The exhibit opening for the work of Jean Luc Mylayne, Andy Warhol, Audubon at Illinois, and Marloes ten Bhömer drew a rather homogenous crowd, lots of white relatively affluent looking individuals meandering through the galleries. Yet, I couldn’t help but notice that within most of the exhibits very few people were spending very much time actually looking at and examining the new pieces on display. Many people visiting KAM during this event seemed in attendance be seen, chat with acquaintances etc. As I watched the visitors that night I felt as if the Warhol exhibit had the most people who were actually looking at what was on display, ironically these pieces were in the smallest space.

**Art Exploration:** *Diptych with the Coronation of the Virgin and Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John*, 1340–1360

When I first came across this tiny work in the smallest room of the museum, I squinted hard trying to take in all of the detail, wishing that I could turn up the lighting. Its small size made this work feel much more personal to me: I could imagine it taking the place of a jewelry box or small picture frame on a dressing table or night stand in a bedroom. The simplistic and clean white ivory are beautiful, I love that I know that this piece is expensive (because of its material), but not over complicated in its composition or design. I would imagine that this piece was carved, making the level of detail, symmetry and softness of the figures amazing considering the size of this diptych. The texture of this piece appears to be completely smooth. The drapery on the figures looks like there are real bodies beneath it, especially on the right side.

On the left side of the diptych the Virgin Mary is holding the baby Jesus underneath a gothic style arch, accompanied by angels on either side. On the right side Jesus hangs from the cross under an identical arch accompanied by a man and a woman. The woman may be Mary again, but I am not sure. The figures on the right side each echo each other in a curved, almost “S” shape. In contrast all of the figures found on the left side of the piece are standing rather straight. While the right side of diptych looks more dynamic, all of the figures seem to be frozen, or posed as opposed to being caught in morning for example. However, I feel that the lack of movement was a necessity of size rather than by choice of the artist.
I believe that this piece was probably intended for personal worship at home due to its size. Its owner was probably affluent due to the great expense of ivory. I believe that the imagery found on this piece was created to remind the viewer of the miracle of Christ’s birth and the sacrifice of his death. This piece has a unique significance today for several reasons. First, this diptych not only provides a testimony to the importance of Christianity in that objects just as this were made for home worship, but also provides a view of the architectural styles of the time period.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think that this object is so small? Why do you think that the artist chose to place these images on two separate pieces of ivory instead of one? What do you think the original use of this object was?

2. Why do you think that this piece was made from ivory instead of another material such as wood or stone? Do you think that the color is significant?

3. What do you notice about the figures on the right panel versus the left panel? Do you think that the poses of the figures is significant? Why?

4. Who are the people depicted in this piece? Why do you think that the artist chose these two scenes as opposed to others?

5. What do you think the significance of the sizes of the figures in this piece is? Does this tell you anything about the level of understanding about perspective at the time?

Keywords:

Object Guide:
Hedda Sterne
Romania, 1910–
*Machine V*, 1950
Oil on canvas
During a time typically linked with boat like Cadillacs and dinner promptly at five o’clock pm, the abstract impressionism movement was changing the art world. Yet, when thinking about this movement, Hedda Stern, the token female member is often forgotten while museums and galleries across the country covet her works. However, Sterne sets herself apart from many of her peers, such as Jackson Pollock, in that she never settled into one identifying style, in fact, Sterne made a point of evolving as soon as her work began to be recognizable within a style. Sterne’s progression can be seen in the diversity of her exhibition patterns, contributing to surrealist shows during the 1930s and moving on to abstract expressionism for the following decades.

*Machine V* provides the viewer with a paradigm of Sterne’s stent in the style of abstract impressionism. This piece is initially striking as its bright orange color almost overwhelms a majority of the details that fade into the background. This intense color is achieved by Sterne with oil paint applied so thinly that the fibers of the canvas are visible to the viewer. Beyond the color of the backdrop, the viewer is met a complex web of machinery that articulated in shades of gray that appear to have both an immediacy in the foreground as well as fade back into the distance. Cranes, cranks and antenna like elements create a large diagonal moving from the top left to bottom right. Yet these mechanical elements extend from the ordinary with anthropomorphic elements, eyes and smiles that produce an energetic and enigmatic mood in the painting.

Sterne brings life and an optimistic view to the mechanization seen in *Machine V* in reaction to a post World War II America. This mood is surprising considering that Sterne left Europe narrowly escaping what she described would have been an “unspeakable death” in a 2007 interview. This piece no doubt reflects the wide spread feelings of relief at the close of the Second World War.

