

LESSON PLAN: Narrative Art

By Amy Wunsch, 2008



Key Idea:

As far back as the cave paintings at Lascaux and Altamira, visual artists have utilized their skill and imagination to tell stories. Contemporary visual artists face new challenges in creating narrative art: making their visual story relevant to contemporary audiences; presenting stories from historical, personal, real or imagined events; deciding how to make that visual presentation so the story is understood immediately or left open to audience interpretation (by using traditional art conventions, formal considerations, symbols, processes, etc.). Stories in literature are generated through the author's imagination, or they may be inspired by real life or historical events, or even personal experiences. Some stories are passed down through time as myths or fairy tales.

Objectives:

1. Students will be introduced to the concept of visual art telling a story (**narrative art**) through an instructor-led discussion. Other means of visual storytelling will be mentioned: comic strips, graphic novels, the frame-by-frame format of movie film, **diptychs** and **triptychs** (storytelling in these instances are told from left to right or, often, top to bottom). Narrative art can include both representational and abstract elements.
2. Students will sketch out an idea for their artwork:
 - a. Think of a simple, 3 part story that you want to tell us, and how might you show it to us visually.
 - b. What is the setting for your story (where is the story going to take place)?
 - c. What characters will you introduce (keep it simple – 1 to 3 characters)
 - d. What action will take place? How will the characters change throughout your story?
 - e. What inspired you to tell this story?
 - f. What would the title of your artwork be?
 - g. Make a rough sketch (quick and not much detail) of how you will create your narrative art work in the triptych format.
3. The instructor will lead students on a tour of several art works in the museum and on campus to explore the variety of narrative formats contemporary artists use.
4. The instructor will demonstrate techniques with the watercolor medium: wet into wet, using salt on wet paint, scratching into a wet surface, using crayon for **wax resist**, dry brush, and lifting color from the surface with paper towels, etc.
5. Students will utilize a triptych format to create a visual story on watercolor paper, with at least 3 watercolor techniques to create 3 different backgrounds as a setting for their story. Students may use markers, colored pencils, and a variety of stamps to complete their visual tale.

Vocabulary:

narrative art = art work that uses images to tell a story.

triptych= a work consisting of three painted or carved panels, usually hinged together.

diptych = a pair of pictures or carvings on two panels, usually hinged together.

wax resist = use a wax-based medium to create marks, and when a water-soluble medium is used over these marks, the wax marks repel the water and show through.

Materials Needed:

Watercolor paper = 15" X 11" sheets, one for each student, folded in thirds to form 5" x 11" sections (each third may be cut in a Gothic peak or another interesting shape)

Watercolor set for each student

A variety of brushes (flats and rounds)

Newsprint sheets to protect table = one sheet per student, placed under watercolor paper

Water cups for individuals, and larger water containers between each 2 students

Paint palettes for each student for mixing colors

Crayons

Salt shakers, toothpicks, plastic wrap, other items for watercolor experimentation

Rubber stamps

Markers (water-based for coloring on rubber stamps)

Spray bottles (for spritzing water on stamps colored with water-based marker)

2+ paper towels per student (have a roll of paper towels at each table for wiping marker off the stamps, etc.)

Stamp pads (kept at a central location in the room for all students to use)

Masking tape to secure the watercolor paper to the newsprint and keep it flat while wet

