Visual Analysis of Artwork
LSC-University Park Library
Assignment Guide for ARTS 1301 | Rodgers

The frame of what once had been Sir Robert Cuspidors Waggon Stuck In River was leaning against a wall in front of her. It was empty. The bare canvas was neatly rolled beside it. In front of the frame, carefully heaped in order of size, were piles of pigment. Several dozen Auditors were breaking these down into their component molecules.

“I think,” said Susan grimly, “that they are appreciating Art.”

-Thief of Time, by Terry Pratchett

Assignment
You will choose a piece of art, historic or contemporary, which will need approval by your instructor.

You will write a personal response describing what attracted you to the artwork & other reflections as well as a formal analysis identifying art elements & principles visible in the work and the underlying message. You will also choose two other modes of analysis to include in your paper.

Other Modes of Analysis
- Iconographic (religions icons in the work)
- Biographical (personal life of the artist)
- Contextual (historical, social, political, etc. influences)
- Psychological (mental state of the artist)
- Feminist (how the work relates to a feminist POV)

Meet Your Librarian
Elaine M. Patton
Elaine.M.Patton@lonestar.edu

Your Instructor
Natalie Rodgers
nat.rogers.art@gmail.com

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Resources for Your Research

When you find a useful article or book, be sure to note the subject terms associated with it for your own search purposes. Also peruse the works cited pages of the sources you find to lead you to other books and articles.

If you’re off-campus, you’ll have to log in using your library barcode number from the back of your student ID card.

Books & Ebooks

The UP library is digital. You can request books or resources from other libraries through the catalog or download or read online eBooks.

Search for the name of the piece you’re researching if it’s a famous one and/or the artist’s name to find ebooks.

Relevant subject terms include:
Artists--United States--Interviews
Arts, Modern--20th century
Arts--religious aspects

Databases

Library databases contain articles, newspapers, images, documents, papers, media and more. The databases selected for you here are best for critical analysis of literature.

Make use of the advanced search features!

- **JSTOR**
  A collection of humanities journals covering art, history, and sociological inquiries.

- **Project MUSE**
  A collection of humanities journals covering art, history, and sociological inquiries.

- **Oxford Art Online**
  Art reference and images.

- **Biography Reference Bank**
  Profiles of thousands of people; useful for finding out basic information about an artist.

- **Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection**
  Worth trying if you’re pursuing a more psychological angle of analysis.

Videos

- **Films on Demand**
  Full-length films from reputable sources like PBS. Try searching for the name of your artist to find documentaries about their lives and works.

Elaine M. Patton, 03/2014
Internet Sites

Be careful to evaluate sites for credibility, authority, bias, relevance, and evidence before citing them.

- **Google Cultural Institute**
  High resolution images of artwork. Search or browse by artist or collection.

- **Clara: Database of Women Artists**
  This unique database contains authoritative information on thousands of women visual artists, of many periods and nationalities.

- **Smithsonian Image Gallery**
  Digital collection of artworks of various media at the Smithsonian.

- **Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog**
  Digital images of print items held by the Library of Congress.

- **Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)**
  Contains records for text and images for items in museums, archives, and libraries across America, all freely available online.

Museum websites, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, will often have online images of items in their collection, as well. Also look for official websites about the artists (preferably published by the artists themselves, if modern, or a society dedicated to them, if not).

Citing Sources & Getting Help With Your Paper

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