

**Audrey Flack's *Vanitas* Series: A DBAE Perspective**

Thesis submitted to  
The Graduate College of  
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
Art Education


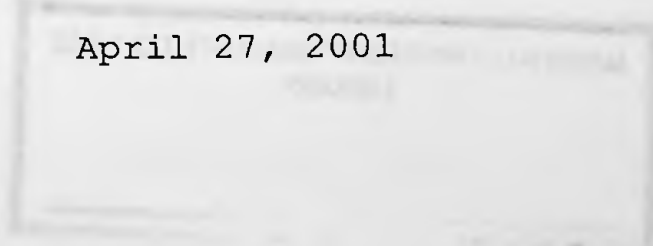
by

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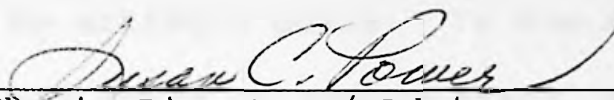
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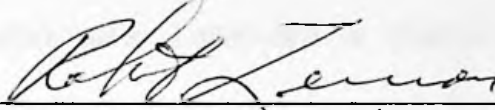
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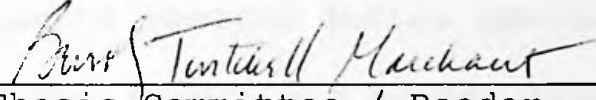


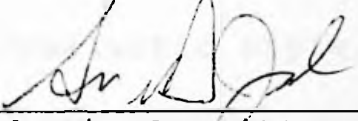
PREFACE

This thesis was accepted on the first day of  
May, 2001, as meeting the research  
requirements for the Master's Degree.

  
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## PREFACE

As I began my Master's studies, I became aware that I needed focus artistically. As an undergraduate, I had not truly settled into my own style or inspiration and realized I needed that to achieve my artistic goals. It was then that I was introduced to the works of Audrey Flack, a photorealistic painter, who was labeled a feminist because of her imagery.

In the 1970s when Flack's *vanitas* series emerged, most photorealists used industrial themes and scenes from daily life. While in the photorealistic style, Flack's use of such imagery as beads, bright colors, jewels, mirrors and cosmetics was very unusual. Many judged her work feminist because they looked at it only superficially, rather than searching for the true meaning -- a commentary on our society.

I am in no way comparing myself to Audrey Flack, but in her work I found true inspiration. I also felt her frustration, for as my style emerged, I too felt the sting of superficial remarks. Many times, artists, while wanting to be accepted for their own style, forget that they must accept other artists for their own styles. Audrey Flack

encourages all of us to be ourselves. Only then do we  
acheive our best, most creative product, whether it be in  
art or any other genre.

# ABSTRACT

## **Audrey Flack's *Vanitas* Series: A DBAE Perspective**

**Lee Anna W. Collins**

Art is a subject that encourages children to think critically, solve problems creatively, make evaluations, work within groups and appreciate a variety of different points of view. These skills are particularly suited to a discussion of Audrey Flack's *vanitas* series. An original and ambitious artist, her motivational canvases are full of vivid colors, historical references and popular imagery.

Discipline-Based Art Education or DBAE is a comprehensive approach to instruction and learning in art which incorporates four foundational disciplines in art -- art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics. Education in these disciplines contributes to the creation, understanding and appreciation of art, artists, artistic processes, and the roles and functions of art in cultures and societies.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The work of this project was made easier by assistance and encouragement given by many of my teachers, colleagues, family, and friends. Although I cannot name everyone, I wish to thank the following for their help and support.

Dr. Susan Power is my mentor and acted as chair of my thesis committee. The knowledge, time, and advice she has given me over the past seven years has been greatly appreciated. I owe many thanks to her, and feel privileged to have worked closely with such a gifted educator. I also wish to thank Dr. Susan Jackson, Dr. Robert Lemon, and Dr. Beverly Marchant who provided invaluable experience, guidance, and encouragement throughout this project.

Special thanks to The College of Fine Arts, The Graduate College, and The Visual Arts Department for assistance in the funding of my research.

I also thank my family for their love and encouragement, instilling in me the value of an education, and always lending a helping hand. Special thanks to my husband, Craig Collins, for his support throughout all phases of this project.

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# 1

## **Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

Art encourages students to be creative, open-minded, and self-assured. Students can spend at least five hours a day, five days a week for forty weeks in a school setting. Schools should offer artistic experiences, not just in the classrooms, but in all parts of the school, inside and out. Sadly, schools are often bare places, occasionally decorated by caring teachers but often lacking in the arts. Education, going back to Plato and Aristotle, was originally focused around the arts. Visual art in the classroom allows the student to create or experience something unique to them. In today's world, students are often "stamped out" when they leave

school, being taught to conform to society and its standards of right and wrong. While I think it is important for students to have a firm foundation rooted in stability, I do not believe in fitting each student into the same mold.

I must agree with many art advocates, art educators, and art practitioners who believe that a person who has not been educated in the arts is not fully educated. Artistic tasks, unlike so much of what is now being taught in our schools, encourage the ability to assess, to judge, and to experience a range of meanings apart from what we are able to say in words. By incorporating disciplined-based art education (DBAE) we are fostering a wider range of understanding of not only art but society as a whole. More importantly, students will leave our classrooms with a greater appreciation for the arts and hopefully, themselves.

## **Purpose of Study**

Studies of discipline-based art education are numerous, and although informative, sometimes dry in nature. Artistic learning experiences should develop the ability to inform, to critique, and to experience a wide range of non-verbal communication. By concentrating on the works of one artist, the discussion of discipline-based art education becomes more intriguing. Students are more receptive to colorful, energetic images. It is for these reasons that the *vanitas* series of Audrey Flack was chosen to be analyzed and discussed.

It is essential that we continue to inform our art educators about the importance of discipline-based art education. By using Flack's *vanitas* series as the basis of a discussion, DBAE is easily understood, and its importance to education is clear.

## **Rationale**

Incorporating the *vanitas* series of Audrey Flack into a discipline-based art education program opens up many channels of discussion, including iconography, art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and virtually all of the elements of art and principles of design. Because Flack's works are so colorful, lively, and full of imagery, students, parents, and teachers are easily drawn to the images themselves. Their intensity allows an involved discussion and application of discipline-based art education so that art becomes a "learning experience" where students create art and learn about art simultaneously.

## **Limitations**

Discipline-based art education is essential to every art program and could be incorporated in numerous ways.

Flack's *vanitas* series is full of bright colors, striking

imagery, iconography and social commentaries. The series is intriguing in itself, encouraging the viewer to study the imagery further, thus lending itself to a discipline-based art education approach.

Flack's art brings a new, fresh approach to art history and the art classroom. While great masters of art, such as van Gogh, Rembrandt, and Monet are all well suited to this format, focusing on Flack's works allows a discussion of not only the works of art, but their implications for popular society.

## **Assumptions**

The following assumptions underlie this study:

- \* most schools provide an art program in their curriculum
- \* most school art experiences incorporate some level of discipline-based art education
- \* an appreciation of art exists in most school settings

- \* most art classrooms incorporate discussion and art criticism
- \* most schools do not usually incorporate research in their art programs
- \* Use of Flack's work is not a common source (unlike van Gogh or Monet)

## **Procedural Overview**

As previously stated, this study focuses on a discussion of discipline-based art education, its importance in an art education program and the analysis of Audrey Flack's *vanitas* series in the context of DBAE. Chapter One introduces the study, Chapter Two defines discipline-based art education, discusses its role in an effective art program and covers the application of DBAE and the National and Local Standards for Art Education.

Chapter Three incorporates Audrey Flack's *vanitas* series into a discipline-based art education program, while Chapter Four sets the foundation for an extensive discussion of Flack's series by introducing the history of *vanitas* paintings and the imagery related to the

genre.

Featured in Chapter Five is a discussion of Audrey Flack's life, education and early career, as well as the start of Flack's photorealistic works. Chapter Six discusses Flack's *vanitas* paintings individually, including their iconography. Conclusions and recommendations for further examination are drawn from this study in Chapter Seven, which is followed by the Appendices.

**Discipline-Based Art Education**  
**&**  
**The National Visual Art Standards**

**Discipline-based Art Education**

W. Dwaine Greer first established discipline-based art education in 1984. According to Greer, discipline based art education or DBAE is a comprehensive approach to instruction and learning in art, developed primarily for grades K-12, but also formatted for use in adult education, lifelong learning, and art museums (Hobbs & Rush 9). DBAE incorporates four foundational disciplines in art: art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics. Education in these disciplines contributes



to the creation, understanding, and appreciation, of art. The study of artists, artistic processes and the roles and functions of art in cultures and societies.

### **Importance of DBAE in schools**

When recalling the schooldays of youth, what were the moments when something really important and of lasting value happened? Most likely it was on a school trip, in a play or at a concert. But these events are regarded as frills, little stops on our educational journey.

