

Latina Artists

How do Latina artists depict their homelands and cultures?

What differences and similarities exist in artwork created by artists of divergent Latin countries?

LESSON OVERVIEW

What does it mean to be a Latina artist? The twentieth and twenty-first century artists included in this lesson are not bound by language or geography. Indeed, they come from countries across Latin America – Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and Cuba. Some, by necessity or choice, have lived and worked elsewhere. This lesson explores the artists' own distinctive personal stories, as well as the rich variety of their art, which ranges from traditional media like painting and sculpture to more contemporary expressions in photography, **installation art**, and **performance art**. All the while, it challenges middle- and high-school students to consider the nature of identity and how people of the same broad cultural ethnicity—and the art they create—take no one fixed form.

GRADE LEVEL

Grades 7-9, but adaptable for younger and older students.

LENGTH OF LESSON

Four forty-five minute sessions

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand why people self-identify or are identified by others as Latino or Latina.
- Recognize the diversity of art made by twentieth-century and contemporary Latina artists.
- Understand that artists are shaped by the social and political issues of the places where they grow up and that their experiences in these places inform and influence their art.
- Consider how we craft our own identities and how our cultural heritage contributes to our notions of self and the way in which we relate to others.
- Understand the concept of **ecology** and consider how and why certain Latina artists address this concept in their work.

STANDARDS MET

Language Arts:

- IRA/NCTE.K-12.4: Communication Skills
- IRA/NCTE.K-12.5: Communication Strategies
- IRA/NCTE.K-12.9 Multicultural Understanding

Science:

- C: Life Science
- F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

Social Studies:

- Culture – Performance Expectations A, B, D
- People, Places, & Environments – Performance Expectations A, B, H
- Individual Development & Identity – Performance Expectations A, B, C, F
- Global Connections – Performance Expectation A

FOR THE TEACHER

The content of this lesson lends itself to discussions of geography and environmental studies, colonial history, the construction of individual and collective identities. Please scroll to the end of the lesson for biographies about the artists, bibliography, and a vocabulary list.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 – The Geography of Latin America

Social Studies

- Supply List: world map, Internet access, and biographies accompanying this lesson plan
- Procedure: What is Latin America? What countries does it include and what are the languages spoken there, both official and unofficial? What are their respective capital cities, populations, natural resources, and forms of government? Assign each of your students a Latin American country to research and ask them to find the answers to these questions. Then, using the biographies provided, ask each student to show if any of the featured artists were born, studied, or traveled within their assigned country. Ask the students to consider when the artists were in these places and if any of them might have crossed paths.
- Assessment: Using a world map, have each student identify his or her Latin American country and share the results of the research. What do the countries have in common and how are they different? What influence might these factors have on the artists who grew up there?
- Looking/Discussion Questions: Show students Adriana Varejão's *Contingente (2000)*. How does it relate to the activity they just completed? How did the artist incorporate the human body and why? What is the significance of drawing the equator in red? In what language is it labeled and why?

Activity 2 – Photo- and Newspaper Journalism

Language Arts

- Supply List: Image included in this lesson plan.
- Procedure (Looking/Discussion Questions): Lola Alvarez Bravo, Graciela Iturbide, and Rosângela Rennó each worked or work primarily in photography. Without explaining the context or titles, ask your students to examine several of Alvarez Bravo's photographs of daily life in Mexico's villages and city streets, including *De Generación en Generación* (ca. 1950), Iturbide's images of Mexico's indigenous peoples, and Rennó's *Cicatriz Series* (1996). Who or what are the artists' subjects? How do you think the artists relate to and feel about these people and/or places? To what extent is each artist using photography as a purely documentary tool or to what extent are they changing and manipulating the photographs? How does that change the story or stories that they communicate through their work?
- Assessment: Ask the students to imagine that they are journalists. Have them choose two or three similar works by one of these photographers and write a newspaper or magazine article that ties the images together. Then ask the students to write captions for the photographs that link them with their texts.

