

Art Analysis Worksheet No.1

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This Art Criticism worksheet is based on the ideas outlined by Ed. Feldman.

This approach has 4 stages that you can use to analyse and make sense of an artwork that you know nothing about. It allows you to make your own decisions about the quality of the artwork (s). The different headings could be used as the basis of a longer piece of writing, such as an essay, or could be the key points in a comparison of more than one artwork. Feel free to add additional space between each of the 4 stages for your responses.

The Worksheet could be located in your Workbook or Visual Diary.

There is an excellent example of the use of this approach to analysing artworks included below. You might like to send me an example of your own use of the 4 stage approach. There is another approach to analysing artworks included under **Art**

Analysis Worksheet No. 2.

Description. What can you see in the artwork? (list all of the things that can be seen)

Analysis. How is the artwork made? (What art techniques, skills, working processes etc do you think have been used)

Analysis. What does it mean? (What do you think the artist is trying to tell us or show us, or what is the purpose of the artwork?)

Judgment. Explain how good you think the artwork is? Explain whether you like it or not?

A Student Example of this process.

The following analysis of the painting *Australian Countryside* (included below) uses the 4 stages outlined above. Notice how

much information can be found when that approach is used after careful observation of the painting.



Australian Countryside
Max Darby
Acrylic paint on canvas
2 panels each 150 cm x 85 cm

Description. What can you see in the artwork? (list all of the things that can be seen).

I can see two paintings that go together to make up one bigger

picture. The main things in the painting are all related to what you would find in the countryside. These include a strong blue sky, rolling cream and dry hills that are probably covered in long grass, a waterway or river, rocks and cliffs and trees with shadows. There are some reflections of the hills and cliffs in the water. The colours are mainly variations of blues, reds and pinks, greens and some really dark areas that look like they are black. I can see that the river is winding through the hills and the cliff areas but it also looks like the river divided up and continues out of the painting at the top to the right. It looks to me like there is a deep pool in the left painting towards the bottom in the middle.

Analysis. How is the artwork made? (What art techniques, skills, working processes etc do you think have been used).

The artwork appears to have been painted since the title mentions acrylic paints and canvas. It is probable that a variety of brushes would have been used for different areas of the two panels. I think the two panels would have been done together at the same time so that everything in them was similar and the hills and water would line up exactly. There can be seen some careful blending of colours in the hills and the water, especially with the shadows. The cliffs would have been roughly textured using something like a palette knife or pieces of flat plastic or wood. Fingers or hands could also have been used to create smooth and rough textures. Because the paintings are so big one of the working processes would have been to do some work and then stand back a long way to see how it was going. It is a fairly complex work so it would also have taken a lot of time and attention. I imagine it

would have been done with the canvases lying flat on the floor or on two very big easels standing beside each other. One other working process would be to ensure that the sizes of the different things in the painting were correct so that things a long way away would look smaller than those close up. This would help to give it a 'real' appearance.



Careful blending of colours in the hills and water, especially with the shadows

Analysis. What does it mean? (What do you think the artist is trying to tell us or show us, or what is the purpose of the artwork?)

It is not so easy to say what this painting means. Many landscapes don't actually have a meaning. Probably what the artist is trying to tell us is how the countryside looks in the area that is shown. That is, it looks very dry on the land even though there is plenty of water. This is suggested by the dry ochre colours of the grasses. The hills look really hot but the water looks really cool because of the deep blue colours used and the deep shadows and reflections along the edge of the water. The artist might be commenting on the need for us to preserve water so that the environment isn't destroyed (although there is plenty of water available). I think the painting shows really lovely countryside where people and animals could easily live. It definitely isn't a desert even though the colours suggest Summer months. I would find it difficult to accept that the artist doesn't like this place. On the other hand it doesn't look 'too real' so the paintings could be the artist's interpretation of the countryside rather than be exactly as it would look there. If I had to find any deeper meaning I can see that the artist might be making a comment on people's lives. That is, life can sometimes seem so gentle and safe and then rough, cliffy and deep and dark times can come along all of a sudden. Yet, for some people life continues to go along gently with no real challenges or issues – as seen by the river going along out of the top right hand corner.

Judgment. Explain how good to you think the artwork is?

Explain whether you like it or not?

I think this is a really good painting. When you first look at it you don't really see much else than a landscape. I don't really like a lot of landscapes but this one has so much happening in it that I find it really interesting and being interesting seems to be an obvious good thing. The things I think are really good are the use of colours to suggest weather, atmosphere, temperature and the season of the year; the contrasts between smooth and rough textures; the development of big spaces and the illusion of distance, and the many possible meanings and intentions that the artist built in to it. I like the contrasts between the two different canvases and think they are also really good. The two paintings are different but have so many similarities that they clearly go together. The colours are obviously mixed and not used just as they can be found in the tubes. Everything seems to have been deliberately chosen as a part of the overall design and I think this helps in making it a good painting. I also admire the fact that it isn't just a 'pretty scene' but has a lot of expression in it that reflects the artist's interests and tastes. I think it's a good work and I also like it.



Details of brush work and surface tones and textures.