Teaching-Learning Academy
Dialogue Highlights

How does the political context of art affect the way we consume it?

This session took place in the Western Gallery. Participants viewed the work of artist Knowledge Bennett and heard from a panel of speakers before breaking into small dialogue groups. These groups expanded upon understandings of how the political context of art affects the way we consume it, and further considered what the panelists shared. The dialogue centered on how certain privileges, or lack thereof, impact the way people view art.

Panel

Cynthia Camlin
WWU Faculty, Art

Brett Coleman
WWU Faculty, Human Services / Health and Community Studies

Monique Kermin
WWU Faculty, Art History

Peter Phios
WWU Faculty, History

Key Points

- POC voices need to be prioritized
- A person doesn't always need historical/political context to experience art, but it is still important to recognize the artist's intent
- Context and interpretation changes over time, and certain generations of people will have different understandings of artwork
- There are many historical events that have been hidden from the American public
- The communities that you are apart of, and the lens by which you view the world both impact your understanding of sociopolitical art
- Knowledge Bennett's work has an immediate, strong emotional pull
- White people are often socialized to be blind to racism and the experiences of POC

Action Strategies

- Research historical events that have been hidden from view by the government and society in general
- If you cannot personally identify with certain experiences represented in the art, listen to those who these events have impacted
- Rethink ownership and entitlement in the art world
- Rethink politeness and the barriers it represents in terms of how art depicts traumatic historical events
- Choose to be open-minded, and know that there are different ways to consume art
- Discuss important issues with those in your community, and spread awareness while also continuing to learn

Students 19
Staff 9
Community Members 10