- Lesson Extension: Have students document an event at school using both photography and writing. Afterwards, ask them to consider if it is easier or harder to write about people and events they know and care about. Can an artist or writer ever be truly impartial? What effect does that have on journalism?

Activity 3 – Tradition and Artistic Influence

Language Arts and Social Studies

- Supply List: Post-card sized index cards, crayons, or markers
- Procedure (Looking/Discussion Questions): War in Tomie Ohtake’s native Japan forced her and her family to emigrate to Brazil when Ohtake was twenty-three years old. Ana Mendieta was just twelve when she was sent to Iowa because of the dangerous political situation in Cuba. Ask students to read the biographies of Ohtake and Mendieta and consider how each artist draws or drew on the traditions of her homeland to create art. Have them consider the artists’ training as well as the materials they used and their distinctive styles. Ask them to incorporate their findings as they discuss each artist’s featured work. Have your students think about the most important traditions in their homes. Is it a special recipe an aunt makes every Passover or a card game their Dad taught them? Have your students write a how-to lesson to someone who has never done this activity before. Then ask them to illustrate the tradition on a post-card sized index card and write a letter on the back to someone their age who lives outside the United States. The letter should explain why this tradition is so meaningful to them and why the recipient will enjoy doing it.
- Assessment: Have students trade their how-to lesson and ask them to follow their peers’ instructions. Were the instructions clear? Why or why not? Then ask students to peer-edit the how-to lessons to improve upon their clarity.
- Lesson Extension: Have each student share aloud his or her chosen tradition. Is there any overlap? Why or why not?

Activity 4 – Ecology and the Environment

Science and Social Studies

- Supply List: A variety of art materials. If your supplies are limited, you can restrict the art activity to any media or form.
- Procedure (Looking/Discussion Questions): Ecology is a branch of biology that explores the relationships among organisms and the environment they inhabit. Ask the students to look carefully at Frida Baranek’s *Untitled* (1993) and describe what they see. What materials do they think the artist used to make the sculpture? Ask the students to think about what Baranek wants to communicate. How do her chosen materials help convey the meaning of the sculpture? How would the sculpture’s meaning change if it were carved out of a traditional material like stone or wood? If it were made from an unprocessed material? If it were made from a new material that the artist bought at a store? Now ask them to consider the Salamé and Mendieta pieces. What materials did these arts employ? Do they look “natural” or “artificial”? Why? What do these words mean?
- Assessment: Ask your students to imagine a dialogue among the pieces by Baranek, Salamé, and Mendieta. What would they call each other? What would their voices sound like and what would they say to each other? How would they get along?

- Lesson Extension: Baranek has said about the materials she uses, “I live with these things around me. There are a lot of industrial left overs, and I thought I could do something with them.” What do Mendieta and Salamé have to say about their work? With a view to issues of ecology and the environment, ask students to create a work that speaks to the idea of home, whatever that may mean to them. Have the students write a short poem to accompany their piece.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS AND THEIR ART

Frida Baranek (b. 1961) – Frida Baranek is representative of the new generation of sculptors in Brazil who rose to prominence in the 1980s. Creating works that are studies in paradox and contrast, she is part of a strong intellectual vanguard in Brazilian art. She uses industrial debris to shape forms that juxtapose and reconcile opposite qualities such as heavy and light, solidity and stability, **organic** and industrial.

Baranek uses heavy tools, mechanical equipment, and discarded industrial materials to create large sculptures. She transforms **found objects** such as leftover steel sheets and tubes, iron wire, and even airplane parts into abstract **assemblage** sculptures that seem to resemble forms found in the natural world. The organic appearance of industrial waste is not the only paradox evident in Baranek’s work. Despite the weight of her materials, her delicately woven grids of metal and the organic forms of her nest-like constructions, which often support or suspend even heavier pieces of metal debris, appear surprisingly light and airy. The apparent weightlessness of such heavy pieces and the use of line to define space characterize her work.

