

**Art Appreciation  
Course 101, Section 001  
Paper Assignment**

Important Dates:

Paper Proposal due, in class: **Wednesday, October 27**

**Final Paper Due, in class (it will NOT be accepted via email): Wednesday, Dec 1**

Requirements for this **Comparative Visual Analysis paper**:

You must **choose one** of the following works of art from your textbook—

Option #1: *Menkaure and Queen*, Egyptian, c. 2500 BCE (p. 242)- it is owned by and on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Option #2: Michelangelo, *David*, 1501-1504 (p. 275)

Option #3: J.M.W. Turner, *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons*, 1834 (p. 354)

Option #4: Mary Cassatt, *The Boating Party*, 1893-1894 (p. 370)

Option #5: Henri Matisse, *Harmony in Red (The Red Room)*, 1908-1909 (p. 382)

Option #6: David Smith, *Cubi XVII*, 1963 (p. 428)

Option #7: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Shuttlecocks*, 1994 (p. 87)

**and do a comparative visual analysis of it and a work of art in a local museum.**

The works must be different enough so that you can compare and contrast the approaches of the artists to their subjects and form, *which you will gain only through your own observations*. Your paper will describe the works through visual analysis, using as your road map the Guide to the Visual Analysis of a Work of Art (below). Finally, your paper will interpret each work based on your observations and it will compare and contrast these interpretative meanings. Only then may the paper bring in art historical context, from the textbook, lecture or the museum wall labels.

It must:

**-be two pages long**

**-be double spaced**

**-be 12 point font**

**-properly cite sources (no outside sources, just museum labels and your textbook)**

within the body of the paper you must use either parenthetical documentation or footnotes and you must cite your sources at the end of the paper

**-have an Introduction and a Conclusion.**

- The Introduction should prepare the reader for what the paper will cover.
- The Conclusion should briefly review the paper's points. It should suggest further questions raised by the paper and might make further claims.

**Guide to the Visual Analysis of a Work of Art**

(Sculpture, Painting, & Drawing)

The main purpose of visual analysis is to take a long, in-depth look at a work of art. It is not about research or prior knowledge, but seeing the work of art clearly and being able to present your observations in words that are understandable to others.

## **I. Factual Information**

Identification: Artist (if the artist is known), title, date, culture or movement, medium (e.g. stone), size (dimensions)

## **II. Visual Analysis, Sculpture**

A. Material and Technical Means ? Is the sculpture carved out of wood, stone, marble, or cast in bronze?

B. Scale ? Is the object imposing in size, or small enough to fit into the palm of a hand? Or something in between?

C. Space ? To what degree does the object display space? Is the work a relief that creates its own illusion of space within it? Is recession into depth or projection into the beholder's space suggested? Is it meant to be seen from a certain viewpoint?

D. Color ? Is color a part of the object? Is the color of the material itself of significance?

E. Sculpture Type ? Is it low relief, high relief, a freestanding figure, a group?

F. Line ? How is line used in the object? Are the dominant linear elements seen in the forms themselves, or are they incised onto the surface of the forms?

G. Form ? What kind of forms are basic to the object Geometric, Organic, Irregular?

I. Overall Composition ? How do the above elements interact to convey an over-all meaning?

## **III. Visual Analysis, Drawing and Painting**

A. Line ? How does the system of lines and outlines relate to each other? To the whole image? What is their overall effect?

B. Surface Planes ? What is the decorative quality of the two-dimensional organization? Symmetry or asymmetry of forms on the surface?

C. Space ? How is the illusion of space created? Or is it denied? Consider perspective, overlapping, foreshortening, or their absence.

D. Color ? Describe the organization and function of color in the work. Is it representational or expressive?

E. Light ? Can you discern the source of light in the image? In what direction does light fall into the picture? What is the intensity of light and shade? Does light play a dramatic or expressive role as well as descriptive?

F. Paint Handling ? Are brushstrokes visible and bold, or imperceptible with a smooth polished surface? Is the paint opaque or transparent? How does it contribute to the meaning of the work?

G. Organization of Figures ? Their construction, proportion, relation to the frame, scale, costume, pose, gesture, action.