**Bibliography**

Hedda Sterne, Machine V, 1950

Description

I. What do you see in this picture? There is a variety of machinery on a bright orange background.

What (if anything) is strange about it? Can you anything human-like in this painting? The machines look like they have eyes and other facial features, the almost look they are alive.

What emotion do these human like features have? Are they happy, friendly, mean, or scary? Some machines look like they are kind of goofy, some are serious, and others look almost oblivious.

Interpretation

II. Does anyone know what anthropomorphic means? Means assigning human attributes or features to a nonhuman thing. (Offer definition or guide the group if no one knows, give more information and examples to younger groups: Wall-E, Flying Carpet from Aladdin, Sponge Bob Square Pants)

Can you point out the anthropomorphic elements in this piece? Eyes in the crane bucket, faces in stacked tools or scaffolding.

Why do you think that Sterne assigned the human form to machinery in this painting? Maybe she thought that the machines looked alive because they are so big, because of how they moved.

Evaluation
III. What time period do you think this painting was created in? Do you think that the time period plays a significant role in the subject matter of this piece? 1950, almost immediately after the end of WWII. (Mention Sterne’s personal connection with narrowly escaping Nazi persecution.)

Fun Facts/Additional Information

· Female within a male dominated style and school of artistic thought
· Escape from Nazi Europe during WWII
· Progression of style
· Mention retrospective held at Krannert in 2006


Overview

Students will analyze and discuss Hedda Stern’s *Machine V* and create a baseball card for their own anthropomorphic creature or an animated piece of machinery from the painting.

Artwork

Hedda Sterne

Romania, 1910–

*Machine V*, 1950

Oil on canvas

Festival of Arts Purchase Fund

1950–7–1

Supplies

Students will need...

§ Clip boards
§ Worksheet
§ Pencils
§ Colored pencils/Crayons
§ Photos of examples of anthropomorphic figures

Procedure

Prior to tour gather materials, copy worksheets and place one worksheet on each clip board.

When students arrive have/help students set up stools around the painting. Start with discussing the artwork (see questions listed below) ending by coming back the anthropomorphic figures. Show students photos of other examples of anthropomorphic creatures and ask for volunteers to give additional examples. Ask students, if anyone likes baseball and if someone can explain what a baseball card looks like and what information is printed on it.

Pass out clip boards and materials to write/color with. Explain to students to draw a picture of their own anthropomorphic creature. If students can write on their own they can fill out a small bio about their creature that will allow them to write in details and fun facts about their creatures. If children are too young to write have them color a picture of their creature and have a few volunteers explain their bio to the class.

Collect clip boards and coloring materials before moving on.

Question/Discussion Guide

I. What do you see in this picture?
What (if anything) is strange about it? Can you anything human–like in this painting?
What emotion do these human like features have? Are they happy, friendly, mean, or scary?

II. Does anyone know what anthropomorphic means?
Can you point out the anthropomorphic elements in this piece?

Why do you think that Sterne assigned the human form to machinery in this painting?

III. What time period do you think this painting was created in?/Do you think that the time period plays a significant role in the subject matter of this piece?

Fun Facts/Additional Information

· Female within a male dominated style and school of artistic thought

· Escape from Nazi Europe during WWII

· Progression of style

· Mention retrospective held at Krannert in 2006
Kids @ Krannert brought together parents and children to enjoy the new exhibits of Jean Luc Mylayne, Andy Warhol, Audubon in Illinois, as well as activities presented by University students. Parents and children were invited to interact with the exhibits with an “I spy” activity in the Mylayne exhibit, a bird call matching game in the amongst the works of Audubon, observational drawing of life birds in the Link Gallery, origami bird making in the Noel Gallery and mask making in the Palate Cafe. While the target audience of Kids @ Krannert is rather broad, primarily aiming to get as many community members to bring their children to the museum, the crowd seemed to be dominated by families with some affiliation with the university. Many of the families seemed to be of affluent backgrounds and somehow familiar with the arts, many parents were giving their children amateur museum tours as they shuffled between activities. The parents were very encouraging of their children to participate in the activities and for the majority seemed extremely comfortable in the museum setting.
Children especially seemed to be extremely engaged and excited about the activities being held within the galleries and the origami table was consistently swamped from the moment families began to arrive. I felt that this event had a lot of different things to offer guests and children and in this was able to keep children of all different interests and ages occupied. While I was not able to escape the origami table to explore any of the other activities all of the children seemed to be extremely excited running between the galleries and activities. One of the attendees suggested that they would like to see more events targeted to younger children (his daughter looked to be about 1½ years old) while another mother said she would like to see more interactive exhibits on a permanent basis that were not a video game type activity.