The core of Baranek’s ninety-pound work *Untitled*, a dense central mass of rusted iron wire resembling a nest or tumbleweed, is pierced by a number of thicker, bent and rusted iron rods of varying lengths. The interweaving of wires and rods gives the sculpture a linear, drawn quality, while the long, protruding wires break open the central mass and appear to lift the work like a pair of wings. The precariously balanced piece appears unstable and fleeting, as through the slightest touch or breeze could set it in motion; its rusted surface adds to the impression of delicacy and decay.

Baranek also explores certain social issues in her sculptures. By demonstrating that even industrial debris and other discarded materials can have meaning if reused and remade, Baranek’s sculptures lie at the crossroads of two important issues in our world today: **environmentalism** and recycling. These ideas are particularly important in her home country of Brazil. In the past forty years, this largest of South American countries has experienced immense changes related to rapid **urbanization** and industrialization. Baranek is one of a generation of artists who are using industrial materials and commenting on the health of Brazil’s environment and industrialization more generally.

Like many contemporary artists, Baranek is a “global citizen.” Since the 1980s, she has lived and worked in São Paulo, Paris, Berlin, and New York City. Baranek has participated in many solo and group exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale and the Bienal de São Paulo.

Lola Alvarez Bravo (1907-1993) – A native of Lagos de Moreno, a small city in the state of Jalisco on Mexico’s Pacific Coast, Dolores (Lola) Martinez Vianda was among her country’s first professional women photographers. Her parents moved to Mexico City when she was very young. Orphaned at eight, she was raised by relatives. In 1925, she married Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo, who had been a friend and neighbor for many years. The newlyweds spent a year in Oaxaca, in central Mexico, where Alvarez Bravo assisted her husband in the darkroom and began taking her own pictures. The couple’s son, Manuelito, was born in 1927; he also became a professional photographer. Alvarez Bravo and her husband came to know many of the most important Mexican artists of the day, including the painters José Clemente Orozco, Rufino Tamayo, Diego Rivera, and Frida Kahlo.

In 1934, the couple separated, and they divorced fifteen years later. Meanwhile, inspired by such photographers as Edward Weston and Tina Modotti, Lola Alvarez Bravo established a successful independent career. For the next fifty years, she photographed a wide variety of subjects, making **documentary images** of daily life in Mexico’s villages and city streets and portraits of great leaders from various countries. She also experimented with **photomontage**.

Alvarez Bravo’s black-and-white photograph *De Generación en Generación* is typical of her work in that it combines a strong sense of Mexican nationalist pride with universal human emotions and an emphasis on abstract form. While the photograph itself is unposed, its composition has been carefully considered. The artist creates a sense of mystery because of the mother’s unseen face; the child’s startled gaze, focused directly at the camera; and the cropped forms of other figures on either side.

Like Frida Kahlo, Alvarez Bravo celebrated the traditional costumes and customs of her country’s varied regions in her art. Here, the woman’s hairstyle—and unbound single braid with a comb—and this particularly type of wraparound skirt are typical women’s attire in Hueyapan, a town in a mountainous area of south-central Mexico.

Alvarez Bravo’s first solo exhibition was held at Mexico City’s Palace of Fine Arts in 1944; numerous solo and group shows followed. From 1951 through 1958, she directed her own Mexico City gallery, where in 1953 Frida Kahlo’s had her only one-woman exhibition in her native country during her lifetime. In addition, Alvarez Bravo taught photography at the prestigious Academia de San Carlos in the Mexican Capital. A major retrospective of her work was held in Mexico City in 1992, although the artist had stopped making work three years earlier because of failing eyesight.

Graciela Iturbide (b. 1942) – Graciela Iturbide was born into a wealthy conservative Catholic family in Mexico City in 1942. She attended Catholic school, which emphasized the county’s Hispanic heritage as opposed to that of Mexico’s indigenous peoples. Iturbide’s interest in exploring the under-represented native cultures—their daily lives, customs, and rituals—fueled her future work as a photographer.

