

Museum Paper

Attend a professional exhibition that includes works made between 1945 and 1970 at a venue located off campus. The Getty Museum, LACMA, MoCA, OCMA, the Hammer, and commercial galleries regularly feature exhibitions of late modern works. Plan ahead by checking venue museum websites to be sure that relevant works will be on view when you plan to visit. *Your visit must have occurred this semester*, though you are allowed to work on multiple assignments for different courses with the same visit. In preparation, please 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. Ideally, the work you see is a work that you plan to discuss in your Research Paper, so that this Visual Analysis can begin your writing of the Research Paper itself.

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 Paper, assume that your reader has a background in art, but has not seen the work you are discussing in person. With this in mind, 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* your font), and the date the work was made. Describe what you see, drawing the viewer's attention to key elements (objects, figures, symbols, etc.). 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. Your goal in this section is to develop a denotative analysis. It may feel as though you are writing a formal analysis, however, remember that formal analysis involves more than identifying what you see and how it looks.

Finally, connect your private experience with the work and its visual elements. What meaning do the objects, subjects, and symbols suggest? What meanings are conveyed by the work's form and visual elements? What story is told, or view of the world expressed by this work of art? While you previously conducted a denotative analysis, in this section, you should be offering connotative analysis.

Please include a photograph of yourself at the museum in your essay, and remember to list each contributor if this essay was written collaboratively.