

Title: Ledger Art: Past-to-Present

Level: Grades 9-12

Theme: An exploration of ledger art, its history and place in contemporary art.

Duration: Varies according to the student's involvement with the overall body of work needed to illustrate understanding.

Goal: Students will recreate ledger drawings from the past to gain insight to how and why these images were produced and then use these ideas to create a record of a personal event.

Objectives: Students will be able to explain the importance of ledger art in Lakota culture as not only a record of events but also as a means of artistic expression.

Cultural Concept: Ledger art is not a static artwork created for decorative purposes but is indeed a living document representing a personal account of an event in a visual medium.

Background: Ledger book art represents a personal eyewitness account of events from the point of view of the artist. Although seemingly simplistic in execution these are complex and detailed accounts. The artist provides many details as to tribal/cultural affiliations such as shield design, specific hairstyles, and other accoutrements. Direction is also an important component as the artist/recorder is most often the central figure and is usually facing left.

Activity: Students will begin by researching examples of ledger art on-line and print examples. The examples will be sketched out on a separate drawing paper and traced using a fine-point permanent marker onto unbleached muslin. The image will then be colored in using crayons. Following the application of color the muslin is turned face down and ironed between two pieces of paper in order to protect the surface of the iron. Once a grasp of this technique is understood the student will then create a ledger book drawing using this method that describes an event in his or her life somewhat similar to the reproduced image. The images are then mounted next to each other, along with a statement by the student describing their choice of images and the insights gained by this experience.

Resources: Reference books (see references section below) that discuss the place and purpose of ledger book art in Lakota culture, selection of ledger book art reproductions, paper, pencils, unbleached muslin, permanent fine point markers, crayons, iron, and large paper to protect iron from crayon wax.

Assessment: Assessment will be by both one-to-one verbal critique of the work produced and by the creation of a reflection statement. Student statement should include: "What I did", "How I did it" and "What I learned by doing this."

References: Blish, Helen H. (1967) *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Berlo, Janet C. (Ed.). (1967) *Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935: Pages From A Visual History*. American Federation of Arts and the Drawing Center. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers.

Donnelly, Robert G. (2000) *Transforming Images: The Art of Silver Horn and His Successors*. The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago.

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