In 1962, Iturbide married Mexican photographer Pedro Meyer and eventually gave birth to three children. In 1969, she decided to enroll at the Centro de Estudios Cinematográficos at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México to become a film director. After taking a class with master photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo, she shifted her focus to photography. Alvarez Bravo was greatly impressed with Iturbide's talent and invited her to be his assistant. She worked closely with him from 1970 to 1971 and was deeply influenced by his poetic style. However, Iturbide decided to focus her efforts on multi-part works she described as “**photo essays,**” as opposed to individual photographs.

Iturbide traveled to Europe where she met internationally renowned photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose notion of the “decisive moment” (the creative moment when the photographer decides to capture a photograph) greatly influenced her work. She returned to Mexico where she spent the rest of the 1970s working for the Instituto Naciola Indenista documenting indigenous cultures throughout the country.

Iturbide began publishing her photographs extensively during the 1980s. She received international acclaim for her work in the town of Juchitán, Oaxaca, where she photographed the community's marketplace and scenes of domestic-life, both of which were dominated by women. Iturbide continued photographing indigenous rituals and activities of daily life, but refused to approach her work as an outsider, choosing instead to visit and interact with the communities in which she worked. She also felt that it was important to represent these cultures without trying to idealize or romanticize their connection to the past.

Her images often depict startling juxtapositions of traditional Mexican folk-life with elements of contemporary culture. Through her photo essays, Iturbide has documented and preserved a transitional moment in the history of Mexico's indigenous peoples, whose communities are still enriched by their traditional cultures.

Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) – Born in 1948 in Havana, Cuba, Ana Mendieta grew up amidst political turmoil and unrest. Her father, Ignacio Mendieta, worked secretly to undermine Fidel Castro after learning of his Communist agenda. Due to the unsafe times in Cuba, Ana's parents sent her and her older sister, Raquelín, to the United States as part of Operation Pedro Pan, for what they believed would be a short stay. However, Mendieta's father was thrown into political prison, and the sisters' time in America was extended to many years. Only twelve at the time of her exile, Mendieta's life was strongly shaped by her dislocation from Cuba. She and her sister were sent to a Catholic residential institution in Iowa, where they attended high school and eventually college. Mendieta obtained her B.F.A. from the University of Iowa in 1969, and immediately continued for her M.F.A. in painting the same year.

While attending the University of Iowa, Mendieta met the professor Hans Breder, a German sculptor who founded the Intermedia program. This innovative arts curriculum program emphasized performance art and new technologies, as well as the intermixing of media across disciplines. Breder encouraged his students to use their bodies as a direct connection between the audience and their art. Mendieta began to experiment with performance art, often acting as Breder's model.

Much of Mendieta's art stems from Breder's influence and her feelings of displacement from her homeland. From 1973 to 1980 she worked on her *Siluetas Series*, in which she imprinted her silhouette into a landscape or built it up with natural materials, such as mud, snow, sand, grass and fire. She considered her work a combination of **earth art** and **body art**, making **earth body art**. The insertion of her body into nature linked it with the ancestral past and the present. To Mendieta, these **ephemeral** pieces were crucial for her to establish a bond with a certain location. Many of these outdoor installations were performed in Mexico, a place to which Mendieta often traveled in order to reconnect with her Latin American roots. Her art encompassed influences from various traditions including indigenous Mexican **iconography** and Afro-Cuban cultures such as **Santeria**. Mendieta's performances were mainly done in isolation, with only the documentation of photographs and film to record them before the elements of nature erased the artworks completely.

Mendieta's art was not limited to earth body art. She also took a strong feminist stance in much of her work, speaking out against domestic and sexual violence towards women. She was often nude in her works and on occasion used blood as her painting medium. Mendieta became known for her unique and complex **oeuvre**, and her work was shown all over the United States as well as in Canada and Rome.

In 1978, Mendieta moved to New York City. Unfortunately, Mendieta's life was cut short in 1985. She fell to her death from a window of the thirty-fourth floor apartment she shared with her husband, artist Carl Andre. Mendieta was only thirty-six years old. In the sensation surrounding her death, focus shifted away from Mendieta's innovative and extensive oeuvre. It is only now, decades later, that we can begin to take a closer look into the life and art of Mendieta and realize what a multifaceted legacy she has left behind.

