Museums and Collecting: Cultural Value

**DISCUSS:**

**What is a museum?**
- What is a museum? What museums have you visited?
- What things might one see in a museum?
- Why are there museums? What purpose do they have in our community?

**Works of art**
- What is the artist’s message and how do we know?
- What is their point of view (perspective)? Purpose? Agenda?
- What does the artwork say about the time in which it was created?
- In your opinion, what makes this work significant?
- Is this work an example of “cultural heritage”? Explain your answer.

**What is a collection?**
- Why do people collect things? What do you collect, why?
- Would you have purchased this work (show example from Gallagher collection at UAMA) for your collection? Why, why not?
- What worth does it have being displayed in a public museum?
- Where would you display this work if you owned it?
- Does its sense of value (cultural or monetary) change depending on where it is displayed? Why?

**LOOK:**
- What do you notice? Describe what you see.
- What is going on in this image?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
DO:

ACTIVITY 1
The earliest museums were private collections of the wealthy. Natural, geological, religious, and art objects would be displayed together according to the wishes of the collector. These displays, taking up entire rooms, were called Wunderkammers. Art in the 18th century was hung floor to ceiling - called salon style today. This manner is based on the earlier displays of artwork seen in the private picture gallery collections of the 17th century. Compare the images of Dell’historia natural (Wunderkammer) or the salon style display in The Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Gallery at Brussels to the UAMA gallery display.

What exhibition style would you prefer to visit? Why? Why do you think the early collectors preferred to display their art and objects the way they did? What factors might influence how the UAMA hangs their pictures?

ACTIVITY 2
When works from the Gallagher collection are on display in the museum galleries, they may be displayed in a variety of ways. They may be combined with other collections and grouped around a theme, or a time period. An exhibition may arrange the works around an artist, a style, or by types of art (painting, prints, or sculpture).

Create your own exhibition. Use images from the UAMA "Modern Spirit" exhibit, or cut out images from magazines, photographs, books, the internet, etc. Choose a theme or category and decide how you will group your objects. Use the handout UAMA Gallery to "hang" your exhibition.
ACTIVITY 3

Labels are used in museums to make visible the museum’s *classification* of an object (to categorize or organize). A label will record the basic facts including the title, the artist, year the object was made, what it was made from, and sometimes more detailed information. Explanatory text written by the curator might help viewers understand the object better. Write labels for the works on display in your gallery exhibition. You can start your research using the UAMA website.

**Example label from the Gallagher Collection**

| **Alexander Calder** | Calder trained as a mechanical engineer and had a variety of jobs - working as a hydraulics engineer and automotive engineer, timekeeper in a logging camp, and fireman in a ship's boiler room - before deciding to pursue a career in art. His scientific focus on balance and precision followed him as he manipulated traditional artistic forms and experimented with new ones such as the mobile (suspended moving sculpture) and stabile (mobile fixed to a stationary object). Blue Moon over the Steeple incorporates elements of both mobiles and stabiles: the suspended, painted discs are delicately balanced on the peak of a black “steeple,” but can revolve easily in an irregular circle. |
| **American, 1898-1976** |  |
| **Blue Moon over the Steeple, 1965** |  |
| sheet metal, wire and paint |  |
| Gift of Edward Joseph Gallagher, Jr. in Memory of Edward Gallagher, Ann Hay Gallagher, and Edward Gallagher III |  |
How would you curate (display) works of art at the UAMA?

Arrange works from the UAMA, images from magazines or the internet on the walls below. How are you going to arrange the work? Is there a theme to your exhibition? Is there a specific order that they should go in? Think about how the images should be organized before you begin.