

### **Analysis of a “Cultural Event”**

For this assignment, you will write a 500-word review of a cultural event – a museum exhibit, performance, etc. – in which you answer the following questions:

1. What is the event, how was it organized, who is responsible for it? When was the artifact (play, artwork, etc.) being presented first produced, and why is it being presented now?
2. For whom (for what audiences) was the artifact intended? How did this intended audience shape what is encoded in the artifact?
3. For whom (for what audiences) is the presentation intended? How does this intended audience shape what is encoded in the presentation?
4. What information is encoded in the artifact and in its presentation? What does the content of this information say about the culture (or the individual author and presenter) which have produced it?
5. What does the presentation tell us about American culture? What is “American” about it? What does it “say” about America?

Notice that a distinction is being made between the “artifact” (the thing being presented) and the “presentation” (the way the artifact is being represented). For instance, in an art exhibit, the “artifact” might be an artwork by a specific artist, painted at a specific time in the past; the “presentation” might be the exhibition in which the artwork is being presented – say, a survey of post-World War II painting – as well as the exhibition copy, the brochures and other supporting materials provided by the museum or gallery in which the presentation takes place. In the case of a play, the text of the play is the artifact, and the production and performance you are watching is the presentation. When asking “why is it being presented now,” there are a variety of answers available, from an auspicious date (an anniversary of the artist’s death or birth, or of the original production of the work), to a contemporary linkage (the play deals with themes of concern in the current moment).

You need not do research beyond the event itself and the supporting material provided as part of the event – the program for performances, exhibition brochures and copy, etc. – but the more you can work these supporting materials into your analysis as support for your interpretation, the better.

**This paper will be due (typewritten, please!) on Wednesday, 11 March 2009.**