Tomie Ohtake (b. 1913) – A Brazilian national of Japanese origin, Tomie Ohtake is a major figure in contemporary Brazilian art; she is credited, in part, with introducing the sparse and organic aesthetics of Japanese art to Brazil's rich artistic heritage. Born in Kyoto, she spent her youth in Japan until 1936, when growing concern over the impending Sino-Japanese War compelled her family to emigrate. Shortly after arriving in Brazil, she married and settled in São Paulo where she lived a quiet, middle-class life for many years before pursuing a career in painting.

While Ohtake traces her interest in art back to **calligraphy** and drawing classes she took as an elementary school student in Japan, her creative talents went untapped until her late thirties. Then, she was unaccountably seized by an urge to paint. Her first efforts were simple landscapes and genre paintings. Encouraged by art critics and friends, she began to experiment and quickly developed the unique style of abstraction for which she is now known.

Covering her canvas with dense layers of restrained brushstrokes, Ohtake forms simple, sinuous geometries that emerge from ambiguous planes of color. Together, her method and sense of composition imbue each **abstract** work with suggestions of substance, weight, and motion.

Ohtake has steadfastly pursued this aesthetic over the course of her long career, resisting artistic trends emanating from Europe and the United States. Her groundbreaking work, along with that of colleagues such as Manabu Mabe, Takashu Fukushima, and Iberê Camargo, has paved the way for future generations of Brazilian artists.

Rosângela Rennó (b. 1962) – Rosângela Rennó does not work with photography in the traditional sense. Relying on existing photographs and photographic negatives, she digitally manipulates and alters the context of these sources. Her use of found photographs not only raises questions about the subjects of the images, but more importantly draws attention to the anonymity of original photographers.

Rennó was born in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in 1962. She studied at the Escola de Arquitectura at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte in 1986 and the Escola Guignard the following year. She developed her interest in working with social issues through photography, and in 1997, attended the Escola de Comunicações e Artes at the Universidade de São Paulo in Brazil.

After agreeing to assist the São Paulo State Penitentiary in creating a prison museum, Rennó was given permission to use some of the out-dated prisoner identification photographs. She exhibited her *Cicatriz Series* in 1996 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. These images of prison tattoos are enhanced by Rennó to illuminate the rawness of the original photographs. Later, when she exhibited large prints of photographs of the backs of prisoners' heads, the work seemed to better identify the peculiarities of the original photographs, rather than the faceless inmates. Rennó often includes panels of **appropriated** text, pulled from newspapers and magazines and etched on glass. These texts serve as startling examples of violence in society. She often combines images and text in larger installations.

In 2003, Rennó was one of two artists selected to represent Brazil in the Venice Biennial. She displayed *Red Series*, a collection of digitally altered images of bourgeoisie men and boys in military uniforms from various countries. In the resulting deep-red prints, the subjects' portraits are barely visible, as if submerged in blood.

Rennó lives and works in Rio de Janeiro where she continues to address political and social issues in her work. She is acknowledged as one of Brazil's finest contemporary artists and is internationally recognized for her unique use of photography for social commentary.

Soledad Salamé¹ (b. 1954)

¹ The *Clara: Database of Women Artists*® entry for this artist contains an Artist Statement®, unlike the entries for the other artists included in this lesson that contain Artist Biographies.

Artist's Statement:

The natural world and its processes have always formed the center of my work. – Soledad Salamé

What began with a series of sundials, as a meditation on celestial mechanics and the nature of time gradually and, when viewed in retrospect, inexorably evolved and transformed itself into a fascination with water. This evolution took place on both the topical and formal levels, which are inseparably intertwined and have informed each other over years.

