

SENIOR WORKSHEET

INTRODUCTION

Among Michael Snow's most well-known paintings or installations are the Walking Woman works that were his complete focus for a period of time. His Walking Woman started as a 5-foot tall silhouette cut from cardboard of a female figure taking a stride forward. Possibly due to the size of the material at hand, her arms, feet and the top of her head are cropped, and this is the same shape used in all subsequent works. Walking Woman is a female figure who has been flattened, cropped and simplified to remove any trace of specificity. In fact, there was no model used in her design, so she never really had any identity.

The work grows out of Snow's interest in abstraction and in the focus on surface and material over subject matter. By focusing on a single silhouette in a number of works, he was free to experiment with colour, material and presence without having to worry about subject.

CRITICAL THINKING

Art is a product of the time in which it was created, but it can also be used to educate us about issues present in the time in which it is being seen. Using the virtual tour of Early Snow, focus on the final section titled Women and Walking Woman, especially the last few images. These are all works created between 1961 and 1962, in the height of the era of abstraction – where paint and gesture and canvas were far more important to artists than subject.

Discuss the issue(s) that (F)NOR is highlighting in Snow's Walking Woman works with their performance, using the artworks as reference to explain your point.

Throughout art history the concept of the gaze – who is looking, who is being seen, and who is looking back – has been very important when we consider images of people, and particularly of women. Is the subject of an artwork an object being seen by a viewer, or is that subject included in the experience, engaging with the viewer in some way.

How does (F)NOR disrupt the traditional gaze that is at play in these works? What does their action introduce to the work, and to the audience?

What responsibility do artists and educators have in addressing and potentially correcting social injustices present in historical works of art?

How is art particularly well-suited to make these corrections and to teach people about social issues today?