

DES MOINES ART CENTER

Educators Guide Permanent Collection Tours 2006-07 Des Moines Art Center

Created Fall 2006
By Jennifer Cooley
Museum Education Department

Information and images included with this guide may not be manipulated or used in any other format.

Disclaimer: Not all of these artworks will be covered on your tour or will be on public view at the time of your tour.

Table of Contents	Page
1. Information about the CD-ROM	2
2. Goals student tours	2
3. Rules of the Des Moines Art Center	2
4. Understanding labels	3
5. Descriptions and questions relating to each color image on the CD-ROM	3
6. Suggested art activities related to two artworks on the CD-ROM	11

Information about this CD-ROM

- Each building image and artwork listed in this word document corresponds to a color image also found on this CD-ROM.
- Each artwork has its artist, title, and year it was created listed in bold. This information is followed by the credit line (a credit line tells how the artwork became part of the Art Center's collections).
- A brief description of the building or artwork is provided, followed by questions.

Goals Student Tours

- Introduce students to art museums
- Help students make sense of art by engaging in discussion about art
- Create inspiring connections between art and life
- Teach visual analysis
- Foster and promote creativity
- Encourage on-going participation with the Des Moines Art Center

Rules of the Des Moines Art Center

- No touching the art, pedestals, or walls
- Stay on the grey carpet in the galleries
- Watch out for toe lines on the floor – some are wood, some are metal
- Stay with your group and use low voices
- Leave large bags and coats in the coat room or on the bus
- Only pencils can be used, no pens
- No gum, food, or drinks
- No photography of any kind
- Guards, dressed in black shirts and khaki pants, are posted in every gallery

Understanding labels

Each artwork at the Des Moines Art Center, or any art museum, has a label next to it. The label provides important information about the artwork.

Name of Artist→	Morris Louis American 1912-1962	← Nationality and Lifetime
Title and Date →	<i>#189</i> , 1959 Acrylic on canvas	←What the artwork is made from
How or from whom the museum acquired the work →	Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from Gardner Cowles, 1972.2	← Museum I.D. number: <i>#189</i> was the 2 nd work of art added to the Des Moines Art Center's Permanent Collections in the year 1972

Architects of the Des Moines Art Center

BUILDING IMAGE 1 - Eliel Saarinen

This building opened in 1948. The outside is covered in Lannon stone (a form of limestone). Originally, the U-shaped building contained a lobby, galleries, auditorium, and studio classrooms. Everything except for the auditorium is still in its original location.

BUILDING IMAGE 2 - I.M. Pei

In 1968 the first addition was added to the Art Center. It is made out of concrete that has a rough finish created from a technique called bushhammering. I.M. Pei designed a building that enclosed Saarinen's U-shaped building. This wing holds large paintings and sculptures. In addition, the auditorium was moved to the lower level.

BUILDING IMAGE 3 - Richard Meier

In 1985 the second addition was added to the Art Center. This addition was added to the north part of Saarinen's building. The outside is covered in white porcelain-coated metal panels. This addition added much needed gallery space as well as storage space for artwork not on public view.

Select artwork from the Des Moines Art Center's Permanent Collections

IMAGE 1 – Magdalena Adakanowicz, *Flock II*, 1990

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., 1992.36

Early in her career Magdalena became interested in creating her artwork using fiber. She sees fiber “as the basic element constructing the organic world on our planet.” These figures are made from burlap, which is a rough feeling, heavy cloth-like material. She dipped the burlap in glue and draped it across a mold to create each figure. She created 35 sculptures from the same mold that are part of this one artwork. She often includes more than one piece in her artworks, thus creating groups. To Magdalena, groups in art relate to the natural world, such as birds flying as a gaggle or deer running with a herd.

- Look at the figures, what is missing from each person? Why do you think she didn't include this part of the body? Magdalena said this artwork “is a statement about the power of silence.” What do you think she meant by that?
- How would this artwork look if it were made from metal? What makes you say that?

IMAGE 2 – Ashley Bickerton, *Tormented Self-Portrait (Susie at Arles) No. 2*, 1988

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., 1994.334

Ashley's artwork is a self-portrait expressed through the logos of products personally significant to him including his preferences in clothing, hobbies, medicine, and the media. Ashley stated that this artwork is about “seeing myself through the products I used.” The title of the artwork makes reference to Vincent van Gogh who made “tormented self-portraits” in Arles, France. Ashley said, “My piece says as much about myself as a self-portrait of van Gogh's did about him.”