The idea that gave rise to the sundial series led to *Garden of the Sacred Light*, a three-dimensional [**mixed-media**] work that incorporated living plants. Water was omnipresent in these works, even if it was not necessarily visible. In *Growth*, seeds incorporated into the handmade paper that supported the work sprouted, flourished and declined over the period it was on display. The piece could not have existed without water, but its presence was hidden beneath a layer of vegetation. Other works in this series incorporated glass containers holding living plants or, as in *Grotto*, vials of water that provided constant nourishment. These too grew as they were exhibited, expressing the constant of change in the universe. The glass also played a formal role in making the roots of these changes visible.

The more I immersed myself in the elements I used in my work, the more conscious I became of the ecological issues, which surrounded them. My concern with the global environment, with the little noticed results of daily life in an industrialized world increased exponentially. Visits to the rainforest in Venezuela, showed me the results of using mercury in the area's goldmines and inspired a new theme which incorporated the area's insects on fields of gold leaf, which served as a comment on the inherent value of the "lowly invertebrate" and as an ironic observation on the conditions which endangered them.

These concerns also led me to create contemporary ambers to contain today's disappearing life forms. Here again, the concept of value is inherent in the presentation, as is the notion of potential extinction. The idea of transparency was also vital to the conception and expression of the work, just as it had been with the garden of light. Creating these resin-based contemporary ambers introduced new ways of dealing with fluid dynamics that were quite different than those I had previously encountered with ink and paint.

The idea of poisoned streams flowed naturally into a concern with aquatic life that I continue to explore. Seeking ways of expressing those concerns visually led me directly to the source which links humanity, plants and animals alike – water. Like no other subject I have approached, water demands new solutions to representing transparency, motion and the dynamic nature of natural phenomenon. Working with **lenticular** images has given me an entirely new approach to my art and the subjects, which inspire it.

In summary, my art is an attempt to refocus human vision on the too often unnoticed and underappreciated elements that make survival possible on what we so appropriately know as the "blue planet".

Statement courtesy of Soledad Salamé.

Adriana Varejão (b. 1964) – The visually interesting work of Adriana Varejão draws on her heritage as an artist living and working in Brazil. Incorporating both popular and art historical images in her painting—appropriating potent remnants of Brazil’s colonial past—she constructs sculptural paintings that often take the fragmented or eviscerated human body as their subject. Extremely tactile and often saturated in blood-red hues, Varejão’s highly visceral work recalls the pain and pleasure that accompanies both **colonialism** and the creative process. Her work defies narrow classification. Although her work is of a culture, it reaches beyond geographical boundaries.

In her new paintings, Varejão uses the sea as a point of departure. Continually re-examining and representing Brazil’s cultural history, Varejão views the sea as the common link between countries sharing in Brazil’s development: Portugal, China, and India.

Varejão also explores photography. *Contingente* (2000) is a stellar example of her photographic and conceptual prowess. It depicts an open hand positioned against a wall, palm outward. A red line bisects the image horizontally, running across the wall and the palm. The line is inscribed as “equator,” and its transversal across the hand indicates the use of this human form as a stand-in for a continent.

Varejão was included in the 1995 Johannesburg Biennial, the 1998 São Paulo Biennial, and in the first Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, which opened in September 1999. In addition, she has exhibited internationally at Galeria Carmargo in São Paulo, Guislaine Husenot in Paris, and Soledad Lorenzo in Madrid. In 2005, she exhibited at the Foundation Cartier Pour l’ Art Contemporain in Paris.

Biography courtesy of Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, NY.

The eight artists highlighted in this lesson plan represent only a handful of the Latina artists featured in *Clara: Database of Women Artists®*. Other artists to consider include Sonia Andrade, Brigida Baltar, Lygia Clark, Diamela Eltit, Renata von Hanffstengel, María Isquierdo, Frida Kahlo, Anna Maria Maiolino, Carolina Mayorga, Béatriz Milhazes, Marina Núñez del Prado, Catalina Parra, Alicia Penalba, Remedios Varo, and Martha Zuik.

