

## How Does an Artist Use the Principles of Design?

### Core Competency: Global and Cultural Awareness

In 1971, Ben Jones created *Black Face and Arm Unit* (figure 4.40) out of painted plaster casts. Ben Jones is an African American artist, who has often explored his African and African American roots in his art, considering topics such as slavery, spiritual music, body decoration, ritual, and black power. The body parts in the work are life size and are covered in painted, colored patterns; some of the hands have missing fingers.

Write an analysis of the work, considering each of the principles of design. Describe how Jones used each principle and explain what each principle adds to the overall meaning of the work. (Remember that the content must be informed by the context.) To do so, answer the questions below.

Hint: You may want to use your knowledge of the works of other African or African American artists whose art may give you some insight into Jones's work such as the scarification patterns on the woman's face (figure 2.10A), *Stowage* by Willie Cole (figure 2.26), or *Wigs* by Lorna Simpson (figure 4.9).

Describe Jones's use of unity and variety:

- What elements in the work create unity?
- What elements create variety?
- What do you think the use of unity and variety means in this work? (Hint: Consider what Jones is saying about these people with his use of unity and variety.)

Describe Jones's use of balance:

- What creates the actual weight in the work?
- What is visually heavy in the work?
- What type of balance does Jones use? How do you know?
- What do you think the use of balance means in this work? (Hint: Consider why Jones might have selected the type of balance that he did and what he is trying to say.)

Describe Jones's use of emphasis and subordination:

- What are the areas of emphasis in the work? Why are these areas of emphasis?

- What are the areas of subordination? Why are these areas of subordination?
- What do you think the use of emphasis and subordination means in this work? (Hint: Consider what Jones emphasized on the people, why he would have emphasized those areas, and what he is trying to say.)

Describe Jones's use of scale and proportion:

- What is the scale in the work? (Hint: See the description of the work at the beginning of this Explore Art Matters activity.)
- Are any of the proportions off in the people?
- What do you think the use of scale and proportion means in this work? (Hint: Consider why Jones used the scale and proportions of the people that he did and what he is trying to say.)

Describe Jones's use of rhythm:

- How specifically is the rhythm created in the work? (Hint: Be sure to describe the form.)
- What is the speed of the rhythm? How do you know from the form that it is this speed?
- What mood and feeling does the rhythm create? How do you know from the form that it is this mood and feeling?
- What do you think the use of rhythm means in this work? (Hint: Consider why Jones used the speed and feeling that the work has and what he is trying to say.)



**FIGURE 4.40.** Ben Jones. *Black Face and Arm Unit*. 1971. Painted plaster casts, life size. New Jersey State Museum, Trenton.