However, I believe that these such moments, along with all other creativity boosting experiences, are essential to learning.

Schools where children can spend at least five hours a day, five days a week for around forty weeks, ought to be places which offer art experiences in all parts of the school, inside and out. Sadly, schools are often austere places, occasionally decorated by caring teachers, but often lacking in the arts.

I must agree with many art advocates, art educators, and art practitioners who believe that a person who has

not been educated in art is not fully educated. Elliot Eisner<sup>1</sup> has written, "The arts are not only important because of what they represent, they are important because of the ways in which they engage and develop human intellectual ability. To learn to see and to make visual form is a complex and subtle task. The student needs to learn how to observe, not simply assign a label to what is seen, but to experience the qualities to which he attends." Artistic endeavors, unlike so much of what is now being taught in schools, develop the ability to judge, to assess, and experience a range of meanings that exceed what we are able to say in words. The limits of language are not the limits of our consciousness. The arts, more than any other area of human endeavor, encourage this human capacity.

Formed in 1982, the Getty Center for Education in the Arts<sup>2</sup> is committed to improve the quality of artistic learning in our schools and museums. According to the center's educational policy, teaching of the visual arts can be more appropriately rendered by incorporating the

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<sup>1</sup>Professor of Education and Art at Stanford University

<sup>2</sup>The Getty Center operates under the J. Paul Getty Trust

disciplines of art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics. In a discipline-based art education program, learning about art relates and integrates content of all the disciplines. There are various beneficial ways the components of DBAE can be incorporated.

### **Components of DBAE**

Making art helps students to master technical skills and control of materials. In creating works of art, students use thought processes and creativity to communicate their feelings to the best of their abilities. By becoming directly involved as a teacher, one is able to help students understand how artists produce art and the meanings they are portraying. An understanding of art's production provides students with a greater appreciation of art and the artists who created the work.

Through the promotion of free thinking, art criticism encourages students to form their own opinions concerning works of art. One misconception about DBAE assumes that

adult aesthetic standards must be imposed on children involved in discipline-based instruction. Enabling the child to articulate feelings or opinions about works of art, not simply learning facts, is a goal of discipline-based art education and is valuable in all realms of education.

Through art historical discussions, research, and implementation of art's elements and principles, children incorporate all four components of discipline-based art education. A series of simulations, games, or puzzles enable students to become aware of some aspects of more advanced aesthetic inquiry. Art lessons based upon the works and lives of well-known artists are essential in art education. By basing a lesson on a masterpiece, students are producing art, learning the history of the work, forming opinions concerning the style and analyzing the artist's intentions. This process promotes mental growth and the development of awareness and appreciation for artists and their work.

Art history is vital in an art classroom and throughout the school. In art history, all cultures should be studied, not just Western civilizations. It is

equally important that we give consideration to the multi-cultural society in which we live. Educators should not become locked within Western civilizations, only fringing upon other cultures as they become momentarily relevant to Western art. By expanding on art history and incorporating all cultures, views, and civilizations, a fuller awareness and understanding of other cultures and societies is fostered.

Works of art promote responses, sometimes curious questions such as, "Is this really art?". Such a query refers to the aesthetics of a work of art. Class discussions referring to works of art or what is considered art helps students to not only become more informed about works of art, but form opinions of their own.

Often, the importance of DBAE is not widely recognized in our public school systems. As art educators, it is important to establish DBAE and The National Standards as the core of an art program. One way to establish their importance is to incorporate a lesson plan format which emphasizes their importance. An example follows:

**Sample: DBAE Lesson Plan Format**

PROJECT TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_

MEDIUM/MEDIA \_\_\_\_\_ TIME NEEDED: \_\_\_\_\_

MATERIALS:

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RESOURCES:

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IGOS:

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**STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

Primary goal(s) / objective(s):

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The student will:

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Relation to DBAE:

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## TEACHING STRATEGIES

Class Preparation:

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Demonstration(s):

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Guided Instruction:

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## EVALUATION

- |                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1.) Creativity / originality      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2.) Craftsmanship                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3.) Classroom behavior / attitude | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4.) Effort / perseverance         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 5.) Completed & turned in on time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

## **The National Visual Art Standards**

The *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, passed by Congress in 1993, acknowledged that the arts are a core subject and as important to education as math, science, history, and English. Because of this legislation, the National Art Education Association and other arts associations drafted the first sets of national standards for their respective fields.

According to the *Kennedy Center for The Arts*, The National Visual Art Standards provide a framework for helping students learn the characteristics of the visual arts by using a wide range of subject matter, symbols, meaningful images, and visual expressions, to reflect their ideas, feelings, and emotions: and to evaluate the merits of their efforts. The standards address these objectives in ways that promote acquisition of and fluency in new ways of thinking, working, communicating, reasoning, and investigating. They emphasize student acquisition of the most important and enduring ideas, concepts, issues, dilemmas, and knowledge offered by the visual arts. They develop new techniques, approaches,



and habits for applying knowledge and skills in the visual arts to the world beyond school. The visual arts are extremely rich. They range from drawing, painting, sculpture, and design, to architecture, film, video, and folk arts. They involve a wide variety of tools, techniques, and processes. The standards are structured to recognize that many elements from this broad array can be used to accomplish specific educational objectives. For example, drawing can be used as the basis for creative activity, historical and cultural investigation, or analysis, as can any other fields within the visual arts. The standards present educational goals. It is the responsibility of the teachers to choose appropriately from the content and processes to fulfill these goals in specific circumstances and to develop the curriculum.

#### **National Standards K-4**

To meet the standards, students must learn vocabularies and concepts associated with various types of work in the visual arts and must exhibit their

competence at various levels in visual, oral, and written form. In Kindergarten-Grade 4, young children experiment enthusiastically with art materials and investigate the ideas presented to them through visual arts instruction. They are excited as they make and share their art with others. Creation is at the heart of this instruction. Students learn to work with various tools, processes, and media. They learn to coordinate their hands and minds in explorations of the visual world. They learn to make choices that enhance communication of their ideas. Their natural inquisitiveness is promoted, and they learn the value of perseverance.

As they move from kindergarten through the early grades, students develop skills of observation, and they learn to examine the objects and events of their lives. At the same time, they grow in their ability to describe, interpret, evaluate, and respond to work in the visual arts. Through examination of their own work and that of other people, times, and places, students learn to unravel the essence of art and to appraise its purpose and value. Through these efforts, students begin to understand the meaning and impact of the visual world in

which they live.

**Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students know the differences between materials, techniques, and processes
- \* Students describe how various materials, techniques, and processes cause different responses
- \* Students use a variety of media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
- \* Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner

**Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas
- \* Students describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses
- \* Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas

**Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art
- \* Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning

**Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures
- \* Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places
- \* Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art

**Content Standard #5:** Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students understand there are various purposes for creating works of visual art
- \* Students describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific works of arts
- \* Students understand there are different responses to specific works of arts

**Content Standard #6:** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students understand and use similarities and differences between characteristics of the visual arts and other arts disciplines
- \* Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum

## **National Standards 5-8**

In grades 5-8, students' visual expressions become more individualistic and imaginative. The

problem-solving activities inherent in art making help them develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. They select and transform ideas, discriminate, synthesize and appraise, and they apply these skills to their expanding knowledge of the visual arts and to their own creative work. Students understand that making and responding to works of visual art are interwoven and that perception, analysis, and critical judgment are inherent to both.

Their own art making becomes infused with a variety of images and approaches. They learn that others' preferences of others may differ from their own. Students refine the questions that they ask in response to works of arts. This leads them to an appreciation of multiple artistic solutions and interpretations. Study of historical and cultural contexts gives students insights into the role played by the visual arts in human achievement. As they consider examples of works of art in their historical contexts, students gain a deeper appreciation of their own values, of the values of other people, and the connection of the visual arts to universal human needs, values, and beliefs. They

understand that the art of a culture is influenced by aesthetic ideas as well as by social, political and economical forces, as well as other factors. Through these efforts, students develop an understanding of the meaning and import of the visual world in which they live.

**Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices
- \* Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

**Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work
- \* Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas
- \* Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

**Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas**

***Achievement Standard:***

- \* Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their works of arts
- \* Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in arts

**Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures**

***Achievement Standard:***

- \* Students know and compare the characteristics of arts in various eras and cultures
- \* Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts
- \* Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

**Content Standard #5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others**

***Achievement Standard:***

- \* Students compare multiple purposes for creating works of art
- \* Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific works of arts through cultural and aesthetic inquiry
- \* Students describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own works of arts and to works of arts from various eras and cultures

**Content Standard #6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines**

*Achievement Standard:*

- \* Students compare the characteristics of works in two or more art forms that share similar subject matter, historical periods, or cultural context
- \* Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

**National Standards 9-12**

In grades 9-12, students develop more profound works of visual art that reflect the maturation of their creative and problem-solving skills. Students understand the multifaceted interplay of different media, styles, forms, techniques, and processes in the creation of their work.

