

# AGADIR FRENCH HIGH SCHOOL

## Interpretation of a Painting

### 1. GET THE FACTS

Who : artist, patronage (Who paid for the work, and why?)

What : title, subject, medium, size, condition

Where : location (museum, city)

When : date

Why : purpose, patronage, meaning

### 2. DESCRIBE

Inventory of all the visual information (objects, landscapes, portraits, abstracts or other fanciful designs...). note the expression of the sitter, how the landscape feels (bleak or bright) or if the interior is inviting or empty.

### 3. ANALYZE

#### Color

Color can create the illusion of depth, express different qualities of light, symbolic connotations achieve balance, animate, promote emotions. See if the artist has used predominantly dark and dreary colors or if the painting is bright and light. Bright colors can be uplifting--or they can be jarring, if the colors clash or if the artist used many in great intensity.

- What colors are important to this work?
- Does color lead your eye anywhere?
- Would the effect of this work be different if the colors were changed?
- What connotations, associations or symbolic meanings might the colors in this work have?

#### Balance

It is a principle of composition. It can be broken down into symmetrical or asymmetrical balance. Symmetry generally conveys a sense of order, while asymmetry usually expresses action, tension or movement.

- Is this image balanced, off balance, otherwise?
- Does the image lie within the canvas or go past the edges?
- What parts of the painting does the balance effect?

#### Space

Some paintings look flat, others have depth. When there is an illusion of depth and breadth in a painting, it is often achieved by the depiction of overlapping planes, by using a "vanishing point" or by use of color & light.

- How do we travel through this painting? How is our eye drawn across the surface of the work?
- Is it slow, fast? Is it straight, diagonally, zigzag?
- How deep does the space appear to be in this work?

#### Line

Lines can create rhythmic patterns, suggest movement, define edges and create a three-dimensional effect. Look at the lines, real or implied, in the painting. If a subject is looking to the side, what is there? Perhaps there is an implied action not rendered in the painting, such as someone's arrival. See if the contours of objects or the lines that construct a building seem to indicate harmony and strong structure, or if they lead the eye around the painting playfully.

- Are the lines in this work the same throughout?
- Are they thick, thin, ragged, smooth, controlled, etc.?

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## Composition

Composition is the overall arrangement of space. Form and color create a structure that can symbolize meaning in a work. Is it simple, with a few ordered objects, or chaotic, with many elements

- What shapes are in this work?
- How are they arranged? How do they relate to one another?
- Did the artists paint things as they were seen, or were they distorted?

## Light and contrast

Like color, light helps create balance or a sense of space; it can animate and emphasize parts of a painting.

- Does the light in this work come from a source or is it ambient?
- Are the parts of the painting emphasized by light?
- Does the light seem to be painted as it was seen, or has the artist invented it?

## Technique

Technique is the way that the artist has chosen to use the materials of art making. The creation is through brushstroke, paint thickness, surface texture, etc.

- Are the brushstrokes visible? If so, what do they look like?
- Are the marks and strokes the same everywhere?
- Is the manner of stroking slow and meticulous or have they been put on in a quick "painterly fashion"?
- Is there more paint in one place than another?

## 4. INTERPRET

- What does the painting seem to mean?
- Is there a personification or an allegory ?
- Are there symbols or "hidden meanings" ?
- Have my feelings about this work changed as a result of the formal analysis?

## 5. EVALUATE

Once you have done a formal analysis, you can judge it. Judgment is based on the success of the work of the artist to achieve what he or she intended to express (and not on personal preferences).

## Vocabulary

**PROPORTION:** To put in proper relation with something else.

**LINE:** A mark with length and direction, created by a point that moves across a surface.

**SHAPE:** 2-Dimensional objects (circle, square, triangle)

**FORM:** 3-Dimensional objects (cone, cube, cylinder, sphere)

**THUMBNAIL SKETCH:** a small, quick drawing used to get your ideas on paper

**LINE-OF-ACTION:** designates the movement or action of a character in a drawing

**POSITIVE SPACE:** area an object occupies.

**NEGATIVE SPACE:** area around an object.

**VALUE:** lightness or darkness of an color

**COMPOSITION:** way of arranging a drawing or painting so it is interesting to look at and equally balanced.

**GOLDEN RULE OF THIRDS:** a way of breaking down a composition mathematically, focusing on thirds.

**BACKGROUND:** area within a composition that appears further away from the viewer. Objects appear smaller with less detail.

