

Art Analysis: Feldman's method

There are many philosophies on how to analyse and interpret Art. Fortunately, Edmund Feldman created a simple 4 step structure of the criticism of art consisting of description, analysis, interpretation and judgment.

1) Description

Descriptive words about an artwork are like pointers; they draw attention to something worth seeing - so remember that the words that you use must be NEUTRAL. Do not use terms that denote value judgments, such as beautiful, disorderly, funny looking, harmonious, etc. Instead, focus on the factual information, such as smooth, bright, round, a lake, a shape, etc. This is important so that you don't jump to conclusions before going through all the steps.

Do not make or state any judgments at this stage. Do not form or state any opinions at this time. Ask yourself questions like the ones below.

1. *What is the Artist's name?*
2. *Title of the work?*
3. *Date of the work?*
4. *Medium or materials used?*
5. *What do you see in the picture? (only describe what you see, eg. trees, sky, animals, etc. Do not interpret anything)*
6. *What kind of subject matter is in the picture? (eg, rural farm scene, landscape, industrial imagery. Again do not interpret or judge anything in this stage.*
7. *Is the picture a landscape or a portrait shaped 'canvas'.*

2) Analysis

Analysis of relationships such as sizes, shapes, colors, textures, space and volumes, etc., encourages a complete examination of the artwork. It also reveals the decision making process of the artist, who wants the viewer to make certain connections within the artwork.

OR

Write about the elements and principles of design and the relationships between the subjects that you mentioned in the description. Below are some of the questions that you may need to ask. There are very likely other similar questions that you need to ask.

1. *What is in the foreground, mid-ground, background?*
2. *How has the picture been arranged.*
3. *What colours are used and how have they been arranged?*
4. *what shapes are there and how have they been arranged?*
5. *Are there any leading lines and if so, where is your eye lead,*
6. *Is there any use of contrast? If so where.*
7. *Is there any use of pattern? if so where.*
8. *Is there a sense of space or perspective.*
9. *Are there any special techniques employed by the artist?*

3) Interpretation

Interpretation is the meaning of the work based on the information in steps 1 and 2. Interpretation is about ideas (not description) or sensation or feelings. Don't be afraid of revising your interpretation when new facts are discovered (such as the date of the artwork, or the personal history of the artist, etc.) Conversely, don't be reluctant to make an interpretation from your analysis of only the visual information.

OR

Interpretation attempts to get at the meaning of the art work. Use the information learned from the above two paragraphs in order to try and interpret what the artist was attempting to achieve with this art work.

1. *What do you think is the relationship of the title to the picture or meaning?*
2. *What areas do you notice first? Do you think there is a relationship between what you notice first and what you notice later? If so, what is that relationship?*
3. *What story do you think is being told?*
4. *How does it make you feel when you look at this picture?*

4) Judgment

Judgment, the final step, is often the first statement that is expressed about an artwork before it has really been examined. Judgment in that case is neither informed nor critical but simply an opinion.

This is time for your opinions to shine through.

1. *What did you like or dislike about this art work?*
2. *How successful do you think the artist was?*