Educational Activity: Shocking Imagery

Shock value is the potential of an image, text or other form of communication to provoke a reaction of sharp disgust, shock, anger, fear or negative emotion.

Part I: Visual Thinking Strategies

Take a few minutes to look carefully at these works of art.

1. What is going on in these pictures?
2. Why do you say that?
3. What more can you see?

Part II: Elements of Art

The building blocks of art work are line, color, shape, value, form and space

1. Isolate each one of these elements and consider how and why they are used in each work of art.
2. How do the use of these elements convey meaning?

Explore more about these works online:

Braindeath by Ann Mikolowski: https://artmuseum.wayne.edu/objects/3950/braindeath

Found Guilty by Jacob Lawrence: https://artmuseum.wayne.edu/objects/472/no-22-john-brown-was-found-guilty-of-treason-and-murder

Standing Woman by Richard Lindner: https://artmuseum.wayne.edu/objects/3724/standing-woman

Part III - Comparison

1. How do these three works that were created decades ago ring profoundly relevant, and yet more shocking, today.
The Wayne State University Art Collection is an evolving collection that contains over 6,500 works of modern and contemporary art that celebrates Detroit and regional artists. Its mission is to use art to educate, inspire, foster creative thinking and promote the advancement of social and cultural leadership.

The collection is a resource for scholarship and provides students with an authentic hands-on experience with art. Undergraduate and Graduate students in the James Pearson Duffy Departments of Art and Art History have written essays that accompany many of these works, providing them the opportunity to conduct research on art, to write about it and have their writings published online.

Highlights from the art collection can be found online, viewed throughout public buildings on campus, and is accessible to students and the community in public areas, including an outdoor “ArtWalk” of monumental sculpture found installed all around our beautiful urban campus (https://artcollection.wayne.edu/artwalk/guide.pdf).