Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Uktena Monster?

Subject Cataloging for Images

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What is a Subject when it comes to Images?

• Descriptions
  – Who, what, why, where, when

• Iconography

• Symbols
  – Ideograms
  – Allegories
  – Visual Metaphors
Panofsky’s Levels

*Blind Men walking into ditch together, church, landscape, rural*

Pieter Brueghel the Elder.
*Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind*
Panofsky’s Levels

Blind Men walking into ditch together, church, landscape, rural

Christianity, Bible, New Testament, Teaching of Jesus Christ, Parables

Pieter Brueghel the Elder.
Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind
Panofsky’s Levels

*Blind Men walking into ditch together, church, landscape, rural Christianity, Bible, New Testament, Teaching of Jesus Christ, Parables*

*Dogmatism, inexperience*

Pieter Brueghel the Elder.
*Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind*
Symbolism
Visual Metaphor
Non-objective, geometric, concentric circles; inanimate objects, transportation, airplane, propeller, Eiffel Tower, animal, bird
Non-objective Categories

- Abstract Expressionism
- Color field
- Figurative abstraction
- Geometric
- Organic
- Pattern
- Random
Current Standards

• LC Thesaurus of Graphic Materials
• Art and Architecture Thesaurus
• Thesaurus of Geographic Names
• Fogg and Tansey Cataloging classifications
• ICONCLASS
• Cataloging Cultural Objects
Hindrances

• Vast amount of knowledge required
• Time required to find information for solo curators
• Limitations of established standards
• Inclusivity vs. exhaustivity
• Disagreement on terms and meanings
Solutions

• Automation: the CLiMB Project
• Social tagging and crowdsourcing by art historians
• The internet provides a lot of information at our fingertips today
• Expand standard thesauri currently in use, especially for non-Western
• Create new authorities for non-Western iconography
• Create shared lists of reference sources for non-Western art
Susquehanna River (link to TGN), autumn leaves, train, transportation, stone arch railroad bridges (AAT), landscape, mountains, panoramas, bodies of water, (AAT)