

Feldman's Method of Art Analysis

Edmund Feldman was a Professor of Art at the University of Georgia who developed an easy four-step method for evaluating artwork

1. **Description:** Describe what is seen in the artwork.
2. **Analysis:** How were the elements and principles used? What are the relationships that exist with what is seen?
3. **Interpretation:** What is the content, concept, or meaning of the artwork?
4. **Judgment /Evaluation:** What is your evaluation of the artwork, based on steps 1,2, &3?

The Feldman method is not passive, but active and exploratory. One can look at a work of art without thinking about what they see, but once we begin to describe a work of art our mind is engaged and we begin to think about what we are observing. The process moves from strictly objective statements in step 1 to a subjective response in step 4.

Description: Descriptive words about artwork are like pointers; they draw attention to something worth seeing, so remember to use words that are NEUTRAL.

Avoid terms that denote value judgments, such as beautiful, disorderly, funny looking, harmonious, etc. Instead, focus on factual information, such as smooth, bright, round, a lake, a woman, a rectangle, etc. This is important so that you don't jump to conclusions before working through the steps.

Analysis of relationships such as sizes, shapes, colors, textures, value, contrast, space, and volumes, encourages a complete examination of the artwork. The principles of design are an excellent way to work through this process. This step reveals the decision making process of the artist, who wants the viewer to make certain connections with the artwork.

Interpretation is when you determine the meaning of the work based on the information obtained from steps 1 & 2. It is about the concept, ideas, sensation, feelings, and expressive content of the artwork. Don't be afraid to revise your interpretation if new facts are presented (such as the date of the artwork, historical facts about the artist, and information of the culture in which the artist lived).

Judgment, the final step is often the first statement expressed about a work of art before it has really been examined. Judgment in that case is neither informed nor critical but simply an opinion. Using Feldman's four steps will help you evaluate artwork in an intelligent and informed manner.