Overall both parents I spoke too seemed happy to have something geared toward children at the museum and would like to see more events like this in the future. Their comments were primarily positive suggesting that the event be offered for a longer period of time throughout the day and possible make refreshments available.

After speaking with several University of Illinois students about their experiences and perceptions of Krannert Art Museum I was generally alarmed to find out that only one out five had ever visited the museum. Furthermore, two of the students I spoke with did not even seem to have an idea of where the museum was located or confused it with the Performing Arts Center in Urbana.

While I wished that more students were interested and driven to visit museums, I regrettfully have to say that I wasn’t entirely surprised by these responses. Therefore I tried to focus my questioning on what type of exhibits and advertising would draw more students into Krannert Art Museum. The majority of my interviewees said that without classes requiring them to visit the museum they just do not have time to drop in and look around for recreational purposes. While I doubt that this is entirely true, I did receive one cadid response that I feel could be an appealing proposition for many students. One rather blunt “frat boy” that I spoke with suggested that he would be more likely to visit KAM if “they served booze.” While I know that this could potentially worry museum curators I think offering some type social activity at the museum that would be an entry event for a night out for students may draw a decent crowd.

In terms of advertising I believe that catering to the Greek
Community on campus could tap into a huge potential crowd for the museum. Many fraternities and sororities advertise their events through dinner announcements, sending groups of students to chapter houses during dinnertime to give information about upcoming events. Dinner announcements could bring in a group of students typically left out of the art-scene at University of Illinois.

**Audio Guide Script:**


Welcome to the Krannert Art Museum Audio Guide! Today we will be discussing *Machine V* by Hedda Sterne, created in 1950.

This work was created by Hedda Sterne: she is remembered for being the only notable female in the famous group of abstract expressionists, the Irascibles. This group was made up of several other notable artists such as Jackson Pollack, William de Kooning, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman, among others. Even though she was born in Romania, Sterne is considered to be an American artist because it was not until she arrived in New York in 1941 that she started to receive serious recognition for her work.

As a young Jewish woman, Sterne saw the atrocities and violence of World War II while living in Paris. Sterne was able to leave Europe narrowly escaping what she described would have been an “unspeakable death” in a 2007 interview. While Sterne, experienced many visions of war, her work does not necessarily reflect only this period in her life. Although she is remembered as an abstract impressionist, Sterne is also remembered for her stubborn refusal to conform to one specific style, dabbling in many fashions throughout her career.

*Machine V* provides the viewer with a paradigm of Sterne’s stent in the style of abstract expressionism. This piece is initially striking as its bright orange color almost overwhelms a majority of the details that fade into the background. This intense color is achieved by Sterne with oil paint applied so thinly that the fibers of the canvas are visible to the viewer. Beyond the color of the backdrop, the viewer is met by a complex web of machinery articulated in shades of gray that appear to have both an immediacy in the foreground as well as fade back into the distance. Cranes, cranks and antenna like elements create a large diagonal moving from the top left to bottom right. Yet these mechanical elements extend from the ordinary with anthropomorphic elements, eyes and smiles that produce an energetic and enigmatic mood in the painting.
Art After Hours: April 4th 2009

Art After Hours proved to be a successful night in terms of attendance, but may not have served as a vehicle for drawing in repeat visitors to Krannert Art Museum. I felt that KAM served as a perfect location for Runway’s fashion show and provided an extremely trendy atmosphere for the cocktails and food during and after the show. However, I believe that Runway’s show drew most if not all of the guests present at Art After Hours, and the art served merely an environmental enhancement rather than a central part of the evening.

Speaking to those present at the event on April 4th I was able to learn that while some students did hear about Art After Hours through some of the publicity attempts made by MiA students that the fashion show was the event that actually drew them to the museum. However, I was able to collect some positive feedback that could be applied to future student geared events at KAM. First, the attendees that I spoke with enjoyed the idea of having a swankier, fancier event at the museum and enjoyed the nice food and drink available. Although both visitors I spoke with expressed a disappointment with the cost of wine and wished there was a more wide variety of cocktails available.

Compiling all of my responses I believe that KAM could have great success in holding a dressier cocktail hour on a Thursday or Friday night at the museum that students would attend before going out for the night in campus town. I believe that this would draw in more people with an art interest if there was simply music and food rather than a large event that would take attention away from the art works in KAM.