

## QUESTIONS FOR AESTHETIC DISCUSSION

These are a few examples of questions to stimulate aesthetic inquiry in the classroom:

- What is a work of art?
- What is it about a work of art that enables us to identify it as art, as distinct from an ordinary object or event?
- What characteristics must an object have for you to consider it a work of art?
- Is there one standard of aesthetics that applies to all cultures and times? Why or why not?
- If an object is on display in a museum, is it a work of art? Why or why not?
- Why do we call some works of art masterpieces?
- Must an object be original and/or innovative to be considered art? Why or why not?
- What do we mean when we say something is beautiful? ugly?
- How much knowledge of the cultural origins of a work is necessary for understanding a work of art?
- Can we understand works of art from other cultures only from our own perspective?
- How necessary is it that we understand the aesthetic perspective of other cultures?

### Teacher Guidelines for Aesthetic Inquiry

"The general goal of any program of aesthetic inquiry is to develop in students the ability to deal with disagreement and uncertainty; to value ways of viewing a problem that differ from their own."

"Since inquiry cannot proceed without guidelines, get the class involved in setting down a few rules before you begin. These may range from the general ("Try to be open to a point of view that's different from yours.") to the more specific ("When possible, give some clear evidence, such as pointing to a flaw in an argument to support your statement.")"

Al Hurwitz and Michael Day, *Children and Their Art, Methods for the Elementary School*

### The Value of Group Discussion

"In discussions in a group, wonderful things can happen between individuals when they engage each other about works of art that cannot come about when viewing art individually. The group can construct a broader range of meaning than can an individual, and groups tend to be self-correcting about interpretations that are too far removed from the work to be convincing. Groups can widen dogmatic, idiosyncratic views about art whether the work is a soft pastoral landscape or the incendiary photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe as well as about life."