Starter List of Big Ideas

These are organized in clusters but are really quite interchangeable – add more of your own!

Dreams and nightmares
Fantasy
Views of reality

Heroes
"The Common Man" (or woman)
The Everyday
The Extraordinary
Character

Danger
Protection
Safety
Exposure

Destiny
Fate
Time (Past, present, and/or future)
Chance
The Unknown

Life cycles
Family
Maternity
Paternity
Reverence for life
Aging
Life and death
Afterlife
Rebirth
Reincarnation
Altruism
Rationalism
Idealism

Pride
Nationalism
Patriotism
Loyalty
Values and/or Morals
Freedom and liberty
Enslavement

Culture
Ritual
Celebration
Individual identity
Group identity

Social norms
Community
Interdependence

Conflict
Power
War
Relationships
Inter-relationships
Uncertainty
Force
Opposition
Submission

Work
Work ethic
Competition
Collaboration
Boredom
Industriousness
Leisure
Pleasure
Comfort
Adventure
Risk

Wealth
Poverty
Social class
Royalty
Prestige
Materialism
Beauty
Desolation

Diversity
Race
Commonalities
Human diversity
Human commonalities
Population

Emotional life
Love
Suffering
Alienation/loneliness
Fun/Joy
Transcendence
Anxiety
Patience

Idealism

Desire and/or Lust
Struggle

Nature and culture
Technology
Cycles
Adaptation
Resources
Survival
Sustenance

Spirituality
Divinity
Inner spirit
Inspiration
Virtue
Quietude
Solemnity
Reverence
Death and Mourning
Salvation
Peace

Public and Private
Ordinate/Subordinate

SPECIAL SENSE – not used as "ART" term – used in a larger sense

Order and/or Chaos
Patterns (in the larger sense as in "patterns of behavior")
Balance (also in the larger sense as in "a life in balance")
Harmony
Unity - being "one"
Division/ Destruction
Systems and Rules
Simplicity
Complexity

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Big Ideas are enduring human themes that can be studied and investigated across multiple disciplines. Big ideas need to be narrowed down a bit to be really meaningful, as Wiggins writes in ***Understanding by Design****.*

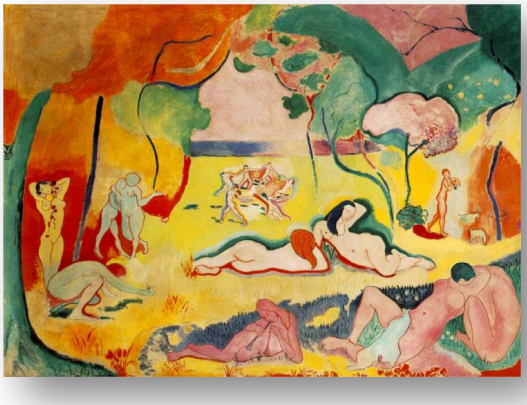
Example

Enduring Human Theme: Emotion

Narrowed down big idea: Positive emotion in human life

Investigated by novelists, poets, artists, composers, actors, playwrights, psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, biologists, neurobiologists, etc.

Artists who have investigated this theme, visually:

- Florentijin Hofman: Spreading Joy Around the World
- Matisse: The Joy of Life
- Rothko: Orange and Yellow
- Lichtenstein: Girl in Window
- Leyster: Jolly Toper
- Garza: (Title unavailable)

Think of artworks as intersections for several big ideas. What other big ideas are operating in these artworks?