

HOW TO LOOK AT ART

→ Four Easy Steps for Art Curious Adults

When looking at art, it's common to wonder "what is it about?" or "what does it mean?"

Artists use visual language to share ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and it can take time to understand it. An artwork can mean different things to different people because each of us brings our own knowledge and life experiences to this active learning process.

The suggestions and questions below are meant to help you look more carefully and reflect on what you see. This looking process will work with any art—on your own, or with a group.

1 OBSERVE

Begin with a deep breath, and let your eyes settle on the artwork in a focused, but not frantic, way. Give yourself some quiet time and take note of what you're seeing. *Details, texture, colors, patterns, size*—everything matters.

2 DESCRIBE

Start to think more deeply about what you've noticed.

What words would you use to describe what you're seeing?

Did you notice one detail more than the rest—if so, why do you think that is? Did the artist make choices that led you there?

Are there certain aspects that seem to evoke feelings for you?

What words best describe what you are feeling?

Are there things that remind you of your own life experiences or knowledge?

3 ANALYZE

You're starting to put everything together.

If you haven't done it yet, read the wall label. Does any of the information help you put this work in context?

How does the subject fit into what was happening in the world when it was created?

Do you see a story in this work of art, or is it more like a statement, or about emotion, or technical mastery?

What do you think the artist was trying to express?

4 INTERPRET

Reflect on what this artwork means to you.

Do you feel like your understanding of it could be different than what the artist might have intended?

Is there anything about it that may spur an action on your part—reading a book to learn more, doing some online research, asking questions of families and friends?

What do you think you will remember about this work of art—later today, or in six months?