

Creative Strategies in Contemporary Art

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How do contemporary artists construct and convey meaning? This paper/presentation explores a number of creative strategies that many current artists use. These strategies include: distillation (paring things down to essences), juxtaposition (placing one image in the context of another), projection (taking something to its logical or illogical conclusion), layering (superimposing one image upon another), formatting (illustrating an idea in the format of a discipline outside art), metaphor (framing one thing as another) and mimicry (using the methods of another discipline to make art). The significance and utility of these strategies lie in their capacity to construct and convey meaning and in the way they make creative thinking visible and accessible to viewers. It follows that once students see these strategies in the works of contemporary artists, they can recognize them in their own artwork or apply them to make their work. Also, through grasping these strategies, students come to understand creative process and meaning making in much contemporary art.

The presentation will include a detailed discussion of what these strategies are and how they work. Examples of contemporary art from many countries and cultures will be shown to illustrate the strategies. The work of the following artists (among others) will be shown: Distillation (Do Ho Suh, Sharmilla Samant; Mona Hatoum); juxtaposition (Fred Wilson, Enrique Chagoya); projection (Packard Jennings); layering (Saira Wasim, Marian Heyerdahl, Sui Jianguo; Tenmyouya Hisashi); formatting (Simon Evans, Chris Ware, Lars Arhenius); metaphor (Ai Weiwei, Mark Ryden, Dennis Oppenheim) and mimicry (Mark Dion, Komar and Melamid).

Student art work that uses these strategies will also be shown.