

The 5 Realms of Art Analysis

Subject Matter: What does the artist depict?

- Who does the artist show?
- What do the figures / objects in the work represent or symbolize?
- What event or series of events does the artist present to the viewer?
- Is there even any iconography at all or is the artwork *non-objective*?

Function: Why did the artist create the work?

- For religious worship?
- To entertain or to please the eye?
- For political propagandistic purposes?
- To address a social issue?
- To commemorate an event or the life of a famous person?
- As an expression of wealth and status?
- To savor a memory?
- To document a place and time?
- To promote an artistic theory or philosophical idea?
- To tell a story?
- To express some human emotion (such as love, grief, or anger)?
- To establish a personal or cultural identity?
- To impress others with technical skill?
- As a gift to a god or another person?
- As a form of scientific study?
- For private enjoyment?
- For practical reasons only (that is, to provide shelter, to hunt with, or to document something for legal purposes)?

For whom was the work created?

- Was there a patron, and if so, who was it?
- Why did the patron commission the work?
- Was the patron upper class or middle class?
- To what degree could you describe the patron as “religious” or “secular”?
- To what degree was the patron involved in the artistic decision-making process?
- Did the artist create the work of art for the mass market?
- Did the artist create the work for himself or herself?

Where did the artist originally intend to place the work?

- In a church or place of religious worship?
- In a private home or a public place?
- In a dramatic outdoor setting or an interior space?
- From a particular viewpoint (for example, down below or high above)?
- With a particular kind of lighting?
- In a competitive exhibition?

Aesthetics: Artistic decision-making

- The principles & elements of design which ones did the artist employ and why? (ie. color, texture, lighting, line quality, etc.)
- What medium did the artist use?
- What techniques did the artist use?
- What rules did the artist follow in accordance with the style in a given time or place?
- What rules did the artist break in order to innovate or experiment?
- Did the artist emulate the work(s) or style of another artist?

Context:

How does the work reflect the cultural aspects of a particular time and place?

- Religious beliefs?
- Political ideologies?
- Philosophical ideologies?

- Attitudes toward social class and gender?
- A culture's concept of aesthetic beauty?
- A culture's concept of power and authority?
- A culture's concept of morality?
- A culture's changing tastes?
- A culture's concept of normality, or views into the daily life of "ordinary" people?
- A culture's concept of nature and humankind's relationship with nature?
- A cultural view of history and tradition?
- Cross-cultural influences?
- The status of the artist or architect?
- The impact of subcultures existing within a larger, mainstream culture?
- The impact of new scientific discoveries or inventions?
- The lifestyle and milieu of the artist or architect?

Cultural Impact

What impact did the work of art or architecture have on the history of art?

- Inspire or influence other artists or architects?
- Seen by a large number of people?
- Cause controversy or raise complex questions?
- Alter visual perception in some way (such as the invention of linear perspective)?
- Popularize a particular medium or technique?
- Provide a sense of cultural or national identity?
- Popularize a particular ideology?
- Alter fashion and taste?
- Alter the way artists were trained?