The Cold War in American: Works from the 1950’s – 1970’s, Selections from the Art Museum Collection

PURPOSE OF THIS PACKET:
To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the UW Art Museum (UAM) exhibition and suggested age appropriate applications for exploring the concepts, meaning, and artistic intent of the work exhibited, before, during, and after the museum visit.

CURRICULAR UNIT TOPIC:
Teachers and students examine the dynamic development of art during the political, emotional, and cultural upheavals of the Cold War. The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to observe, question, explore, create and reflect.

EXPLORE:
They will explore the cultural and political extremes that typified the Cold War period. They will be encouraged to research vocabulary words and related aspects of the exhibit.

CREATE:
Students will be given time to practice sketching and drawing, and may create their own paintings or prints, reflecting the style of the artwork on exhibit, including Abstract Expressionism, Color Field Painting, Pop Art and Minimalism. Work on art projects may occur either in the UWAM Shelton Studio or in their school art room.

OBSERVE:
Students will observe the work of several premier Cold War Era artists. They will look closely at paintings and prints, exploring the ideas and themes presented and the artistic qualities of the work: the colors used; the shapes and lines of the paintings; subject matter; style and techniques.

QUESTION:
Students will have an opportunity to read, write, sketch, and listen to teachers and museum educators, and then, to come up with questions about the work they see, the political and social context and the concepts behind the art work and the artists who created it. Students will question the materials and techniques used and their own responses to the art work in the exhibition.

REFLECT:
Students will evaluate their final art products with other students from their classes and with teachers and museum educators. They will receive feedback on the art work and the concepts behind the making of the art work. After this process, each person may write an essay about their art, the artist, or their museum experience.
INTRODUCTION

The end of World War II in 1945 did not mean the end of war as we know it; rather, it marked the beginning of a new type of discord – the Cold War. This ongoing state of political conflict, military tension, and economic competition continued primarily between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although the two military powers never officially fought, the conflict was expressed through military coalitions, strategic military deployments, espionage, propaganda, technological and cultural competitions, and most significantly, the development of the nuclear arms race.

This period in American history was shaped by conflict, and the public’s preoccupation with the Cold War began to influence American society. In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, the United States saw the rise of the Civil Rights movement, student protests against the Vietnam War, the assassinations of Civil Rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy, the sexual revolution, and the creation of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The American art world during the second half of the 20th Century became a reflection of national and international crises. Artists had a defining role in addressing and reacting to these issues and reaching a new level of engagement with the world.

Abstract Expressionism, Color Field painting, Pop Art, and Minimalism came of age during the Cold War period, representing a radically new engagement with materials and space, redefining the role and purpose of art. Abstract Expressionism became the first uniquely American art movement to gain worldwide recognition. Although Abstract Expressionism shares many stylistic similarities to Russian counterparts of the early 20th century, the American artists, such as Willem de Kooning and James Brooks, based their work on the pure expression of ideas relating to the spiritual, the unconscious, and the mind. Many of the Russian artists’ work involved careful planning to give the impression of spontaneity.

Closely related to Abstract Expressionism, Color Field painting is characterized by large fields of flat, solid color creating areas of unbroken surface and a flat picture plane, placing the emphasis on constancy of the form and process, rather than the gesture and movement of Abstract Expressionism. Artists such as Robert Motherwell are considered to belong to both movements. Conversely, the development of Pop Art in the United States is considered a reaction to Abstract Expressionism and artists such as Robert Indiana and Andy Warhol defined the movement through parody of the mass-produced imagery of advertising that American society was subjected to on a daily basis through sophisticated product labeling and logos.

At the same time, artists continued to produce representational and figurative works in the midst of the abstract movement. The subjects of these artists, including the work of Alice Neel, were portraits
The emotional upheaval, tension, and the unknown caused by conflict of the Cold War and its affect on American society became the muse for artistic development during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s in the United States. It was this atmosphere that allowed Abstract Expressionism, Color Field painting, Pop Art, and Minimalism to set the stage for the United States to become the new center of the art world.

COLD WAR TIMELINE

1946
- Winston Churchill warns of the descent of an Iron Curtain across Europe, marking the beginning of the Cold War.
- A group of abstract Modernist artists known as the Abstract Expressionist or New York School emerge.