Students develop increasing abilities to pose insightful questions about contexts, processes, and criteria for evaluation. They use these questions to examine works in light of various analytical methods and to express sophisticated ideas about visual relationships using precise terminology. They can evaluate aesthetic qualities in works of art, nature, and human-made environments. They can reflect on the nature of human involvement in art as a viewer, creator, and participant.



Students understand the relationships among art forms and between their own work and that of others. They are able to relate understandings about the historical and cultural contexts of art to situations in contemporary life. They have a broad and rich understanding of the meaning and import of the visual world in which they live.

**Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes**

*Achievement Standard, Proficient:*

- \* Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their works of arts
- \* Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

*Achievement Standard, Advanced:*

- \* Students communicate ideas regularly at a high level of effectiveness in at least one visual arts medium
- \* Students initiate, define, and solve challenging visual arts problems independently using intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation

**Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions**

*Achievement Standard, Proficient:*

- \* Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to

accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art

- \* Students evaluate the effectiveness of works of arts in terms of organizational structures and functions
- \* Students create works of arts that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems

*Achievement Standard, Advanced:*

- \* Students demonstrate the ability to compare two or more perspectives about the use of organizational principles and functions in works of art and to defend personal evaluations of these perspectives
- \* Students create multiple solutions to specific visual arts problems that demonstrate competence in producing effective relationships between structural choices and artistic functions

**Content Standard #3:** Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

*Achievement Standard, Proficient:*

- \* Students reflect on how works of arts differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture
- \* Students apply subjects, symbols, and ideas in their works of arts and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life

*Achievement Standard, Advanced:*

- \* Students describe the origins of specific images and ideas and explain why they are of value in their works of art and in the work of others
- \* Students evaluate and defend the validity of sources for content and the manner in which subject matter, symbols, and images are used in the students' works and in significant works by others

**Content Standard #4:** Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

*Achievement Standard, Proficient:*

- \* Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of the characteristics and purposes of works of art
- \* Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places
- \* Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making

*Achievement Standard, Advanced:*

- \* Students analyze and interpret works of arts for relationships among form, context, purposes, and critical models, showing understanding of the work of critics, historians, aestheticians, and artists
- \* Students analyze common characteristics of visual arts evident across time and among cultural/ethnic groups to formulate analyses, evaluations, and interpretations of meaning

**Content Standard #5:** Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

*Achievement Standard, Proficient:*

- \* Students identify intentions of those creating works of arts, explore the implications of various purposes, and justify their analyses of purposes in particular works
- \* Students describe meanings of works of arts by analyzing how specific works are created and how they relate to historical and cultural contexts
- \* Students reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art

*Achievement Standard, Advanced:*

- \* Students correlate responses to works of visual art with various techniques for communicating meanings, ideas, attitudes, views, and intentions

**Content Standard #6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines**

*Achievement Standard, Proficient:*

- \* Students compare the materials, technologies, media, and processes of the visual arts with those of other arts disciplines as they are used in creation and types of analysis
- \* Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or sciences

*Achievement Standard, Advanced:*

- \* Students synthesize the creative and analytical principles and techniques of the visual arts and selected other arts disciplines, the humanities, or the sciences

(ARTSEGE Website, Kennedy Center for The Arts)

## **Conclusion**

DBAE should be at the core of every art education program. By incorporating the four disciplines and following the National Visual Art Standards, we can facilitate a learning environment of art exploration and study, while fostering a respect for art in our youth.

According to Hobbs & Rush, if children are to realize

their full artistic potential as they grow into adolescence and adulthood, they should also learn about art from more substantial experiences in school.(46) An extensive study of discipline-based art education, focusing on the works of one artist, qualifies as a substantial educational experience. Encouraged by research and discussion, students are introduced to the works of the artist and the importance of a discipline-based art program.

### 3

## **DBAE: Incorporating Audrey Flack's**

### ***Vanitas Series***

#### **Introduction**

Discipline-based art education, advocated by the Getty Institute for the Arts and The National Art Education Association, is an approach to instruction rather than a specific curriculum. According to Leilani Lattin Duke, director of the Getty Institute for the Arts, "Learning about the visual arts gives students a window into the rich and interesting world around them, teaching them about their own history and culture, as well as those of other people." In a world in which ideas and information are often delivered visually,

children need to learn how to analyze and judge the meaning of images and how to use them to communicate their own ideas.

Marjorie Cohee Manifold of the Educational Resources Information Center has written that, "The symbiotic relationship between art and culture suggests them for compatible pairing in an integrated curriculum (Manifold 1). Knowledge of both art and culture may be developed sequentially and cumulatively. Studies should be introduced at the primary level and progress through the educational experience. Knowledge of art begins with recognition of basic elements: line, color, value, shape, texture, and space. It progresses to an exploration of the principles of design: balance, emphasis, repetition, rhythm, form, and unity. The formal language of art depends upon knowledge of content. It is for this reason that the analysis of an artist's work is essential in providing a kind of knowledge that facts cannot make known.

## Relative Components of DBAE

Art historian Ann Sutherland Harris was first introduced to Audrey Flack's work at the New York Cultural Center in 1973. According to Harris, Flack's work, *Jolie Madame* (Figure 1), "...dominated the gallery with its glowing, richly-colored surface. The surface was unique and ambitious, also personal traits of Flack" (Flack 10). Harris believed the variety of Flack's subject matter was intriguing. Harris was indeed correct, as Flack's work, most notably her *vanitas* series, lends itself to further study.

An original and ambitious artist, Flack's motivational canvases are full of vivid color, historical references, and popular imagery. Art is a subject that encourages students to think critically, solve problems creatively, make evaluations, work within groups, and appreciate different points of view. These skills are particularly well-suited to a discussion of Audrey Flack's *vanitas* series.





1. *Jolie Madame*, 1972, oil on canvas, 71" x 96",  
Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

Art criticism, through the promotion of free thinking, encourages students to form their own opinions concerning works of art. Flack's canvases evoke emotion in every viewer and lend themselves easily to conversation. When a teacher has a student look at a work of art and talk about what he or she sees -- how the form is organized, feelings evoked, what the student does or does not like about the work, comparisons drawn, and questions or statements of that nature, the student begins to practice art criticism, which allows growth in perception (Brandt 2).

While going through the process of art criticism, discussing the actual production of the work can be included. For example, Flack's photorealistic work follows a precise format. Unlike most painters, Flack's works are airbrushed oil paints over an acrylic base, all on canvas. Flack began by setting up a still life and eventually capturing the image on film. Once a slide of the original photograph was produced, Flack initiated the painting process.

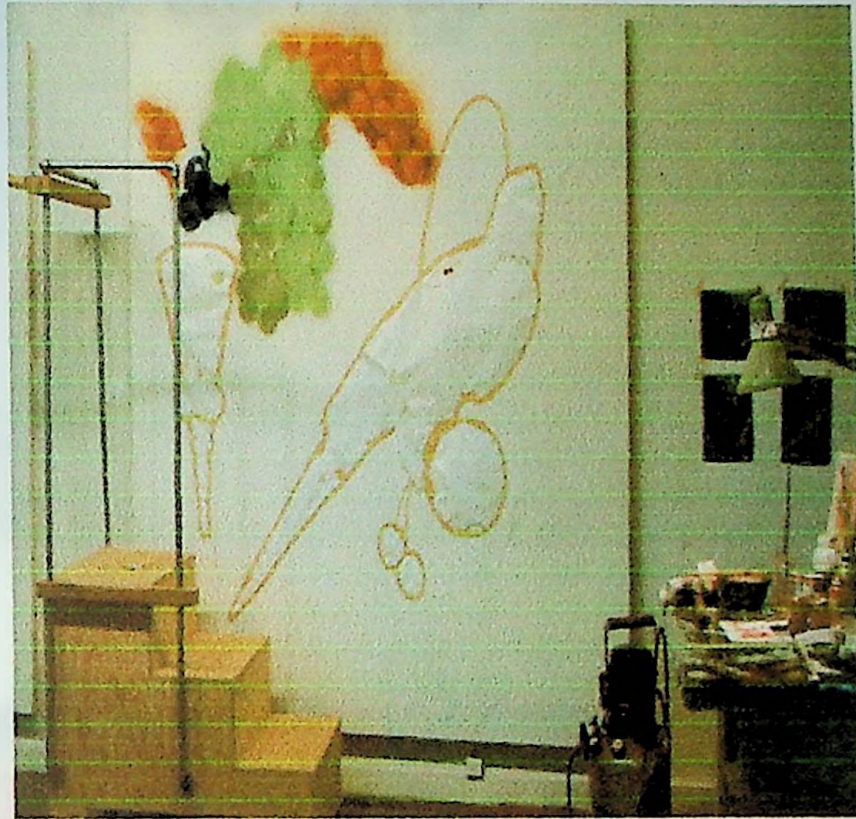
First, she would project the image onto the large canvas, masking and taping areas while concentrating on

one section of the painting. The sequence of events (Figures 2-11) is particularly intriguing and could easily be incorporated in many forms of art production. Art historically, the sequencing is unique and could expand into discussions -- not only of Flack's work -- but also about the crucial positioning of the objects, the historical significance of the images themselves, or the foundations of photography.

