# Unit X: Pluralism

### Stylistic Diversity and the art of the 80's

## Unit Student Learning Objectives

### Unit X: XXX\_TITLE (one week)

At the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify artists and describe qualities associated with 80s and 90s artwork (Course Goals: 1,2,4,5, GE: 1,4,6,7, Core skills: A, D, E)
2. Define key terms associated with these movements and artists (Course Goals: 1,2,4 GE: 1,4,6,7, core skills: A, D, E)
3. Begin the process of writing a research paper by finding an appropriate artists for the subject (Course Goals: 3, 4, GE: 1,3,7, core skills: A,B,D,E)

### Artists covered:

* Jenny Holzer
* Jeff Koons
* Jean Michel Basquiat
* Barbara Kruger
* Cindy Sherman

## Unit Student Assessments & Activities

### Introduction (ULO 1-3)

Welcome to the second half of the semester! We will be following a slightly different class structure during the second half for a couple of reasons -- we only have two chapters left in our text book, you have a couple larger assignments to accomplish, and it gets harder the closer we get to today's art world for me to pick out artists that you have to know.

This means we need to start searching for material that covers even more contemporary artists and events, and that you will be required to do a little more research on your own to find the artists that fit your personal avenue of interest, and share them with the class.

First, the big assignments: Before the end of the semester, you will have to write a research paper, and make a trip to see see artwork in a gallery or museum. The week of unit 9 (November 4th through the 11th) you will be given a lighter course load to give you some time to run out at some real art. If this is going to be tough for you that week, then you may need to get out there sooner.

Besides reading chapter 10, we are starting the research paper this week. I am giving you a sample paper to read, and more details on what is expected. In the discussion forum this week, you will introduce the artist you are going to write your paper on to the rest of the class. This means a lot of the work this week is on your own initiative. I have pulled a couple of the artists out of the chapter for you to know, but we don't spend any time outside of the text on them.

### Textbook : Read Chapter 10 Minimalism and Conceptual Art (ULO 1-3).

Please read Chapter 10 in *Twentieth Century American Art* by Erika Doss, pages 203-225. Then test your understanding by answering the Textbook Review Questions in the next section.

### Textbook Chapter 10 Review Questions (self assess): (ULO 1-3)

The answer to these questions can be found in chapter 10 of *Twentieth Century American Art* by Erika Doss.

Answer these questions as best as you can after reading this weeks chapter in Twentieth Century American Art. You can try the quiz multiple times. You will be graded on the completing the quiz but you are allowed to make mistakes and correct your answers. Use this as an opportunity to test your comprehension of the material and see what you missed, and as preparation for the midterm and final.

Q: How were the political events of the 1980s good for the Arts? A. An economic boom and a focus on materialism also created record sales in the art world. B. A strong focus on equality meant unparalleled focus on minority and feminist artists. C. Reagan's cinematic background brought about his interest in supporting all of the arts. D. A new level of attention to detail and craftsmanship made for some of the best quality paintings in decades. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: How were the political events of the 1980s bad for the Arts? A. Neo-conservative attacks on cultural institutions put a stop to the funding of more critical artworks. B. Another decade dominated by feminist and race related artworks made for a lack of artistic innovation. C. The general public favored new technology, such as video games, over going to the museums. D. At a time when artists could have fused the diversity of previous styles together into a new movement, they returned to traditional forms of abstraction. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Big business (like Marlboro) support the arts with large amounts of money, why do some artists have a problem with this? A. They feel art should be able to look critically at society, making artists beholden to corporations for money inhibits freedom of expression. B. Artists who had a problem with this were the ones not able to get money for public art. C. They believed the true test of an artworks worth was determined by what it sold for in a commercial gallery. D. Their hatred of big tobacco was even larger than their desire for money. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Which of the following does NOT describe Neo-Expressionism? A. A movement that grew slowly from artists interested in quality and the lost techniques of classical painting. B. A term that loosely holds together international young artists reinvigorating painting at a time when conceptual artwork was dominant. C. A painting style that blatantly appropriated from other painting styles, from German Expressionism to graffiti. D. A group of young artists in the 80's known for big egos and uncritical splashy paintings. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Explain the 1980’s backlash against Feminism A. Family-values oriented politics led to a conflict with those who continued to seek greater equality and rights for women.  
B. Femi-Nazis began herding men into concentration camps, the public had had enough. C. The stifling puritanical values of the 60's and 70's were replaced with a rampant reinvestigation of sexuality. D. The abundance of spandex-wearing rock bands and men with perms meant there was no longer a need for Feminism. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

