

### Visual Analysis/Museum Paper

Attend a professional exhibition that includes works made between the prehistoric period and the Middle Ages. The Getty Museum, LACMA, the Fowler Museum, the Huntington Museum, the Norton Simon Museum, and the Bowers Museum regularly feature exhibitions of prehistoric to medieval works. Plan ahead by checking museum websites to be sure that relevant works will be on view when you plan to visit. In addition, read Marjorie Munsterberg's explanation of visual description at, <http://writingaboutart.org/pages/visualdesc.html> for information on visual description and analysis.

Choose one work seen in person and develop a visual analysis. Visual description involves communicating what you see and feel when viewing a work of art to a general reader who may or may not have experienced the work themselves. For the Museum Analysis, assume that your reader has a background in art, but has not seen the work you are discussing in person. Begin your description with the basics - let your reader know the artist's name, the title of the work (being sure to distinguish the title in your text by italicizing or bolding your font), and the date the work was made. Describe what you see, drawing the viewer's attention to key elements (objects, figures, symbols). Discuss the work's subjects. What are the main components, what is represented, who is portrayed, where does the story take place? While you may want to keep your visual description concise, remember that you cannot assume that what you are seeing and experiencing is universal.

Next, identify important formal elements (shapes, textures, lines, colors, etc.) in the work. While this may feel descriptive, what you're focusing on in this section are the qualities and characteristics of compositional elements such as *atmospheric* perspective, *asymmetrical* balance, *irregular* rhythm, *organic* shapes, *faint* line work, and *bold* color harmonies. The handouts on design and the elements of art from the Getty Museum may be helpful.

Finally, connect your private experience with the work and its visual elements. What meaning do the objects, subjects, and symbols suggest? What meaning is conveyed by the work's form and visual elements? What story is told, or view of the world expressed by this work of art?

Please include a photograph of yourself at the museum with your essay, and remember to list each contributor (if written collaboratively).