History: Making Meaning of the Past

“All history is an abstract reconstruction of the past.”

-Marshall & Donahue

What is the purpose of history?

* We can learn from the past about the human condition (pg. 83)
  + However, some historians believe we shouldn’t try to solve present issues by looking at the past. And some historians believe they should be impartial to bias and only present what is fact. What do you think?
* To make meaning of the past by looking at the bystanders of historical change (pg. 85)
  + These historians want to “instill appreciation for the diversity of humans, thus fostering greater tolerance for different cultures and beliefs.” (pg. 85)

Fact vs. Historical Fact:

“A fact is something that happened in the past, but it becomes a historical fact when a historian uses it as part of an argument.” (pg. 85)

Truthful vs. Propaganda:

Historians consider history to be truthful in that it is justified appropriately to history. History that isn’t justified can be considered as propaganda.

Four Ways Historians Think (Pg. 90-91):

Skeptical:

Argumentative:

Synthetically:

Empathetically:

Integration: Purpose, knowledge, methods and forms: An artist can use these strategies that historians use in their artmaking process. An artist can research sources for the subjects of their work, they can synthesize the information and use it to tell a story or make an argument for their perspective of the issue or event.

Creative Methods: Juxtaposition, layering, metaphors: Juxtaposition and layering allows an artist to confront opposing views or construct a supportive narrative. Just in the way a historian would consider a new source against the known information, these methods allow an artist to choose the information they want to present and contrast or support it with other information. Metaphors allow an artist to reference the sources, the events and people. These methods allow people to “embody” and “amplify” ideas and feelings. (Pg. 99)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Theaster Gates Art21 Clip:

What histories is Gates pulling from?

How does Gates integrate these ideas into his practice and artworks?

What creative methods is Gates using?

What might Gates be trying to contribute to history or art?

Quotes form the clip:

For Homework:

Consider your own personal history and the histories intersecting it. What are some of those histories and how might you research them, what sources could you use in an artwork? What creative methods could you use? What metaphors could you make? Brainstorm in the space below.