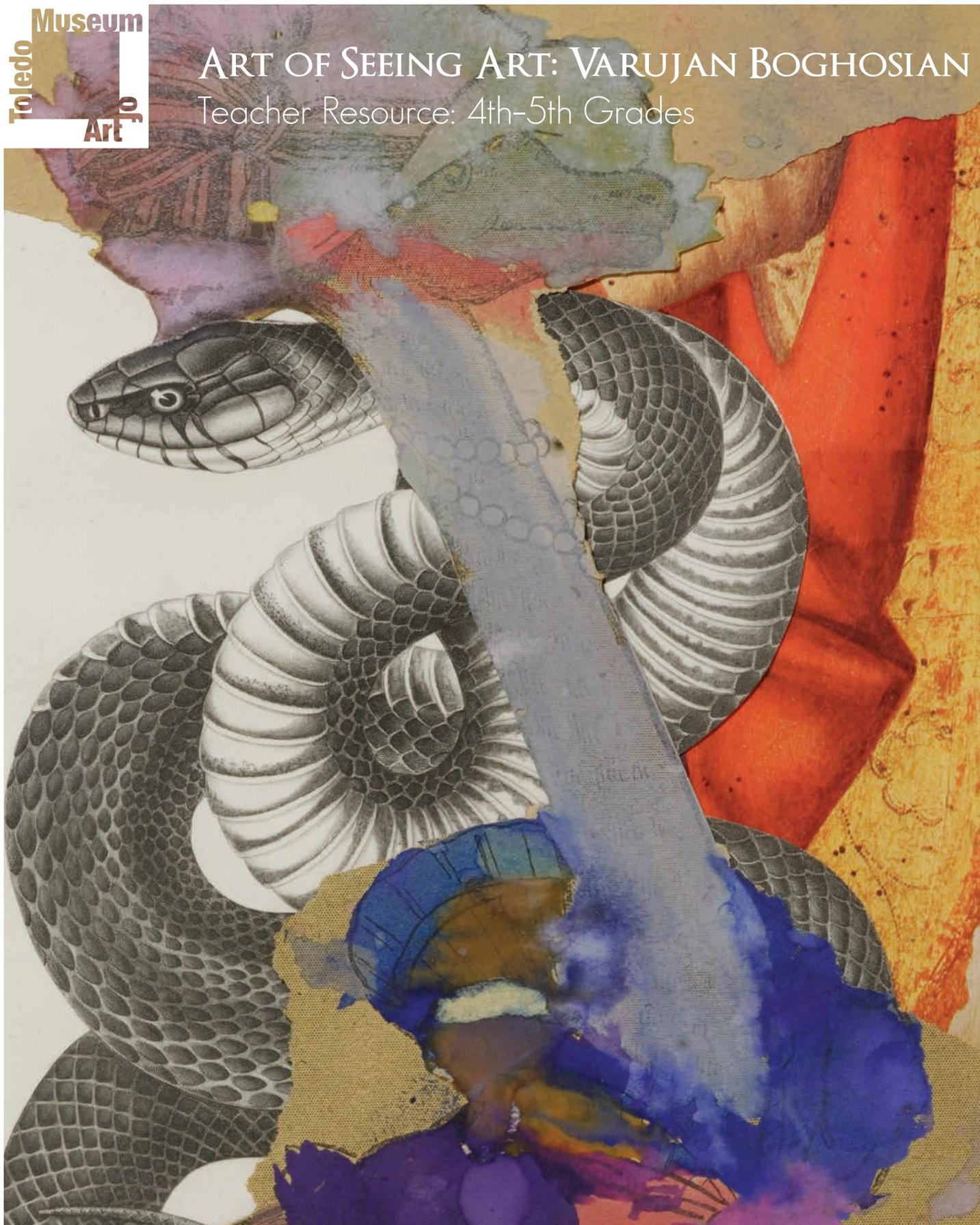


ART OF SEEING ART: VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN

Teacher Resource: 4th-5th Grades



Varujan Boghosian (American, born 1926), *The Serpent* (detail), collage. Courtesy of the Artist

This resource will allow you to lead your students through close looking exercises to enable them to describe, analyze, and interpret what they see in the collage *The Serpent* by Varujan Boghosian (American, b. 1926).

This approach to looking at art is based on the Art of Seeing Art method created by the Toledo Museum of Art. It is discussion-based and will help you and your students explore works of art in the Museum's special exhibition *Varujan Boghosian* (VAR-zhan Bo-GO-zhen), on view at the Museum from December 13, 2013–May 25, 2014.

How to use this resource:

- Print out the document for yourself.
- Read through the document carefully as you look at the image of the work of art.
- When you are ready to engage your class, project the image of the work of art on a screen in your classroom using an LCD projector. Use the questions provided below to lead the discussion.

This exercise is meant for use in the classroom. There is no substitute for seeing the real work of art in the exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art. We are open Tuesday and Wednesday 10 A.M.–4 P.M., Thursday and Friday 10 A.M.–9 P.M., Saturday 10 A.M.–5 P.M., and Sunday noon–5 P.M., and Docent-led tours are available free of charge.

