

Week 2 Discussion: Context, Meaning, and Value

Required Resources

Read/review the following resources for this activity:

- Textbook: Chapter 4, 5
- Lesson
- At least 1 news article (e.g., latimes.com, usatoday.com, nytimes.com)
- Minimum of 1 scholarly source (in addition to the textbook)

Initial Post Instructions

Select one of the following options to research for this discussion:

- **Option 1:** Google <California Washington mural>. You will find numerous reports concerning a California school district that voted to paint over a mural in the high school. The *Life of Washington* was painted by Depression-era artist Victor Arnautoff.
- **Option 2:** Google <Indiana University Thomas Hart Benton mural>. You will find numerous articles on the controversy surround a panel from Benton's *A Social History of Indiana* (1933) murals.
- **Option 3:** Conduct research on a mural or statue or monument in your town that is the subject of controversy.

Before you read the news articles, try to look at the artworks through an image search in Google. Then, read the news articles to see the different viewpoints about the murals. For the initial post, address **at least four (4)** of the following questions for the option you selected:

- What do you think should be done with the artwork (e.g., painted over, covered, destroyed, left as is in plain view, etc.)? Why?
- Should the context in which the artwork was created (the Great Depression of the 1930s in the case of the Benton and Arnautoff murals) have an impact on the decision of what to do with the artwork?
- Should the context in which people now view the artwork have an impact on the decision of what to do with it?
- What message do you think the artwork conveys?
- Do you think there is ambiguity in the message?
- Do you think the message is vague?
- Does the artistic value of the artwork require that it be saved regardless of message?
- Does the historic value of the artwork require that it be saved regardless of message?
- Do you think the message of the artwork is sufficiently important that the message alone requires that it be saved?
- Do you think the artists were biased or prejudiced? If yes, explain specifics about the artwork that support your opinion. Do you think viewers might be bringing bias or prejudice to their opinions? Are you?