1947
- President Harry Truman asks the Congress for $400 million for military and economic assistance to support free peoples in Europe and contain the spread of communism. The Truman Doctrine marked the end of America's longstanding policy of isolationism.
- Secretary of State George C. Marshall issues a call for a wide-ranging program to rebuild Europe. Pressured by the fear of communist expansion and the rapid deterioration of European economies, Congress passes the Economic Cooperation Act and approves financial support for the rebuilding of Western Europe. The Marshall Plan has been recognized as a great humanitarian effort and Secretary of State Marshall received a Nobel Peace Prize.

1948
- Truman signs the Marshall Plan into effect. By the end of the program, funding would rise to more than $12 billion.

1949
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is founded.
- The Soviet Union tests its first atomic bomb. The test succeeds, and the Soviet Union becomes the world's second nuclear power.
- Mao Zedong announces the founding of the People's Republic of China.
- Under Soviet direction the founding of the German Democratic Republic was proclaimed. The USA and most other countries did not recognize the G.D.R. until a series of agreements in 1972-73.

1950
- President Harry S. Truman initiates a crash program to develop the hydrogen bomb.
- At a Republican women's club Senator Joseph McCarthy claims that the U.S. State Department has been infiltrated by Communist spies. During the Red Scare of the 1950s, the House of Un-American Activities Committee will persecute suspected Communist Party members, among those of blacklisted are Arthur Miller, Lena Horne and Paul Robeson.
- North Korea invades South Korea, the beginning of the Korean War. Under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur, the United Nations Command joins the fight with U.S. troops.
- Levittown is built on Long Island, and 17,400 homes go up for sale: the development is nicknamed “Fertility Valley” and the “Rabbit Hutch” because of the rapid growth.
- Approximately 9% of U.S. homes have television sets.

1951
- Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are convicted of espionage for their role in passing atomic secrets to the Soviets during and after World War II. They are executed by electric chair in 1953.
1952
- I Love Lucy premieres on TV.
- The United Kingdom successfully tests its atomic bomb. The test makes the UK the world's third nuclear power.
- The first Holiday Inn is opened in Memphis.
- Dwight D. Eisenhower, the former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II, is elected the 34th president.
- The first successful test of the hydrogen bomb is conducted near the Marshall Islands.
- Sun Records is opened in Memphis. By mid-1950's it released records with a fusion of black and country music, such as Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.
- John Clellon Holmes uses the term “Beat Generation” in his article “This is the Beat Generation.”

1953
- Arthur Miller’s The Crucible, which uses the Salem witch trials as a metaphor for McCarthy’s communist “witch hunts,” is first performed on Broadway.
- The Korean War truce is signed in Panmunjom. During two and a half years of fighting, more than 54,000 American soldiers died and 103,000 were wounded.
- Joseph Stalin dies; he is succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev who is named First Secretary of the USSR.
- The CIA, in a covert operation, helps to overthrow the Iranian government.
- Ian Fleming’s Casino Royale, the first James Bond book, is published.

1954
- French troops pull out of Vietnam
- Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision bans racial segregation in the nation's schools.
- The CIA instigates a coup in Guatemala to stop the spread of communism in Latin America.
- More than one-half of U.S. homes have television sets (an estimated 26 million)

1955
- U.S. begins sending foreign aid to the southern-based Republic of Vietnam.
- Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine is introduced to the public.
- The Mickey Mouse Club and The Ed Sullivan Show premiere on TV.
- The Warsaw Pact is founded; it is organized as military support of Soviet interests in Central and Eastern European countries.

1956
- The Southern Manifesto, which opposes integration, is signed by congressmen from Southern States.
- Elvis records Heartbreak Hotel.
- The Federal Highway Act of 1956 authorizes construction of the interstate highway system.
- Dwight D. Eisenhower is reelected president.
- Suez Crisis: France, Israel, and the United Kingdom attack Egypt with the goal of removing Nasser from power.

1957
- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is founded by Martin Luther King Jr. (its first president), Charles K. Steele, and Fred Shuttlesworth. It becomes a major force in organizing the civil rights movement and advocating nonviolent civil disobedience.
- Leonard Bernstein’s West Side Story premiers on Broadway.
- Though the school board had voted unanimously to begin desegregating the public schools, nine black students are blocked from entering Little Rock’s Central High School by Governor Orval Faubus. President Eisenhower sends federal troops to Little Rock to enforce desegregation.
- The USSR launches Sputnik, marking the start
of the space age and the U.S.-U.S.S.R space race.

- Jack Kerouac’s On the Road is published.

1958

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is created.
- Alan Kaprow initiates “Happenings”
- The first domestic jet airline passenger service begins operations between New York City and Miami.

