

LESSON PLAN

MEANING AND MEMORY



DESCRIPTION

In connection with the Holocaust Arts and Writing Contest theme: **Women of the Holocaust: Stories of Loss, Resistance and Survival**, this lesson will explore the work of a female artist whose work addresses the concepts of loss, victimization, violence, and memory. While her work is not directly inspired by the events and/or victims of the Holocaust, the work addresses similar events and concerns in contemporary society.

AGE/GRADE LEVEL: Grades nine through twelve

OBJECTIVE

Upon completing this lesson, students will understand how artists use imagery and symbols to express memory, social concerns, and emotion. They will demonstrate this understanding through discussion of an artwork from the collection of the Akron Art Museum and through creation of their own artwork.

RELATED ARTIST/ARTWORK

“Doris Salcedo was born in 1958 in Bogotá, Colombia. Salcedo earned a BFA at Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano (1980) and an MA from New York University (1984). Salcedo’s understated sculptures and installations embody the silenced lives of the marginalized, from individual victims of violence to the disempowered of the Third World. Although elegiac in tone, her works are not memorials: Salcedo concretizes absence, oppression, and the gap between the disempowered and powerful. While abstract in form and open to interpretation, her works serve as testimonies on behalf of both victims and perpetrators. Even when monumental in scale, her installations achieve a degree of imperceptibility—receding into a wall, burrowed into the ground, or lasting for only a short time. Salcedo’s work reflects a collective effort and close collaboration with a team of architects, engineers, and assistants—and, as Salcedo says, “with the victims of the senseless and brutal acts” to which her work refers. Doris Salcedo lives and works in Bogotá, Colombia.¹

¹ Text taken from PBS Art 21 website at <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/doris-salcedo>

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Doris Salcedo (Bogotá, Colombia, 1958 -)

Atrabiliarios (Defiant), 1996

Installation of shoes, cow's bladder, surgical thread on drywall, and wood
198 in. x 210 in. (502.92 cm x 533.4 cm). Collection of the Akron Art Museum.

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ABOUT THE WORK:

Atrabiliarios is the most important and best known of Doris Salcedo's early installations. It is both sculpture and ritual space. The level rows of rectangular niches recall the geometry of the minimalist art in the adjacent gallery. The pieces of translucent cow bladder that cover the niches, crudely sewn to the wall like bodies hastily stitched up after autopsies, arouse far less rational reactions.

Atrabiliarios, an archaic Spanish word meaning "defiant," is derived from an expression for melancholy associated with mourning. That emotion is common in Salcedo's country, Colombia, where civil war and the drug trade have made disappearances and violent death common occurrences. Salcedo was asked by families of "the disappeared" to make art commemorating their losses.

Salcedo learned that most families could only determine the identity of those in mass graves by recognizing their shoes. Each niche contains one or two shoes, most still bearing footprints and scuffs. As you walk around the room, the niches become like reliquaries or stations in a chapel. "By presenting a story of a victim of violence in Colombia, I am calling on the memory of pain which all human beings have, here or anywhere else in the world."

DISCUSSION

If visiting the museum, bring students into the installation space and allow them time to experience the work before discussing it. If viewing the installation with reproductions or digital images, show the students several different images of the work/space before beginning discussion. Ask students to respond to the artwork by discussing what they see. Expand the discussion by asking the students what ideas/concepts/events they think the work is addressing. Finally, give students the background information about the artist and the work and ask them how their reactions change based on this knowledge. Ask students how the artist communicated her ideas using materials and composition.

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STUDIO

Inspired by Salcedo's use of shoes to represent the memories of victims, students will gather found objects that represent an event or individual impacted by an event. These objects could have personal significance to the student or he/she could invent a history for the found object(s). Students will either use the objects as materials to create a three dimensional artwork such as a sculpture/semblage, or use the objects as visual reference to create a two dimensional work such as a drawing, print, photograph, etc. Successful works will have a distinct mood and feeling, be well-crafted, and visually interesting.

MATERIALS

- Found objects (clothing, jewelry, photographs, etc.) to use in a three dimensional work or to use as reference for a two dimensional work
- Sculpture materials for a three dimensional work
- Drawing/painting/printmaking/photography materials for a two dimensional work

STANDARDS

This lesson addresses the following Ohio Department of Education 2012 Visual Arts Standards:

	Perceiving/Knowing	Producing/Performing	Responding/Reflecting
HS Beginning	2PE, 4PE	1PR, 6PR	1PR, 3RE, 6RE
HS Intermediate	1PE, 4PE	1PR, 2PR, 6PR	1PR, 3RE, 6RE
HS Advanced	2PE, 4PE	1PR, 2PR, 6PR	1PR, 3RE, 6RE

MORE INFORMATION

Akron Art Museum Collection: www.akronartmuseum.org/collection

PBS Art21 Series: www.pbs.org/art21