

### **Visual Analysis/Museum Paper**

Attend a professional exhibition that includes works made between the Renaissance and early Modern periods. The Getty Museum, LACMA, the Huntington Museum, the Norton Simon Museum, and the Bowers Museum regularly feature exhibitions of Renaissance to Modern 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, <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.

Then, craft a persuasive visual description that supports your thesis and that skillfully utilizes pertinent vocabulary. After discussing the denotative meaning of the work (it's primary and literal features), consider the work's connotative meaning by describing the ideas that are suggested and implied by its formal properties. 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. Refrain from offering iconographic, biographic, or semiotic analysis as much as possible in this essay.

Finally, connect your visual description, denotative consideration, and connotative read into an overall interpretation of the work. 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? If the exhibition venue, layout, and interpretive materials did their work well, your final interpretation should nicely reflect the exhibition's theme and concepts.

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