



The Final Art Survey Paper

During your visit to the Art Institute, you will spend significant time in person with a single work of art. By significant I mean at least thirty (30) minutes. It may seem very difficult at first, but I encourage you to slow down your pace, and look deeply and intently at the piece.

Take notes. Make sketches. **Be as specific and descriptive as possible of what you see.** Use plentiful adjectives and active verbs to enrich your writing. Consider the *formal elements* and *principles of design*. Is the *line quality* sinuous and delicate or rough, jagged? Is *form* created through the depiction of *shapes and planes* or built up of *texture and mass*? Are brushstrokes or the bites of a chisel evident, or have surfaces been “licked” or smoothed over? Does *negative space* flow in and around the volumes, or is it trapped, dense and solid? What *hues* have been chosen, and what is their specific quality (*value, intensity, or saturation*)? How have the elements been *composed* or arranged in relation to one another and the audience, and in what *manner* or *style* has the subject been visually executed? Is there *symmetry, repetition, or pattern*? How does this contribute to the feel or possible meaning(s) of the work?

When you think you have seen everything there is to see, put your pencil down and close your eyes. When you open them, look at the piece again. Look at the work’s title if you haven’t already (preferable actually), and read any additional information about the artist which might help to situate the piece in history. Try to get inside the mind of the creator. Imagine what the artist’s process may have been like based on what you see.

Next (and this may need to happen once you’re back at Wheaton) **interpret the work in light of one of the major themes we have been studying in our text:** the Earth as Art, Representations of the Divine, Pilgrimage, the shifting role of the artist in relation to her patrons, the idea of Utopia and Dystopia, and the Spirit World and the Inner Mind. In order to place the piece better in the cultural context in which it was created, refer back to another specific work we looked at either in the text, or online in our course blog.

Finally, end with some concluding thoughts. The entire paper should be approximately 750 words **and fit on a single page**. Be concise and memorable rather than rambling and muddled. On your cover sheet, please include a color image of the work. Much of the Institute’s collection is online, or you can also find many works on postcards in the museum shop. **This paper will be due on Thursday, 29 April.** Consult the blog for more information, including instructions for those unable to go on the field trip.