Q: Explain why in the 1980s the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was a favorite target of conservatives A. Public funding for artwork that was outside of the "Norman Rockwell" experience was seen as promoting perverse lifestyles and wasting taxpayer money. B. The NEA funds public programs such as PBS and Sesame Street, and conservatives have long hated Big Bird. C. The endowment favored small art shows over big art events that could bring publicity to America. D. Reagan's "trickle down theory" proved without a doubt that the best way to bring money to the arts and the poor was through tax breaks to the rich. ANSWER: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC

## Research Paper (ULO 3)

You will need to choose and Artist for your research paper. The paper should be 1500 words – (approximately 3 pages in length at 1.5 spacing at 12pt type). Pick an artist whose career starts somewhere between 1970 and 2000--that is an established but contemporary artist. Make sure there are enough sources out there for you to research this artist.

I have reduced the length of the assignment from previous semesters, but I expect something in return: include links or images within your paper to take advantage of the on-line experience. We can work through this in the coming weeks if you need assistance. This first week, when you introduce your artist in the discussion forum, include at least one link to the artist through their gallery or other material.

If there is a Wikipedia page for the artist, it is a good indication that there is enough source material out there for you. Look to the external links section of the Wikipedia entry for a list of biographical resources to use. You are responsible for finding an appropriate artist. That means: look through the criteria here one more time and make sure your artist fits. Make sure there is enough material out there do proper research. Make sure your not picking some old dead artist that we all know about anyway.

Below is a short list of interviews with important artists, and artist lists from a few galleries. I may continue to add to this in the future.

### Lists of Artists to Consider:

#### Interviews and blogs about artists:

* [PBS Art21 series](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/index.html)
* [Robert Ayer's "A Sky Filled with Shooting Stars" Artist interview blog.](http://www.askyfilledwithshootingstars.com/wordpress/)

#### Lists of artists at the following galleries:

* [Gagosian Gallery](http://www.gladstonegallery.com/artists.asp)
* [Barbara Gladstone Gallery](http://www.gladstonegallery.com/)
* [Matthew Marks Gallery](http://www.matthewmarks.com/artists/)
* [Cheim and Read](http://www.cheimread.com/artists/)
* [Sikkema Jenkins](http://www.sikkemajenkinsco.com/artists.html)
* [303 Gallery](http://www.303gallery.com/artists/)
* [Feature Inc.](http://www.featureinc.com/artists2.html)
* [Deitch Projects](http://www.deitch.com/artists/index.php)
* [David Zwirner](http://www.davidzwirner.com/artists)
* [Luhring Augustine](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/)

### **Readings**: (ULO 3, 4)

#### Introduction

*insert intro here... If you are interested, you can find the* [*full text*](http://www.example.com) *and more information about the author at* [*this website*](http://www.example.com)*.*

#### Example research paper: "Gina Magid" by Olivia Smith

Contemporary art has become a mixture and collaboration of past artists and past movements over the last two centuries. When discussing contemporary art, styles range from abstract expressionism, pop, minimalism to film and photography. It has become difficult to associate any contemporary artist to one particular style because of the diverse culture, fusion of styles and total freedom of expression. Art that expresses sexual intensity or the ideas of feminism have become less taboo, as many artists find the release of their personal lives and visions easier to express in their works. Contemporary artists are growing in number as many find their own unique style and realize how important their artwork has become to the emotions of everyday people. In studying contemporary artists, one particular woman who has captured the intensity of emotion, seductive darkness and the light within dark shadows is New York based artist, Gina Magid.

