

ART AND CULTURE

Professor: Marta Slaughter, MFA

Guest Lecturer: Pam Brekka, Ph.D.

Greetings. And welcome to the final unit for this course, themes in historical context. I'm Doctor Pam Brekka, visiting instructor of art history here at the University of South Florida.

In this unit, we will explore art works from around the world within their historical contexts. Historical context is very important to understand when studying works of art as it helps us to know the cultural habits which informed the making of the works themselves-- including religion, politics, economic structures, and social habits.

From a global perspective, it is important to understand that cross cultural concerns, things like hybridity and influence, play a very important role in the history of art. In other words, cultural groups from around the globe, in different contexts and different ways fluidly, throughout history, contributed to the artistic production of other groups.

Our approach to the content in this unit will be thematic rather than chronological. Let me explain the difference. Traditionally, art historians tended to talk about the history of art chronologically, that is, using a historical time line that was linear starting with an earlier period and moving forward. This approach has its pitfalls. For one thing, it implies that later artistic production was more advanced and more sophisticated than earlier artistic production. It also tends to favor the art works from one cultural group or one period of time over another.

As an alternative, we will be looking at this material thematically. We'll be examining works of art from around the world globally using unifying themes. Works of art from different periods in art history. For example, we might look at a statuette from the paleolithic period in art history and examine that side by side with a female nude made by Picasso in the 21st century. The unifying theme in this context would be the history of the female nude in art.

As viewers living in the 21st century, it is imperative that we develop, that we hone, our own critical perspective in relation to art around the world, and different cultural groups, their social concerns, social habits, economic structures, religion, in other words, their diversity.