



*Artful Connections*  
**Teacher Guide:**  
**Found Object Artwork**  
Grades 1+



**Videoconference programs at the  
Smithsonian American Art Museum are supported  
by the Smithsonian Women's Committee.**



## Tips for a Successful Videoconference

### *Before the Videoconference*

- ❑ Check with your technology coordinator to ensure your school has compatible videoconferencing equipment (H.323 protocol).
- ❑ **At least four weeks prior** to your preferred dates, schedule your videoconference with the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC): <http://www.cilc.org>. Search the list of content providers for Smithsonian American Art Museum to view a list of our programs. All requests made on CILC will be routed to the museum and our staff will contact you to set up a test call.

*Please note:* We recommend you book early due to high demand for limited time slots.

- ❑ **At least one week prior** to your program date:
  - Staff will contact you with the assigned videoconference presenter's name and e-mail. Contact the presenter to discuss your plans for integrating this topic with your curriculum. Your videoconference presenter may suggest ways to customize the content of the videoconference to your needs.
  - Complete a successful test call at the scheduled time with the American Art Museum staff. This is a good time to practice turning the equipment on and off and locating the volume and other functions of your videoconference equipment.
  - Identify a space where all your students will be able to sit comfortably within your camera's view, see a projected PowerPoint, and hear the videoconference presenter.
  - Review videoconference rules and expectations with your students. Students should speak loudly and clearly to the presenter, one at a time. It's helpful to have students raise their hands and for you to call on them before they speak.
  - Review the pre-visit material (available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>). Encourage your students to write down questions for the videoconference presenter elicited by the pre-visit activities. Questions about the content, artwork, museum, and (within reason) the presenter are welcome!

### *During the Videoconference*

- ❑ Make sure students are comfortably seated within view of the camera and can readily see the videoconference screen and projected PowerPoint presentation.
- ❑ Classroom-appropriate behavior is essential to a successful videoconference program. Students should listen to the presenter as well as each other and should behave respectfully.
- ❑ Encourage your students to ask and answer questions and give their opinions and ideas. Remind students to speak loudly and clearly for the presenter.
- ❑ Encourage your students to exercise the observation and interpretation skills you introduced with the pre-visit materials.



- ❑ Help the videoconference presenter maintain classroom management. Call on students to prompt them to ask and answer questions. Consider rephrasing or restating a question if you know your students have something to say but are shy or may not understand the question. If the presenter cannot hear students, repeat their answers for the presenter.

### ***After the Videoconference***

- ❑ Incorporate the appropriate videoconference post-lesson into your classroom curriculum (available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>).
- ❑ Contact the videoconference presenter with any follow-up questions from your students.
- ❑ Contact American Art staff ([AmericanArtEducation@si.edu](mailto:AmericanArtEducation@si.edu)) with your comments and suggestions. Evaluation and program improvement are a priority and we welcome your comments.
- ❑ Follow the link to CILC below and complete a brief survey about your videoconference experience.
  - Found Object Artwork <http://cilc.org/evaluation.aspx?pass=XfbC2Q56t1>



## Found Object Artwork (Grades 1 +)

### *Overview*

From beads to bottle caps, foil to game pieces, artists have used many nontraditional materials to express themselves and create art. This videoconference covers the use of everyday materials, vision and imagination, storytelling and a sense of place. After an introduction to found-object artwork through a pre-visit activity, participation in the videoconference, and a post-visit lesson to cement concepts, your students will be better able to:

- Understand some of the purposes and processes of American artists who work with found objects
- Understand how nontraditional materials can be vehicles of artistic expression
- Use visual vocabulary to articulate observations and interpretations of artworks made with a variety of materials
- Identify alternative, artistic uses for nontraditional materials

### *National Standards*

#### **Visual Arts**

K-12.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes;

K-12.3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas;

K-12.2 Using knowledge of structures and functions;

K-12.4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures;

K-12.6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.