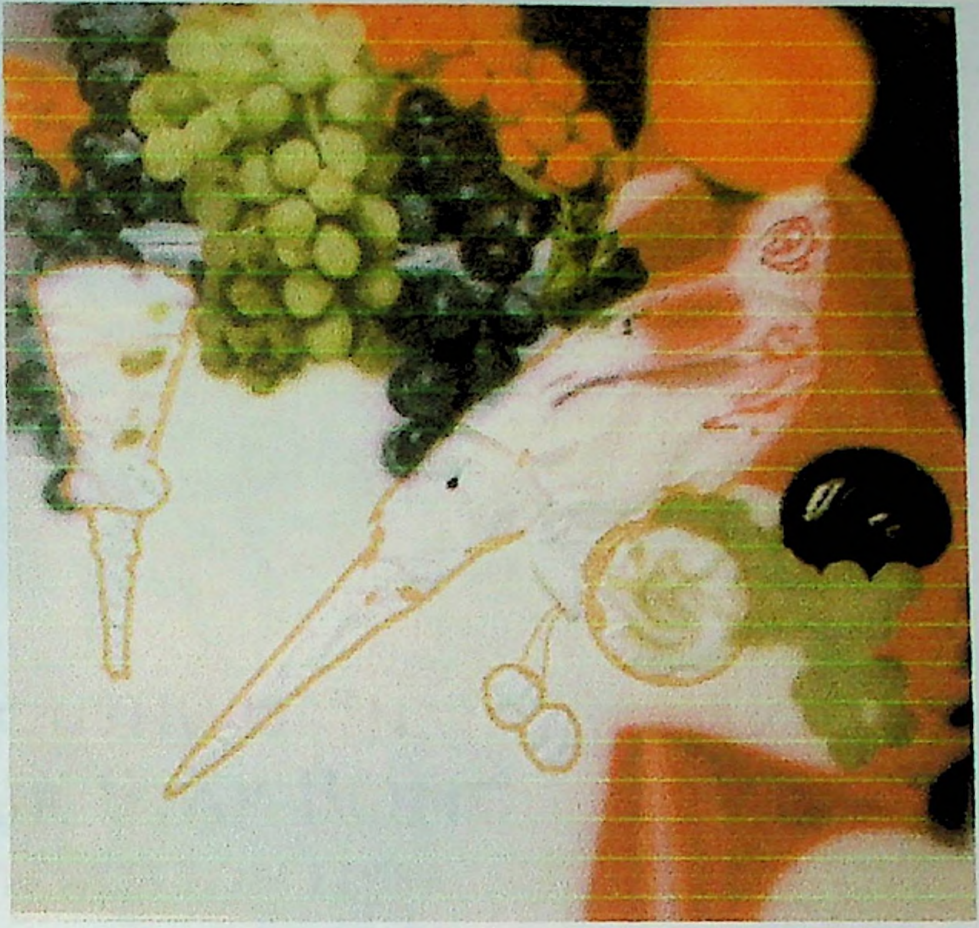


Figures 2-11 show the nine stages in the painting of *Parrots Live Forever*, with stencils masking areas of the canvas. The final piece shows the completed painting.

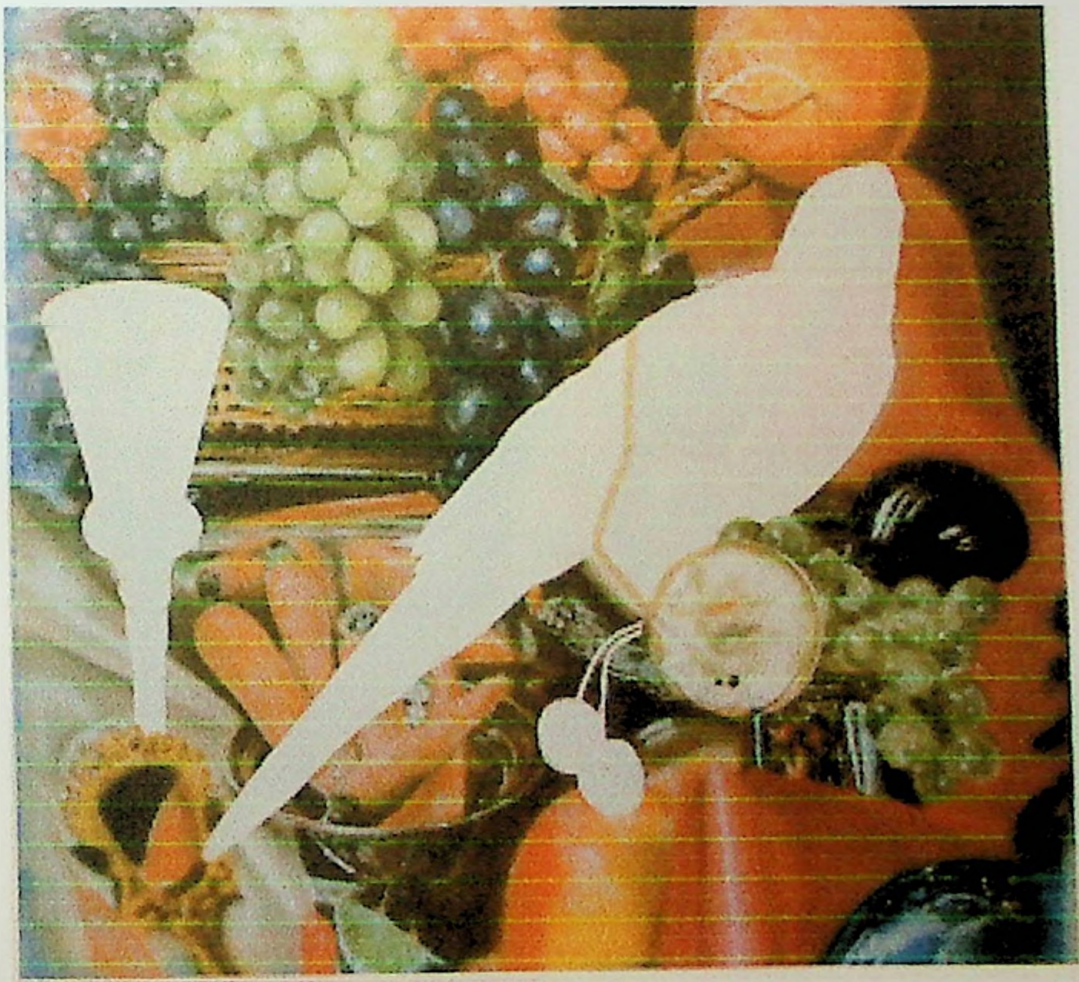
1978, Oil over acrylic on canvas, 83" x 83", National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.



