

# ART CRITICISM IN ACTION



▲ **FIGURE 2.10**

Faith Ringgold. *Bitter Nest Part II: Harlem Renaissance Party*. 1988. Acrylic on canvas, printed, tie-dyed, and pieced fabric. 238.8 × 208.3 cm (94 × 82"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. © 1998 Board of Trustees.

Notice that the work of art in **Figure 2.10** is a quilt. The center of the work is painted with acrylics on canvas. The frame is made of quilted squares.

### 1 **DESCRIBE** What do you see?

During this step you will collect information, or clues, about the subject of the work. Use your perception skills to study what you see in the work. If you are not sure of something, do not guess.

- List the information found in the credit line.
- Describe the fabric frame around the painting. List and describe the people you see in the painted center. Explain the setting.

### 2 **ANALYZE** How is this work organized?

The second step in art criticism deals with the composition of the work. This is also a clue-collecting step. Do not make guesses. During this step you will use what you will learn in each chapter about the elements and principles of art.

- Which person is emphasized? How?
- What is unusual about the arrangement of objects and people?
- Where do you see repetition in this work? Describe and locate the objects that are repeated.

### 3 **INTERPRET** What is the artist trying to communicate?

The third step in art criticism is concerned with the content of the work. You are allowed to make guesses about the meaning of the work during this step. Remember that you do not need to know what the artist meant. Instead, decide what this painted quilt says to you.

- What does the clothing tell you about this scene?
- What do you think is happening in this scene? What has happened before this moment, and what will happen next?
- Why do you think the artist has illustrated this scene on a quilt?

### 4 **JUDGE** What do you think of the work?

Now you are ready to make an aesthetic judgment about this work.

- Do you think this is a successful work of art? Why or why not? Use one or more of the three aesthetic theories explained in this chapter to defend your judgment.

## MEET THE ARTIST

### FAITH RINGGOLD



*American, 1934–*

Faith Ringgold, an African-American artist, was born in New York City in 1934. She grew up in a close-knit family in Harlem.

Ringgold taught high school art in New York City for almost twenty years. In 1985, she joined the faculty at the University of California, San Diego.

During the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, she focused on political themes in her oil paintings. Then one of her students challenged her to “practice what she preached” and use traditional African materials. Her painting style changed to reflect this. She felt that she could not paint African-Americans using the techniques of shading to achieve realism, and so she changed to painting people to appear as flat shapes.

# CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

## Building Vocabulary

On a separate sheet of paper, write the term that best matches each definition given below.

1. Standards of judgment.
2. An organized approach for studying a work of art.
3. The art-criticism step in which you make a list of all the things you see in a work of art.
4. The art-criticism step in which you discover how the principles of art are used to organize the art elements of line, color, shape, form, space, and texture.
5. The art-criticism step in which you explain or tell the meaning or mood of the work.
6. The art-criticism step in which you determine the degree of artistic merit of the work.
7. The aesthetic theory that focuses on realistic representation.
8. The aesthetic theory that places emphasis on the design qualities.
9. The aesthetic theory that requires that a work of art must arouse a response of feelings, moods, or emotions in the viewer.

## Reviewing Art Facts

Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What will learning the steps of art criticism help you develop?
2. Define the four steps of art criticism.
3. Describe the three aesthetic theories.
4. If the organization of an artwork is most important to an art critic, which aesthetic theory would he or she hold?
5. When criticizing functional objects, what must you consider during interpretation besides beauty?
6. In what ways are the steps of art criticism different from the steps of art history operations? In what ways are they similar?

## Thinking Critically About Art

1. **Apply.** Select something from your home that is used solely for aesthetic purposes. Critique it using the four steps of art criticism. When you are finished, ask yourself if the object seems different than it did before. Has your opinion of the object changed?
2. **Analyze.** Find a movie critic's review of a current film in a newspaper or magazine. Read it carefully. Try to find statements that fit each of the four steps of art criticism.
3. **Extend.** Do you think you can appreciate the qualities of a work of art even if you don't like it? Explain your conclusions.



Dance pioneer Martha Graham uses the principles of aesthetics in the development of her modern dances. See how Graham uses literal qualities, design qualities, and expressive qualities through the use of body movement on page 414.



Challenge yourself and test your knowledge of art history. Visit the Glencoe

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