

Art Critique --Essay 2 ENG 201 Kelley Martin

Guidelines for Writing an Art Critique

One of the best ways to learn the techniques and style for writing a critique such as this is to read other critiques. We will be reading a few.

- 1) Begin your critique by summarizing what you know about the artist's background and biography. Discuss when and where the artist lived, what influenced him or her and any important events that occurred.
- 2) Next choose one or more of the artist's works to critique. Identify the title, the medium/ art material used, and what year the work was created in.
- 3) In your critique you must at some point describe the work, analyze the elements and principles within the work, interpret the work, describe its purpose, and evaluate the work using aesthetic principles.
- 4) If a particular aesthetic theory or writer applies, use it.

The following outline is adapted from Edmund Feldman's *Varieties of Visual Experience* (Prentice Hall, 1972).

I. Give an introduction about the facts of the exhibit. Who? What? When? Where?

II. Critique one or more of the works included in the exhibition using a four-step process.

A. Description

Make objective* or value-neutral* statements about the work in question. Exclude interpretations and evaluations, and instead take an objective inventory of the work. Point out single features such as objects, trees, and people. Then point out abstract elements such as shapes and colors. Finally point out textures, which can lead to a description of the "characteristics of execution."

*A test of objectivity would be that most people would agree with your statement.

B. Formal analysis

Make statements about the relations among the things you named in the descriptions (part A). You should note similarities in formal elements—such things as color, shape, or direction. Then note dissimilarities (contrasts) in those same elements. Take note of

continuities (such as the color red repeated throughout the work) and of connections (for example, the shape of a window repeated in the shape of a table) between these formal elements and the subject matter. Finally, note the overall qualities of the work.

C. Interpretation

Make statements about the meaning(s) of the work. This is the most creative part of your critique. Using a hypothesis, support it with arguments, based on evidence given in the description and formal analysis (parts A and B)

D. Judgment

This is the most complex part of the critique and requires an opinion regarding the worth of an object, based on what was learned in the previous stages of the critique. Are you moved by this work? What do you think of it? What is your aesthetic judgment? And on what is based?

III. Draw conclusions—compare and contrast the works in you chose to look at two.