



Aesthetics

Schonmann 2017

What is aesthetics all about?

- Something to do with...
 - Beauty
 - Feelings
 - Experience
 - Art
 - Perceiving art
 - Critiquing art
 - Reflecting on art

Schonmann:

- “aesthetics refers to the values and relationships that are interlinked with tacit knowledge”
- *When we experience something aesthetically, we encounter values and relationships that we consider in reference to understandings that we cannot necessarily articulate.*



What is the value of aesthetics?



- “aesthetics is essential for the spiritual and the fully human existence of society”
- “...an opportunity for *catharsis*, referring to a release of emotions that can lead to renewal or restoration.”
- “To be engaged with the world aesthetically makes life really worth living.”

What is an 'aesthetic experience'?

- A feelingful response



Have you had an
aesthetic experience?

When?

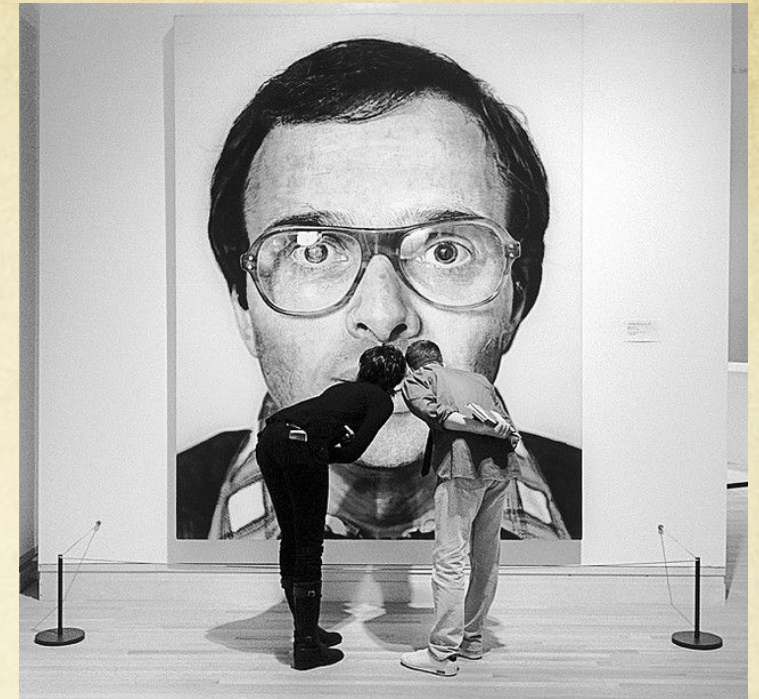
How do we teach for aesthetic experience?

- How can you cultivate, in your students, a *feelingful* response to art?

“Aesthetic distance”

Bullough (1912)

- The perceiver needs to have the right distance from the art
 - Too close, you can't appreciate it
 - Too far away, you can't meaningfully experience it



- Many *kinds* of distance, e.g., in terms of...
 - familiarity with subject matter, or materials
 - cultural understanding
 - technical or theoretical understanding

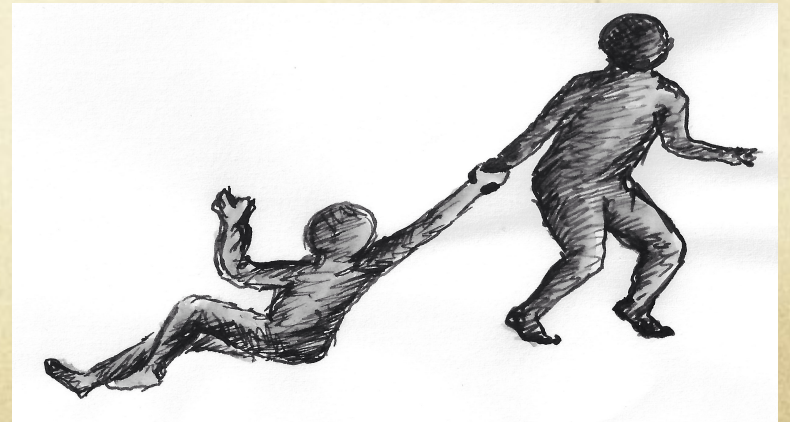
How do we teach with *aesthetic distance* in mind?

How to curate an aesthetic experience?

- Choose a piece of art that is a suitable distance from your students

OR...

- Bring your students closer, so they are at an optimal distance



Important

How to curate an aesthetic experience?

- You must *invest* time, energy and focus to achieve an aesthetic experience
- How to persuade your students to fully lend themselves to the experience? Tricky!

Samuel Barber: Adagio for Strings, 1936

- 9:00 Barber's adagio score
video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajaMdRv0IK0>
- 8:07 String quartet
video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKrxPTePXEQ>
- 8:50 Orchestra
video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3MHeNt6Yjs>



Curating the experience

- Composed when Barber was just 26 years old
- Evokes contemplation, sadness
- Used often in films, perhaps most famously in the Vietnam War movie *Platoon*—an elegy for lost lives and the loss of innocence
- A simple melody that seems to wind around itself, tighter and tighter, moving higher and higher until there is a breath-taking climax...*and then it goes even higher and tighter...*then a short unwinding: a dénouement.

