

Step 5: Critical Assessment & Response

This final stage involves a judgment of the success of a work of art. Critical assessment involves questions of value and can include personal and subjective responses to art.

Do you think this sculpture is successful and well done?

**Do you like it? Does it move you?
Is it relevant to your life?**

We hope this approach enhanced your exploration and enjoyment of this sculpture. If you like, you can try this method with other works of art. Simply ask yourself the following questions with each object:

What do I see?
(Close Observation)

What do I think?
(Analysis)

How can I learn more?
(Research)

What might it mean?
(Interpretation)

How do I feel about it?
(Critical Assessment and Response)

Nina Winkel, 1905-1990
***Song in the Furnace* (1977)**
Copper and Brass, 44 x 48 x 4"
X1983.7.31
Gift of George and Nina Winkel

In this sculpture we see three people with arms raised skyward in praise, encircled by a ring of fire. The story is taken from the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel was a wise man who described and interpreted dreams for King Nebuchadnezzar. The king had made a large image of gold and set it on the plain of Dura. He ordered all to fall down and worship it whenever they heard the sound of the cornet, flute, or harp. If anyone did not comply within the hour, they were to be thrown in a fiery furnace. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the idol, the king ordered that they be thrown into the fire. The soldiers that cast them into the furnace perished, but the three men walked out without suffering any damage. The king, realizing his mistake, reinstated them to their old positions.

Winkel self-described this sculpture as a remembrance of the Holocaust. – even though it was not tragic or sad enough. Instead, it is meant to express a strong trust in God, even in the greatest danger.

Plattsburgh State Art Museum

Look Think Learn



Interactive Guide
part of a series

Look Think Learn

As a college museum, Plattsburgh State Art Museum is committed to helping visitors develop visual literacy skills – the ability to construct meaning from all that we see. One way the museum does this is through a method called Learning to Look. This is a five-step approach to exploring works of art that is meant to empower visitors to observe carefully and think critically about any work of art they encounter. Simply follow the steps below.

Step 1: Close Observation

Look carefully at this sculpture *Song in the Furnace*.

What do you notice about these three figures?



What do you notice about their faces?



Their bodies? Their poses?



Observe the flames. What do you see?



What else do you notice about this sculpture?

The skill of the artist? The details?

Step 2: Analysis

Think about all of this visual information.

Who do you think these people might be?

What do you think is happening in this scene?

How do you know?

As you consider each of these questions, look to the sculpture for clues to support your ideas.

Step 3: Research

Now that you have had a chance to look carefully and begin forming your own ideas about this work of art, feel free to read the text printed on the back of this brochure. It provides information you cannot get simply by looking at the object.

When you have finished reading the text, consider the following:

Does the informational text reinforce what you observed and deduced on your own? How?

Did the text mention anything you did not see or think about previously? If so, what?

How would your experience of this piece have been different if you had read the background information first?

Step 4: Interpretation

Interpretation involves bringing together your close observation, analysis, and any additional information you have gathered about an art object to try to understand what a work of art means.

There can be multiple interpretations of a work of art. The best informed ones are based on visual evidence and accurate research.

Some interpretive questions to consider for this sculpture might be:

What do you think Nina Winkel was trying to say?

How does this piece connect to the biblical story? To the events during the artist's life-time? (i.e. Holocaust, World War II)

Why would Nina Winkel choose to depict this subject?