

# the warhol: resources & lessons

Unit Lesson Plans / Critical Thinking / Aesthetics / Lesson 2



Installation of Thonet barstool and steamer trunk from Warhol's studio ca. 1964-1967 at The Andy Warhol Museum ©AWF.

## Personal Aesthetics

### Overview:

This lesson highlights two rooms designed in 1969: Andy Warhol's *Silver Factory* and the Red Room of the White House, redecorated by Jackie Kennedy. Students compare and contrast these rooms through a series of objective and subjective questions.

**Grades:** 6-12

**Subjects:** Philosophy, Language Arts, Art History, Visual Arts

## Pennsylvania State Standards

Arts and Humanities:

Historical and Cultural Contexts

9.2. A. Explain the historical, cultural, and social context of an individual work in the arts.

9.2. C. Relate works in the arts to varying styles and genre and to the periods in which they were created

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

1.2. Reading Critically in All Content Areas

A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas.

## Learning Objectives and Cognitive Skills:

- Students distinguish between objective and subjective questions.
- Students compare and contrast the aesthetic qualities of two rooms from the 1960s.
- Students draw parallels between aesthetic design and cultural context.

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## Personal Aesthetics

### Procedure:

1. Review how people make aesthetic choices everyday based upon personal preferences and ideas about goodness, harmony and beauty.
2. Introduce Objective/Concrete questions vs. Subjective/Sensory questions:



Andy Warhol, Brillo Box Dress and Fragile dress, 1964 ©AWF.

When buying a dress a person might ask the following questions before purchasing:

#### Objective/Concrete questions

- Where will this dress be worn? (To the office, to a fancy restaurant? The dress will reflect the activity it is meant for.)
- Should it be short or long? (What is in style, what will other people be wearing? The dress will reflect the current culture, what is available or in stock).

#### Subjective/Sensory questions:

- How do I feel in this dress?
- Does this color please me? Do I like the way it fits?
- Does it look good according to me and according to cultural norms?



The Andy Warhol Museum *Self-Portrait* Gallery, photo by Paul Rocheleau - All Art ©AWF.

When purchasing an artwork a company or institution might ask the following questions:

#### Objective/Concrete questions:

- Where will this painting be hung?
- Does it fit in the space and complement the space's function?
- Do the colors, lines, and shapes work with the colors, lines, and shapes already in the room?
- Does the artwork match or fit well with the historic period of the room?
- Does the artwork share a similar context with the space in terms of subject matter?

#### Subjective/Sensory questions:

- How does the work feel in the room?
- Does it bring pleasure to the people working there?
- Does it feel right or harmonious?

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3. Analyze the students' homework samples about the aesthetics of their spaces. Talk about the concrete function of items they included and the sensory effect of their aesthetic choices. Are all of the items in their rooms of their own choosing or do other peoples' aesthetics weigh in?

4. Use Aesthetics Handout 2.1 to compare and contrast the aesthetics of Andy Warhol's *Silver Factory* and the renovations of the Red Room in the White House by Jackie Kennedy.

And / Or

Present the artist Yinka Shonibare and discuss how he also changes an environment using printed fabric in his artwork *Victorian Philanthropist's Parlour*.

## Homework:



Most people would say these objects are not art. What is art?

Discuss "Things that are not art"

Assign students to bring in something from home that is not art.

Students should list 4-6 reasons why the object is not a work of art.

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Unit Lesson Plans / Critical Thinking / Aesthetics / Lesson 2 / Handout 2.1



Andy Warhol at the *Silver Factory* with Cow wallpaper and *Silver Clouds*, 1965-1966  
Photo © Stephen Shore



The Red Room in the White House, circa 2000 during the Clinton Administration.

## Andy Warhol's Silver Factory

Warhol's *Silver Factory* was a large studio space coated in silver paint and aluminum foil. Even some furniture was spray painted silver, including chairs, a trunk, and the toilet. Billy Klüver's apartment, decorated entirely in silver, inspired Warhol, and he asked Klüver to do the same for the Factory. Warhol used the Factory for making large photographic silkscreen prints—usually working on the floor—as well as for filming movies, entertaining, and as a hang out for his friends. The fashion designer Betsey Johnson, created silver clothes around the same time period. Edie Sedgwick, a model, socialite, and actress, dyed her hair silver to match Warhol's look. The "space race" that started with the 1957 Soviet launch of Sputnik ushered in a "Space Age" style. The fad embraced new technology, creating everyday products with modular designs and shiny "modern" surfaces.

## The Red Room of the White House

In 1962 Jacqueline Kennedy redecorated the White House and refurnished the Red Room in Empire Style (1810-30). Richly finished, carved woods containing dolphins, acanthus leaves, lion's heads, and sphinxes were common motifs in French Empire furnishings following Napoleon's 1798-99 campaign in Egypt. American cabinetmakers working in the early 1800s adopted these same motifs. The American Empire furniture selected for the room was upholstered in red silk. The Red Room is one of four state reception rooms, and it was the first to be redecorated to "restore" grandeur to the White House. The Red Room has served as a parlor, music room, and dining area for small dinner parties. Eleanor Roosevelt used the room for meeting with women members of the press. Following President John F. Kennedy's State Funeral, Mrs. Kennedy received foreign heads of state in the Red Room.

## Aesthetic Questions:

Compare and Contrast the two rooms using the following questions:

1. When was this room created? Who used the room and for what purpose?
2. What colors are in the room? What shapes?
3. How is the room lit? What kind of feelings do you think you would have had standing in each of these rooms?
4. What kind of person would have used each of these rooms.

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