

# SHOULD ARTWORKS BE VALUED AT MILLIONS OF DOLLARS?

*THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.*

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### WHY CHINA'S ART MARKET IS EVOLVING FROM KNOCKOFFS TO NEW WORKS

PBS NewsHour | October 3, 2019 | Video

6:44 minutes

In the village of Dafen, China, artists make a living by creating new works of art, but also by hand duplicating some of Europe's most well-known masterpieces.

- Chinese artist Zeng Muquan has made a living copying some of the most famous European artists in history.
- Muquan claims he has painted between 3,000-5,000 duplicates of Van Gogh's "Starry Night" every year, sometimes painting as many as five per day, each of which earned him \$5.
- The artist believes he has become a better artist from copying others, and is now selling original works that fuse Western and Chinese styles. His transition to original work reflects the growing market for contemporary Chinese art in the country.
- In previous decades, Chinese collectors focused on European works or traditional Chinese art. Now, young collectors are more interested in works by contemporary Chinese artists.

### BALTIMORE MUSEUM SAYS GOODBYE WARHOL, HELLO YOUNGER, MORE DIVERSE COLLECTION

NPR | May 19, 2018 | Audio

3:56 minutes

The Baltimore Museum of Art is deaccessioning, or selling off, some of its work by famous white, male artists and purchasing works by women artists and artists of color.

- Deaccessioning a work of art is not necessarily a straightforward process. Ethically, museums are held to their mission of benefitting and educating the public when they purchase an artwork. If a museum irresponsibly sells a work of art, it could compromise the inherent pact between museums and the public.
- The Berkshire Museum in MA found itself in trouble when it tried to sell some works in its collection. The museum's actions were condemned by the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Art Museum Directors.
- Some professional associations supported the Baltimore Museum's sales because they were sold with the intent of using the proceeds to help the museum's collection better reflect the local community, which is roughly 60% Black.
- The museum's director, Christopher Bedford, says acquiring a more diverse collection can help the museum more accurately represent the history of art to the museum-going public.

## RECORD-SETTING SALE OF AN ANCIENT ASSYRIAN STONE RELIEF SPARKS LOOTING FEARS IN IRAQ

NPR | November 4, 2018 | Article

1629 words

Assyrian artifacts have garnered high prices at auctions, but some experts worry that increased demand could lead to illegal looting.

- In 2018, a 3,000-year-old 7-foot bas-relief from the palace of Nimrud in current-day Iraq sold at Christie's auction house for more than \$28 million dollars. The artifact was sold by the Virginia Theological Seminary, who claims they will use the proceeds to fund diversity scholarships.
- The palace of Nimrud was largely destroyed by ISIS in 2014, but it is believed that ISIS also funded some operations by illegally selling artifacts from the palace.
- Experts like archaeology professor McGuire Gibson argue that if prices for antiquities go up, instances of looting may follow.
- While laws exist in Iraq that prohibit exportation of archeological finds, the bas-relief was brought to Virginia in 1860. The Iraqi government requested the artifact be returned, but Christie's claimed the work was legally imported to the U.S.

### KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Deaccession
- Auction
- Bas-relief

### CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

### DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*