Visit <http://www.toledomuseum.org/learn/tours/> to schedule.

Common Core Standards Related to Visual Literacy:

The Common Core State Standards were designed to help teachers provide knowledge and foster skills in students that are necessary in order for them to successfully navigate the contemporary world. The following Common Core State Standards relating to Visual Literacy are covered in this lesson.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Background Information:

This background information will give you some context for the work of art you will be discussing with your students. We suggest not sharing this information with your students until after they have engaged in close looking and describing. Waiting to share this contextual information allows the students to think creatively about the image and fosters critical thinking.

Varujan Boghosian creates his works of art by assembling images and objects that he has collected over time. He is very interested in the ways that seemingly unrelated objects can be combined to create new meanings.

Although the images he uses often have personal meanings, Boghosian wants the people who view his works of art to discover their own meanings by thinking about what the images symbolize for them.

Vocabulary:

Collage: A work of art created by adhering various different materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric onto a backing.

Symbol: Something (an image) that represents something else.

*“I don’t make anything,
I find everything.”*

–Varujan Boghosian

Close Looking

Before telling them any information such as the name of the artist or title of the work of art, ask your students to look carefully. Have them look closely for at least three minutes. This close looking allows students the time to observe details and explore the image beyond their initial reaction to the image.

Describe

Ask the students to describe what they see. Start the questioning with broad, open-ended questions with attention to the Elements of Art.

What do you see in this picture?

Describe the colors that you see in this work of art.

What colors draw your attention?

Describe the snake. What kinds of lines do you see in the body of the snake? What shapes to these lines make?

What else do you see in the artwork that you can identify?

How would you describe the lines and colors used for these other images?

Elements of Art

Line: A continuous mark with width and height, but no depth, made with a moving point.

Shape: An enclosed area defined by other elements of art, such as line or color.

Color: The full visible light spectrum (rainbow) and black and white, plus all possible combinations.

Space: The area around or within objects; the arrangement of components on the surface.

Texture: Refers to the tactile quality of an object, whether real or perceived.

Visit vislit.org to learn more about the Elements of Art.

Principles of Design

Emphasis: The point or points of focus in a composition.

Balance: Relates to the sense of visual equilibrium in a work of art; how components of an image are arranged around a focal point.

Proportion: The relative scale of objects and shapes in an image to one another and to the viewer.

Harmony: The way the elements work together to create an overall appealing effect.

Rhythm: The path along which the eye follows a regular or repeating arrangement of motifs (such as colors or shapes) around a composition.

Movement: The way shapes, lines, colors and forms direct the eye around a composition or interact with each other to suggest motion.

Variety: The use of different, often contrasting, elements that provide visual interest.

Unity: The wholeness that is achieved through the effective use of the Elements of Art and Principles of Design.

Analysis

Once the students have completed listing everything they observed in the collage by close looking, begin to ask simple analytical questions that will help to deepen their understanding of the work of art. Examine how the artist has applied the **Principles of Design**.

This is a work of art that was created through a process called collage. Can you identify the separate pieces of paper that Boghosian combined to create this work of art?

What details do you see that let you know that these are different pieces?

How has the artist used texture and color to create variety in this collage?

Where has the artist used repeated colors and shapes to create unity?

In this collage, parts of the snake are covered up and we can't see them. If you could remove the top layer, what do you think the hidden parts of the snake would look like?

Layering of Information

(Background Information/Research)

Share the background information provided above regarding the artist and the collage. This is information that a viewer cannot get simply by looking at the work of art. Once you have shared the information, your students will be ready for deeper analysis and interpretation.

Interpretation

Interpretation brings the close looking and describing questions, analysis, and background information together to aid in better understanding the work of art.

Look at the snake in this work of art and think about other snakes you have seen in real life, in pictures or read about in stories. What do snakes mean to you? Does the snake in this picture support what you already know about snakes? Why or why not?

Colors can also have emotional meanings. What do the colors in this collage remind you of? How would the work of art change if you changed the colors? How does the snake relate to your feelings about the colors? Do they fit together? Or do they seem to be opposites?

Overall, what does this work of art mean to you?

Activity

This activity will encourage students to apply what they have learned through looking by creating their own work of art.

- Supplies:**
- old magazines, newspapers, scraps of colored paper and other collage materials
 - scissors
 - glue sticks
 - construction paper or matte board to serve as a background

Ask students to look through the magazines and other materials and select a few images that are meaningful to them. Have them cut those images out. After they have chosen a few images each, have the students write down a list of what each of their chosen images represents. Ask the students to use their images to create a collage that is a symbol for something else. Remind students that color can also have symbolic meaning and suggest they think about how color may be used as an element of their design. Encourage them to experiment with various ways of arranging their compositions before gluing.

Once they have finished their collages, ask students to give their artwork a title and ask them to write a gallery label that describes what the image means to them. You may want to allow time for students to share their collages with the group or hold an exhibition of your Varujan Boghosian inspired works.