1959

- The forces of revolutionary leader Fidel Castro enter Havana; Castro becomes prime minister of the revolutionary government.
- The Barbie doll made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York.
- The Twilight Zone premieres on TV.
- Alaska and Hawaii become the 49th and 50th states.
- The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, opens in New York.
- Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and U.S. Vice President Richard M. Nixon openly debate the capacities of each superpower at the opening of the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow.

1960

- Harper Lee’s novel To Kill a Mockingbird is published.
- U.S. Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in public transportation is illegal (Boynton vs. Virginia).
- John F. Kennedy is narrowly elected over Richard Nixon as the 35th president.
- Approximately 87% of U.S. homes have television sets.

1961

- The Berlin Wall is built in East-Germany.
- The Peace Corps is created by President Kennedy.
- A U.S.-backed group of 1,300 Cuban exiles lands at the Bay of Pigs, in Cuba, in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro.

1962

- The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) sends student volunteers on bus trips throughout the South, which are labeled Freedom Rides.
- The Soviet Union detonates the Tsar Bomba, the largest nuclear weapon ever constructed or detonated, with an explosive yield of some 50 megatons.
- Cuban Missile Crisis: The Soviets have secretly been installing military bases, including nuclear weapons. Kennedy orders a “quarantine” of the island that intensifies the crisis and brings the US and the USSR to
the brink of nuclear war. These 13 days are regarded as the one moment when the cold war came close to escalating to nuclear war.

- John Glenn becomes the first astronaut to orbit the earth.
- Marilyn Monroe dies of a drug overdose.
- James Meredith is denied admission to the University of Mississippi as the first black student. Violence surrounding the incident leads President Kennedy to send 5,000 federal troops.

1963

- Publication of Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique.
- Martin Luther King Jr. is arrested during antisegregation protests in Birmingham, Alabama and he writes his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” arguing that individuals have a moral duty to disobey unjust laws.
- Martin Luther King Jr. makes his “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington.
- Assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas; Lyndon B. Johnson becomes president.

1964

- Lyndon B. Johnson is elected the 36th president.
- Martin Luther King Jr. is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination of all kinds based on race, color, religion, or national origin.
- Leonid Brezhnev succeeds Khrushchev to become General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- China tests its first atomic bomb making China the world’s fifth nuclear power.

1965

- Malcolm X, a founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is assassinated in New York City.
- President Johnson issues Executive order 11246, which enforces affirmative action in all aspects of hiring and employment.
- Operation Rolling Thunder begins large-scale bombing of North Vietnam.
- The first U.S. combat troops are sent to Vietnam (by July, troops will increase from 75,000 to 125,000)
- Founding of National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities is legislated.
- The Rolling Stones releases “Satisfaction.”

1966

- An unmanned United States spacecraft landed on the Moon.
- U.S. troops in Vietnam exceed 184,000.
- International Day of Protest against the Vietnam War; the largest gathering draws 25,000 people in New York City.
- The National Organization for Women (NOW) is founded.
- The Black Panthers are founded in Oakland, California.
- Ronald Reagan is elected governor of California and vows to crack down on antiwar protests.
- Time’s “Man of the Year” award goes to the “Young Generation,” the man—and woman—of 25 and under.
- Simon & Garfunkel, the Mamas and the Papas and the Rolling Stones top the charts.

1967

- Counterculture leaders organize a “human be-in” in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park to promote peace, happiness, and love.
- Stokely Carmichael coins the phrase “black power” in a speech in Seattle.
- The Monterey Pop Festival gathers the counterculture together, setting off the “Summer of Love.” Thousands of people come
together in Golden Gate Park to promote peace, happiness, and love.

- Antiwar demonstrators march on the Pentagon.
- Jann Werner publishes the first issue of Rolling Stone magazine in San Francisco.
- Aretha Franklin, the Doors, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix top the charts.

1968

- The Tet Offensive is launched by the Viet Cong marking the turning point in Vietnam War.
- Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibits racial discrimination in housing.
- Martin Luther King Jr. is shot and killed in Memphis by James Earl Ray.
- Robert F. Kennedy is shot and killed in Los Angeles while campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.
- American medalists Tommy Smith and John Carlos are expelled from the Mexico City Olympics after giving the black-power salute during the award ceremony.
- Richard Nixon is elected as the 37th president.
- Prague Spring Reforms in Communist Czechoslovakia cause five Warsaw Pact countries to intervene and crush the uprising.