Paper for sketching and peer critique

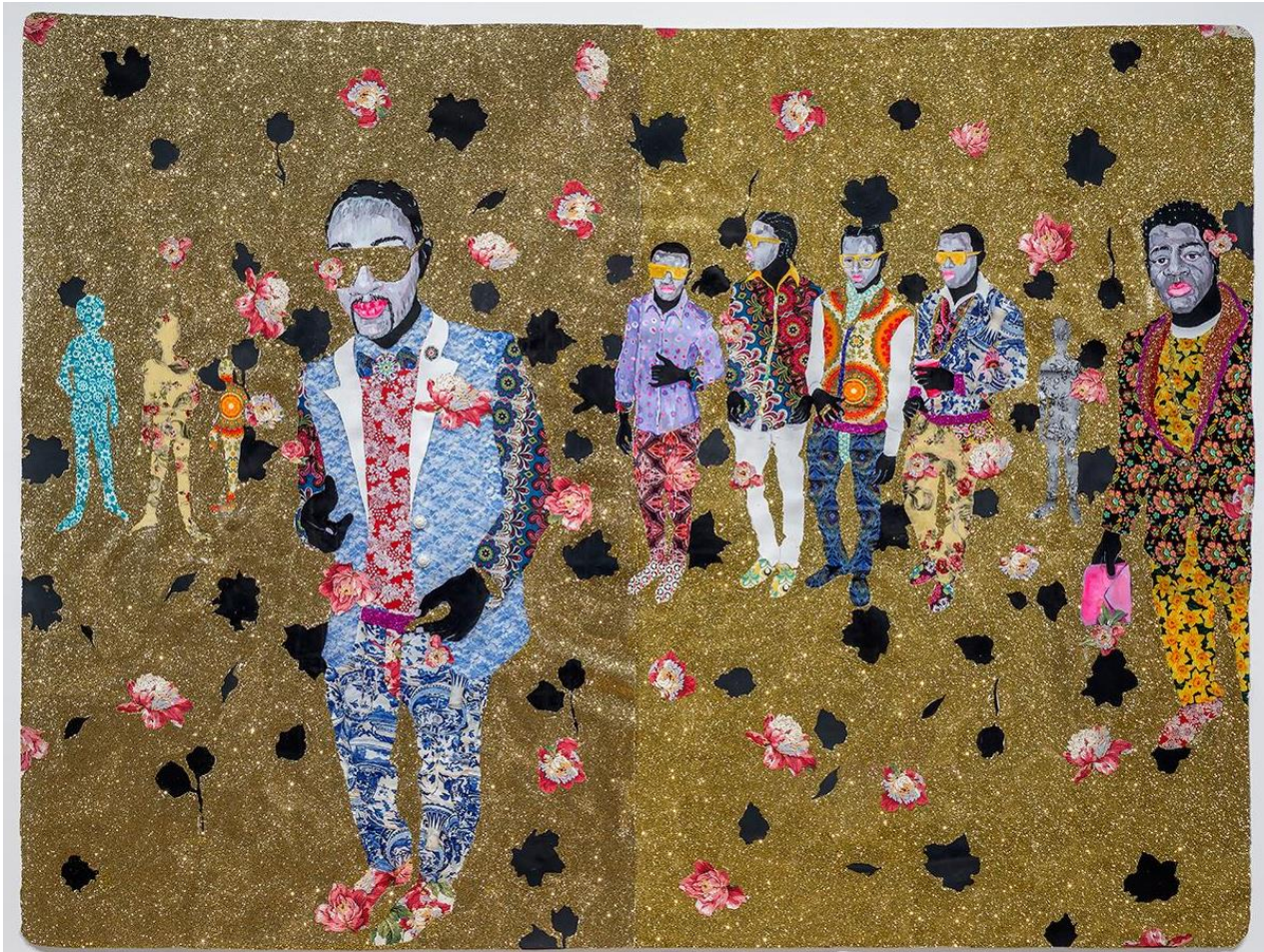
Writing pencils and erasers

Evaluation:

Students will pair up to "unravel" the story in each other's art work, using the following questions to guide them (these may be written up on the board or could be pre-printed on the other side of the sheet students used for their initial story sketch):

- a. What is the setting(s) of your classmate's art work?
- b. What are the main characters? What are the other secondary characters?
- c. What action is taking place?
- d. How does the story resolve itself?
- e. How would you categorize this story: is it imaginary, or based on a real event, a real person, or some story from history?
- f. Ask your partner how well you interpreted his or her narrative painting – were you on the same track as the artist, or did you interpret the story differently than how the artist intended? How might having multiple meanings and interpretations of a visual story be a good thing?

