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**AFCU Care for Creation Workshop 2013**

## **Assignment for Integration of Franciscan Values into Art Appreciation Course**

**Course Title:** Art 105 – Introduction to Visual Art (GE course for non-majors)

**Learning Activity:** Discussion on contemporary environmental art and Franciscan perspective on creation.

**Franciscan theme:** Care for Creation.

Students are asked to read the Canticle, and then analyze the art work in light of the sentiments expressed in the Canticle. The goal is to help students see the commonalities between this contemporary art work and the concepts in the Canticle in order to foster appreciation of human creativity and God's creativity/creation.

**Assessment:** occurs primarily through class discussion and written responses to questions.

### **Assignment Rationale and Guidelines**

One of my goals in curriculum development is to integrate a Franciscan perspective into the coursework I teach in my discipline. One of the assignments I have developed and refined based on the AFCU / FAN workshop is the following discussion activity for Art 105 – Introduction to Visual Arts. I have used the assignment both for the in-class and on-line versions of this course.

First, students watch the video "Running Fence" (1977) – a 50 minute documentary on Christo's project of the same name. I also have them read the "Canticle of Creation" and the following website on Christo: <http://www.christojeanneclaud.net/index.shtml> (especially the "About the Artists"(biography, interview, how to understand the works); under "Some Art Works", read about any 4 artworks of your choice; under "Current projects" read about *Over the River*

For the online version of the course, I assign each student a question to answer and then assign them an online small discussion group using VoiceThread ([www.voicethread.com](http://www.voicethread.com)). Each student is responsible for writing the answer to his/her question to share with those in his/her group. I also ask students to comment on each other's answers.

For the in-class version of the course, I first divide students into small discussion groups and assign each group one questions. So, as a group they need to share their ideas of how they would answer the question. Then I create a second set of groups with a representative from each questions. The student has to share his answer with the group, so each group is exposed to answers to all questions. This presentation of answer questions in small groups generates further discussion.

I then reconvene the class as a whole and review the main points generated by the small group discussions.

The Franciscan portion of the assignment, asks students to look at this piece of art work through a Franciscan lens. Christo's art work visualizes all of the ideas expressed by St. Francis in the Canticle – as the art work engages with light, wind, water, earth in a way that encourages the viewer to appreciate their beauty. Christo and St. Francis are inspired by the same thing – the beauty of the natural world around them. Christo's work is temporary, which also connects to the phrase about death in the Canticle.

Lastly, Christo's work is a team effort, it involves a lot of negotiating between various groups, it involves a variety of types of works – it is very much about team-effort, respect for others, listening to others, etc.

**Ideas for further development of the assignment:**

In the future, I will rephrase the questions related to teams in order to foster further discussion about peaceful negotiations, etc. , so again, asking students to analyze the art work's creation through the lens of Franciscan values.

I am considering using the group discussion as preparation for a 4-5 page essay on the questions below.

**Art 105 Christo Video – Group Discussion Activity**

- 1) What is the role of the lead artist, Christo, in creating the project? What is the role of the engineers, of Jean-Claude, of the teams of workers? What is the relationship between these various groups?
- 2) How does *Running Fence* compare to other examples of environmental art? How does it compare with other works by Christo and Jean-Claude's ? What are the similarities and differences with other works by Christo and Jean Claude and other examples of environmental art?
- 3) What is the relationship of *Running Fence* to its natural surroundings (landscape, light, wind)? How do these natural elements interact with the fabric and contribute to its expressiveness? What influence does the color and texture of the fabric on the overall impression created by the curtain?
- 4) What is artistic about this work? What are its aesthetic qualities? What do you think inspired Christo to undertake this endeavor? What does it communicate? Not everyone agrees that *Running Fence* is a work of art, why not? In your opinion, is it a work of art? Explain.

- 5) Consider how the viewer's experience of *Running Fence* relates to the sentiments expressed in St. Francis's "Canticle of Brother Sun/of Creation as well as the Franciscan emphasis on community. Explore these connections.