**MIDDLE GROUND:** part of a composition that appear between the foreground and back ground.

**FOREGROUND:** in a scene or artwork , the part that seems closest to you. Objects appear larger and more detailed.

**SYMMETRY:** both sides of a center line are exactly or nearly the same, like a mirror.

**ASYMMETRY:** two sides of a composition are different yet balanced

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**SPECTRUM** : all the colors in the color wheel

**PRIMARY** : red, blue & yellow

**SECONDARY** : green, orange & violet (mix primary colors)

**WARM COLORS** : red, orange & yellow

**COOL COLORS** : blue , violet & green

**ANALOGOUS** : colors that are next to each other on the color wheel

**COMPLEMENTARY** : colors that are directly across from each other on the color wheel

**INTENSITY** : brightness or dullness of a color

**OPAQUE** : colors that you can't see through

**TRANSPARENT** : colors that you can see through

**SHADE** : color and black

**MONOCHROMATIC** : a single color and it's tints and shades

**PALETTE** : colors you paint with or the thing that you put the colors on

**MOOD** : emotion portrayed within an artwork

**VERTICAL** : This can refer to the placement of objects within a composition or the composition itself.

**HORIZONTAL** : This can refer to the placement of objects within a composition or the composition itself.

**AESTHETICS**: To experience a feeling or response to art.

The Elements of Art		Principles of Design	
<b>Line</b>	<p><u>path of movement</u>                      active - passive                      bold - delicate                      flowing - light                      straight - curved                      thick - thin                      dark - light                      broken - continuous                      implied - actual                      precise - irregular                      contour - outline</p>	<b>Balance</b>	<p>symmetrical                      asymmetrical                      radial</p>
<b>Shape &amp; Form</b>	<p>2D-3D                      solid - void                      ambiguous - complete  <u>Form</u> : circle - sphere - square - cube- triangle - pyramid- cone</p>	<b>Rhythm, Movement</b>	<p><u>Types</u> : regular – alternating – progressive – dominant  <u>Path of movement</u> : vertical – horizontal – diagonal - curving</p>
<b>Space</b>	<p>2D-3D                      positive – negative                      open – closed                      filled – empty                      actual – implied                      interior – exterior                      illusion of space                      systems of perspective</p>	<b>Proportion</b>	<p>life-size – monumental - miniature  <u>Scale</u> : normal – exaggerated – idealized  <u>Emphasis</u>                      by focal point                      by isolation                      by size                      by contrast                      by converging lines</p>
<b>Light &amp; Color</b>	<p>color spectrum - Color wheel                      color interactions - monochromatic                      contrast - shade                      primary – secondary – intermediate - neutral                      warm – cool - neutral                      intensity                      bright – dull                      symbolic</p>		

Sources : (abridged) <http://www.bluelavaart.com> & [www.lymanallyn.org](http://www.lymanallyn.org)

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## Graph Interpretation

### 1. Examine ALL the information on the graph

- Recall the purpose of the type of graph used and its advantages and disadvantages.
- Read the title.
- Read the footer or summary of the graph.
- Read the labels of the axes.
- Read the units of the axes. Ensure you know the quantity measured
- Read the scales of the axes. Is the range a small or large one?
- Examine the symbols and the Key/Legend used. Sometimes the curves or columns are labelled.

### 2. Observe and describe patterns in the data

- Pay attention to patterns and detail, values and anomalies. Compare interrelating graphs.
- Plotted Curve. Is there a pattern? Does the dependent variable increase or decrease with the independent variable. Is the relationship directly proportional or is the pattern more complex? Is there a linear increase and then a leveling off? or a decrease? Is the Graph U-shaped or hump-shaped?
- Histogram. What is the general shape? Is it symmetrical about the middle or skewed? Is there a single peak or multiple peaks and valleys? Are there outlier values? Can you determine the mode?
- Bar Chart. Compare the series by categories for Clustered Bar Charts; and the categories for Stacked Bar Charts. Same questions should be asked as for the Histogram.
- Pie Chart. Which sectors are greatest? smallest? similar in size? If examining a number of charts, how have the size of the sectors varied with time, location, etc.?

### 3. Interpret the Graph

- What do the results tell you about the phenomenon studied? Are the results expected or unexpected? What would a graph of expected results look like?
- Account for any unexpected results - outlier values/anomalies
- Describe quantitatively and qualitatively what the graph is showing.

Source : [http://www.brilliantbiologystudent.com/graph\\_interpretation.html](http://www.brilliantbiologystudent.com/graph_interpretation.html)