Magid was born in New York City in 1969. She does not elaborate on her personal life, though one could make the claim her paintings start from happenings in her life. She claims that she does not start her work this way. In other words, the art she creates subconsciously creates her biography. In an interview on Feature Inc, she states that “ I very rarely start a painting with the details of my life. I tend to start with visual imagery that inspires me....it eventually becomes apparent that they are very much about my life, usually in ways I had not/could not have planned - as I believe all art reflects it's maker's life.” She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of California Santa Cruz in 1992, and a Master of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute in 1996. From there she worked to develop her skills as a painter and teacher. Through interviews with art magazines and blogs, Magid has been able to describe her passion for psychological intoxication of the human mind. She begins most of her work from a place of uncertainty, as if taking herself on a psychological journey to some unknown depth as she creates. Her paintings are not necessarily difficult to grasp, yet the fluidity of her images take the viewer on a similar journey, a feeling of dreamlike chaos:

"I would like to induce the feeling one has right before waking up or falling asleep, embracing a realm of time which exists between two worlds: ￼conscious/unconscious, chaos/structure, abstraction/realism. I consider these polar relationships when creating the internal logic of a painting. My intention is to unite them in a seamless, sensuous reality which is capable of resonating meaning on varied levels of perception." (Feature Inc)

Some of her most intense works are like looking into dreams, full of fast moving confusion and flashes of images in a dark haze. The viewer may find themselves enjoying a romantic gesture in the painting, then may experience a feeling of darkness and violence by looking at the painting longer and closer. Magid has clear intentions to confuse the observer with obvious images juxtaposed into fascinating scenarios.

Animals and the reflection of nature are two very important aspects of some of her paintings. For instance, Tiger in Pool of Reflective Water, 2006 was displayed in the Steuben Gallery (11crossgallery.com) in 2006. The painting, made of acrylic and oil paints, was created on paper and infused with ink and glitter. It shows a white tiger, walking into the depths of water, surrounded with water lilies, reminiscent of Monet with a pink, girlish feel, and flowing black branches. The tiger is purely an outline done in ink, displayed as translucent as the water. He is looking up mysteriously at the onlooker, as if caught during a personal moment of bathing or drinking. Other works that describe Magid’s love affair with animals and nature are those of jaguars ( Roar, 2010 and Jaguara, 2003-2006), snakes (King Cobra 2007), birds (Owl with Two Hands, 2005, Soaring Hawk, an interesting, realistic wood cut, from 2006, and deer (Love and Affection, 2006 and Dark Night Coming, 2006).

Many of her animals are outlined, like the Tiger in Pool of Reflective Water, to create a feeling of translucency, as if they may never be caught, as though they are only shadows of the spirit within the animal. Roar is a perfect example of this idea of imagery. The jaguar is outlined in a neon green ink, placed on deep rich purples, blacks and bright blues. The intense colors, dark pastels and oil paint, intensify the animals pain and possible violent anguish, as though ready to attack or hunt. The animal itself is only an outline, yet the placement within dark colors allow Magid to keep the details of appearance to a minimum without losing any effect. She does something similar in the painting Dark Night Coming, as she places an ethereal fairy floating next to a beckoning deer, surrounded in roses and drips of paint. Yet what makes the painting stand out, is the use of color behind the images. Again, dark purples with shades of black and white are reminiscent of Torches Mauve 1960, by Franz Kline, whom she lists as an influence. She says in an interview with Features Inc:

“When I leave a shape transparent rather than painting it in, it gets to have a more open-ended and ambiguous relationship to the whole. For me it's sort of existing outside of conscious, linear time and space. It can be read literally as part of the landscape, the foreground, background, or felt as an unseen entity”.

Magid’s transparent images literally give a fluidity to the animals, the knobby limbs of a deer, the sharp teeth of the jaguar, or the individual thinness of the owl’s wings, or the wrinkles of water in the reflecting waters.