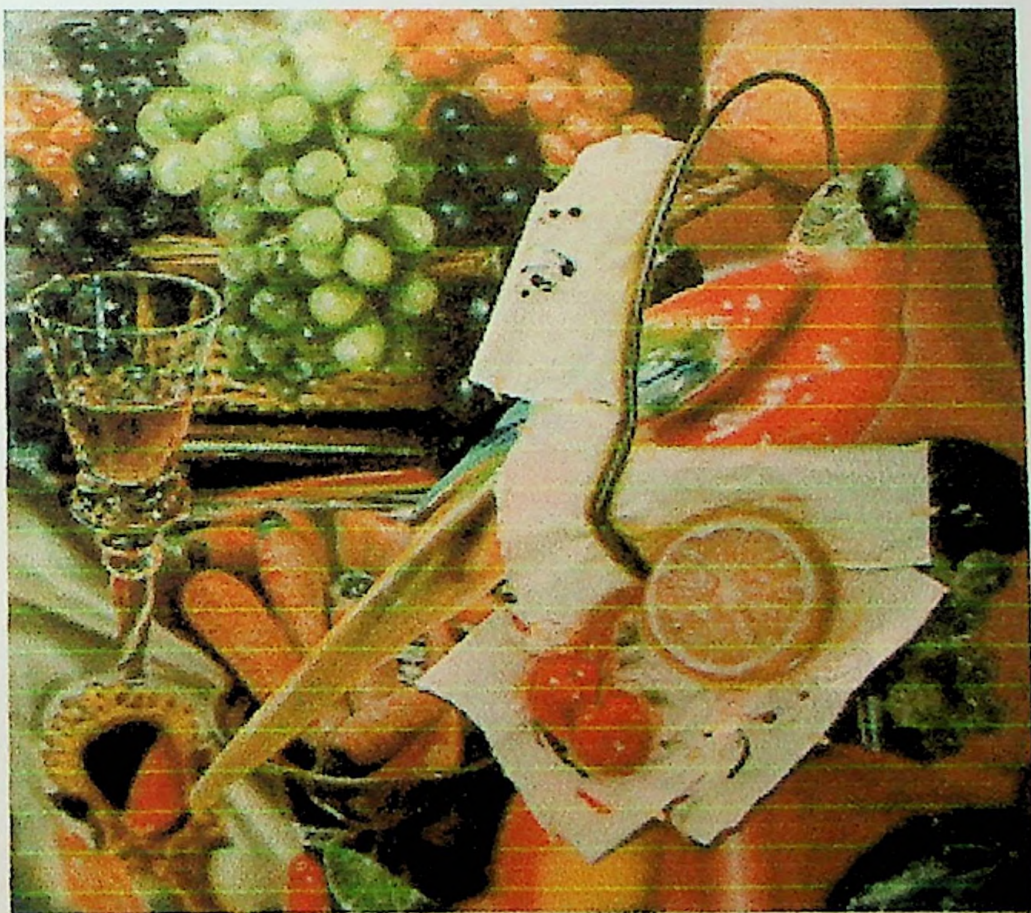
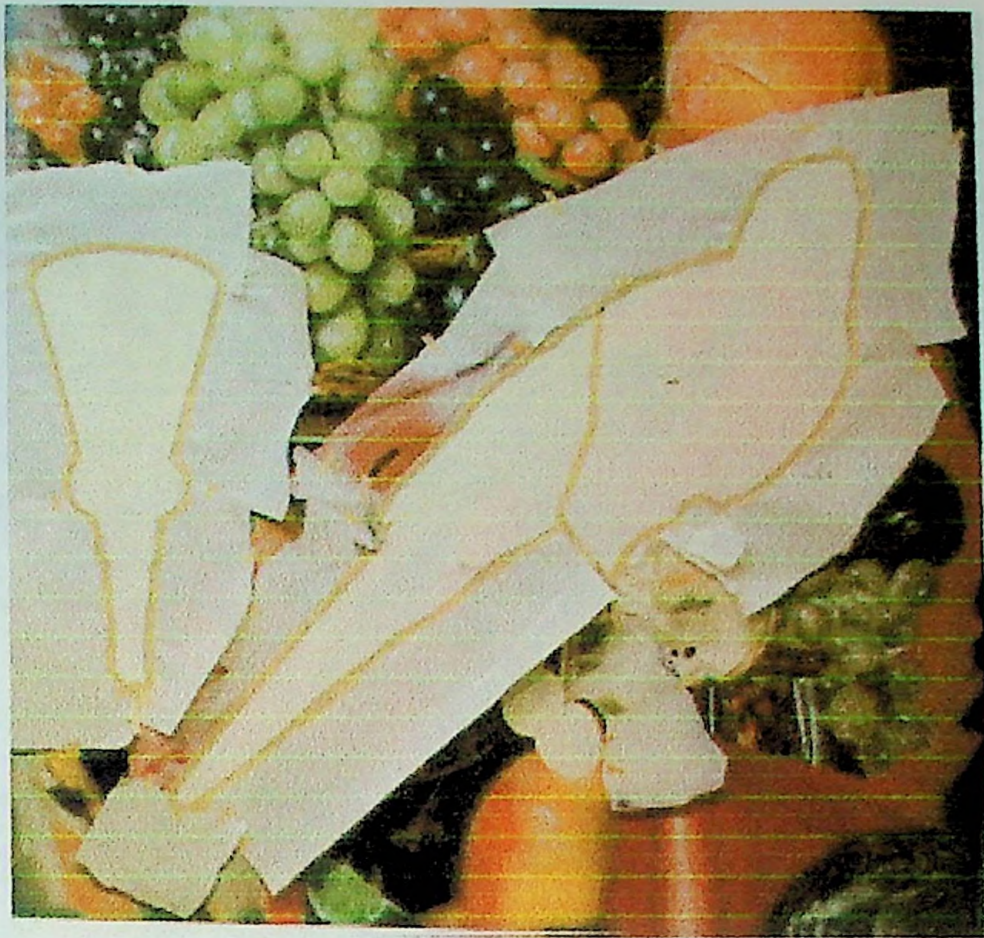




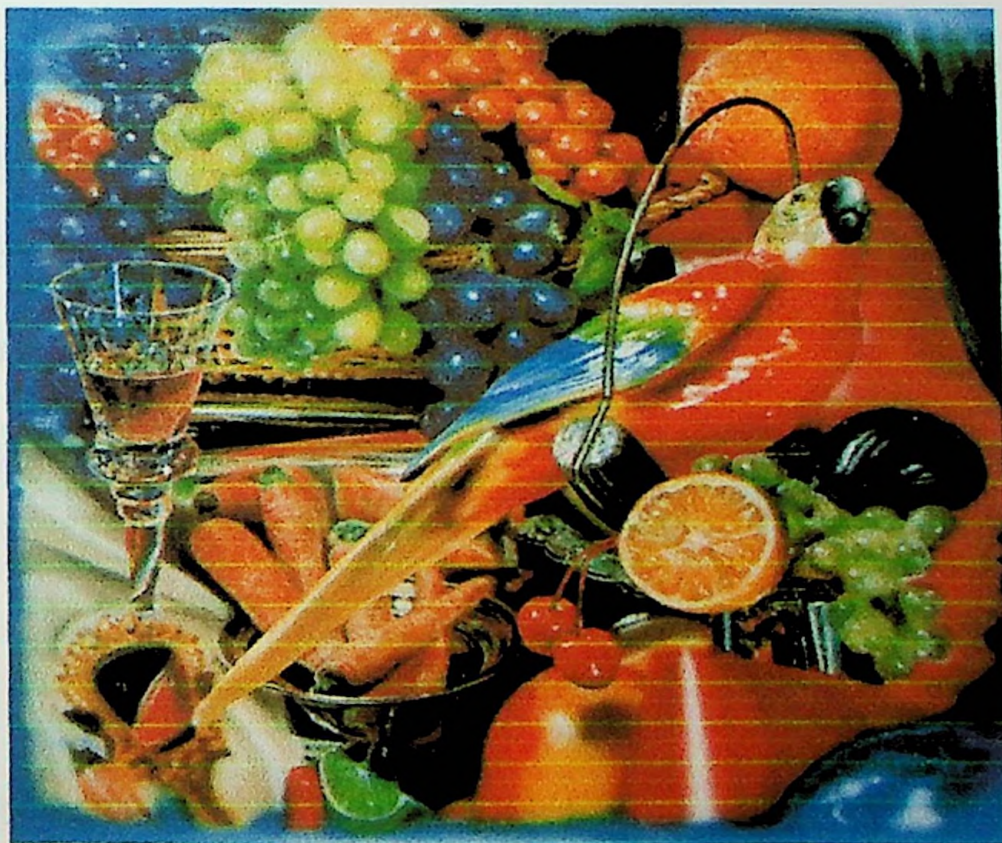
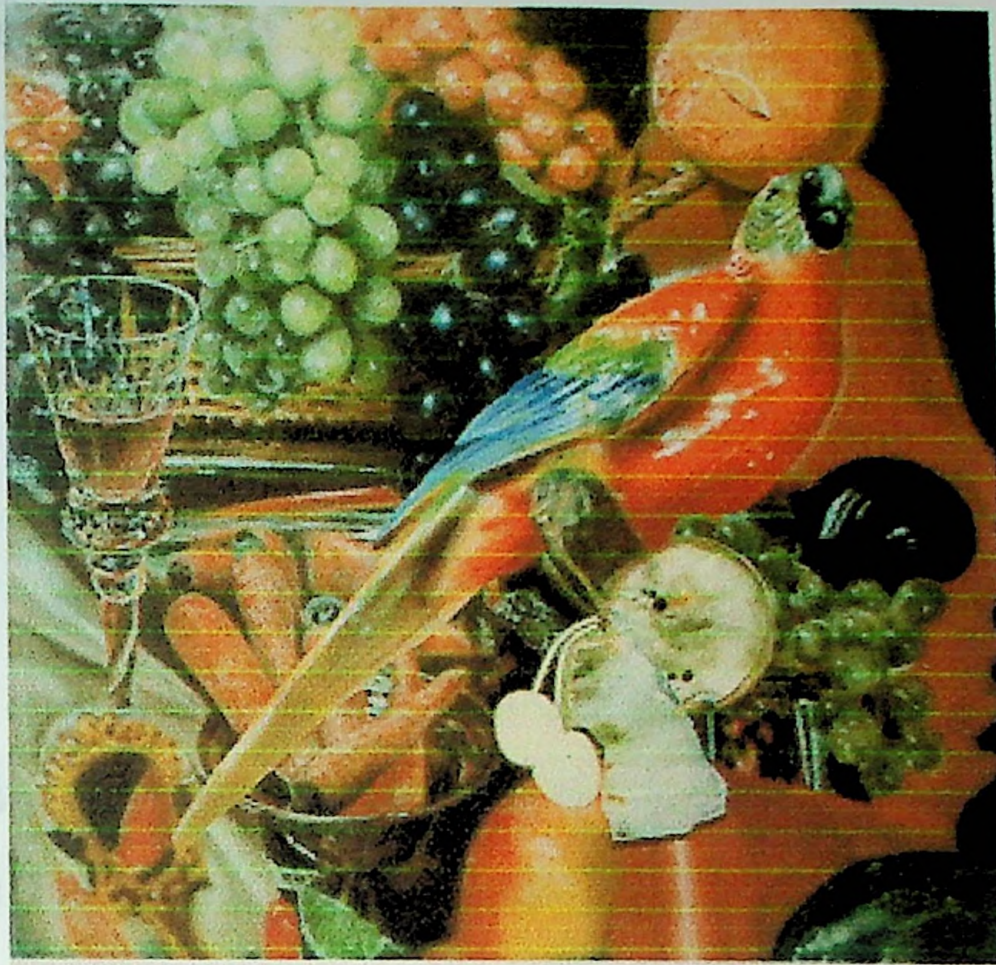














