

# VALUED SPECIES

Animals in the Art of **ANDY WARHOL** and **AI WEIWEI**

## TEACHING GUIDE

### GRADES K-2

**Ai Weiwei's art focuses on animals from the Chinese Zodiac.** Each animal corresponds to a year. Anyone born in that year is supposed to have a personality like that animal.

- Pick three of your favorite animals from the art.
- What words would you use to describe the animals? What character traits do you think they have?

Animal 1:	Animal 2:	Animal 3:
Words to describe:	Words to describe:	Words to describe:

**What animal from the Chinese Zodiac do you think you're most like?**

Draw a picture of it! This animal doesn't have to look realistic! You can make it look however you want.

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### GRADES 3–5

#### ***Panda Diplomacy***

Pandas are known internationally as a symbol of peace. After China became Communist, the leader of China began to loan pandas to zoos in other communist countries (such as North Korea and the USSR). However, the USA and the UK were mad that China no longer let them take China's natural resources for free. It wasn't until 1972 when American President Nixon met Chinese leader Mao Zedong and repaired the American and Chinese relationship that China began loaning pandas to American zoos.

- Look at Warhol's panda. Do you think pandas are a good symbol of peace? Does Warhol's panda look like a good symbol for peace?
- What other animal might you suggest to be a symbol of peace?

#### ***Warhol is using these animal images to make people care about endangered species.***

- Do they work? Do they make you care about saving endangered animals? Why or why not?

***What animal do you think might be a good representative of a community you're a part of?*** It can be your country, your town, your school, or even your family! Using tiny pieces of construction paper, make a collage of the animal that you might use as a symbol of your community. Use any colors you want! (They don't have to be realistic.)

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### GRADES 6–8

***Think about the style and materials both artists use.***

- Why might Ai Weiwei have used LEGOs as a medium? What do we know about LEGOs?
- How would the exhibit have been different if he'd painted them using traditional 2-D materials? Would the message change?

***Think about the theme of extinction (both cultural and environmental).***

- What argument does Ai Weiwei seem to be making about cultural extinction?
- What argument does Andy Warhol seem to make about species extinction?
- Who has power in these situations? Are they connected in the two artists' works?

***Both artists take up questions of the “value” of both art and animals.***

- What do you value?
- What value do we place on art?
- What value do we place on animals?
- Is “value” different from quality?
- Who or what decides what is valuable?
- How do we see “value” portrayed in both collections?

**Flagship species** are endangered animals that are used as mascots and emblems of environmental conservation movements (elephants, pandas, tigers). While some are apex predators (animals at the top of the food chain) and other keystone species (species that ecosystems need to stay healthy), others are highlighted largely because they are popular with the public.

**Pop art**, the style of art both Warhol and Ai are using, relies on popular appeal by using well-known images and materials to make their art.

- What do you think makes these animals popular with the public?
- What might be the potential downsides of using flagship species?
- Using the images of non-flagship endangered species provided, design a work of pop art in the style of either Warhol or Ai Weiwei. You can either sketch this out using paper provided, or, if you prefer, you can write out what materials and subject matter you would use.