

GLENN BROWN: PAINTING THE PAST

GRADE LEVEL: 9TH - 12TH GRADE

Please be advised. The Glenn Brown exhibition features three paintings that contain imagery of the nude female body. The artist appropriates these images from historical art; references include three nudes inspired by Eugene Delacroix and Jean-Honore Fragonard. While a request can be made to not focus on these specific works, they are still visible in the gallery on docent-led tours. Examples of the exact paintings can be provided upon request.



Left: "Skull of a Skeleton with Burning Cigarette" by Van Gogh.
Middle: "Theatre" (2006) by Glenn Brown. Right, Brown's "Suffer Well" (2007).

Is originality still possible? Are all contemporary creative pursuits built on the ideas and brushstrokes of the past? Glenn Brown strives to address these questions in his work. Appropriation, in varying degrees, is the foundation for many of his paintings. He uses images of original work reproduced for books or postcards as inspiration. Brown alters the composition, size, and color palette of these images and then creates a new painting reimagined from the original. The source material imbedded in these works is, at times, obvious and at others less clear prompting the viewer to investigate the layers of reference. Brown's artistic skills are notable and his technique exacting. From far away, his work appears to be painted on very thickly with heavy brushstrokes; however upon closer inspection, his paintings have a flat, almost photographic surface. The "brushstrokes" are a trompe l'oeil effect, painted to look as though they have texture, but are in fact smooth. He painstakingly approaches each canvas only completing a small number of works each year.

Glenn Brown is deliberate in his use of already existing imagery. His motivation and artistic challenges are rooted in his desire to pay homage to the artists who preceded him and to discover ways to resurrect, enhance and improve the source material he utilizes.

*"...I love the notion of appropriation, and the fact that we can't escape appropriation. All of the knowledge of all of the art we've ever seen is with us when we paint, or when I paint."
- Glenn Brown*

*"I'm rather like Dr. Frankenstein, constructing paintings out of the residue or dead parts of other artist's work. I hope to create a sense of strangeness by bringing together examples of the way the best historic and modern-day artists have depicted their personal sense of the world."
- Glenn Brown*

In this lesson the students will create artwork inspired by Glenn Brown. They will explore the notion of appropriation and its role in the creative process through discussion and a hands-on activity.

VOCABULARY

Appropriation	Texture
Attribution	Trompe l'oeil effect
Originality	Copyright
Reproduction	Fair use

MATERIALS

Teacher selected images of Glenn Brown paintings

Teacher selected images of some of the paintings that inspired Glenn Brown's work.
(See *Teacher Resources*)

Teacher selected images of works by artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and Roy Lichtenstein that demonstrate the use of appropriation in their creative process. (See *Teacher Resources*)

ModgePodge

Canvas

Scissors

Exacto knives

Paint brushes

Acrylic paints and or oil pastel

Optional:

Computer with Photoshop

Printer

BEFOREHAND

- Tour the Glenn Brown exhibition at the CAC
- Collect materials for discussion and art making.

DISCUSSION

- Share with the class various examples of Glenn Brown's paintings and the source work that inspired each, such as works by artists Chris Foss and Frank Auerbach.
- Discuss the role appropriation plays in Brown's work.
- Share examples of other artists throughout history, such as Vincent Van Gogh and Roy Lichtenstein, who have employed appropriation in their creative process and discuss the similarities and dissimilarities to Brown.
- Explore and discuss the state of originality in contemporary painting. Is originality dead? Or is it alive in repetition and appropriation?
- Discuss the quote often attributed to Pablo Picasso "good artists copy, great artists steal." Look at Steve Jobs use of this quote as well as other variations of this maxim that appear throughout history and encourage discussion.
- Discuss attribution and the role it plays in the utilization of the ideas of others. Encourage the students to explore their own experience with appropriation and attribution- writing papers, conducting research and various forms of creative expression. What rules must they follow in academia? Explore examples of appropriation in other artistic fields such as music and fashion design.



PROCEDURE

This project will require more than one class period to complete

- Have each student select a Glenn Brown image to appropriate and use as the building block for his or her own painting.
- Have the students research the source material Glenn Brown used as inspiration for the painting they selected.
- Encourage the students to study the painting they selected and consider ways to redesign the work in order to create his or her alternative version.
- Like Glenn Brown students can alter the image's composition by inverting, cropping, repositioning, etc. They can manually create the alterations or digitally change the image by using computer software such as Photoshop or one of the many free apps such as PicEffect Studio.
- Once the students have reimagined Brown's artwork have them affix the reworked image to a canvas board using ModgePodge.
- Once dry the students can apply acrylic paint and or oil pastel to the canvas to complete their own work.
- Have the students exhibit their work alongside an image of Glenn Brown's painting and if possible the original source image Brown used.
- Have the students present their work to the class and discuss the reasoning behind their redesign and final product.

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

Interview with Glenn Brown

www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/interview-glenn-brown/

Images of work Brown has appropriated from and artists throughout history who used appropriation

www.artofericwayne.com/2014/01/13/in-defense-of-artist-glenn-brown/

History of the quote "Good artists copy, great artists steal."

www.quoteinvestigator.com/2013/03/06/artists-steal/

Article addressing appropriation in art

www.bbc.com/culture/story/20141112-great-artists-steal

Art forger John Myatt examines appropriated work from artist Glenn Brown

www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-glenn-brown/

The New Yorker covers Foss's take on Glenn Brown's appropriation

www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-5-7-million-magazine-illustration

The New York Times discusses the limits of appropriation in light of Richard Prince artwork

www.nytimes.com/2012/01/01/arts/desgn/richard-prince-lawsuit-focuses-on-limits-of-appropriation.html

Case of appropriation artist over artwork appropriated from the original image (Great discussion topic)

www.techdirt.com/articles/20100507/0231219332.shtml

Glenn Brown Biography and source for quote

www.rogallery.com/Brown_Glenn/brown-biography.html