PHS Visual Arts & Design Department’s

Critical Method for Writing about Art Information Worksheet

(Describe, Analyze, Interpret, Evaluate)

Describe:

**Label information:** Artist, title (in *italics*), and date of work. Medium (what is it made of) Processes used to make it. Size of artwork.

**Subject Matter:** Figures, animals, objects (trees, sun, clouds, grass, birds, machines, buildings, etc.). **If there are no recognizable objects** in the artwork, describe art elements: line, color, value, shape, texture, space, movement.

Describe what figures, animals and other things that move are doing. How many are there? What is large/small, near/far, in front/behind?

Subject Matter__________________________

Name:____________________________________

Class:_________________________Period__________

Date:________________(started)_______________(completed)

Label Information:

Artist_____________________________________

Title________________________________________

Date_________________________Size_________________

Medium/Process____________________________________

Location of work____________________________________

(Web/Book____________________________________)

Subject Matter_____________________________________________________________________________________

Subject Matter_____________________________________________________________________________________

Subject Matter_____________________________________________________________________________________

Subject Matter_____________________________________________________________________________________
**Elements of Art:**

**Lines:** Are they straight, curved, swirling, jagged, diagonal, vertical, horizontal, continuous, broken, heavy, thin, dark, light? Do they occur at edges where color, value or texture changes suddenly? Are there lines that direct your attention from one place to another?

**Colors:** Are they warm, cool, bright, dull, opaque, transparent? Are they like colors you see in the real world, or different from the real world colors? Is there a dominant color? Are there related colors?

**Values:** Are the colors dark? Light? Both? Describe the range of value (light to medium blue). Are there contrasts of dark/light?

**Shapes** (two-dimensional) and **Form** (three-dimensional): Are the shapes realistic, unrealistic, or not representational? Do shapes appear flat or do they appear to have depth (roundness)? Are they geometric (squares, triangles, circles)? Are they organic (curved and irregular edges)?
Textures: Are they visible in the artwork? Where? Don’t confuse texture with patterns like checkerboards, stripes, and polka dot.

Space: Does space appear deep? If so, is it due to: overlap; placement of small objects high on the picture and large ones low; making objects smaller as they get farther away; linear perspective (converging lines); colors that seem to advance and recede? Does space appear shallow? Why?
Analyze:

**Principles of Design:** Analyzing involves identifying relationships among elements in an artwork. It means looking at how the artist organized subject matter and elements including line, shape, form, texture, colors, and space so that they interrelate as a composite.

**Similarities:** Are things similar in shape, form, value, color, pattern, size, or texture? Are some lines or edges similar in direction: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, circular?

**Contrasts:** Are there contrasts of dark/light, cool/warm, large/small, curved/angled, hard/soft, rough/smooth? (Contrasts can occur in line, color, value, texture, shape, or form.)

**Repeated Elements (Rhythm):** Is anything repeated over and over? Is there a repeated alteration of elements. Are there progressions from large to small, warm to cool, light to dark and so on?

**Movement:** If movement is suggested in the work, it is due to: altering shapes; figures and other life forms doing something; repetition of one thing after another; elements that progress from large to small, small to large, dark to light?
Mrs. Brandley 9/2011

**Dominance (Emphasis):** Is there an area, element, or arrangement that dominates the rest of the work? Is it due to size, central location, complexity, isolation, contrast of some kind, or convergence?

**Balance:** What arrangements or relationships of elements contribute to the balance in the composition? Is the balance symmetrical, asymmetrical, approximately symmetrical, radial? (Relationship Between Subject and Medium) What are relationships between the subject and the art elements? What are relationships between the subjects and the medium used to produce it?

**Unity:** Is the work of art balanced, harmonious, and complete as a whole? What unifies the elements within the work of art contributing to its success?
Interpret:

To interpret an artwork is to explain the meaning of it. Interpretation builds on description and analysis.

There are two more sources of information you can use for interpretation: Your own knowledge & experience and Art history for background about periods and styles of art and social conventions relevant to the work in question.

Look for clues in your description and analysis to help guide your interpretation, such as dominant elements, repetitions, similarities, lines that direct vision, moody colors, subtle or strong contrasts, and so on. The artist had reasons for including these things. What does it all mean?

Describe the expressive quality of the work: happy, sad, serious, lighthearted, calm, chaotic, depressing, ominous, sensual, joyful, angry, aggressive, passive, tense, relaxed, restful, threatening, and so on. What is happening? Even if the work is nonrepresentational, try to answer this question. Draw on your own knowledge and experiences related to the subject matter, forms, shapes, and colors of the work. Have you seen, read, or studied about situations or things similar to what you have seen in the artwork?

Metaphors may help to get at the meaning of the work. Is there something in the work that makes you think of another, different thing? For example, the man has a poker face. Her lips are a sealed envelope. The pitchfork is a three-pronged spear.
Form a Hypothesis

A hypothesis is an assumption or guess based on evidence you have collected. It can’t be just based on personal opinion. When you have generated a hypothesis, ask: Does evidence from the description and analysis support this hypothesis? Does evidence based on personal knowledge and experiences support the hypothesis? If your evidence does not support the hypothesis, try another one. It is not unusual to generate more than one hypothesis for an artwork.

Evaluate:

Based on your analysis in the first three stages, how would you judge the quality or success of the work? Judgment may be affected by the following criteria.

- **Craftsmanship:** The degree of skill in use of media and procedures, and how well the medium relates to the subject matter of the artwork.

- **Design Quality:** The degree of visual organization of the materials and elements that make up the work. Consider unity, variety, proximity, balance, and rhythm.
• **Expressiveness**: How well the work expresses its subject, Personal Response: The extent to which the artwork provokes a personal response, one that could be shared with others.

• **Originality**: The degree of uniqueness, imagination, and freshness in the artwork.

• **Comparison**: How the work compares with artworks of a similar kind.

Any additional thoughts…

Expressiveness: ____________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

Originality:________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

Comparison:________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
CCA Writing Rubric: Responding Narrative Reflective Statement about Exemplar Work in Visual Art & Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas</th>
<th>Exceeds Standard/Advanced</th>
<th>Meets Standard/Proficient</th>
<th>Below Standard/Emerging</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VAD 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVAS 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GSE: (W-10-6.1, 6.2, 6.4; W-10-7.2, 7.4, 7.5; 10-8.2, 8.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies, in great detail, relevant properties of the work that can be seen, named, and described with certainty.</td>
<td>Identifies relevant properties of the work that can be seen, named, and described with certainty.</td>
<td>Identifies some properties of the work that can be seen, named, and described with certainty.</td>
<td>Identifies few properties of the work that can be seen, named, and described with certainty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ✓ Label
- ✓ Subject
- ✓ Description: The seven *Elements of Art*

- ✓ Label
- ✓ Subject
- ✓ Description: At least five out of the seven *Elements of Art*

- ✓ Label
- ✓ Subject
- ✓ Description: Four or less of the *Elements of Art*

- ✓ Label
- ✓ Subject
- ✓ Description: Two or less of the *Elements of Art*

**Label:** Artist name, title, media, dimensions, year, location

**Subject:** What are you able to see and identify (house, figures, objects)

*The Elements of Art:* Line, Shape, Color, Value, Form, Texture, Space

Score: ____________________