sup> century) in **architecture** began between World Wars I and II. It is an individual decorative arts style that the public particularly liked and helped to make thousands of products commercial successes. The term “art deco” was coined from the name of the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925. The term *moderne* also came from that title, and the two styles were applied to a variety of products and a style of architecture. The style is characterized by slender forms, straight lines, and a sleekness expressive of modern technology. The style regained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Art Nouveau.** Art nouveau **architecture** (late 19<sup>th</sup>—early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) is characterized by the lively, serpentine curve known as the “whiplash.” Art nouveau incorporates organic and often symbolic motifs, usually languid-looking flowers and animals, and treats them in a flat, linear, and relief-like manner.

**Baroque.** Baroque style (17<sup>th</sup> century) in **architecture** emphasizes the same contrasts between light and shade and the same action, emotion, opulence, and ornamentation as the other visual arts of the style. Because of its scale, however, architecture’s effect becomes one of great dramatic spectacles. Baroque style in **painting** appeals to the emotions and to a desire for magnificence through opulent ornamentation. At the same time, it employs a systematic and rational composition in which ornamentation is unified through variation on a single theme. Realism (lifelikeness using selected details) is the objective. Color, grandeur, and dramatic use of light and shade (*chiaroscuro*) are fairly typical, although the style itself is quite diverse in application. In much of baroque art, sophisticated organizational schemes carefully subordinate and merge one part into the next to create complex but unified wholes. Open composition symbolizes the notion of an expansive universe; the viewer’s eye travels off the canvas to a wider reality. The human figure may be monumental or miniscule. Feeling is emphasized rather than