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Art 107  
Spring Semester, 2007

## **FIRST MUSEUM ASSIGNMENT**

You may choose works of art from the Renaissance through the modern periods at The Art Institute of Chicago.

You are to answer both of the following questions:

- 1. What is your favorite work of art in the collection and why?**
- 2. Which work do you find to be the most interesting and thought-provoking and why?**

Write approximately two pages on each of two works of art. The paper will be graded on both form and content. **It is due on February 12<sup>th</sup>.**

A suggestion: Take this assignment in the spirit in which it is offered. It's meant to be a gift, and its objective is enjoyment. If you do this assignment properly, it has the potential to change your life. At this point, this gift is meant to be for you alone. After you've found yourself in your relationship to art, and after you've, I hope, discovered pleasure and, perhaps, even joy and excitement in your experience of art, you'll be in a better position to share it with others. So be a little selfish now and go to the museum alone. Give yourself a gift, so later on you can share it and give it to others.

## **HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS ASSIGNMENT**

Step 1: Plan a date to go to the museum and arrange for someone else to watch your kids.

Step 2: Before going to the Art Institute, you must gather up your notes from class on learning to look, and from the introductory chapter of your book on how to look at art. I suggest that you photocopy the chapter to take with you along with your notes so you do not have to carry the heavy book. Skim your notes before your visit, and look at them more carefully while you are looking at the art about which you will write.

Go to the Art Institute of Chicago and give yourself enough time to **leisurely** wander around. There's a great deal to see, and you must give yourself the time to choose both your favorite object and the one work of art about which you're the most curious. Bring with you to the museum not only your notes and your photocopies but also a notebook with which to write down your thoughts and observations. Bring too, an open mind, a sense of anticipation, and excitement.

Since you'll be walking on stone floors all day long, **wear comfortable soft-soled walking shoes** with good support to protect you against back pain and knee pain, etc. Keep your admission ticket, which you will later staple to your paper.

Step 3. After wandering around the exhibit, **if, and only if you're feeling overwhelmed by having too much from which to choose**, set some boundaries: Perhaps you'll limit yourself to the first three rooms, to monumental sculptures, to depictions of women, or to whatever you decide. The choice is yours.

Step 4. **Always keep in mind that the point of this exercise is enjoyment!**

Step 5: Sit in front of your chosen artwork, look hard, and reflect! Take notes. Perhaps do some stream of consciousness writing. (This is to get your juices flowing. Think of it as journal writing. It's not to be turned in.) Ask yourself, why do you like this piece? You must go beyond "I just like it." Ask yourself why you like it. If you don't know at first, spend more time looking at the object. Force yourself to think about it! (*Sometimes, this is an opportunity to think about who you are. Art reflects the human condition. Your choice reflects who you are.*) As you look and think, write down your thoughts.

Step 6: Part 2 of your paper: Choose the artwork that you find most interesting. What piques your interest? What are you curious about? What would you like to know? (Review steps 3, 4, and 5 and apply them to Part 2 of the exercise.)

Step 7: Make a list of your questions, while you're looking at the work of art.

Step 8: Make detailed, mental photographs of the two works of art.

Step 9: If available, get postcards or photographs. Some museum guards will allow you to photograph without a flash, and others will not. Later, you may be able to get photographs from museum catalogues online or you can make photocopies from the hard copy catalogues. Some images may be available from [archive.com](http://archive.com). In the event that you won't be able to get a photo, be sure to make a rough sketch of each work. Sketching will also force you to look harder at the art. Later, sketches and/or photographs will make your work easier, when you're thinking about the artwork and writing your paper.

Step 10: During the next days, give yourself some daydream time: Visualize the artworks. Remember your museum visit. Think about the two questions. Jot down your thoughts.

Step 11: Organize and clarify your thoughts for the first question. Put your ideas in the best order to be understandable to a third party. Create an outline. Arrange your thoughts in the best order to be compelling to a third party.

Step 12. Organize and clarify your thoughts for the second question. Create a logical and compelling outline.

Step 13: Write a first draft of both parts of your paper.

Step 14: Ask yourself how you can make this paper better. Although it's personal in nature, is it understandable to someone other than you? How can you make it clearer? How is your grammar? Are there spelling errors? Fix your mistakes. Improve your paper. Write a second draft. Write a third, fourth, or however many drafts it takes to excel in this assignment.

Step 15: Assemble your paper in the following way: Part One is entitled at the top of the first page, for example, “Picasso’s Old Guitarist: My Favorite Work of Art at the Art Institute of Chicago”. Under this, put your illustration and then, approximately two pages of text. Do not amplify you margins; use standard ,margins and four tsizes,. Do not skip lines between paragraphs or use any other measures to create space. Do not include the space for your illustration in your page count. Part Two, on another page, might be entitled “Marcel Duchamp’s Hat Rack (hanging from a ceiling): The Work of Art I Find Most Interesting at the Art Institute of Chicago” and is organized the same way. (Note: Titles of works of art should be underlined or italicized, rather than placed within quotation marks)

Step 16: Give your paper a final check-over for form and content.

Step 17: Ask yourself the following questions:

Have I learned something about myself?

Have I allowed myself to get the most out of this assignment?

Or, have I cheated myself somehow?

If so, can I fix it?

Step 18: Turn in your paper by February 12<sup>th</sup> with a sense of accomplishment!

**MUSEUM INFORMATION: Addresses, Directions, Hours, Entrance Fees, etc.**

The Art Institute of Chicago is on Michigan Avenue at Adams. It is open every day, except Christmas and Thanksgiving. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, it is open from 10:30 to 4:30, while on Thursdays, it is open from 10:30 to 8:00. On Saturdays and Sundays, it is open from 10:00 to 5:00. Keep in mind that you will be asked to leave the galleries at least fifteen minutes before closing time, so schedule your visits accordingly. On Tuesdays, the museum is free. On other days, a suggested donation is requested. If money is an issue, do not let that keep you from going to the museum and going back as often as you like. You are asked for a donation, not an entry fee. If you can afford the suggested donation, pay it; it’s for a good cause. If not, it’s up to you to decide how much you’d like to donate.

**A FINAL WORD**

Keep in mind the objectives for this assignment:

1. To become engaged with original works of art
2. To think seriously about original works of art
3. To experience enjoyment while doing it