## The Context of Flack's Art

The four disciplines of DBAE are not necessarily taught separately, but as "conceptual bridges across subject matters" (Brandt 2). When students have the opportunity to study works of arts, they begin to understand how the arts have been influenced by social, political, and economic beliefs of a society. Aesthetic choices made in form and decoration may reveal philosophic or religious beliefs (Manifold 1). The components of DBAE are easily recognized through a study of Flack's *vanitas* series. Through a discussion of the series, the power and potential of art for shaping contemporary attitudes and values is recognized. Her *vanitas* series is expressive, urging and molding society as well as reflective.

## 4

# The *Vanitas* Tradition

## *Vanitas* Origins

The theme of *vanitas*, especially popular with Netherlandish artists in the seventeenth century, concerns the fragility of a world of desires and pleasures in the face of the inevitability and finality of death. *Vanitas* painting demands that aspects of the life cycle be present: life, death, fruitfulness, pleasure, and varying degrees of all components. The concept of *vanitas* is biblical, referring to the vanity of earthly possessions and comes from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the

sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever." In other words, we can all have beauty, power, wealth, and fame, but eventually, we all must die (Flack 76).

### ***Vanitas Imagery***

The *vanitas* tradition, as a distinct and separate category of still-life that emerged in the Netherlands in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, was contradictory, loaded with heavy verbal and symbolic content. By the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century an extensive emblematic vocabulary based on Italian precedents had developed in the Netherlands, giving *vanitas* associations to all sorts of actions and occurrences as well as to fruits, flowers, and other objects from daily life (Rosenberg 333). Many of the emblems or symbols were common domestic images rather than classical imagery.

A *vanitas* still-life uses the presence of traditional symbols such as the skull and other human remains. However, representation of the macabre is not enough to explain the wide popularity of the *vanitas* still-life.

*Vanitas* painting was found in Calvinist areas such as the northern Netherlands, in particular Leiden and its university, and in areas influenced by the Counter-Reformation and in 16<sup>th</sup> century symbolism and Calvinism (Rosenberg 337). *Vanitas* exemplifies - more than any other narrative or allegorical theme - the paradox of earthly life as contemplated by the growing middle class in Netherlands. There was a concern that man should not be seduced by sensual experiences, but at the same time northern theologians had begun to celebrate the blessings of God's creation, man's labors, and the extraordinary riches and beauty of the natural world. The two strands of thought were conflicting yet interrelated. It was possible to enjoy a *vanitas* still-life and simultaneously be reminded of its somber message.

*Vanitas* painters of the 17<sup>th</sup> century often added food to serve as moral "pointers." According to Schama, overblown fruit was symbolic of "early ripe, early rot," oysters of "lust," bunches of grapes held by the stem stood for both premarital chastity and marital fidelity, crabs for "side winding unchristian or irregular upbringing and behavior," and cheese, in one of its

aspects, a warning against over ripeness and decay. The imagery was meant as, "food for thought," with as much humor as solemnity involved (163).

*Vanitas* paintings encourage the viewer to think about life and its fleeting pleasures. *Vanitas* still lifes incorporate various objects to symbolize their thoughts, an hourglass, a burning candle, a skull, each signifying the passing of time. Audrey Flack made it her goal as an artist to inspire and educate her viewers.

## **Audrey Flack**

### **Biography**

Even as a child, Flack always knew she wanted to be an artist. Despite her family's lack of enthusiasm, she worked toward her dream and attended the High School of Music and Art in New York City where she won several awards. After attending Cooper Union, Flack went on to graduate from Yale University's School of Art and Architecture in 1952.

She has been honored with many awards, including a Citation and Honorary Doctorate from Cooper Union. Her canvases are in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, as well as the Whitney and Guggenheim museums. Recently, she was commissioned by New York City to sculpt the image of Queen Catherine, for whom the borough of

Queens is named.

## Career Beginnings

During the 1950's Flack was attempting to create personally satisfying art out of the Abstract Expressionistic style that influenced her work during her student days. At that time in the 50's, her idol was Jackson Pollock. She describes meeting him at the Cedar Bar, a hangout where Abstract Expressionist artists drank and talked.



*Self Portrait*, 1980, oil and crayon on paper, 32 ½" x 20", Collection R. Wesley Mutchler, Jr., Oakland, California.

He was drunk, had a stubbly beard and seemed more interested in her as a woman than as a person wanting to talk about art. He hung over her table, tried to kiss her, belched, and pinched her bottom.<sup>3</sup> She was highly

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<sup>3</sup>Jackson Pollock was renowned for such behavior (Flack 42-43).



embarrassed, fled and never returned to the Cedar Bar. She has described Pollock's behavior as typical of the macho character of the art world in general and the Abstract Expressionist artists in general (Dietrich 34).

### **Photorealistic Start**

In the 1960's Flack juggled her career with marriage and two daughters, one of whom was autistic. She began to paint compositions based on documentary photographs of political figures such as Roosevelt, Churchill, and Kennedy. Then, in 1970, she produced her first photorealistic work. At this time, Flack developed the technique of taking a slide of her subject, projecting it onto the canvas and then painting over the projected image with extensive detail. Soon, she began using an airbrush which enabled her to create a clean surface similar to a photograph's. The immaculately painted surface emphasized what was represented rather than the process of painting, in essence making the artist less visible than in works by artists like Kandinsky or Pollock.



Photorealism is concerned with the surface. How the surface becomes an illusion and how the illusion becomes the surface is paramount. Audrey Flack concerns herself with the materiality of the surface. "She has an enormous prowess for the study and execution of detail. Painting, for Flack, seems to be a religious act. She has always sought that truth, no matter what the subject matter" (Morgan 2).

Although the *vanitas* works are consistently photorealistic, they are not conventionally so, for much photorealism refuses to make a clear comment on its subject. Her canvases are full of passion and preoccupied with personal revelations and societal commentaries. Her subjects blend popular art and popular culture with less common cultural or historical references. The immediate effect of her art is stunning and her messages are always much more than the stereotypical symbols of femininity utilized in her paintings: lipsticks, jewelry, flowers. Consequently, her paintings must be read for content.

A discussion of the iconography of Flack's paintings complements a discipline-based study. Aesthetics, art

criticism, and art history can be initially incorporated by focusing on the use of the art elements and principles. By thoroughly discussing and analyzing the works of Flack, the importance of the aesthetic in her paintings and the references to the history of art encourage a deeper look at not only her series of *vanitas* but society itself.

## 6

# Flack's *Vanitas* Series

## Introduction

Through her iconography, Flack communicates with the viewer and comments on life. The *vanitas* paintings, which were Flack's point of reference, encouraged their 17<sup>th</sup> century viewers to think about the meaning and purpose of life. *Vanitas* themes have long been a favorite of still life painters who have used a variety of objects to symbolize their thoughts: an hourglass, a skull, over-ripe fruit and flowers, a burning candle or a watch, each signifying the passage of time.

Flack was deeply involved in the content of her *vanitas* paintings. Some works examined her own

definition of beauty, through the visual pleasure of bright jewels, colorful fruits, and blooming flowers. Others celebrated the sinful pleasures of food, though in such a way that the paintings also became symbols of greed. At that time, eating disorders were a prominent topic. Her *vanitas* series was very ambitious, taking on powerful moral subjects and doing so with vivid colors and pop culture imagery. Unlike her 17<sup>th</sup> century predecessors, Flack's use of bright colors contrasts the solemn images selected (skulls, clocks, food).

## **Inspiration**

Flack found inspiration for her *vanitas* paintings in the work of Dutch still life artist Maria van Oosterwyck. Flack was introduced to the work of van Oosterwyck in the important survey exhibition of 1976, "Women Artists 1550-1950," which opened at The Los Angeles County Museum. The handling of detail and use of symbolism in Oosterwyck's painting, *Vanitas* (Figure 12), challenged Flack to pursue her own series of *vanitas* paintings (Gouma-Peterson 83).





