

# Evaluating artwork using form, content, process, mood

## Form

- the shape of the overall work
- the different parts of it and in it
- the way the parts are put together or arranged
- how they work as one single whole work of art.

### Think about:

- the way the main colours or shapes are put together or built up and create an overall structure or arrangement.
- any important colour or shape that stands out or is particularly pronounced and what effect this creates. Refer to use of line, outline, tone, gradient, shading, shadow.
- ways important shapes or colours are repeated, making patterns
- how verticals, horizontals, diagonals and curves make up the overall arrangement and what effect this creates.
- how your eye can move easily over the work without moving off it.
- Layout of graphics, typography and images, balance and proportion of elements of a page.

Look at it with your eyes nearly closed. This will hide the details. You will only see the basic overall shapes and colours.

- Is it symmetrical - the same sort of shapes to left and right, top and bottom?
- Can you see any geometrical shapes such as a circle, triangle or square?
- Are there any lines, shapes or colours that are especially important in the painting? Now discuss what your friends think about it.

## Content

- what the work contains, in other words, what is in it and how that affects the outcome.

### Ideas:

what it is about in terms of its subject matter. Whether it is based on something real and observed - or is from the artist's imagination. Whether it tells a story (narrative) or has a message to convey.

- Has the subject matter been selected as a matter of interest in itself or for the purpose of expressing social, moral, religious or political concerns of the artist or patron?
- Does it portray particular brand values? What are these and how do you know?
- Was the subject observed at first hand or from memory or imagination?
- How has the artist interpreted the subject matter - representationally or with exaggeration, distortion or abstraction? Using photographs, manipulating photos or illustration?
- What do you think the artist's reasons might be for treating it like this?
- Is the subject matter meant to be taken at face value or are there hidden meanings such as symbols, double meanings, metaphors in the work which are not immediately evident?
- What is the function of the artwork? Who for? How do you know?
- Has the artist used similar subject matter in other work and, if so, how do they compare?
- Have other artists used similar subject matter and, if so, what comparisons & contrasts can be made?



## Process

- how the art work is made
- all the stages the artist goes through and all the things he or she does from start to finish.

### Ideas:

When you think about the process you could be thinking of the stage before the artist actually started practical work - when he or she was thinking and planning:

- How you think the artist got ideas and gathered information? From memory? By taking photographs? Using sketchbooks? Outside somewhere or working in their studio? and about the finished artwork, you could think about:
- how visual elements have been used.
- the techniques and methods that were used.
- signs that tell you whether the artist worked slowly or quickly.
- signs that suggest whether the work was done digitally or by hand.

- the media and materials that were used, e.g. oil paint, oil pastels, charcoal, mixed media or what software might have been used, tablets, scanning...
- how the materials were applied or used, e.g. fast rough brush marks, thick opaque palette knife strokes, transparent washes of colour, roughly assembled clay, etc. Digital work might talk about textured brushes in illustrator or Photoshop, using layers, opacity, clipping masks, 3d transforming using extrusion or revolve tools, distorting images or text.

**Things to try:** Talking about processes involved in producing artwork helps you to develop your visual vocabulary. Try to think of twenty words which refer to activities or stages in the production of an artwork, e.g. scumbling, shading, cross-hatching, modelling.

## Mood

the feelings, emotions and atmosphere in the work of art itself .

- the feelings, emotions and reactions someone has when they experience – look at, think about - a work of art.
- different people react differently to the same artwork. In your critical evaluation, remember what matters are your ideas. You may like an artwork or see something in it, that others don't. All this means is that you see things differently to others. Remember that no two people see or understand any artwork in exactly the same way. Remember that you must explain why you think:
- an artwork generates or gives off certain feelings, emotions and atmosphere.
- why YOU react to it and think about it as you do. Give your opinions ... and back them up with good reasons!
- List ten words that refer to mood. Examples could include sadness, soothing, tranquillity, peaceful, angry, confused, etc. calm, quiet, peace, busy, hurrying, action, frightening, sinister, scary, friendly, welcoming.