

# 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 **conceptual 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.

### CONCEPTUAL ART

**Conceptual art** originated as a movement in the 1960s and emphasizes the idea behind a work of art.

#### Key Concepts

- **Emphasis on the idea:** The idea behind the artwork is just as essential as—or more important than—the finished work
- **Critique:** May challenge expectations of what art can be, the authority of galleries and museums, and the commercial value of art
- **Any medium is possible:** Any media and multiple disciplines (music, dance, literary arts, etc.) could communicate the concept

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#### Discussion Prompts

1. Conceptual artist Sol LeWitt said, “The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.” What did he mean by this?
2. Why do you think conceptual artists might make work that cannot be easily bought and sold (e.g., a performance)?
3. How does conceptual art challenge traditional art forms like painting and sculpture?

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#### Post-Visit Activity

How do you come up with a good **concept** for a work of art? Here are some brainstorming suggestions:

1. Think about things that matter to you, things that challenge you, and things that you critique.
2. Write them all down.
3. Circle the ones that would be the most visually interesting.
4. Discuss your selections with a partner to arrive at the best option.

**For more guides in this series visit [hammer.ucla.edu/teachers](https://hammer.ucla.edu/teachers).**