12. Maria van Oosterwyck, *Vanitas*, 1668, oil on canvas, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Inspired by the work of another artist, Flack began work on her *vanitas* series. Once involved in the series, she began to recognize the importance of the tradition, incorporating art historical imagery and the aesthetic beauty of photorealism into her own version of the *vanitas*. Flack, who had become an active feminist, celebrated her womanly self in many of the compositions, which were also symbolic meditations on life, death, luck, the position of women, and the hope for transcendence through art (Gouma-Peterson 36).

Flack used both old and new ways to communicate her views on life. According to Flack, the modernist attitude is that the public must be educated to understand art. Intimidated, viewers do not have faith in their ability to tell good art from bad, whether it be abstract or realistic, and they have accepted their "ignorance" as fact (62). It is an art educator's duty to change this trend. By introducing students to art, encouraging their responses, creativity, and study we are building faith in our students and trust in themselves.

## **Marilyn**

Flack used canvas to comment on the materialism of contemporary American society. They were symbolic of life, death, and the position of women at that time. For example, in *Marilyn* (Figure 13) Flack identified herself with the movie star Marilyn Monroe and included in the painting an early photograph of herself with her brother juxtaposed among images of Marilyn Monroe, a powder puff, lipstick, pears and roses, symbols of time (a candle and hourglass) and a paintbrush dripping red paint (Gouma-Peterson 78). Also included is a book, which is open to the page that describes the moment Monroe realized that her beauty could win her love and fame.

*About four or five months after she moved into the orphanage, she fell into a depressed mood.*

*On the way back from school, she slipped away from the line and fled. She didn't know where she was running to and wandered aimlessly in the*

slashing rainstorm. A policeman found her and took her to a police station. She was brought back to Mrs. Dewey's office. She was changed into dry clothes. She expected to be beaten. Instead, Mrs. Dewey took her in her arms and told her she was pretty. Then she powdered Norma Jean's nose and chin with a powder puff.

In 1950, Marilyn told the story of the powder puff to Sonia Wolfson, a publicity woman at 20<sup>th</sup>

Century Fox and then confided, "This was the first time in my life I felt loved - no one had ever noticed my face or hair or me before."

Let us assume it even happened in some fashion. For it gives a glimpse as the powder goes on and the mirror comes up of a future artist conceiving a grand Scheme in the illumination of an instant - one could paint oneself into an instrument of one's will!"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>From Maurice Zolotow's Marilyn Monroe





13. *Marilyn*, 1977, oil and acrylic over canvas, 96" x 96", University of Arizona Art Museum, Tucson, Arizona.



Although the painting is entitled Marilyn, the representation of the actress is "Norma Jean," the girl who would become the screen siren Monroe. For instance, her hair is soft and flowing, not the platinum blond of Monroe fame. The image is of Monroe as a young woman before she "painted" herself into fame. She is surrounded by the tools of her trade, rouge jars and the powder puff crowning her head (Flack 84).



The Artist with Marilyn

To the left of her beauty queen's crown is open, decaying fruit, signifying the passage of time, over-ripe, and fecund. The peach forms an erotic, open pit while the orange is beginning to shrivel and decay is sitting in. Both the orange and opened peach relate well to traditional vanitas imagery -- open fruit was symbolic of, "early

ripe, early rot" (Schama 162). The fruits and their symbolism are direct emblematic comments on the life and death of Marilyn Monroe.

A calendar page rests at the top of the painting, featuring the month of August, the month in which Monroe died. To the left of the calendar is a bubble gum pink rose, open and delicate, perched over the book and placed beside a deep violet sheet. Violet is a traditionally healing, majestic color, and the bubble gum pink rose suggests youthfulness, girlishness, and love.

Marilyn "painted"<sup>5</sup> herself into fame and succeeded. She exposed a fragile humanity with which everyone identified and, as a result, became an iconic figure. Flack, on the other hand, painted a number of works of art to comment on femininity. Flack's Marilyn is surrounded by objects of femininity which belonged to Flack and were "tools of the trade" for Marilyn. Flack's still life of Marilyn is elaborate, colorful, and displays an image of the young Marilyn, but most likely it is meant to comment on her status as a victim of the media.

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<sup>5</sup>In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a "painted woman" or "woman who paints" was a prostitute.

## **Wheel of Fortune**

In Wheel of Fortune (Figure 14) death becomes the overt focus and is represented by a skull. Traditional vanitas imagery, the skull is reflected in the oval mirror to the left of the painting. Most interesting, the reflected image of the small hand mirror is a rainbow, signifying the beyond or afterlife. The artist herself is reflected in the crystal ball.

Bright, red-orange grapes are displayed at the top of the painting. According to Flack, she was insistent about the color of the grapes and had difficulty finding the exact shade she wanted. A year after working on Wheel of Fortune, while visiting an Edvard Munch exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, Flack stopped sharply in front of a painting which held that exact color. The picture was called, The Smell of Death. Munch had sought the same shade and for the same associative powers (Flack 90).





used the poem as a source of strength. It reads as

14. *Wheel of Fortune*, 1976-77, oil over acrylic on canvas, 96" x 96", Louis K. Meisel Gallery.

Also included in Wheel of Fortune are a tarot card, an hourglass, a crystal ball with the artist's reflection, beads, grapes, and an image of Flack's autistic daughter. She also utilized traditional indicators of time, the hourglass and burning candle. The tarot card refers to fate and the path we are to follow. The tarot card is most closely related to the artist's daughter, Melissa who was "dealt" a life with autism.

According to Flack(89), Wheel of Fortune is the most personal of all her vanitas paintings. It confronts aspects of her life, most notably the personal tragedy of her autistic daughter Melissa. It is for these reasons that the artist has spoken very little about the painting. The work is meant to represent the duality of life: the "luck" you draw and the fate you control.

Inspiration for Wheel of Fortune and many of Flack's vanitas paintings came from the poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley. She memorized it as a teen and used the poem as a source of strength. It reads as follows:



Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the full clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud,  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul.

## World War II

Flack's vanitas works were personal and concerned with private matters. However, they also commented on public life and what was occurring at that time. In the middle of the 1970s, Vietnam and political discord, she turned to vanitas themes in protest of death and the glorification of war, perhaps most successfully realized in the painting World War II (Figure 15). In her book, Audrey Flack on Painting, Flack described the day she and the photographer Jeanne Hamilton shot the initial photograph for the painting. "...the hot lights began to affect the candle. I looked through my lens and exclaimed to Jeanne, 'My God, the candle is bleeding.' The tilt we had given the candle made the red wax drip all over the book and it looked very much like blood. At one point the shape of the melted wax looked like Hebrew letters. The candle was burning down rapidly and we shot at breakneck speed, it was an alive and exciting time" (Flack 81).





15. *World War II*, 1976-77, oil over acrylic on canvas, 96" x 96", Artist's collection.

Flack created a work of violent contrasts, of good and evil. The inmates are painted in black and white, colors associated with prison attire. The use of black and white also contrasts sharply to the vivid colors of the still life objects, emphasizing sadness and despair.

Another striking contrast is achieved by placing sickeningly sweet pastries next to the images of the gaunt prisoners. The silver dish with its floral repousse work, flowing pearls, and pastries are materialistic pleasures of contemporary life -- the vanity of the vanitas. The contrast of the pastries and concentration camp victims was meant to raise consciousness and guilt. Did WWII deprive anyone of such delicacies? Do we not continue to eat lavishly while others are starving in the world? Flack shows the objects wrapped in a red drape, which is the traditional color of fire or blood. The pocket watch reads a few minutes before twelve, or the "final hour." The blue jar represents the cup of sorrows, reflecting the prisoners in abstract distortions in its silver cover (Flack 81). The large, blue butterfly is a symbol of the liberation



of the soul, like the Holy Ghost or dove of Christ.<sup>6</sup> In relation to the butterfly, the photograph of the prisoners<sup>7</sup> was taken before they were released or "liberated" from the concentration camp.

As in Marilyn, Flack included a passage of text in World War II. It too, was as powerful as the imagery and served as the source of inspiration and reflection. Written by Roman Vishniac<sup>8</sup>, it is a key element of the painting.



The Artist with WWII

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<sup>6</sup> Flack later read that hundreds of butterflies alighted on Auschwitz years after the Holocaust (Flack 81).

<sup>7</sup> Original photograph was taken by Margaret Bourke-White when the prisoners were about to be liberated from the concentration camp at Buchenwald (Flack 80).

<sup>8</sup> *Polish Jews*, New York, Schocken Books, 1976.

Outwardly they may have looked plagued by the misery and humiliation in which they lived, but inwardly they bore the rich sorrow of the world and the noble vision of redemption for all men and all beings. For man is not alone in the world. "Despair does not exist at all," said Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, a hasidic leader. "Do not fear, dear child, God is with you, in you, around you. Even in the Nethermost Pit one can try to come closer to God." The word "bad" never came to their lips. Disaster did not frighten them. "You can take everything from me - the pillow from under my head, my house - but you cannot take God from my heart."