## ***Vocabulary***

### **Visual Arts**

additive sculpture – (n.) the creation of a three-dimensional artwork through the combination or addition of materials. For example, hand building a figure from clay

composition – (n.) the arrangement of elements such as shape, line, value, and form within an artwork

craft – (n.) a type of artwork that has roots in a tradition of functionality

decorative – (adj.) having no specific use beyond enjoyment

fine art – (n.) a type of artwork that is traditionally nonfunctional

folk art – (n.) artwork that is usually created by anonymous or untrained artists

found object – (n.) a natural or discarded object found by chance and held to have aesthetic value<sup>1</sup>

inspiration – (n.) mental or emotional stimulus that directs the creative person toward certain content or methods

interpret – (v.) to derive meaning from observed features or traits

landscape – (n.) a picture representing natural scenery

museum – (n.) an organization traditionally concerned with acquiring, conserving, studying, and exhibiting objects

observe – (v.) to note the visible features or traits of an artwork

portrait – (n.) a pictorial representation of a person, usually showing the face

process – (n.) a combination of methods and techniques used to create an artwork

subject – (n.) the principal idea conveyed by a work of art

self-taught – (adj.) having developed skills on one's own without the help or instruction of others

subtractive sculpture – (n.) the creation of a three-dimensional artwork through the removal of material. For example, sculptors carve away marble or wood to create a figure

symbol – (n.) something that stands for something else due to a relationship, association, or accidental resemblance<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2004. [adapted]

<sup>2</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. [adapted]






**Topic Related Artworks**

A representative sample of the artworks in our collection that support the videoconference topic appears below. These are suggested for use during pre-videoconference activities. Images used during your videoconference may vary.

<p>TITLE: <b>Root Monster</b>  DATE: 1968  ARTIST: <b>Miles Burkholder Carpenter</b>  MEDIUM: carved and painted tree roots, rubber, metal, and string  DIMENSIONS: 22 5/8 x 28 5/8 x 28 1/4 in. (57.5 x 72.7 x 71.6 cm.)  CREDIT LINE: Gift of Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr. and museum purchase made possible by Ralph Cross Johnson  ACC. NUMBER: 1986.65.238  WEB LINK: <a href="http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=3796">http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=3796</a></p>		
<p>TITLE: <b>Game Fish</b>  DATE: 1988  ARTIST: <b>Larry Fuente</b>  MEDIUM: mixed media: wood, plastic, beads, buttons, poker chips, badminton birdies, ping pong balls, rhinestones, coins, dice, plastic figurines, combs, miniature pinball games, dominoes, chess pieces, pool balls, and other found objects  DIMENSIONS: 51 1/2 x 112 1/2 x 10 3/4 in. (130.8 x 285.6 x 27.3 cm)  CREDIT LINE: Gift of the James Renwick Alliance and museum purchase through the Smithsonian Institution Collections Acquisition Program  ACC. NUMBER: 1991.61  WEB LINK: <a href="http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=32281">http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=32281</a></p>		



<p>TITLE: <b>Bottlecap Figure with Mirror</b>          DATE: 1991          ARTIST: <b>Mr. Imagination</b>          MEDIUM: bottlecaps and mirror on wood          DIMENSIONS: 59 3/4 x 24 x 11 1/4 in. (151.8 x 61.0 x 28.6 cm.)          CREDIT LINE: Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of Chuck and Jan Rosenak and museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment          ACC. NUMBER: 1997.124.66          WEB LINK: <a href="http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=36157">http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=36157</a></p>	
<p>TITLE: <b>Reservoir</b>          DATE: 1961          ARTIST: <b>Robert Rauschenberg</b>          MEDIUM: oil, wood, graphite, fabric, metal, and rubber on canvas          DIMENSIONS: 85 1/2 x 62 1/2 x 15 1/2 in. (217.2 x 158.7 x 39.4 cm.)          CREDIT LINE: Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of S.C. Johnson &amp; Son, Inc.          ACC. NUMBER: 1969.47.70          WEB LINK: <a href="http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=20593">http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=20593</a></p>	
<p>TITLE: <b>The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly</b>          ca. 1950-1964          DATE: <b>James Hampton</b>          ARTIST: gold and silver aluminum foil, Kraft paper, and plastic over wood furniture, paperboard, and glass          MEDIUM: 180 pieces in overall configuration: 10 1/2 x 27 x 14 1/2 ft.          DIMENSIONS: 10 1/2 x 27 x 14 1/2 ft.          CREDIT LINE: Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of anonymous donors          ACC. NUMBER: 1970.353.1          WEB LINK: <a href="http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=9897">http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=9897</a></p>	



