

Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996 – 2008

PURPOSE OF THIS PACKET:

To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibitions and suggest age appropriate applications for exploring concepts, meaning, and artistic intent of work exhibited, before, during, and after the museum visit.

CURRICULAR UNIT TOPIC:

Explore the video works of artist Peter Sarkisian and examine his use of space and three-dimensional form as a means of integrating video and sculptural art forms. The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to **observe, question, explore, create,** and **reflect.**

OBSERVE:

Students and teachers will observe *Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996-2008*. Students will look at the different forms and themes of these video sculptures and analyze the concept of perception vs. reality.

QUESTION:

The students will have an opportunity to look closely at the artwork of Sarkisian and examine the materials and process the artist used to create his video sculptures. What materials does he use? What am I really seeing? What is Sarkisian attempting to tell the viewer?

EXPLORE:

Students will consider the use of space and form in these works by looking carefully at the surface of the sculpture. Where does the sculpture end and the video begin? How does lighting and sound effect how I understand this piece?

CREATE:

Students will be given time to create (sketch, draw, sculpt, etc.) a design that uses a 3-D form with overlapping images, shapes, and forms to convey an idea.

REFLECT:

Students will discuss their finished artwork with the other students and teachers and write a reflective paper about the process they used to complete their work.



Peter Sarkisian (American, b. 1965), *Registered Driver*, 2004, Mixed media, video projection, 30 x 36 x 9 inches, Lent by I-20 Gallery

INTRODUCTION

Peter Sarkisian (American, b. 1965) explores the spatial and perceptive possibilities of video, film, and sculpture through multi-media works that challenge our perceptions of reality and illusion. Trained as a filmmaker, Sarkisian became interested 15 years ago in the possibilities of video sculpture and, more recently, video projection. Since then, he has created numerous works that re-contextualize video, the moving image, and the sculptural object. *Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996 – 2008* is a small retrospective that features signature works and conveys how the artist has considered and resolved various approaches to integrating video into temporal and spatial experiences.

Sarkisian challenges viewers to question their

own observational experiences. “What am I really seeing here?” He likes viewers to “get stuck” in front of his pieces as they try to sort out the reality and the non-reality of what they are seeing. Sarkisian is especially interested in how video has evolved into a passive medium. He notes that, as viewers, we watch the story unfold on the flat screen, with little to no action on our part. His 3-D screens prompt a different response. We find ourselves intrigued and even stumped by what we are viewing, engaging in active looking and consideration.

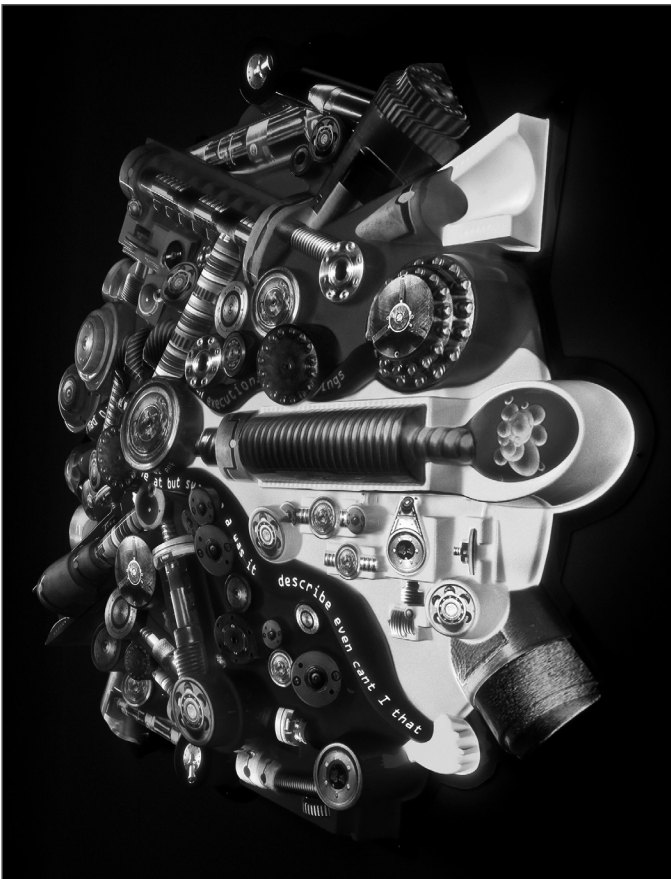
BACKGROUND

Video artist Peter Sarkisian (American, b. 1965) explores the spatial and perceptive possibilities of video, film, and sculpture. Sarkisian combines three-dimensional screens and objects with video projections that cause the viewer to question their own observational experience. This small retrospective focuses on the various approaches Sarkisian has taken to create perceptual traps for the viewer.

In today’s popular society, film and video has become a passive medium that negates actual experience and neglects the presence of a screen. Sarkisian takes video and turns it back on itself, bringing it to the forefront and physically pushing it into the viewer’s space. This causes a contradiction in the viewer’s mind, forcing reconciliation between the actual and the perceived.

Sarkisian’s early work, such as *Sleep Defined* (1996) or *Green Puddle* (2000), places a recognizable object in physical space. The perceptual trap is created by projecting an image, such as moving fabric or dripping, onto these objects and creating something that appears physically real, but prompting the viewer to consider an alternative.

