

The Art Gallery is the New Gym (handout)

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Here is a handout from a college freshman course in art appreciation. This class was for students who were not art majors. At the beginning we focussed on description and interpretation. As the students learned more and gained experience their discussions expanded.

For the purposes of art engagement as practice in creativity basic description and interpretation are enough, but of course the more you know about art history, cultural history, craft, media and art technique the broader and richer the interpretations can be.

Critique Guidelines

Describe

Interpret

Analyze / Theorize

Modernism / Post-Modernism

Structuralism / Post-Structuralism

Evaluate

Description

Internal

medium / materials

formal considerations

process

title

subject matter (denotative, What is it?)

content (connotative, What does it mean?)

context (How/where should the work be shown?)

External

other work that informs/connects the work (response or reaction)

- other artists

- other ideas from other disciplines

biographical information (How is it significant?)

the world today/the world then

ideology or world view of significance

criteria (What is the criteria from which the work should be judged? See below.)

remember, meaning is never absolute

preference is not the same as value (we are not the art police)

an interpretation seeks significance / meaning

consider the dialog (artist—object—audience...who is the audience?)

consider these three questions re: the artwork

What does it do?

How does it do it?

How is it significant? (“Why should I care?”)

think analogically

make connections

Evaluation Criteria (theories / world views)

Realism, Representation, Imitation

Formalism

Expressionism

Contextualist theories

instrumentalist (art in service)

institutionalist (the “artworld”)

linguistic (art as language)

other considerations

originality

craft