

Basic Critiquing Handout

*Provided by our speaker for the October 2016 Monticello Camera Club meeting;
Jessica Scott, BFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2006*

Basic Critiquing: An art critique allows the artist to understand how they influence their audience. It also allows the audience/viewer to gain a better understanding of that artists' work.

1.) Describe what you see. This is the objective portion of the art critique. It involves a technical description-nothing more. It should include things like:

- Artist's name
- Title of work
- Type of artwork
- Subject of the painting (scene)
- Objects in the painting
- First impression—note the characteristics of the artwork that first jump out at you
- Colors used
- Shapes, lines and texture
- Light saturation
- Sensory qualities—identify the predominant mood and visual effect.

2.) Analyze the artwork. Evolve the art criticism from a technical description to an in-depth examination of how the technical elements were utilized by the artist to create the overall impression conveyed by the artwork. Technical elements you need to analyze when you critique artwork include:

- Color.
- Shapes, forms and lines.
- Texture.
- Light and shadow.
- How each technical element contributes to the mood, meaning and aesthetic sensation of the artwork.

3.) Interpret the artwork. This part of an art critique is more subjective than the others, as you are expected to use your analysis of the technical aspects of the piece of art to apply your own supposition to the artist's intended purpose for the artwork. Try to accomplish the following things when formulating your interpretation:

- Communicate the artist's statement. Describe what you think the artist is trying to say through the work of art.
 - Expound on the feeling conveyed by the artwork. Describe what the artwork means to you, and why.
 - Explain what you feel is the artist's intended purpose for creating that particular work of art. Examine why the artist made the choices in technique, materials and subject matter and how they relate to the intended purpose.
 - Identify symbols in the artwork and describe how they relate to the artist's technical choices and contribute to the artist's execution of the intended purpose.

4.) Evaluate the artwork. This is a summation of the art criticism process leading up to this point. Use your analysis and interpretation to draw conclusions and reach judgments about the artwork.

- State what you think the artwork's value is. For example, its value may be to evoke nostalgia, to incite anger or to impart beauty. Explain why you feel this way.
- Describe the artwork's relevance to the art community and to people as a whole.
- Explain where you feel the artwork has strong value and where you think it falls short.

5.) Say how this piece comes across to you:

- What do you think could be done better?
- Why didn't the artist do it that way?
- How is this picture unique in its composition?
- What have you gained through examining this picture?