World War II was meant to contrast beauty and horror. The roses, pearls, and pieces of fruit were part of Flack's contemporary vanitas vocabulary. The prisoners with their gaunt faces and mournful eyes contrast greatly

the colorful objects and luscious foods, luxuries giving fleeting pleasures. By using such ironic images and strong colors Flack overwhelms the viewer with contrast.

World War II features a border, which is unique to Flack's vanitas series. According to the artist, "...the mathematical proportion of each two of the rainbow-colored stripes equals one green. The rainbow border signifies all that is beyond the spheres, the afterlife, the refraction of all light and knowledge. The black border signifies the enclosure of the present and the expansion outside space and time, a memoriam" (Flack 81).

Flack used color as brilliant as Kodachrome film in order to reach a contemporary audience. Many felt the powerful colors were upsetting when used with the Bourke-White photo, but Flack wanted to contrast the horror of the situation without realistically painting the prisoners' actual mutilations. If those colors had been used, the horror would have been too strong (Flack 81). By approaching the image with powerful colors and juxtapositions, Flack succeeded in telling a story, the ultimate breakdown of humanity and the existence of pure evil as well as the existence of the beautiful.

## **Time to Save**

Time to Save (Figure 16), is a vanitas flower painting. The title for Time to Save comes from a clock in the painting which is not just a clock but a bank as well. The bank suggests that it is "time to save" money. The bank is also a clock, which reminds viewers that life is short, and time is passing by rapidly. An irony is presented - does anyone really have, "time to save?" Flack has relayed the (literal) impossibility of saving time through the use of one still life object - the clock/bank. Once again she has fused traditional vanitas imagery, a clock or timepiece, with popular culture, the mini-bank, and formed a new vocabulary.

Resting on the clock, at a strange angle, is an hourglass, the age-old symbol of passing time. A skull is also present in the bottom left, an overt symbol of the presence of death. However, unlike the skull in Wheel of Fortune, the skull in Time to Save is miniature in size and does not dominate the painting. Time is an essential concept in the painting, as in all vanitas paintings, but in Time to Save, death or the presence of





16. *Time to Save*, 1979, oil over acrylic on canvas, 80" x 64", Artist's collection.



death is not as powerfully stated as in Flack's other vanitas paintings.

The flower arrangement comes to a peak at the center top of the canvas, where a butterfly (again indicating the symbol of liberation of the soul) is about to fly away. A bird, an ancient symbol of the soul, is perched on a crystal dish filled with fruits. The mixture of natural, traditional, and manufactured objects encompasses a broad spectrum of society, reminding all that it is, "time to save."

## **Bounty**

Bounty (Figure 17) probes into the nature of reality by displaying both artificial and real objects. A large parrot which appears to be made of plastic is contrasted with a lemon so juicy it looks real. Some questions arise: Which objects are real? Which are artificial? And, because they are all illusionary, does it really matter?





17. *Bounty*, oil over acrylic on canvas, 96" x 96",  
Reynolda House, Museum of American Art, Winston-  
Salem, North Carolina.



In the ripe, hovering fruits (grapes, lemon, cherries) and the decaying, carrots, Flack represents the stages of life from maturity (ripeness) to old age (decay). The painting also contains traditional symbols of vanitas, for the half-filled wine glass can be emptied and the candle flame can be extinguished without warning, like death's ability to strike without warning. Unique to Bounty, this mirror reflects nothing. Once again, Flack has established a strong protest against the tragedy of too brief an existence.

## **Conclusion**

Flack has reached a broad audience by stating her message in her own terms. Illusionistic imagery juxtaposed with classic vanitas objects lures an audience that more subtle approaches might touch less profoundly. Flack used objects of popular culture to empower and inform, while challenging the definition of good taste and beauty.

Great art does not always have to be aesthetically pleasing or comforting. Flack is an important artist

because her work is disturbing, reaching simultaneously to stir our emotional response and rational understanding. Her vanitas series evolved compositionally and thematically, speaking to the viewer on many levels. She discovered her own icons, infused them with images of the past, and created a new artistic vision that was both personal and universal.

## Conclusion

### Summary

As stated earlier, studying art encourages children to think critically, solve problems creatively, make evaluations, work within groups, and appreciate different points of views. Audrey Flack's vanitas series serves well as a basis for discussion of these skills.

An ambitious and intriguing artist, her canvases are full of vivid colors, historical references, and popular imagery. The components of DBAE: art history, art criticism, art production, and aesthetics were easily recognized throughout the analysis of Flack's series. A student's understanding of the meaning of art increases when a student experiences working with the materials and processes that artists use to create art. Understanding

also broadens with knowledge of when and where the work was made, the process(es) involved, the artist's techniques, the function it serves, and what experts have said about it. This is a discipline-based approach to art education, the same approach used in the analyzation of Flack's vanitas series.

### **Implications of Study**

Understanding a work of art empowers a viewer to accept, reject or transform its message. In a world in which ideas and information are often delivered visually, students need to learn, through the implementation of DBAE, how to analyze and judge the meaning of images and how to use them to communicate their own ideas. Controversies concerning censorship, which voices will be heard, the appropriateness of funding, even questions of what does or does not constitute art are ongoing issues that require response from a visually literate, critically thoughtful society, a society aware of the importance of art.

# HOW THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ART EDUCATION ARE ORGANIZED

## APPENDICES

## **HOW THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ART EDUCATION ARE ORGANIZED**

Teachers, policymakers, and students all need explicit statements of the results expected from an arts education, not only for pedagogical reasons, but to be able to allocate instructional resources and to provide a basis for assessing student achievement and progress. Because the largest groups using the Standards will be teachers and educational administrators, the most sensible sequence for presenting the Standards is by grade level: Grades K-4, Grades 5-8, and Grades 9-12. Individual standards should be understood as a statement of what students should know and be able to do. They may, of course, acquire the competency at any time within the specified period, but they will be expected to have acquired it before they move on. Within each grade-level cluster, the Standards are organized by arts discipline: Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts. Presented within each of the disciplines are the specific competencies that the arts education community, nationwide, believes art essential for every subject. Although the statement

of any specific competency in any of the arts disciplines necessarily focuses on one part of that discipline, the standards stress that all the competencies are interdependent.

The division of the Standards into special competencies does not indicate that each is - or should be -- given the same weight, time, or emphasis at any point in the K-12 sequence, or over the student's entire school career. The mixture and balance will vary with grade level, by course, by instructional unit, and from school to school. The Standards encourage a relationship between breadth and depth so that neither overshadows the other. They are intended to create a vision for learning, not a standardized instructional system. Two different types of standards are used to guide student assessment in each of the competence areas: Content standards specify what students should know and be able to do in the arts disciplines. Achievement standards specify the understandings and levels of achievement that students are expected to attain in the competencies, for each of the arts, at the completion of grades 4, 8, and 12. A



number of achievement standards are described for each content standard. In grades 9-12, two levels of achievement standards -- "Proficient" and "Advanced" -- are offered for each of the arts disciplines. Several standards may be offered in each of these two categories. In grades 9-12, the "Advanced" level of achievement is more likely to be attained by students who have elected specialized courses in the particular arts discipline than by students who have not. All students, however, are expected to achieve at the "Proficient" level in at least one art.

## **WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO IN THE ARTS**

There are many routes to competence in the arts disciplines. Students may work in different arts at different times. Their study may take a variety of approaches. Their abilities may develop at different rates. Competence means the ability to use an array of knowledge and skills. Terms often used to describe these include creation, performance, production, history, culture, perception, aesthetics, technology, and appreciation. Competence means capabilities with these elements themselves and an understanding of their interdependence; it also means the ability to combine the content, perspectives, and techniques associated with the various elements to achieve specific artistic and analytical goals. Students work toward comprehensive competence from the very beginning, preparing in the lower grades for deeper and more rigorous work each succeeding year. As a result, the joy of experiencing the arts is enriched and matured by the discipline of

learning and the pride of accomplishment. Essentially, the Standards ask that students should know and be able to do the following by the time they have completed secondary school:

\*They should be able to communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines --dance, music, theater, and the visual arts. This includes knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabularies, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of each arts discipline.

\*They should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.

\*They should be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives, and from combinations of those perspectives. This includes the ability to understand and evaluate work in the various arts disciplines.

\*They should have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and

historical periods, and a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines, across the arts as a whole, and within cultures.

\*They should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines. This includes mixing and matching competencies and understandings in art-making, history and culture, and analysis in any arts-related project.

As a result of developing these capabilities, students can arrive at their own knowledge, beliefs, and values for making personal and artistic decisions. In other terms, they can arrive at a broad-based, well-grounded understanding of the nature, value, and meaning of the arts as a part of their own humanity.

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