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FORMAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Directions:

- Find an artwork in a public place we can both easily visit in person. *You must contact me about which piece you wish to use for this paper before you start writing.* You must visit the artwork in person, more than once if possible, to examine both formal elements and principles of design used in the composition. Make sure you're looking very closely, taking detailed notes, and even drawing sketches. Depending on where your artwork is located, you should be able to take a NO-FLASH photo for reference. For help with formal elements of art and principles of design, see the attached handouts from the J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Beyond just observing, you should begin to cultivate some ideas about the formal qualities of the artwork *and what effect they have.* You will develop these ideas into a thesis and use your observations of the formal qualities of the artwork to support your argument. For reference, refer to Sylvan Barnet's example of a "Formal Analysis," found in the Formal Analysis module on D2L.
- You will then write a 1000-word (1000 minimum, 1300 maximum) essay carefully analyzing the formal qualities of the artwork and what effect they have. Along with your formal analysis essay, you must submit an image of the artwork you have analyzed.

This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade and will be submitted in two stages.

Stage 1 due: Sunday, March 26, 11:59 pm (100 pts. total)

Part A:

You must visit a writing center somewhere on campus *with your rough draft essay* by this time and ask them to email me a copy of your meeting report.

Part B:

Upload your rough draft to D2L. This is the same version you took to the WATL, uncorrected.

As soon as I verify that you visited the writing center *with a rough draft* and uploaded it to D2L, you will be awarded full credit for this portion of the assignment.

Stage 2 due: Sunday, April 23, 11:59pm (100 pts. total)

You must submit a final, *revised* draft to D2L by this time.

Grading Rubric

The following rubric will be used to assess the final draft of your formal analysis:

Format (15%)

Paper must be 1000-1300 words in length, use an easily legible font, and include a title, illustrations (photos) of artworks discussed.

Description (30%)

The artwork is fully identified and fully described in an organized way. Multiple formal elements are examined and appropriate vocabulary is used.

Analysis (30%)

The relationship between different formal elements and their affect on the viewer's experience is explained. The author addresses what ideas the artist may be trying to convey and why.

Quality of writing (25%)

Ideas are clearly organized and presented. Sentences are clear. The paper is free of grammar and spelling errors.

Elements of Art

The elements of art are the building blocks used by artists to create a work of art.



Line is a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal; straight or curved; thick or thin.



Shape is a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles; or organic, like free-form or natural shapes. Shapes are flat and can express length and width.



Forms are three-dimensional shapes expressing length, width, and depth. Balls, cylinders, boxes, and pyramids are forms.



Space is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space; negative space has shape. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual art, when we create the feeling or illusion of depth, we call it space.



Color is light reflected off of objects. Color has three main characteristics: *hue* (the name of the color, such as red, green, blue, etc.), *value* (how light or dark it is), and *intensity* (how bright or dull it is).

- White is pure light; black is the absence of light.
- Primary colors are the only true colors (red, blue, and yellow). All other colors are mixes of primary colors.
- Secondary colors are two primary colors mixed together (green, orange, violet).
- Intermediate colors, sometimes called tertiary colors, are made by mixing a primary and secondary color together. Some examples of intermediate colors are yellow green, blue green, and blue violet.
- Complementary colors are located directly across from each other on the *color wheel* (an arrangement of colors along a circular diagram to show how they are related to one another). Complementary pairs contrast because they share no common colors. For example, red and green are complements, because green is made of blue and yellow. When complementary colors are mixed together, they neutralize each other to make brown.



Texture is the surface quality that can be seen and felt. Textures can be rough or smooth, soft or hard. Textures do not always feel the way they look; for example, a drawing of a porcupine may look prickly, but if you touch the drawing, the paper is still smooth.

Principles of Design

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements of art in a work of art.



Balance is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.



Emphasis is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.



Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.



Pattern is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art.



Repetition works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.



Proportion is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.



Rhythm is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.



Variety is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.



Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.



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