Tour artwork images:



Ebony G. Patterson (Jamaican, b. 1981)

Untitled Lightz II, 2013

Mixed media on paper

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014.03

Gift of the H Tony and Marti Oppenheimer Foundation



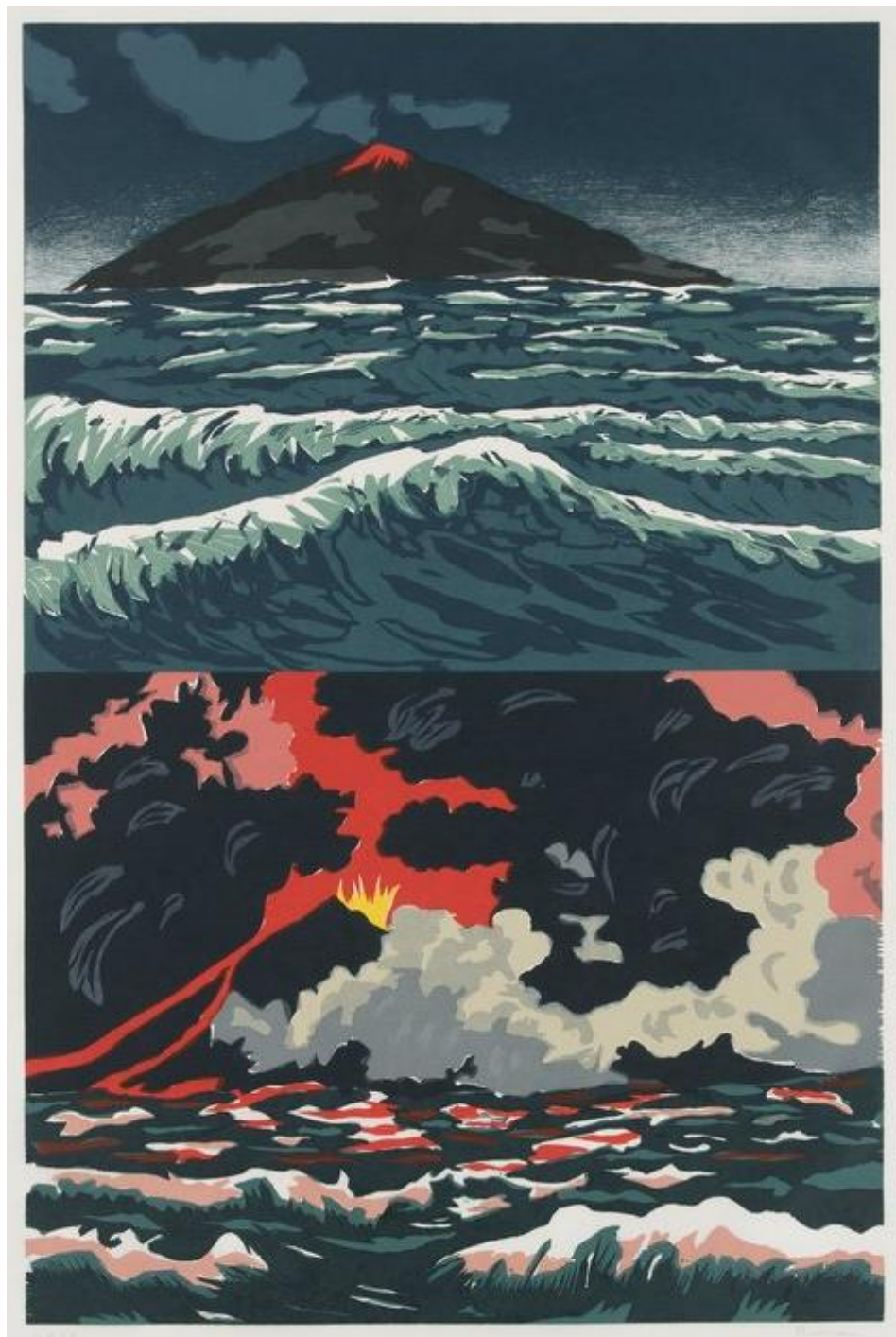
Aaron Morse (American, b. 1974)

