

VISUAL ANALYSIS EXERCISE

A formal analysis includes an analysis of the forms appearing in the artwork. These forms give the work its expression, message, or meaning. A formal analysis assumes a work of art is (1) a constructed object (2) that has been created with a stable meaning (even though it might not be clear to the viewer) (3) that can be ascertained by studying the relationships between the elements of the work.

Think of the formal analysis as a way of describing the work of art to someone who has never seen it before. Record your first impressions of the artwork. What stands out? Is there a focal point that your eye is drawn to?

VISUAL ANALYSIS TERMS

Here are some terms that may help you conduct your visual analysis. Use this as a framework to guide your thinking. You don't necessarily have to use all the terms or address all questions.

- ▶ **Composition:** How are the parts of the work arranged? Is there motion or is it static?
- ▶ **Space:** What kind of space is conveyed? What is the relation of the main figures or objects to the space around them? Could the viewer enter the space or is it flat/two-dimensional?
- ▶ **Color:** What type of colors are used? Complementary or contrasting? Dull or bright? Are they used to draw your gaze to a certain aspect of the work?
- ▶ **Line:** Do the outlines convey energy or motion? Are they smooth or jagged, bold or subtle, geometric or curvilinear?
- ▶ **Proportions:** Do the individual parts of the object work as a whole and look natural? Or are the proportions intentionally askew? What purpose might that serve?
- ▶ **Pose:** If there are figures in the work, how are they rendered—realistic or abstract? If there are multiple, how do they interact with each other or to the viewer?
- ▶ **Tone/Mood:** Do you sense an overall mood of the work? How does the mood impact your interpretation of the message of the work?

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3



4



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Frida Kahlo

Self Portrait along the Borderline between Mexico and the United States of America
1932

Oil on canvas



Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Moulin de la Galette
1876
Oil on canvas



Raphael
Madonna in the Meadow
1505-06
oil on wood



Laocoön and his sons
c. 200 BC
Marble



Jacob Lawrence
The Migration Series, Panel no. 49: They found
discrimination in the North
1940-1941
Casein tempera on hardboard



کرخیزان اصف خان و قاضی نوران بجایوت خان اورا کشتی

صحنه جنگی در کانال سیکون

۱۵۹۶ (۹۴۰) ۲-۱۷۷

۱۳۰

Battle Scene with Boats on the Ganges
From the manuscript, *Akbarnama*
1565
Opaque watercolour and gold on paper



Plaque: Warrior and Attendants
16th-17th century
Edo Peoples, Nigeria
Brass