TITLE:	<b>Chemical Balance III</b>	
DATE:	2009	
ARTIST:	Jean Shin	
MEDIUM:	prescription pill bottles, acrylic mirrors, epoxy, fluorescent lights	
DIMENSIONS:	5 units 18 to 40 in. (45.7 to 101.6 cm) diameter	
CREDIT LINE:	Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of an anonymous donor in honor of YoungArts, the core program of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts	
ACC. NUMBER:	2010.2A-E	
WEB LINK:	<a href="http://www.americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=77496">http://www.americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=77496</a>	



## ***Additional Resources***

### **Bottlecaps to Brushes**

[Americanart.si.edu/education/insights/cappy/index.html](http://americanart.si.edu/education/insights/cappy/index.html)

Cappy, a folk art giraffe, guides young children through art activities for school or home.

### **James Hampton: Zoom It**

<http://americanart.si.edu/education/insights/zoom/hampton/>

After the reclusive artist James Hampton died in 1964, his sister discovered *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly*—his life's work—carefully constructed and symmetrically arranged in a rented garage. Explore this installation—an artist's private temple!—using the "zoom" tool.

### **Pepón Osorio: Zoom It**

<http://americanart.si.edu/education/insights/zoom/osorio/>

Pepón Osorio considers chandeliers, which can be found in even the poorest apartments of Spanish Harlem and the South Bronx, to be symbols of the dreams, hopes, humor, and hardships of Puerto Ricans living in the New York barrio. For him the swags of pearls, plastic babies, palm trees, monkeys, and other mass-produced items embody immigrant popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s, when the majority of New York Puerto Ricans emigrated from the island.

### **Larry Fuente: Zoom It**

<http://americanart.si.edu/education/insights/zoom/fuente/>

Since the late 1960s, California artist Larry Fuente has transformed banal, commercial products into works of wonder and mystery. Explore the surface of our featured artwork, *Game Fish*, using the "zoom" tool!

### **Interview: Robert Hudson**

<http://americanart.si.edu/luce/media.cfm?key=372&type=Archive&subkey=465>

Artist Robert Hudson discusses the appeal of working with found objects, including scrap steel that he turned into *After Wood*.

***Made with Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection*** by Lynda Roscoe Hartigan (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum: 1990).

This in-depth look at a renowned collection, ranging from bottlecap-covered figures and wood carvings to hand-sewn quilts, provides a new understanding of folk art, recognizing its essential place in America's visual heritage. Lynda Roscoe Hartigan's essay discusses the man behind the collection and its development over four decades.

***Contemporary Folk Art: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum*** by Tom Patterson (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum: 2001).

This book highlights works created by self-taught artists over the past forty years. Whether in painting, sculpting, or weaving each artist has forged an individual path rather than followed established conventions. Their inventiveness is apparent in the materials they chose. Tin roofing, model airplane enamel, marbles, bottlecaps, and costume jewelry are only a few of the ordinary materials the artists have transformed into objects of extraordinary expressive power.



## Learning to Look: Pre-Visit Lesson

### Grades 1 – 4

#### Overview

After completing these activities, students will have strengthened their visual vocabulary by making observations of and expressing their interpretations of artwork.

#### Discussion

Define “observation” with students. Observations are statements of fact relating to what students see, not what they think might be happening.

Define “interpretation” with students. Interpretations are statements that ascribe meaning to the artwork based on observations.