Additional teaching opportunity: Google Vincent van Gogh and find one of his “tormented self-portraits” and compare and contrast it to this artwork with your students. Have your students discuss Ashley's quote, “My piece says as much about myself as a self-portrait of van Gogh's did about him.” Do they agree or disagree and why.

- Think about the products you buy and use. What logos are included on those products? Do you buy specific brands because of the logos? Why or why not?
- What do the products you buy and use say about you?

*Art activity associated with this artwork, see page 11 of this document

IMAGE 3 – Alexander Calder, *Black Spread*, 1951

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., 1952.15

When Alexander was 27 years old he spent two weeks sketching people and animals at the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus in Florida. His observations of the circus acts inspired a love of spontaneity, suspense, playfulness, humor, and motion. Alexander is considered the father of the mobile, which is a sculpture, suspended from a high point that has the ability to move with the wind current and is created with precise balance. He explained how he calculated the weight balance: “I begin with the smallest and work up. Once I know the balance point for the first pair...I anchor it by a hook to another arm, where it acts as one end of another pair of scales....”

- Look closely at the artwork, why do you think he cut circular shapes out of some pieces?
- Most mobiles hang from the ceiling, why do you think Alexander wanted them hung so high?
- Where else in the city of Des Moines have you seen sculpture that moves with air currents?

IMAGE 4 – Jean Dubuffet, *Le Villageois aux cheveux ras (The Villager with Close-Cropped Hair)*, 1947

Purchased with funds from the Nathan Emory Coffin Collection of the Des Moines Art Center, 1981.41

“People are more beautiful than they think they are. Long live their true faces.” Jean made this statement when his exhibition of portraits was on view in 1947. In a one-year time span Jean made 161 portraits, which included this artwork. Many people comment that a child could create something like this artwork. In fact, this is exactly what Jean wanted a viewer to think. Jean believed that artwork created with instinct, feelings, and the passion of children with no formal art training was more interesting than any artwork created by the finest trained master painter.

- Talk about Jean’s feeling about children’s art, do you agree with Jean that a child’s artwork is more interesting than a well trained artist? Why or why not?
- The title of this artwork suggests there is a village in this painting. What part of the painting could Jean be referring to? What do you notice about the village?
- What do you notice about the figure in the painting? What did Jean consider the most important features of this man?

IMAGE 5 – Sam Francis, *Summer No. 2*, 1957

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Gift of the Jean and Richard Levitt Family in Memory of Nelle and Ellis Levitt, 1984.25

Sam was born in southern California and traveled to Europe and Japan; he lived in both countries for a few years. Although he was influenced by living abroad, most of his artwork is associated with a clear, bright palette, possibly influenced by the dazzling light of California. Sam paints with bursts of energy, applying the paint thickly in some sections and very thinly in others, which creates both a sense of airiness and heaviness at the same time.

- Why do you think he didn't paint the entire canvas? Describe how this painting would look if the entire canvas was painted blue.
- Look at the blue color in the painting, how many colors of blue can you find? What could the color blue represent in this painting?
- Look closely at the painting, how do you think the canvas was positioned when Sam painted this painting? What makes you say that? Do you agree with your classmates?

IMAGE 6 – Roy Lichtenstein, *The Great Pyramids*, 1969

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., 1970.1

Roy is considered a member of the Pop Art movement. Pop Artists were very influenced by their culture; they looked to advertisements, commercial products, and popular people, among other things, to gain inspiration for their artwork. Pop Artists utilized bright colors and lines to simply capture the likeness of objects in a geometric way. Roy was very inspired by cartoons and comic strips. In fact, in this painting he used Benday dots to shade the sides of the pyramids. Benday dots were used in comic strips either to color in an image or to show shadow.

- Do the real pyramids look like the ones in this painting? How are they different? How are they the same?
- Roy considers this to be a landscape painting. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- Why do you think Roy only used 3 colors in this painting? Describe how this painting would look if he used more colors.

IMAGE 7 – Morris Louis, #189, 1959

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from Gardner Cowles, 1972.2

Morris had an interesting way of painting; he didn't use a paint brush. He tacked canvas, a cloth material that feels like blue jeans, to a frame and poured paint onto the canvas. The paint was thick enough so Morris could control where it flowed on the canvas, so he was able to create the layering effect that you see in this painting. Morris used many different layers of colors in this painting. He called these different paint layers "veils" because you are able to see how the colors mix to create the final product.

