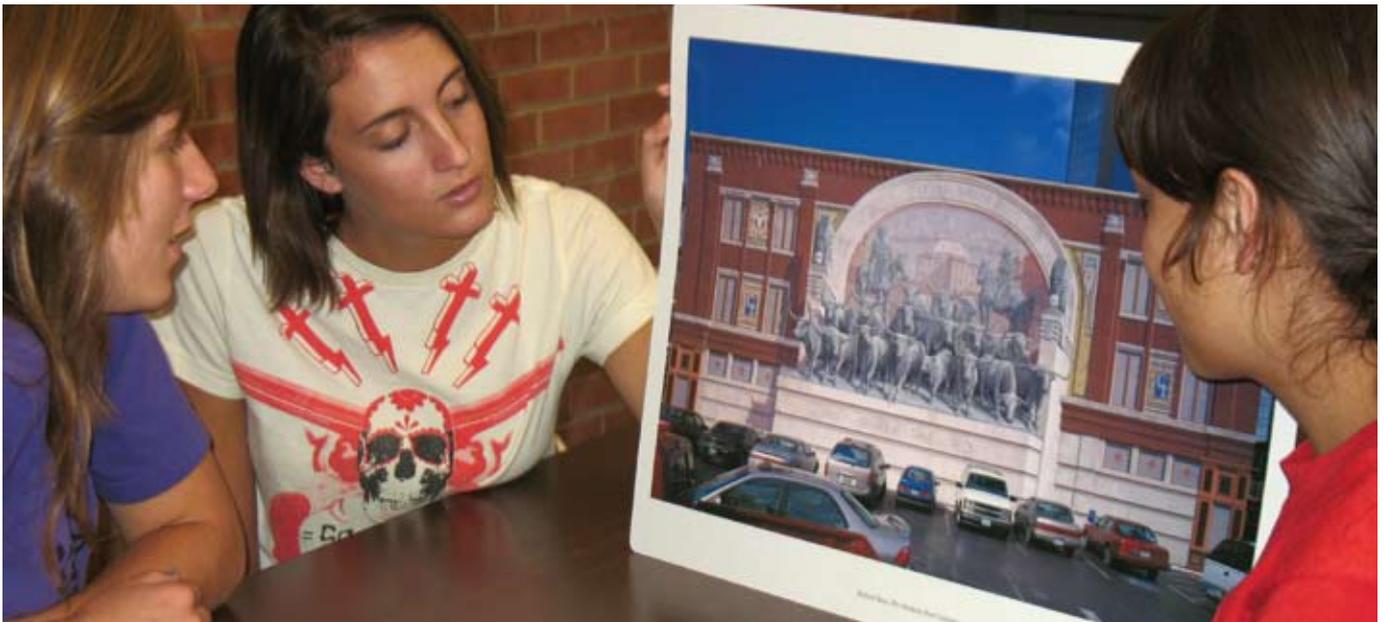


# Commemoration: Art and Remembrance



*Kaley, Renee, and Jessalyn investigate a commemorative mural.*

## **Pam Stephens**

**T**his month's Art Teacher Round Table deals with commemoration, the act of honoring or remembering someone or something. Artists create a wide variety of commemorative objects ranging from monumental statues that recall historical figures or events, to discreet roadside shrines memorializing friends or family.

Regardless of the scale, style, or medium, commemorative art expresses meaning. With this thought in mind, I have challenged some of my art education students to develop units of study based upon meaningful exploration of commemorative art objects. Here are the questions that students developed to guide their units:

1. What are the characteristics that define commemorative art? What characteristics are most common? Least common? How do we know when an art object fits the category of "commemorative"?
2. How do we decide who or what deserves commemoration? Can we commemorate anyone or anything? What makes a person or event eligible for commemoration?

3. Where does commemorative art belong? City parks? Museums? On the roadside? Inside homes? How can the location change the meaning of commemorative art?
4. Who can make commemorative art?
5. Are certain kinds of commemorative art more valid than others? For example, is a bronze statue more valid than a temporary installation?
6. What exemplars of commemorative art will best guide students to discover meaning?
7. What sort of commemorative art activities are appropriate for the K-12 classroom?

I believe that the intrinsic nature of the visual arts has the power to accomplish meaningful commemoration, therefore, my proposal is to select those commemorations that best address teaching goals. Next, locate artists and artworks that most suit desired learning outcomes, and set about investigating the "whys" and "hows" of the artworks.

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Here are a few examples of commemorative artworks to explore:

- The Cowgirl Hall of Fame Mural (a trompe l'oeil painting that honors the women of the American West)
- The Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach (a large installation that memorializes a historical event)
- The Washington Monument (in honor of George Washington)

What are your ideas for teaching through commemorative art? What artworks do you suggest as exemplars for students to investigate? Join the discussion at [schoolartsroom.blogspot.com](http://schoolartsroom.blogspot.com) or on the *SchoolArts* Facebook page. ☺

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## **WEB LINKS**

[cowgirl.net/home/home/the-museum/museum-exterior](http://cowgirl.net/home/home/the-museum/museum-exterior)  
[www.holocaustmmb.org](http://www.holocaustmmb.org)  
[www.nps.gov/wamo/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wamo/index.htm)