

TEACHER GUIDE

Getting Started with Contemporary Art

Artists working today often push the boundaries of traditional media like painting and sculpture. This guide is part of a series designed for high school teachers to use in conjunction with a visit to the Hammer Museum, where students might encounter a range of contemporary art forms. Use the information and discussion prompts below while engaging with **performance art** during your visit or in preparation for your visit using images available on the Hammer website. The post-visit activity is designed to extend student learning in the classroom after your visit.

PERFORMANCE ART

Performance art began in the early 20th century as a challenge to traditional, “motionless” works like painting and sculpture.

Key Concepts

- **Time-based:** A focus on ephemerality, or impermanence, as a result of actions performed live
- **Space:** The site of the performance
- **Performer/audience relationship:** Challenges traditional relationship between viewer and artist; the viewer may be a participant
- **The body:** As the artist’s medium, it is the center of the performance and places emphasis on subjectivity, or the individuality of the performer

Discussion Prompts

1. Consider examples of performances (e.g. concerts or sports). What are the elements of a performance?
2. What are the similarities and differences between performance art and a “traditional” performance?
3. “Live-ness” is a key component of performance art and yet images are integral to extending the life of a performance. Do you think this changes the work of art?

Post-Visit Activity

There are aspects of **performance** in everyday life: any decisions about how we dress, move, or interact with people are performative actions. Direct your students to:

1. Select a behavior that they perform in their daily life.
2. Alter the behavior in some way. For example, they could amplify it into an exaggerated behavior. Or they could draw attention to a specific action by slowing it down or repeating it. This will be their performance.
3. Describe how they will incorporate the four key concepts of performance art into their performance—time-based, space, performer/audience relationship, and body.

For more guides in this series visit hammer.ucla.edu/teachers.