


das fliegende künstlerzimmer

Dear Readers,

Have you ever thought that racism and prejudice can be connected to art? If not, then I would like to tell you about the time my English-class and I finally went to visit the much-acclaimed 'Fliegende Künstlerzimmer' ( *flying artist room*).

The fliegende Künstlerzimmer is part of a statewide initiative to help bring the world of art to young students. The room is currently being inhabited by the artist Dawid Liftinger and it is stationed in the courtyard of the Walter-Lübcke-Schule Wolfhagen.

Due to the fact that our current topic in class is racism and prejudice towards people of colour in the USA, Mr. Liftinger prepared three artworks to us which are in some way related to the topic:

This is America - a music video by *Donald Glover [ChildishGambino]*

The Slave Ship - an oil painting by *J. M. W. Turner*

The Killing of Halit Yozgart - a speculative documentary by
Forensic Architecture

After viewing the pieces of art, Mr. Liftinger held a discussion with us where we explained and presented our thoughts and feelings about the material.

(Sadly, because of time restrictions, we were unable to discuss the third artwork that day and I was unable to attend the next visit.)

Although I do have to say that personally, I really liked the part where we discussed 'The Slave Ship'.



The painting is beautiful in itself, a breathtaking sunset decorates the top half of the painting, bathing the clouds and the waters on which a ship sails in various shades of orange. Next to the clouds a storm can be seen approaching, almost as if to take the ship away in just one go. Yet the painting isn't a depiction of nature's beauty, but that of an historic massacre.

The Slave Ship, J. M. W. Turner - Wikipedia

Contrasting to the pretty background is the foreground, where, the longer you look at it, you can see more and more horrifying things. Shackles, blood, people drowning, being eaten by wild birds and fish, all compiling into a terrible scene. It's such a dramatic contrast from the tranquillity of the background that it's easily missed if you don't look twice. When Mr. Liftinger first showed us the painting, I myself did not see half of what's going on in the foreground and only saw them after we've started our discussion.

Now what do I mean when I say I liked this part the most, if the painting is such a miserable one? What makes it special?

To be completely honest, I simply like paintings. The way a tragedy was captured within the art, the stark contrast between the background and foreground is what makes this painting a great work of art. Additionally, Mr. Liftinger told us about the historical context of the painting, how a slave ship went to sail with too many people, how a navigation error caused it to get lost on high sea and how the lack of food caused the Captain to throw countless people overboard which led to their gruesome demise. And all this, so that the Captain could tell his insurance company that they 'fell overboard during a storm'. The insurance, which viewed the slaves on board the ship as mere goods, the people only having as much worth as cattle to it, would only pay if the slaves died because of uncontrollable circumstances. Since a lack of food does not count as 'uncontrollable', the Captain committed fraud by drowning a big portion of the slaves and lying about the reason for their deaths.

In total I believe the entire lesson was very informative and all parts were pretty interesting, even if I only talked about J. M. W. Turner's painting...

So got you dear readers, I say: go make a visit to the Fliegende Künstlerzimmer and you won't regret it!