- Just like in Sam Francis' painting, Morris didn't fill the entire canvas with paint. Compare Sam's painting to Morris' painting, how are they similar and how are they different?
- Look at the way the painting is orientated; do you think he poured the paint from the top or bottom of the canvas? What makes you say that?
- How else can you make a painting without using a paint brush?

IMAGE 8 – Stanton MacDonald-Wright, *Abstraction on Spectrum (Organization 5)*, c. 1914-1917

Purchased with funds from the Nathan Emory Coffin Collection of the Des Moines Art Center, 1962.21

Stanton once stated, "Color is just as capable as music of providing us with the highest ecstasies and delights." As an artist, Stanton was very influenced by both music and art, so much so that he painted what he thought music would look like with its changing tempos, bursts of energy balanced with periods of softness, and feeling of happiness as well as sadness. When you look at the painting you will notice both warm and cool colors, which can be linked to emotions, as well as repeating shapes and patterns, which can relate to the repetition of notes and cords.

Additional teaching opportunity: Bring different music (like rap, classical, rock, swing, heavy metal, etc.) into your classroom and play it for your students after discussing this painting. Ask your students which piece of music they think best accompanies this painting and why.

- What else can you hear but not see (like a voice, car starting, dog barking, or clock ticking)? How would you represent that in a painting? What colors and shapes would you use?
- Look closely at the colors, are they mostly warm or cool colors? Which colors seem to fall back into the background and which colors seem to burst towards you?

IMAGE 9 – Bruce Nauman, *Animal Pyramid*, 1990

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Commissioned with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and Anonymous Donors, 1990.18

Bruce's sculpture was created specifically for this location outside of the Des Moines Art Center. He was commissioned, which means he was asked to create a work of art specifically for this space and paid for his time and materials. Bruce said that this sculpture "needs to be seen in relation, not just to the park, but to [the] architectural setting..." This sculpture is 12-feet high and includes five caribou, eight deer, and four foxes. Bruce intentionally incorporated humor into this sculpture by placing the animals in odd positions and creating an unnatural arrangement.

- Think back to Roy Lichtenstein's *Great Pyramids* painting. How are these two artworks similar and different?
- How would this sculpture look if it were placed *inside* the museum? Does it need to be placed in an outdoor setting? Why or why not?
- If you were to re-make this sculpture, which animals would you include and why?

IMAGE 10 – Julian Schnabel, *The Death of Fashion*, 1978

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from Roy Halston Frowick, 1991.47

Julian thought of the idea for this artwork while he was on vacation in Spain, "I had a funny idea that I could make a painting the size of the closet in my hotel room in Barcelona and that I could cover it with broken plates." He wanted to include the plates to break up the smoothness of a painting surface and the straightness of the edges. He also wanted the whiteness of the plates to reflect the light while the paint created a dark feeling. This artwork seems to be filled with energy – the energy it took to break the plates, as well as the energy it took to paint the surface.

- Think about the different sizes and shapes of the items in your bedroom, on which object would you like to base an artwork? What materials would you use?
- If you could cover a painting with an uncommon art material what would it be? Why did you select that item?

IMAGE 11 – Richard Serra, *Standing Stones*, 1989

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Commissioned in Memory of Florence C. and David S. Kruidenier; Project made possible by the Kruidenier Family Members and In-laws, 1989.15

Richard was commissioned to create this artwork. There are six stones made from granite that was quarried in Sweden. Richard visited the Des Moines Art Center many times before he created this artwork. He walked around the grass and noticed how the land sloped downward in two directions toward the road. He cut the tops of the stones to mimic the downward slopes of the land, then placed them on the lawn. Richard placed each stone a distance from another so the viewer must walk on the land, just like he did before creating this artwork.

- Think about the land around your school, where would you like to place an artwork and why?
- Why do you think Richard selected stone as the material for this artwork? What makes you say that?
- Think about other sculpture you have seen that is outdoors. Do you think sculpture should be there? When and where do you think this idea got started?