Present students with one artwork that relates to your scheduled videoconference topic. (A selection of artworks related to each tour is included in the “Tour Information” document available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>). Have students begin by sharing only their observations. When students offer interpretations, or ideas about what they think is happening in the artwork, ask: “What do you see that makes you say that?”

#### Questions that prompt observations:

- *Who or what do you see in this artwork?*
- *What is the largest thing you see in this picture?*
- *What is the smallest thing you see in this picture?*
- *What colors do you see in the artwork?*
- *Is the scene outside? Inside?*
- *If there are people, are their clothes similar to or different from what you are wearing? How?*
- *Is the scenery similar to or different from where you are? How?*
- *What can you tell me about the colors in this artwork? What color do you see the most?*

Next, invite students to share their interpretations about what is happening in the artwork if they haven’t already done so. It is acceptable for students to have different interpretations of the same object. Make sure students support their interpretations with direct observations about the artwork. You may notice that some observation-focused questions lead directly to interpretation-focused questions. All interpretations should be founded on answers to observation questions.

**Questions that prompt interpretations:**

- *What is going on in this picture?*
- *Where do you think this scene is taking place?*
- *What season is it? What time of day is it?*
- *When was this artwork made?*
- *What do the scenery and the clothing or objects tell us about when this artwork was made?*
- *Does this scene look like it could be taking place today? Why or why not?*
- *Indicate a figure in the artwork:*
  - *Who is this person?*
  - *Is s/he similar to or different from you? In what ways?*
  - *What is s/he doing?*
  - *What do you think s/he does for a living?*
  - *How does s/he feel?*
  - *Where do you think s/he is?*
  - *What do you think it sounds like where s/he is?*
  - *What do you think it smells like where s/he is?*
  - *What kind of weather is this person experiencing?*
- *How do you think the artist feels about this person or thing in the painting?*
- *How does this artwork make you feel?*
- *How do you think this artist made this artwork?*
- *What types of materials do you think the artist used? Paint? Clay? Wood?*
- *How long do you think it took to make?*
- *What kind of mood or feelings do the colors give the artwork?*
- *Do you like the colors that are in the artwork? If you were the artist, would you have used different colors?*
- *Why do you think this artist made this artwork?*
- *What do you think the artist is trying to say?*

**Activity**

Either working in groups or independently, have students select a person or object in the artwork and complete the included worksheet, "Give this artwork a voice!" Have students refer back to their observations to support their interpretations of the person or object they chose. To take this activity further, have students create their own artwork based on the worksheet writing prompts "I wish..." or "Tomorrow, I am going to..."

Questions to ask students:

- Who or what did you choose to write about and why did you choose them?
- What in the artwork helped you make decisions about what the subject is thinking or feeling?
- Did you use the title or date of the artwork to inform your decisions? If so, how did they influence what you wrote? If not, do they contradict or reinforce your interpretation?



If your students want to know more about the artwork or learn about other interpretations from scholars, art historians or curators, visit <http://AmericanArt.si.edu>, <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Luce/>, and your school library to research more about the artwork. If you have specific questions about an artwork, you can ask Joan of Art at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Research/Tools/Ask>.



# Give this artwork a voice!

*Choose an artwork and pretend you are one of the people or things in it. How would you finish these phrases?*

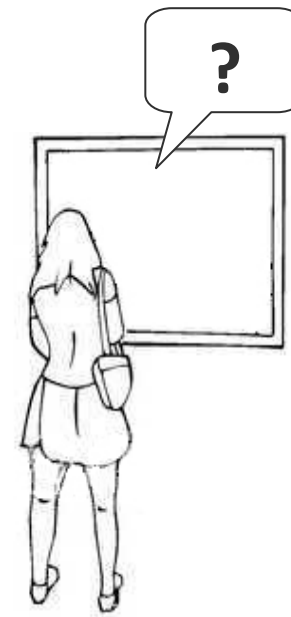
Here I am...

Boy, am I...

I wish...

I think I might...

Tomorrow I'm going to...