IMAGE LIST

- Lola Alvarez Bravo, *De Generación en Generación*, ca. 1950, National Museum of Women in the Arts.
- Frida Baranek, *Untitled*, 1991, National Museum of Women in the Arts.
- Graciela Iturbide, *Cuatro Pescaditos, Juchitán, Oaxaca*, 1986, National Museum of Women in the Arts.
- Ana Mendieta, Image from *Siluetas* series, National Museum of Women in the Arts. Visit <http://www.galerieelong.com/> to view images of Mendieta’s work.
- Tomie Ohtake, *Untitled*, 1993, National Museum of Women in the Arts.

- Rosângela Rennó, Image from *Cicatriz Series*, National Museum of Women in the Arts. Visit http://angelfloresjr.multiply.com/photos/album/92/Rosangela_Renno_Cicatriz_Vulgo_Corpo_da_Alma to view images of Rennó's work.
- Soledad Salamé, Contemporary amber sculpture, National Museum of Women in the Arts. Visit <http://www.soledadsalame.com/> to view images of Salamé's work.
- Adriana Varejão, *Contingente*, 2000, National Museum of Women in the Arts.

VOCABULARY

Abstract Expressionism: A painting movement beginning in the 1940s in which artists applied paint rapidly and spontaneously to their canvases in an effort to represent feelings and emotions rather than objective reality.

Abstract: Art that is based on the natural world but in which the forms might be simplified, exaggerated, or distorted; the colors might be altered; and the space might be unrealistic.

Appropriation: The act by which an artist uses another person's imagery, typically without permission, in a context that differs from the original and thereby gives the imagery new meaning.

Assemblage: Works of sculpture assembled from found natural or manufactured materials or debris of various sorts. The component parts of an assemblage retain something of their previous life and use while also interacting with other elements to create new meaning.

Body Art: A form of art in which the artist uses his or her own body as the medium, or material, with which he or she creates the piece. Body art can either be carried out publicly or privately. The process of creating the art is often documented through photography or video recording, which artists then use to share their work more widely.

Calligraphy: Script, produced by hand in brush or pen, that is noted for its aesthetic qualities.

Colonialism: Control by one nation over another territory or people.

Documentary images: Images whose purpose is to present facts objectively without including fictional matter or editorial commentary.

Earth Art: A form of art in which the artist transforms a landscape using stones, dirt, leaves, or other natural materials.

Earth Body Art: A hybrid form of contemporary art that integrates concepts of earth art and body art. Typically, the artist inserts her or his body into nature in order to link it with the ancestral past and the present.

Ecology: A branch of biology that explores the relationships and interactions among organisms and the environment they inhabit.

Environmentalism: Work aimed at better understanding the way in which people interact with the natural world and advocating to protect the natural environment from human destruction and pollution.

Ephemeral: Lasting for only a short time; fleeting and impermanent.

Found object: An object—natural or human-made—that is found and displayed as an artwork with only minimal alterations by the artist. Essentially, the artist has identified in the object some aesthetic characteristics and seeks for others to appreciate it through display in an art context.

Iconography: Subject matter or image in the visual arts that is associated with specific meanings.

Installation art: Art that is arranged in a space that is specified or created by the artist. Like body art, the process of creating the piece is often documented through photography or video recording, which artists then use to share their work more widely.

Lenticular: Having the shape of a double-convex lens or relating to a lens.

Mixed media: An artistic technique that combines two or more media, or artistic materials, in a single piece.

Oeuvre: An artist's body of work; literally, French for "work."

Organic: Shapes that are rounded, uneven, or irregular and might be found in nature.

Performance art: A form of art that features a performance by the artist before a live audience and often involves elements of theatre, including voice, music, costumes, and lighting.

Photo essays: A series of photographs of related subject matter that together make up a single work of art.

Photomontage: A single composition or piece of art in which the artist assembles many photographs, or pieces of photographs.

Santeria: An Afro-Caribbean religion that incorporates elements of Roman Catholicism with worship practices of the Yoruba and Bantu people of southern Nigeria, Senegal, and the coast of Guinea.

Urbanization: The social process whereby cities grow and societies become less rural.

Visceral: That which affects a person on a deeply emotional, rather than rational or thinking level.

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