1969

- The number of U.S. troops in Vietnam reaches 543,000.
- American Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the Moon.
- The Woodstock Music and Art Fair gathers 450,000 people for three days of “peace and music.”
- The US begins to withdraw troops from Vietnam.

1970

- Members of the National Guard fire on antiwar demonstrations at Kent State University in Ohio, leaving four students dead and eight wounded.
- Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) begins broadcasting.
- Founding of first feminist art program at California State University, Fresno.
- The first Earth Day celebration is held.

1971

- The United States Supreme Court upholds the right of the New York Times and the Washington Post to publish classified Pentagon papers about the Vietnam War.
- Walt Disney World opens in Orlando, Florida.

1972

- The “journey for peace” trip of the U.S. President to Peking, China begins, marking the beginning of the process for normalization of relations with China.
- President Richard M. Nixon makes the first trip of the U.S. President to Moscow, improving the relations with the USSR.
- The Watergate crisis begins when four men are arrested for breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C.
The Paris Peace Accords end American involvement in the Vietnam War. The last U.S. military troops would leave the war zone on March 29.

The Senate Watergate hearings begin, highlighted by Fred Thompson’s discovery of Nixon’s secret tapes.

Vice President Spiro T. Agnew resigns and is replaced by Gerald R. Ford.

The Arab Oil Embargo: Oil imports from Arab oil-producing nations are banned to the United States after the start of the Arab-Israeli war, creating the 1973 energy crisis.

1974

President Richard M. Nixon resigns the office of the presidency, avoiding the impeachment process and admitting his role in the Watergate affair. He was replaced by Vice President Gerald R. Ford. Nixon was the first president to ever resign from office.

1975

Communist forces complete their takeover of South Vietnam, forcing the evacuation from Saigon of civilians from the United States and the unconditional surrender of South Vietnam. U.S. Marines and Air Force helicopters begin a massive airlift. In 18 hours, over 1,000 American civilians and almost 7,000 South Vietnamese refugees are flown out of Saigon.

1976

The Viking 1 space probe lands on Mars. It would be followed by a second unmanned Viking II on the Utopia Plains. The first color photos of the surface of Mars are taken on these missions.

Death of Mao Zedong.

Jimmy Carter elected as the 39th President of the United States.

1977

President Carter grants presidential pardon to those who had avoided the draft during the Vietnam War.

The New York City blackout leaves millions of residents in darkness and results in looting and disorderly conduct during its twenty-five hour duration.

Fifteen nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union, sign a nuclear-proliferation pact, slowing the spread of nuclear weapons around the world.

1978

The United States Senate votes to return the Panama Canal back to Panama.

The Camp David Peace Agreement between Israel and Egypt is formulated in twelve days of negotiations at the Camp David retreat of the President.

1979

An accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania occurs. It is the largest accident in the U.S. nuclear power history and considered the worst until the Soviet Chernobyl accident.

The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.

U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev sign the SALT II agreement dealing with limitations and guidelines for nuclear weapons.

The Iran Hostage Crisis begins when sixty-three Americans are among ninety hostages taken at the American embassy in Tehran by a group of militant Islamic students and followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, demanding that the Shah of Iran, who fled the country be extradited from the US.
LESSON OVERVIEW
Students will learn about the work of Cold War Era artists, considering the political, social, and cultural context of the period. Students will explore ways that artists are influenced by the world they live in, and how they express their own ideas. They will discuss the relationship between the works and the materials used to convey concepts.

In the Shelton Studio students will be given the opportunity to complete a painting, or print. While inspired by or responding to any one of the Cold War Era paintings or prints in the galleries, each student will try, in his or her own way, to create something new.

Students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about Abstract Expressionism, Color Field Painting, Minimalism, and Pop Art before arriving at the art museum. They may investigate different aspects of the history of the Cold War Era, important events and the individuals who played critical roles in shaping that history. They may research specific artists who created work in this time period. While at UAM they will spend time in the galleries closely observing the work, discussing it, writing about it, and sketching it. They will begin conversations about the theories behind the work which will lay the groundwork for future opportunities to pursue these ideas in their home classrooms and schools.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

GRADES K-6
- What is art?
- Why are there different kinds of art?
- When we speak of original art work, what does that mean?
- How do artists turn their ideas into art?
- Where do artists’ ideas come from?