## Learning to Look: Pre-Visit Lesson

### Grades 5 – 12

#### Overview

After completing these activities, students will have strengthened their visual vocabulary by making observations of and expressing their interpretations of artwork.

#### Discussion

Define “observation” with students. Observations are statements of fact relating to what students see, not what they think might be happening.

Define “interpretation” with students. Interpretations are statements that ascribe meaning to the artwork based on observations.

Present students with one artwork that relates to your scheduled videoconference topic. (A selection of artworks related to each tour is included in the “Tour Information” document available to download at <http://AmericanArt.si.edu/Education/Video>). Have students begin by sharing only their observations. When students offer interpretations, or ideas about what they think is happening in the artwork, ask: “What do you see that makes you say that?”

#### Questions that prompt observations:

- *Who or what do you see in this artwork?*
- *What is the largest thing you see in this picture?*
- *What is the smallest thing you see in this picture?*
- *What colors do you see in the artwork?*
- *Is the scene outside? Inside?*
- *If there are people, are their clothes similar to or different from what you are wearing? How?*
- *Is the scenery similar to or different from where you are? How?*
- *What can you tell me about the colors in this artwork? What color do you see the most?*

Next, invite students to share their interpretations about what is happening in the artwork if they haven’t already done so. It is acceptable for students to have different interpretations of the same object. Make sure students support their interpretations with direct observations about the artwork. You may notice that some observation-focused questions lead directly to interpretation-focused questions. All interpretations should be founded on answers to observation questions.

**Questions that prompt interpretations:**

- *What is going on in this picture?*
- *Where do you think this scene is taking place?*
- *What season is it? What time of day is it?*
- *When was this artwork made?*
- *What do the scenery and the clothing or objects tell us about when this artwork was made?*
- *Does this scene look like it could be taking place today? Why or why not?*
- *Indicate a figure in the artwork:*
  - *Who is this person?*
  - *Is s/he similar to or different from you? In what ways?*
  - *What is s/he doing?*
  - *What do you think s/he does for a living?*
  - *How does s/he feel?*
  - *Where do you think s/he is?*
  - *What do you think it sounds like where s/he is?*
  - *What do you think it smells like where s/he is?*
  - *What kind of weather is this person experiencing?*
- *How do you think the artist feels about this person or thing in the painting?*
- *How does this artwork make you feel?*
- *How do you think this artist made this artwork?*
- *What types of materials do you think the artist used? Paint? Clay? Wood?*
- *How long do you think it took to make?*
- *What kind of mood or feelings do the colors give the artwork?*
- *Do you like the colors that are in the artwork? If you were the artist, would you have used different colors?*
- *Why do you think this artist made this artwork?*
- *What do you think the artist is trying to say?*

**Activity**

Have students select a different artwork and complete the included Observation/Interpretation worksheet. To take the activity further, have students refer to it as they write about the work of art. Students can choose words or phrases that they think best describe the artwork and use them as material in a poem, story or podcast.

Questions to ask students:

- *Why did you choose that artwork?*
- *Who did you choose to write about and why did you choose them?*
- *What in the artwork helped you make decisions about what the subject is thinking or feeling?*
- *Did you use the title or date of the artwork to inform your decisions? If so, how did they influence what you wrote? If not, do they contradict or reinforce your interpretation?*



Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Artwork Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Artist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation	Interpretation
<i>Definition: What you see?</i> <i>Example: Dark grey sky, no rain, dry ground</i>	<i>Definition: What you think based on what you see?</i> <i>Example: A storm is approaching</i>
What is the main idea of the artwork?	



Imagine yourself inside this work of art.

What do you hear?	What do you smell?
What do you taste?	What do you feel?

Imagine that the artwork is one part of a larger story.

What happened right before this moment?
What will happen next?



## Post-Visit Lesson: Found Object Artwork

### Grades 1 – 5

#### Overview

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to understand the roles choice of material and juxtaposition of objects play in the creative process. They will also develop or refine problem solving skills.