Another important subject in Magid’s paintings is the use of the female and the female nude. Magid’s use of line also gives a transparency to some of her female subjects. The ultimate feeling that stimulates from these images is erotic sensitivity, as though spying on the tiger again in the water, yet instead peering into the intimate, private lives of women. Magid gives life to her female subjects through facial gesture and free flowing bodies. She combines her images of animals with her images of women, as if to say that women are the human embodiment of nature. As females, there is a sense of power and wildness, of danger and innocence. Sugar Mountain, 2008, an oil paint on satin, the cobra is literally consuming the striking young woman in the painting. She looks on with dangerous eyes, as if the snake is taking over her body, becoming her hair, and eventually becoming apart of her soul, which she displays through her eyes.

Magid claims that she is appreciates feminism and its desires for the recognition of women’s art. She grew up during the seventies and eighties when feminist art was starting to be a much more distinguished movement. According to Erika Doss, author of Twentieth-Century American Art ( 2002), “A core issue...was female identity and the ways in which images, especially those of the body, shape that identity” (183). Feminist artists “sought to reclaim the female body as a subject” (184), rather than a typical image of sexual innuendos and desire of men. Magid uses her paintings of women as subjects, and portrays them as a sense of self- reflection and strength. She uses women as a way to display a “universalizing female experience” (Doss 186), invoking a sense of power and enamor over any onlooker. Yet another interpretation could be that the snake, the King Cobra is literally devouring the woman, a sense of a man’s attempts of power over a strong female. Perhaps Magid is showing the typical scenario of a woman letting a man take over her life, though it must be left for personal interpretation as all her paintings.

Magid certainly attracts the female sex in her sensual, colorful, yet dark paintings, yet appeals to the man’s animalistic senses through her use of animal imagery. She states in her interview with Feature Inc :

“I definitely consider myself a feminist...I believe both sexes should have the opportunity to pursue whatever it is they want to pursue and be treated with equal respect. I think my work could be seen as feminist in the sense that I just feel really free in my approach to expressing myself and putting forth a vision of being alive in a very strong, sensual, and unapologetically feminine way.”

She certainly has no apologies and her honest, girlish materials make her such an attractive artist to study. Magid loves to use the bright colors of pastel, the deep darks of as well as thin acrylics and oil paints. But it is her other mediums that make her paintings to fluid and so dream-like. She uses glitter, not just because its girly and sparkles, but also because it has a feminine grittiness to it, that can appeal to any strong and tough woman. Instead of canvas, Magid predominately uses stretched satin, as well as paper, allowing her paints to soak in deep and spread. She explains, “I love its girly, gaudy, glamorous and magical qualities...a certain decadence, like in satin sheets, underwear, or throw pillows” (Feature Inc). She also hand stitched the satin to put a feminine twist, an act of woman’s work (Feature Inc). She does this to feel tightly attached to her painting in a intimate, rough and appealing way.

Magid has certainly crafted her own unique techniques and styles. In my opinion, I would compare some of her styles to a few of the modern artists we have studied this semester. It is gratifying to be able to pick out styles from past artists and see the influence that they have on contemporary artists. For instance, Magid’s styles can range from representational yet abstract art, and unquestionably pop art. Her colors and use of lightly sketched birds and animals has a likeliness to Robert Raushenburg’s (October 22, 1925 – May 12, 2008) untitled painting of pink birds, a carnival scene and pink, yellow and white abstract strokes that I viewed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Another Rauschenberg painting, Canyon (1959) uses a stuffed hawk with open wings combined with his abstract paintings. This use of open-winged birds is similar to Magid’s use of birds in Soaring Hawk (2006), Ocean Dusk (2006), and an Untitled (2002) painting of a young woman in a dream-like state in the bathtub with these soaring birds around her. In fact, the soaring birds seem to be a permanent fixture in many of her paintings, as if to always keep nature a circulating factor, no matter the subject. The painting Okunomatu (In the Pine Forest, 2007) blends the silent nature of a woman and a wolf-like animal that has some similarity to Japanese prints in the use of lines, color and fluidity. This wolf could represent the American trickster, as a fox would be in Japanese culture.

