

The Steps of Art Criticism

Summary Sheet

Description

A super-detailed inventory of all subject matter contained within the work.

The step of Description focuses upon the **NARRATIVE QUALITIES** of the artwork, as well as being a highly detailed verbalization of the visual object.

Formal Analysis

A detailed analysis of the artist's apparent development of composition, as well as his/her use of media, tools, materials, and techniques in the execution of the work.

The step of Formal Analysis focuses upon the **COMPOSITIONAL QUALITIES** that exist in the artwork.

Interpretation

A personal statement of the meaning of the artwork, as perceived and supported by the viewer with evidence that comes from within the work of art alone. The student doing Interpretation should discover a "deeper meaning" to the artwork beyond the "surface story" that may already be apparent through Description. The step of Interpretation focuses upon the **INTERPRETIVE QUALITIES** of the artwork, as well as themes and concepts that the artist is, apparently, trying to send a message about.

Judgement

A personal statement of the viewer's evaluation of the artwork, based upon his/her investigation of the above qualities contained in the artwork. The viewer must state and explain the criteria that he/she has used to judge the work of art. Judgement vs. Preference?

List 3-10 Descriptive Words to Use in a Formal Analysis of Art

ELEMENTS OF ART

Line

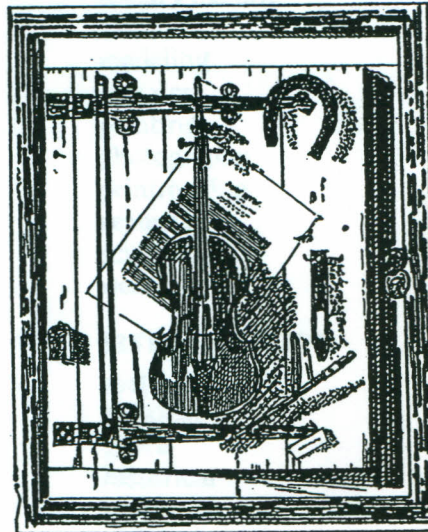
blurred
broken
controlled
curved
diagonal
freehand
fuzzy
horizontal
interrupted
meandering
ruled
short
straight
thick
thin
vertical
wide

Texture

actual
bumpy
corrugated
flat
furry
goeey
leathery
prickly
rough
sandy
shiny
simulated
smooth
soft
sticky
tacky
velvety
wet

Colors

brash
bright
calm
clear
cool
dull
exciting
garish



Drawn after *Still-Life Violin and Music*, 1888, William Michael Harnett, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

grayed
multicolored
muted
pale
polychromed
primary
saccharine
secondary
subdued
sweet
warm

Shape/Form

amorphous
biomorphic
closed
distorted
flat
free-form
full of spaces
geometric
heavy
light
linear
massive
nebulous
open
organic

Value

dark
light
medium

Space

ambiguous
deep
flat
negative/positive
open
shallow

Principles of Art

balance
contrast
emphasis
harmony
pattern
repetition
rhythm
unity
variety

THEMES IN ART

adoration
children
circus
cityscape
earth, air, fire, and water
farming festivals
gardens
grief
history
hunting
landscape
love
music
mythology
narrative of historic occasions
portraiture
processions
religion
seascape
storytelling
theater
war

List 3-10 Continued

MEDIA (MATERIALS)**Two-Dimensional**

chalk
colored pencil
conté
egg tempera
found materials
gouache
ink
oil
pastel
pencil
photograph
print
tempera
vine charcoal
watercolor

Three-Dimensional

bronze
clay
fibers
found materials
marble
metal
mixed media
papier-mâché
plaster
stone
wood

TECHNIQUE

architecture
batik
carving

ceramics
collage
crafts
glassblowing
jewelry making
metalwork
modeling
mosaics
painting
photography
printmaking
repoussé
sculpture
weaving

STYLE OR PERIOD

abstract
classical
genre
historical
literary
naive
narrative
nonobjective
primitive
realistic
romantic
Renaissance

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASSICAL ART

balanced
calm
clean outlines
conservative

controlled
cool
decorous
detached
dignified
elegant
formal
intellectual
rational
serious
simple
symmetrical
traditional
tranquil

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC/EMOTIONAL

asymmetrical
blurred outlines
conveys a mood
dynamic
emotional
expressive
extreme emotions
man not at center
mysterious
nature at center
otherworldly
personal to the artist
sad
spiritual
strong diagonals
swirling
unrestrained