GRADES 7-12
- What do we mean by style when we speak of art?
- How do different styles of art change?
- What words would you use to describe Cold War Era art?
- Why did so many different and distinct styles develop during the 1950’s-1970’s?
- What political, cultural, economic and societal factors influenced the artists of the Cold War Era?
- How are the American modernists similar and different from the European modernists?
- How are the modernists different than the romantics, classicists, etc.?

ART QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

GRADES K-6
- What do you see?
- Describe the kinds and types of marks the artists have made.
- What shapes and forms do you see?
- What colors do you see?
- What are the subjects of the paintings and the prints in this exhibit?
- How are these prints and paintings the same and how are they different?

GRADES 7-12
- What techniques can you name in the paintings and prints?
- How would you use the same techniques to make something new in art?
- Can you describe the differences between Abstract Expressionism, Color Field Painting, Minimalism and Pop Art? Which style do you react to the most (either positively or negatively)? Explain why.
- What do we mean when we say that Pop Art uses iconic imagery?
If you were to draw from today’s icons to create new art, what icons would you use?

**PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES**

In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest that teachers and students consider the following activities:

- Students will read and research about the Cold War Era, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Pop Art in art magazines, books, and on the web.
- Students will explore the various techniques used in creating works in these styles.
- Students will explore relationships between the events of the Cold War and the art produced.
- Students will explore significant political, economic, and historical events of the Cold War Era.
- Students will investigate well-known people of the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s, exploring the reasons behind their fame.
- Students will create their own visual timeline of the period, identifying through their own research, important events, individuals, ideas, inventions and more.
- Students will research printmaking techniques such as monoprints, lithographs, serigraphs, and silkscreens.
- Students will experiment with mixing colors, different brushstrokes, and surfaces to be used in painting.

**MUSEUM ACTIVITIES**

These activities are suggestions. Museum educators will work with teachers to carefully tailor all classes to their students’ needs, in support of classroom goals and district and state education standards.

**PART 1**

**TIME FRAME: 30 - 45 MINUTES**

**IN THE GALLERIES**

- Students will closely observe the works of the Cold War Era on exhibit in the art museum.
- They will identify lines, shapes, forms, patterns, repetition, color, light and shadow, technique and style in the existing work.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- They will explore the styles of art practiced by the artists in the Cold War exhibit.
- They will explore the concepts behind the art work in the exhibit.
- Using worksheets, students will respond in writing or drawing to the work they see by recording their observations and their own thoughts about the work.
- Students will answer questions on a museum worksheet.
- Students will engage in discussions about their observations and their answers and sketches with one another and with the teachers.

**PART 2**
TIME FRAME: 45 - 60 MINUTES
(IN THE SHELTON STUDIO)
The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum educators will work with teachers to develop specific projects which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students will explore the concepts and techniques of Cold War Era art by painting, drawing or creating a monoprint that relates in some way or responds to the art and ideas discussed.
- Students will create a painting or monoprint using a style of the Cold War artists as inspiration to make something new.

POST VISIT ACTIVITIES
We have found that students achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit when time is scheduled for post-visit activities. Here are some suggestions:

- Students discuss or write about their museum experiences, reviewing what they learned, what has special meaning for them, how they will use new information and skills.
- Students continue to research the works of Cold War artists and the concepts of post-modernism in America (an essay, art work, research paper).
- Students create their own drawings, prints and paintings to explore new ideas.
- Students create their own artwork focusing on an icon or event that has special significance for them.

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM USE
The study of the Cold War Era works, specifically Andy Warhol, Willem de Kooning and Robert Motherwell, plus the historical context of the middle to late 20th century ties to multiple curricular areas including art, history, social studies, writing, reading, math, geography, and philosophy. Museum staff will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Teaching Standards and to align museum projects and studies with ongoing classroom curricular units.
SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These are just a few of the many resources available. We welcome other suggestions that teachers and students find helpful which can be added to this list.

- UW Art Museum website: www.uwyo.edu/artmuseum
- Cold War in America, 1946 to 1990, by Ross Gregory, 2003
- Andy Warhol, http://www.warholfoundation.org
- Alice Neel, http://www.aliceneel.com/

MATERIALS TO BE SUPPLIED TO EACH STUDENT

Materials for selected Shelton Studio projects are provided by the art museum.

ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION

In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we may ask that participants help us assess the activities and learning that take place. Examples of evaluation tools include:

1. Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and explorations, and their studio experience,
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick-survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students’ experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum educators will record their observations and assessments.
4. When studio time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art completed in the Shelton Studio.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available to teachers upon written request for use in teaching and student portfolios.