#### Discussion

Have students look closely at “*MINUTE MAID*” *Articulated Figure*, which is made of a Minute Maid® orange juice can, carved wood, and turned iron. Discuss the artwork with one or more of the following questions:

- What found object did the artist use to create *MINUTE MAID*?
- What would happen to the artwork if the artist had used the frozen orange juice that was inside this can to make artwork instead of the can itself? What if the can still had orange juice in it?
- What found objects do you think could be used to make a good artwork? What makes those suitable for creating artwork?

#### Activity

Have students bring three different found objects into class. Ask students to select one of their found objects to look at closely. Have them make a detailed sketch of the object on a plain piece of paper in pencil. Discuss the transformation of a found object into art by asking students:

- How many different things can you transform the object into? For example, an ice cream cone could become a party hat *or* a bird beak.
- What happens if you change parts of the found object? For example, what could the ice cream cone be if I removed the tip?

Using the back of their sketch, ask students to write a “five-different-ways paragraph.” (A five-different-ways paragraph has students describe a single object as five different things.) What can their object become besides what they know it to be?

Example (using a plastic pen cap):

This pen cap is:

a tall top hat for a gentleman faerie off to a dance;

a pirate’s peg leg for walking the plank;

one of many petals, fallen and curling in the sun;

the extra-long snout of a dachshund;

a candle with an unlit wick, waiting for dinnertime.



Using their five-different-ways paragraph as inspiration, have students sketch two ideas for using their found object in an artwork. What else can this found object be? What else would I need to make a found object artwork?

Finally, have students select one of their two sketches to turn into a sculpture that incorporates their found object.



Unidentified artist, "MINUTE MAID" Articated Figure about 1950s  
1986.67.277



## Post-Visit Lesson: Found Object Artwork

### Grades 6 – 12

#### Overview

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to understand the roles choice of material and juxtaposition of objects play in the creative process. They will also develop or refine problem solving skills.

#### Discussion

Introduce students to the concept of assemblage by showing students Robert Ebendorf's necklace *Off the Street, On the Beach*. Explain that Ebendorf used found objects in his works. Rather than altering a single found object, however, he combined a group of found objects to make one artwork. The found objects in this artwork were ones he found while walking on the beach and while walking his daughter to school.

Encourage discussion by asking the following questions:

- What found objects can you identify in this artwork?
- In literature, by putting two words or concepts side-by-side, or juxtaposing them, you can draw people's attention to their similarities and differences. Does the juxtaposition of found objects change the way we see individual items? If so, how?
- Choose a single object in the necklace. How do you think it got to be on the beach? Who might have used it before Ebendorf found it? How long do you think someone used it before it was lost or discarded?
- Would you wear the necklace, *Off the Street, On the Beach*? Why or why not?

Introduce *Sunflower Necklace* for comparison to *Off the Street, On the Beach*. The artist, Heidi Gerstacker, describes this necklace as a "balance between all the parts I love to fabricate and all the historical necklace forms I've studied." Explain that she used oval onyx stones to represent the seeds in the center of the flower and framed the piece using a bimetal material of 22-karat gold fused with sterling silver.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-precious stones and metal instead of found objects?
- Can artworks made of traditional materials convey the same stories as found object artworks? Why or why not?

#### Activity

Have students bring in at least four objects found either from home or elsewhere. Have them discuss where they found their objects and what else surrounded the object and whether the object has any significance or meaning to the student.



Considering all their objects together, have students develop a theme for an assemblage piece before executing their work. Have them decide which traditional art materials they would like to incorporate into the artwork, if any. Students should consider why they selected particular traditional materials and how the use of those materials might change or add to the meaning of their artwork.

Finally, upon completed their artworks have students discuss the following:

- As the artist, what is my personal meaning for this artwork?
- For the viewer, what is the meaning conveyed by this artwork?



Robert Ebendorf, *Off the Street, On the Beach* 1992 2003.27.1



Heidi Gerstacker *Sunflower Necklace* 2002 2003.17