Another interesting comparison is her painting Smash-up Derby (2007), a scene of a car crash, with a collision in the shape of a flower, surrounded by palm trees as well as GTS and Car Crash with Birds to Andy Warhol’s (August 6, 1928 – February 22, 1987), Car Crash series (1962-63). She beautifies the horrors of something so real, unpredictable and depressing, just as Warhol brought the idea of death and disaster to life that expresses a feeling of numbness and desolation. Magid’s spiritual connection of women, flowers and nature are reminiscent of the French symbolist artist of the early 20th century Odilon Redon (April 20, 1840 – July 6, 1916). Redon was best known for his dark, color-drenched paintings of flowers and women which are comparable to Magid’s pieces for their subjects, and vividness. Both artists stand out because of their use of fantasy in art and their emphasis on the mysterious woman among nature as a subject.

Magid has had the opportunity to display her works in numerous galleries starting as early as 1998 and has featured works through 2010. Galleries have included Spencer Brownstone (NY) , Feature Inc (NY), Acuna Hansen Gallery (CA) and the Greenberg Van Doren Gallery (NY). In 2004 Magid received a residency in the artist colony MacDowell Colony, located in Peterborough New Hampshire, as well as the Ucross Foundation, in Ucross, Wisconsin in 2002. She also received the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship in 2003, which is a grant given to those who have demonstrated outstanding artistic and creative abilities. She currently resides in Brooklyn with her husband and has been working on creating her own studio in her home. Her contacts include a Facebook page, and email, ginamagid@msn.com. Magid has created touching, inspirational and intimate pieces that truly speak to the soul. They display an encouraging message to strong females and insecure women looking for direction. Her mediums, colors and everyday inspiration from animals to trees to females and car crashes speak for themselves as powerful originality and insight into the human mind.

### Interactive activities: artwork identification, and terminology (multiple chances, self assess)(ULO 1, 2)

#### Identify artwork images from the textbook

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Jenny Holzer B.Hans Hofmann C.Jasper Johns D.Richard Serra Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/holzer.1986.timesSquareTruisms.77-9.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Jeff Koons B.Helen Frankenthaler C.Carolee Schneemann D.Andy Warhol Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/koons.1988.michaelJacksonAndBubbles.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Jean Michel Basquiat B.Michael Ray Charles C.David Smith D.Kara Walker Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/basquiat.1981.untitled.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Barbara Kruger B.Kerry James Marshall C.Jeff Koons D.Jenny Holzer Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/kruger.1987.shop.jpg

Q: This Artwork is by: A.Cindy Sherman B.Helen Frankenthaler C.James Turrell D.Jenny Holzer Answer: A POINTS: 5 TYPE: MC IMAGE: images/sherman.1982.sundress.jpg

### Discussion Board Question relating to slideshows and readings (ULO 1-4)

Now that you have become familiar with the artists and concepts presented in this unit, it is time to start making connections. Here is your chance to apply what you learned in the readings to some of the artwork you have seen.

**First**, you will start a thread by answering the Essay question below.

**Then** you will reply to at least two (2) other students posts to get the discussion going.

Please make sure you meet the **due dates** for these posts.

#### Essay Question:

Pick the artist you want to do your term paper on by the credentials listed in the section "Research Paper". Then write a paragraph introducing your artist to the rest of the class. Use the links feature of the discussion post forum to link to related material, images, etc. so we can see the work as well. I will be reviewing your entry not only for good presentation, but to make sure you have chosen an appropriate artist for your paper.

### Additional Artists to Study (ULO 1)

*You will not be tested on the following material, but if you are interested in studying further anything we discussed this week, these artists could also fit into this category*

### Optional links for further self-study (ULO 1-4)

*You will not be tested on the following material, but if you are interested in studying further anything we discussed this week, these links are a good place to start:*