

The Role of the Arts in Cultural Diplomacy Kathy Hoffman (Austria 2006)

Biography

Dr. Katherine Hoffman received her B.A. from Smith College and Ph.D. from New York University. She is currently a Professor of Fine Arts at St. Anselm College, Manchester, NH, USA, where she has worked since 1990, and served as chair of the department for 18 years. She has been a visiting professor at Richmond University in London, and was Fulbright Distinguished Chair at the Karl Franzens University in Graz, Austria. During the spring semester 2009 she will serve as the Dorothy K. Hohenberg Chair of Excellence at the University of Memphis. Her area of specialization is Modern Art, particularly painting, photography, and film. She is also interested in cross-cultural influences between Islamic and Western art; she was a fellow at the American Center for Oriental Research in Amman, Jordan in 2004, and a Hamad Bin Khalifa Fellow in Doha, Qatar, in 2007. She has given papers and lectures in a variety of places including Vienna, Salzburg, Paris, Coimbre, Warsaw, Istanbul, St. Petersburg, Cape Town, Oslo, and Marrakesh. She has published a variety of books and articles. Her books include: *An Enduring Spirit: The Art of Georgia O'Keeffe*, Grolier Books/Scarecrow Press; *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Celebration of Music and Dance*, George Braziller Publishers; *Explorations: The Visual Arts Since 1945*, Harper Collins; *Collage: Critical Views*, UMI Press; *Concepts of Identity*, Harper Collins; and *Stieglitz A Beginning Light*, Yale University Press. She is currently working on a second book on the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, *Stieglitz A Legacy of Light*, for Yale University Press to be published in 2010. She resides in Peterborough, NH, USA.

Background

In our current global society one frequently reads about acts of violence, sometimes based on misunderstanding and ignorance. Currently global communication can be instant, but misunderstanding can also be instant. Thus it seems important to try to make connections between and among various cultures, to increase levels of international understanding. Toward that end, the arts with their unique, universal languages-- the visual arts, music, dance, drama, etc., that are not usually limited by national boundaries, have a potentially important role to play in world diplomacy. This session will explore the various ways that art, in particular the visual arts, might serve as a kind of cultural diplomat. Areas to be addressed will include discussion of distinctions between art, and cultural propaganda; the role of film and photography in communicating individual and cultural identities and ideologies; the role of iconic images that are frequently reproduced; the role of traveling or virtual exhibitions, government sponsored and privately funded, past, present, and future – i.e. *The Family of Man* exhibit, the Abstract Expressionists as Cold Warriors or various large scale Guggenheim exhibitions at their locations throughout the world; the role of visiting artists; and the establishment of possible partnership projects with artists from different countries. It is hoped that out of this discussion, some actual projects and/or partnerships might evolve that help in some way to promote, and increase international understanding.

Discussions Questions

1. What are some distinctions that can be made between “art” and “propaganda”?
2. What kinds of traveling or virtual exhibits might be developed that might serve in cultural diplomacy?
3. Are there any particular photographic images and/or films that you feel are significant examples of promoting international understanding, or conversely those that communicate cultural stereotypes that pervade our cultures? How might such images or films be used in educational settings or public forums?
4. What is the role of iconic images that are frequently reproduced? - i.e. Joe Rosenthal's 1945 Iwo Jima photograph, “Raising the Flag at Mount Surabachi” ?
5. How might visiting artists' positions, or collaborative/partnership projects between various countries with artists, students, and/or a general public be established? Do you have specific ideas for such?