**LIST OF DESCRIPTIVE WORDS TO CRITIQUE ART (HANDOUT)**

**Words to Critique Composition**

How the elements in the painting are arranged, the underlying structure (shapes) and relationships between the different parts, how your eye moves around the composition.

* Arrangement
* Structure
* Layout
* Landscape Format/Vertical
* Portrait Format/Horizontal
* Balanced/Symmetrical
* Spacious
* Foreground
* Middleground
* Background

**Words to Critique Line**

Lines and curves are marks that span a distance between two points (or the path of a moving point). As an art element, line pertains to the use of various marks, outlines and implied lines in artwork and design. A line has a width, direction, and length.

* Flowing
* Delicate
* Simple
* Bold
* Thick
* Thin
* Broken
* Blurred
* Varying
* Contour
* Meandering
* Vertical
* Horizontal
* Diagonal
* Geometric
* Organic

**Words to Critique Tone**

In art, tone refers to the degree of lightness or darkness of an area. Tone varies from the bright white of a light source through shades of gray to the darkest black.

* Subtle
* Contrasting
* Muted
* Constant
* Dramatic
* Brash
* Subdued
* Graduated

**Words to Critique Texture**

Texture is the perceived surface quality of a work of art. It is an element of two-dimensional and three-dimensional designs and is distinguished by its perceived visual and physical properties.

* Rough
* Fine
* Smooth
* Coarse
* Uneven
* Simulated
* Actual

**Words to Critique Form/Shape**

Art comes in various shapes whether it is a painting or a sculpture. Therefore, there are specific words to describe each piece of art.

* Organic
* Curvaceous
* Geometric
* Linear
* Angular
* Elongated
* Distorted
* Ambiguous
* 2D/3D
* Flat

**Words to Critique Movement**

Movement is seen in every piece of art. Movement helps to create or define a piece of art.

* Swirling
* Flowing
* Dramatic
* Changing/Morphing
* Varying
* Implied
* Actual
* Repetitive

**Words to Critique Scale**

Scale is basically the size of the art.

* Large
* Small
* Intimate
* Miniature
* Monumental

**Words to Critique Contrast**

Contrast in art refers to the arrangement of opposite elements (light vs. dark colors, rough vs. smooth textures, large vs. small shapes, etc.) in a piece of art.

* Dramatic
* Subtle
* Strong
* Reflected
* Frontlit/Sidelit/Backlit
* Direct/indirect light
* Natural/Artificial
* Dappled
* Cast shadow

**Words to Critique Color**

In art color is very important. This is what helps each piece of art stand out. The color, no matter what type of artwork helps define the piece and the artist. A lot of artwork can be determined on who did the work just by looking at the colors, because certain artists use specific colors in every piece of their work.

* Bold
* Vibrant
* Subtle
* Distinctive
* Pale
* Earthy
* Value: Dark-Light
* Naturalistic
* Calm
* Multicolored
* Analogous
* Primary/Secondary/Tertiary
* Gray-scale
* Artificial

**Subject Matter Words**

This aspect of a painting is one where it can really feel like you're stating the obvious. But if you think of how you'd describe an artwork to someone who's not seen of it or who isn't looking at a photo of it, you'd probably tell them the subject of the painting quite early on.

* Abstract
* Cityscape/ buildings/ man-made/ urban/ industrial
* Fantasy/ imaginary/ invented/mythological
* Figurative (figures)
* Portraits
* Interiors
* Domestic
* Landscape
* Seascape
* Still life
* Kinetic
* Expressionist
* Pop
* Manga
* Street Art
* Public Art
* Installation
* Propaganda

**Another List of Descriptive Words to Critique Art**

* Saturation- Refers to the brightness of color.
* Geometric – Refers to the shapes such as circles, triangles, squares, etc.
* Organic – Free flowing or rounded or found in nature.
* Symmetry – Meaning it is equal on both sides.
* Asymmetrical – Unequal proportioned elements.
* Flat tones – No tonal effect in the color.
* Negative space – The space around the actual form of art.
* Positive Space-The space occupied by form.
* Depth – The illusion of space.
* Broken color – Dabs or small amounts of color.
* Focal point – The spot that stands out in the artwork.
* Aesthetics- The branch of philosophy dealing with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comic, etc., as applicable to the fine arts.
* Pattern- a combination of elements or shapes repeated in a recurring and regular arrangement.
* Rhythm-is a combination of elements repeated, but with variations.
* Proportion- refers to the relative size of parts of a whole (elements within an object).
* Mood- What emotion(s) do you experience looking at it?
* Viewpoint- How it is viewed. Ex. Close up, far away, life size, bird's eye view.

**TRY TO USE AS MANY OF THESE TERMS AS YOU CAN (MINIMUM 10) WHEN WRITING YOUR CRITIQUES.**