

Name _____

Date _____

ART CRITICISM: Formal Analysis for Written and Verbal Critiques

Description:

We tend to believe everyone can see what we see. However, what is obviously apparent to you might be overlooked by someone else. When listening to others describe the same work of art, you may be surprised by what they notice and what they ignore. Each person attends to different aspects of a photograph with different points of emphasis and varying degrees of enthusiasm. When describing a work, do your best to gather all the visual data you observe involving the subject matter, which includes the person, object, place, or event photographed. Also, include statements regarding form or how the subject is presented. This has to do with the camera angle, subject distance, framing, and depth of field.

Analysis:

The elements and principles of design are meticulously controlled by skilled photographers. This is what separates a snapshot from a work of art. A proper analysis of a photograph involves the discussion of these design elements including line, shape, form, space, value, and texture. The principles of design should also be discussed. This is how the elements were used. Discuss your observations on how the photographer utilized balance, emphasis, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, repetition, pattern, proportion, perspective, and unity.

Interpretation:

The act of interpreting occurs whenever attention moves beyond offering information to matters of meaning. No photographer owns the meaning of his or her artwork. What he or she thinks about the photograph is one among several possible interpretations. As viewers, we automatically attach a mood or feeling based on our previous experiences. Therefore, as soon as a photograph is presented to a viewer, it becomes open to interpretation. It is important that you account for all the described aspects of the photograph in order to support your explanation. Identify what you think is most important, how its parts fit together as a whole, and how its form affects the subject matter.

Judgment:

We make judgments about the work's success by considering the literal, formal, and emotional qualities. Avoid impulsive judgments by always backing up your evaluations with reasons, and be willing to listen to views that challenge our own. It is important to be honest and open in all discussions. If we resolve to express rather than impress, the discussions will be much livelier and will include more participants. Your goal should not be to end the conversation, but to extend thinking.