**Observation Prompts for your Museum Visit**

**Take a selfie in front of your painting and email to me: natalie.greenberg@brooklyn.cuny.edu**

You will not receive credit for your paper unless I receive your selfie.

**Due Monday November 25th, 2019 IN CLASS TO ME**

**Directions**

Take this sheet on your museum visit. Use these questions in any order when looking at the object(s) you have chosen for your museum response paper assignment. Not all of them may be pertinent to your object. You may choose the ones that will best fit the thesis of your paper.

If you’re able to write a few sentences under each question while you’re at the museum, you’ll have the beginnings of your essay ready to work on at home.

REMEMBER: **you are being graded on the quality of your close looking**, on what you can SEE at the museum, and how you contextualize your object(s) though YOUR OWN observations. THIS IS NOT A RESEARCH PAPER.

This paper should be about 3 pages long; **typed,** double spaced, 12 pt font

After exploring the galleries, stand in front of your chosen object and ask yourself the following questions. Make detailed notes.

**1) First Impressions**

* What do you see? This is an important question to ask yourself before you read the object label. Your first impressions might change once you have read about the work, and the connections or changes you make between your initial impressions and later conclusions can form an interesting part of your paper.

**2) Form**

* Note textures and the quality of the surface of the work. What adjectives could you use throughout your analysis? Eg. shiny, dull, hard, soft, rough, smooth.
* How does the artist use line, color, light and shadow?
* What about the composition? Is it balanced, symmetrical, asymmetrical? Why?
* How big is the work?  How does size affect your reaction to the work?  How does size affect the depiction of the subject?

**3) Context**

* Read the label – what can we tell from the label? Look for the artist’s name, the media/materials used in creating the work, and when and where the piece was made.
* Where was the work originally meant to have been seen, and how might the current context in the museum be similar or different? What might it have been like to view the work in its original context?
* Where is the viewer meant to stand in relation to the work? Is there one viewpoint or multiple viewing points?
* Identify the subject matter.  Be certain to describe all of the components depicted. Is this artwork telling a story? Is it religious or mythological?

**4) In-Depth**

* Is the subject imagined or real? Describe the style.  Is this a realistic depiction?  Is it abstract?  Is the style of this work similar to styles we have studied?
* You have identified the material(s) used from the object label. Why might the artist have used this material?
* What do you think the artist or the patron of the work was trying to say about his or her subject?
* Where is this work located? What other works are near it to the right and to the left (brief details/comparisons, not a full analysis). Does it relate to its surroundings at all?
* Look around the gallery. Are there other wall texts or information points that might help you think about your object further? Look for leaflets, plaques on the wall to find out who sponsored the gallery, museum guards, docents etc.

**5) Personal Response**

* Describe why you selected this work.  What do you like/dislike about it?
* Is this work popular? Do other people stop and look at it? What are some of the reactions you overhear?

**NOTE:**

Make sure that you are able to articulate the difference between mere description unconnected to any developing ideas in your essay (bad) and formal analysis that connects and deepens as your essay progresses (good).

* Eg. “*This work is very beautiful. The sculpture has two arms, two legs and is covered by a long garment.”* **NO**. This is a “claim” or a “statement” – you need to develop ideas like these to show your reader why you might have come to such conclusions, or why your observations matter in the greater context of your paper.

* Eg. “*The sculpture is wearing a long garment that emphasizes the proportion and length of her body. In keeping with Hellenistic tradition, the effect makes the figure seem life-like, as if the clothing might move if touched it as if the sculpture could walk. This is contradicted by the fact that the work is actually made from very hard and immoveable white marble*.” **YES**. Sentences 2 and 3 develop the description of the figure in Sentence 1, contextualizing the observations made in the museum with information learned in class lectures and from the object label.