A later work by Sarkisian, *Registered Driver* (2004), takes that concept one step farther. This piece inserts video footage of a real person between an actual car door and computer generated video



Peter Sarkisian (American, b. 1965), *Extruded Video Engine, Large Shape 1, Version 3, 2007*, Vacuum formed thermal plastic, video projection
Unique in a series, 39 x 40 x 8 inches, Lent by the artist



Peter Sarkisian (American, b. 1965), Above: *Blue Boiling in Pail*, 2003, Mixed media, video projection, AP 2, from an edition of 4, Dimensions variable, Lent by the artist Right: *Registered Driver*, 2004, Mixed media, video projection, 30 x 36 x 9 inches, Lent by I-20 Gallery

game scenes. As the driver moves through the city streets he runs over pedestrians, drives the wrong way, and crashes into oncoming traffic, all with complete nonchalance. The driver's casual attitude exemplifies the passivity of playing video games, yet the physicality of the car door contradicts the lack of consequence.

In his more recent work, *Extruded Video Engine, Large Shape 1, Version 3* (2007) for example, Sarkisian celebrates the screen by creating a three dimensional, molded plastic, sculptural surface. By projecting onto the screen from behind and eliminating the visual element of the projector, he creates a moving, audible object. He marries the image to the surface by wrapping shapes and text around and through the piece.

Sarkisian lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is represented by I-20 Gallery, New York, James Kelly Contemporary, Santa Fe, and Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami.

Text Label, *Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996 - 2008*

LESSON OVERVIEW

Peter Sarkisian has been strongly influenced by the perception that video is a passive media. He endeavors to create a dynamic video experience that causes the viewer to question their perceptions. Students will use 3-D forms to explore these concepts.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Here are some questions to consider when looking at the exhibition *Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996-2008*.

- How many ways do we use video in our lives today?
- How is video a passive medium?
- How does our perception shape our sense of reality?
- How can video be 3-D?

GRADES K-6

- What is this artwork made of?
- What are the subjects of these artworks?
- What forms can you see in these pieces?
- How are these sculptures similar? Different?
- What senses do you need to use to understand these video works?
- How do these videos work?

GRADES 7-12

- Why does the artist choose to use 3-D screens?
- What technology is used to make these sculptures? What is the process for creating video sculpture?
- How long do you think it takes the artist to create a new piece? Why is form important in these pieces? Describe which is your favorite piece and why. What message does the artist convey through this piece?

ART QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Why is this art?
- How is video art similar to and different from other forms of art making, such as painting or sculpting?
- Describe the challenges and benefits of working with the materials used in these video sculptures.
- How is video used to create movement and depth in the works?
- How are the 3-D screens formed?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

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

- Students may tour Peter Sarkisian's website and discuss his background.

- Research installation art and video sculpture.
- The teacher and students will collaborate with the video instructor at their school to learn the basics of video production.
- Research the importance and use of video in modern American society. How does video convey information?

PREREQUISITE SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

Museum educators will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate.

Teachers may select words from the following vocabulary word list for students to look up and understand:

- Form
- Perception
- 3-dimensional
- Passive
- Spatial
- Re-contextualize
- Extruded
- Polymer

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 objects in *Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996-2008*.
- Students may be given worksheets or journals so that they may respond to the exhibit by recording their observations and impressions through sketching and writing.
- Students will create word lists about the exhibit that help them describe the art work



Peter Sarkisian (American, b. 1965), *Foreground Reversal*, 2007, Vacuum formed thermal plastic, video projectio, Edition 1/5, 26 x 15 x 5 inches, Lent by the artist

or explain how they feel about it.

- Students will identify the materials used to create each work in the exhibit.
- Students will examine the purpose of each example of video sculpture in this exhibit.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- Students will engage in discussions about their observations, sketches, and reflections with one another, teachers, and museum educators.

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 discuss the idea that video is a passive media. How can video be changed to be a more active experience for the viewer?
- Students will create their own 3-D form upon which they will superimpose 2-D shapes and images to simulate a video sculpture. This artwork should take into account their individual “perceptions.” At the end, students should be able to reflect on how their expressions are similar to or different than their peers.
- Students may write a reflective paper that describes their favorite piece on exhibit in *Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996 - 2008*.

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:

- Collaborate with the video instructor to use projection techniques and 3-D forms to create your own video sculpture.
- Research the impact of digital media – TV, video games, etc. on the human brain.

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM USE

Peter Sarkisian: Video Works, 1996-2008 will tie into a variety of curricular areas including, but not limited to the following:

- Popular Culture
- Communications/Video Production
- Installation Art, Performance Art
- Sculpture
- Museum educators will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Standards and align museum projects and activities with classroom lessons and assessments.

SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- www.petersarkisian.com
- <http://www.uwyo.edu/artmuseum/>
- Interview with Peter Sarkisian, *Zing Magazine*, 1998
- *Five Museum Curators Talk About the Work:*, Selected Bibliography, www.petersarkisian.com
- *Art In American*, Review, November, 1998
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_sculpture
- *Understanding Installation Art: From Duchamp to Holzer*, by Mark Rosenthal, Prestel Publishing, 2003.

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.