IMAGE 12 – Frank Stella, *Interlagos*, 1983

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Anna K. Meredith Endowment, 1983.58

Throughout his career, Frank has tried to break down the idea that a painting needs to be contained to a simple rectangular canvas. With this artwork Frank painted on thick metal sheets that he cut into shapes. He then took those shapes and arranged them to create a dimensional painting that comes away from the wall and allows the viewer to see the wall through the artwork. During the time when he created this series of artworks, Frank was fascinated with auto racing.

- What elements in this painting remind you of auto racing? What makes you say that?
- Why do you think Frank painted on metal? Why do you think he cut the metal into shapes?
- How would this painting look if it were flat and did not have dimension or was the size of a piece of paper? Why do you say that?

*Art activity associated with this artwork, see page 12 of this document

IMAGE 13 – Grant Wood, *The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover*, 1931

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased jointly by the Des Moines Art Center and The Minneapolis Institute of Arts; with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., Mrs. Howard H. Frank, and the John R. Van Derlip Fund, 1982.2

Grant was born and raised in Iowa, as was Herbert Hoover – the 31st President of the United States (he was in office from 1929 to 1933). A group of business men commissioned Grant to paint an image of Herbert's birthplace as a gift for the President while he was in office. When the painting was presented to Herbert he turned it down saying, he "did not approve of the painting in which the actual cabin [in which he was born] is obstructed by a house that was not there at the time of [his] birth."

- When you look at this painting, where is your point of view? Why do you think Grant gives the viewer that vantage point?
- Look closely at the trees, what do you notice about them? Are they the same or different from the real trees outside?
- Notice the colors used in the painting, what season do you think it is in this painting? What makes you say that?

Suggested Art Activities

These art activities are related to two artworks in the Des Moines Art Center's Permanent Collections. They can be tailored for all ages.

IMAGE 2 – Ashley Bickerton, *Tormented Self-Portrait (Susie at Arles) No. 2, 1988*

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Edmundson Art Foundation, Inc., 1994.334

Alternative Self-Portraits

Materials Needed:

- Crayons or markers, multiple colors
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or school glue
- Construction paper, multiple colors
- Black construction paper 8.5"x11" or larger, one for each student

Directions:

1. After discussing Ashley's artwork, have the students think about and list the brands that they buy and use – clothing or household products – and discuss what logos are associated with those products
2. Have the students draw the product logos using the crayons or markers on the various colors of paper
3. Once all the logos are drawn, have the students cut out the logos and arrange them on the black construction paper
4. After the logos are arranged, have the students glue them to the black construction paper

Discussion:

- Are there logos that are represented in many of the students' compositions? What is the purpose of those products? Do the students buy the products based on need or because they like the brand?
- Can the students figure out which student belongs to which alternative self-portrait? Why did they make those connections?

Additional Teaching Opportunity:

- If you've done a self-portrait drawing lesson and still have the artwork, group them together in one area of the room
- Then take the alternative self-portraits and group them together in another area of the room (don't place them in the same order of the drawn self-portraits)
- Have the students match up the drawn self-portrait to the alternative self-portrait based on what they know about their fellow classmates
- Discuss how easy or difficult it was to make a correct match. Do they feel the drawn self-portraits or the alternative self-portraits capture a more accurate representation of their classmates? Which did they more enjoy making and why?

IMAGE 12 – Frank Stella, *Interlagos*, 1983

Des Moines Art Center Permanent Collections; Purchased with funds from the Anna K. Meredith Endowment, 1983.58

Interlagos

Materials Needed:

- Construction paper, multiple colors
- Crayons or markers, multiple colors
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or school glue
- Railroad board (poster board) cut to 9"x9", one for each student

Directions:

1. Look at and discuss Frank's artwork, *Interlagos*: discuss shapes, color, pattern, movement, and dimension
2. Have the students cut the construction paper into unique shapes, like the shapes they see in *Interlagos*. For young students, have them cut strips.
3. Using the crayons or markers, draw designs (like polka-dots, zigzags, or other patterns) on both sides of the cut paper
4. Talk about how the students can create dimension by accordion folding the paper, twisting the paper, attaching the ends of a strip close together, attaching one piece to another, etc.
5. Using the railroad board as the base, have the students attach the cut paper to the railroad board with glue.

Discussion:

- How easy or difficult was it for the students to create dimension with the paper? Discuss what other techniques they used to create dimension.
- Discuss how their artwork look the same and different from Frank's. Which do they like better and why?
- Discuss whether or not there is a proper top or bottom to their composition. Should it be hung on the wall or laid flat? Why?