

teaching adolescents
the history of art

The Power of Pictures

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People today have a tremendous hunger for pictures. This hunger is a symptom of the fact that humanity, through the destiny of our time, is being urged toward the sphere of imaginative perception. We satisfy this hunger creatively if we let eye and heart dwell in active contemplation on works of art which have themselves arisen out of some measure of imaginative perception, and which can thus help to prepare the soul for this same inner sight. So "looking at pictures" can help to meet a deep need peculiar to the present day.

— EMIL BOCK¹

Aesthetics, the science of beauty, has to do with a heightened sense of experience and the ability to respond to phenomena. When we engage with the world through refined sense perception, we gain a greater richness and connection with the world. And when we have the possibility of this enhanced response, we likewise take on greater responsibility (response ability) for what we respond to. Responsibility for the object of our perception is endangered today because, more and more, we experience the outer world as something that is not a part of us. This is where the value lies in teaching aesthetics

through art history, particularly for adolescents. Engaging with art draws their interest at this powerful time of transformation in their lives away from themselves and directs it toward the world. Developing an interest and a caring responsibility for the world during adolescence can make all the difference in their later lives.

At this time of adolescence, suggests Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, it is important to balance the study of inorganic, lifeless elements in the natural sciences with that of art. Steiner writes: "At the age when the child must realize that nature is ruled by abstract law to be

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