

M.LiT Tour by Camille Karabaich

Description: Learn how modern art shows social trends through ideas of beauty and vanity.

Location: 21st Century Art, and Mid to Late 20th Century Art

Introduction:

Hello and Welcome to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. My name is Camille Karabaich. I am a member of a new group here called Museum Leaders in Training, or MLiT. Our tour theme this year is Social Trends: Beauty and Vanity. I will be taking you on a mini-tour tonight to show how our theme is shown in modern art.

Modern art is a great section to explore with this theme because it is the most up to date interpretation of beauty. It is also easier for us as a starting point looking for this theme in art because we can relate to it. So, follow me and we will look at three pieces of modern art that exhibit our theme on what I like to think of as a “noun tour.” I like to call it this because we will take a look at artwork of a person, a place, and a thing. So, let’s go.



Object One:

Krishnaveni I, 1997

Ravinder Reddy, 21st Century Art

Painted and gilded polyester-resin fiberglass

2001.230a/b

The first piece we will visit today is a piece that I used to refer to as, “the head.” The real name of this piece is Krishnaveni I and it is by an artist named Ravinder Reddy. Reddy wanted to create a mixture of, in my words, modern Indian culture and “classical” Indian culture. In this he uses elements of popular culture and social trends of today and religious aspects that are more classical culture. The first example of this is her name.

Krishnaveni is a popular name in Reddy’s home town of Andhra Pradesh. Another element of today is her make-up. The stylized eyebrows and the lipstick shade are both popular today. The flowers in her veni, her braid, are a style of today and have a connection to the classical. Radha would supposedly weave them through her veni to seduce her love, the god Krishna. The size, 75x72x73 inches and golden color also emphasize her goddess-like qualities. She actually stands over six feet tall without her pedestal, making her at least a good foot taller than me.

The mixture Reddy made of past and present, and of real women and mythical ones, shows his interpretation of what features are noticeable, or even important, in his culture over time. He also shows the ever changing social trend of appearance and what appearance is considered

beautiful. **Question:** What is an element of modern day beauty that I have talked about here that is similar or different in your culture? Do you participate in any of these trends? *Audience.* (If needed- Let's take a look at the flowers in her veni. Is that a style that you see often?-If more is needed- Let's do the same with the make-up.)

So, any questions, comments, or concerns on this piece before we move on?

Transition: We have just seen our person so we are going to cross the room to our thing.



Object Two:

Dollar Pyramid, 2000

Yukinori Yanagi, 21st Century Art

Colored sand, ants, plastic boxes, plastic tubes, plastic pipes

2000.81.1-15

This piece is named Dollar Pyramid and it is by Yukinori Yanagi. He is a Japanese artist from Fukuoka, Japan who now lives and works in Hiroshima or Hiroshima, whichever way you prefer to say it. This particular piece is not the only one of its kind. It is actually the fourth in a series. There were three pieces made of the American dollar before this one and three made of other types of bills after this one. However, this was the only one in the pyramid shape.

Question: Because this piece is a little different from the dollar bill we see every day, what differences do you see in this work of art and the dollar bill you would pull out of your wallet or pocket? *Audience.* (If needed, well one of the first things I notice is the shape. Is it in the same shape of a dollar bill?)

The last bit I have on this piece is from a quote. The artist said, in essence, that he always tries to give fun first and then people can think about the deeper meaning. Some of the meanings I found were that this piece could be a metaphor for workers, being the ants, destroying even though they are struggling to succeed and that it could be a symbol for a crumbling capitalism. It could even be an example of how vainly people spend their money. That is they spend it mostly on themselves. Now even though it may be a symbol for some deep and not so great things, I think that one great thing about this piece is that, because of its size, it is really easy to see the beauty of the dollar bill that we may overlook otherwise. I mean if you take a look at what would be the edges of the dollar bill, you can see that there are very detailed designs all the way around the bill. So, does anyone have any questions, comments, or concerns about this piece?

Transition: Okay, with that let's move from the 21st Century Gallery into the 20th Century Gallery where we will see our "place."



Object Three:
Gullscape, 1964
Roy Lichtenstein
Oil and acrylic on canvas
85.418

This piece is titled *Gullscape* and it is by the artist Roy Lichtenstein, which is just fun to say. It seems to be even more fun to say if you say it in a voice that isn't yours. Like Lichtenstein or Lichtenstein. Let's all try it once in any voice you want- Roy Lichtenstein. Well, Mr. Lichtenstein said once, in essence, that it is important to see the difference between Pop Art and Pop Culture. In this he set himself apart from the social trends of the day, or at least tried to. Alright, this piece is a little bit different from his usual pieces because of its color. **Question:** What colors do you see in this piece? *Audience.* Right. This piece is different because he does not use a primary color scheme. Here, instead of using just blue, red, and yellow by themselves, he layers the red and blue dots to create a purple-ish color for our eyes. It is also a seascape which is not what he is really known for. When you get up close, you can see the separate dots of color. You are welcome to do so if you like.

Mr. Lichtenstein was born in New York, New York in 1923. He went to college for his MFA, Master of Fine Arts Degree, at Ohio State University and he then taught there for five years. Later on, he taught at Rutgers University in New York. There he taught a pretty well known artist named Claus Oldenburg who, in case you haven't heard of him, creates huge, like gynomous, larger than life "everyday objects." He has made an ice cream cone, a saw, a clothes pin, a spoon with a Maraschino cherry on it, and many other things I'm sure. He's a pretty cool guy to look into, but going back to Lichtenstein- He also went through an Abstract Expressionist period before he began his Pop Art. In this phase he made art that was both abstract and expressionist. So, these pieces don't look like real things, but they evoke an emotion. A good example of another artist who did this is Jackson Pollock who created the dripped/splattered paint paintings.

Once he did begin to create Pop Art, he began to create really large pieces from newspapers and comic strips. Because he was blowing these pictures up so large he would make sketches and then use an opaque projector to create his art. I looked at opaque projectors and some looked like overhead projectors, but most looked more like the newer projectors. They have them in Henrico county schools. If you've seen one they look like that but taller than they were wide.

Conclusion: Well that wraps up our "noun tour" of Modern art. I hope that you have had a good time exploring the theme Social trends: Beauty and Vanity with me tonight. I know I had a good time. We saw how 3 pieces of modern art exemplify beauty. We touched on social trends affecting interpretations of beauty when we viewed Krishnaveni I. We also touched on vanity with the Dollar Pyramid. So, that concludes our tour, does anyone have any questions,

comments, or concerns? Thank you for coming out tonight and joining me on my tour. Please see some of the other tours while you are here. Goodnight.

References:

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