Pathfinder, 2004

Acrylic on canvas

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005.19

Gift of the Buddy Taub Foundation, Los Angeles, CA

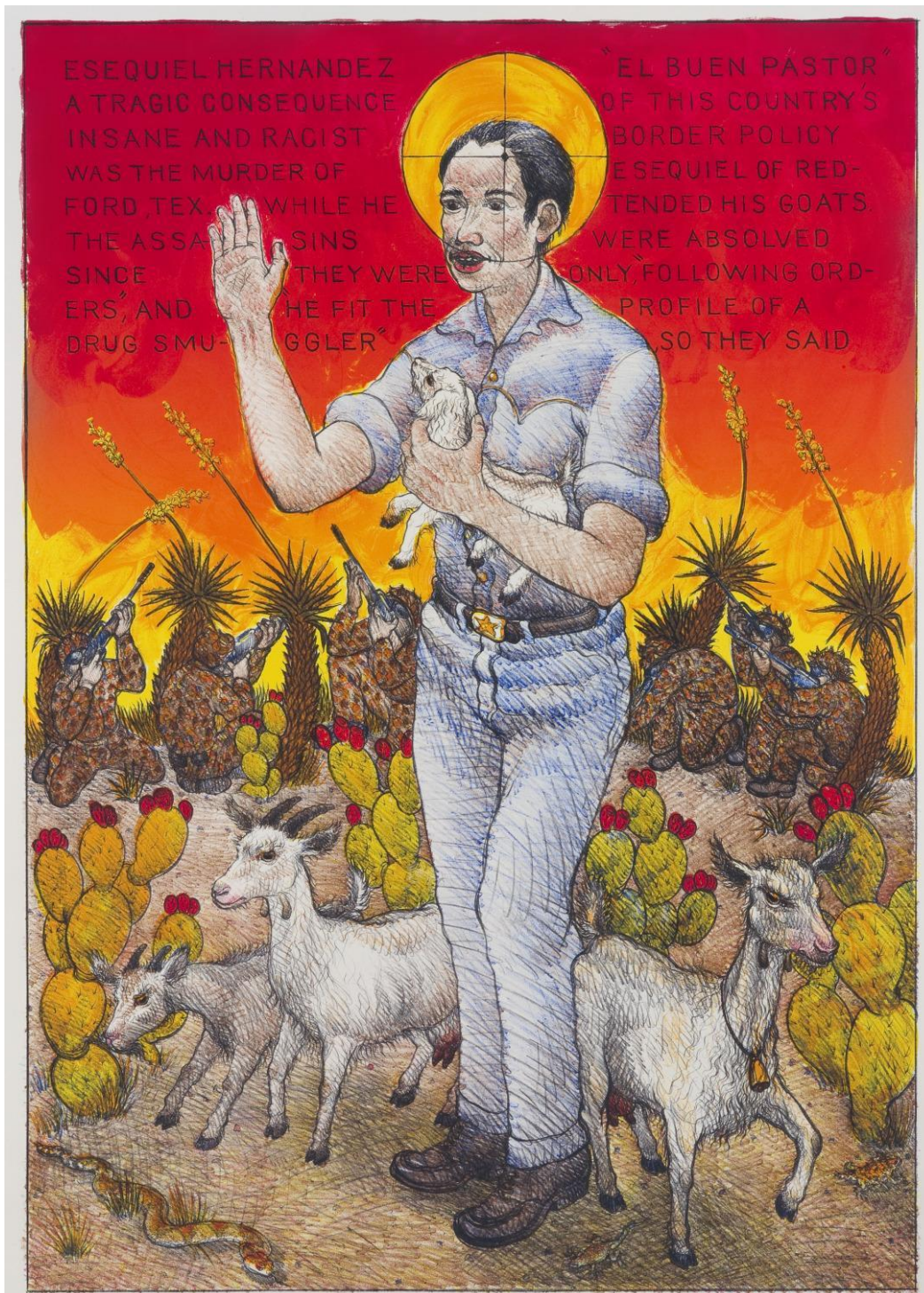


Richard Bosman (American, b. 1944)

Volcano, 1989

color woodcut

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1991.01



Luis Jimenez (American, b. 1940 -d. 2006)

El Buen Pastor, 1999

Lithograph

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999.15



Roger Shimomura (American, b. 1939)

American Infamy, 2006

Acrylic on canvas panels

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006.15

Acquired with funds provided by JCCC and Marti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation



Kerry James Marshall (American, b. 1955)

Untitled (Altgeld Gardens), 1995

Acrylic, collage on canvas

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999.16



Art Miller (American, b. 1961)
Jalisco Restaurant, Mission, KS, 1996, Printed 2007
Gelatin silver print
Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.33



John Arsenault (American, b. 1971)

Irene, 2005

C-print

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006.22



Preston Singletary (American Indian, Tlingit, b. 1963)

Raven Steals Moon, 2003

Blown and sand carved glass

Collection Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007.66