

Dressed to Kill: Japanese Arms & Armor



Japan; Suit of Armor; 19th Century; metal, leather; Gift of Mrs. Enoch T. Carson through the Women's Art Museum Association; 1881.152

Key Concepts

Art Criticism: The process of developing emotional, verbal, and judgement skills used when responding to artworks.

Aesthetics: The science that deals with the appreciation and the beauty of art.

Elements of Art: Color, line (straight, curved, spiral, etc.), form, shape, texture, value (lightness and darkness), and space.

Principles of Art: Balance, contrast, emphasis, repetition, and unity.

Artworks and artifacts can be the expression of an aesthetic principle, as well as the visual documentation of a significant time period, culture, and history. The works included within *Dressed to Kill: Japanese Arms & Armor* embody symbolism, complex compositions, and many of the essential Elements and Principles of Art.

You Can Be An Art Critic

Art criticism does not have to be complicated. You have many of the same attributes as professional art critics:

- You like to talk about and share artwork with others.
- You have a personal preference on the types of artwork you enjoy.
- You like to make connections between artworks you view.

The Art Criticism Process: Steps a Formal Critic Uses

The following four steps are often referenced when viewing and critiquing artworks and artifacts:

1. **Describe:** Take a visual inventory of the artwork using the Elements of Art.
2. **Analyze:** Discover how the Elements of Art work together; find relationships.
3. **Interpret:** Discover meaning within the work by focusing on content and expressive qualities.
4. **Judge:** Evaluate the qualities you discovered within the work and assign value.

Explore Connections

Use the four steps of art criticism on one or more artworks of your choosing.

Art Criticism: Step 1 - Describe

Look at the artwork. What colors do you see? What types of line can you identify? Do you see a range of values?

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Art Criticism: Step 3 - Interpret

Did you discover symbolism in this work? Does the work express an idea (thought or opinion)? Does the work convey a feeling (joy, sadness, anger, etc.)? Does the work communicate a message (story, fable, or history)?

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Art Criticism: Step 2 - Analyze

Is the work balanced? What creates this balance? Does the work have repeating elements? What is causing the repetition? Does the work have contrast? What differences are causing the contrast (line, color, shape, value, etc.)? Is there unity (harmony) within the work? What is causing this unity?

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Art Criticism: Step 4 - Judge

Do you find this work beautiful? Why? Are your feelings toward this work based on how the Elements and Principles of Art were used? Are your feeling toward this work the result of discovering its emotional content, an idea, or message? Did you find value in this work?

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(Left) Anthony van Dyck (Flemish, b.1599, d.1641); *A Man in Armor*; 1621-1627; oil on canvas; Gift of Mary M. Emery; 1927.393



(Right) Mary Louise McLaughlin (American, b.1847, d.1939), decorator; Frederick Dallas Hamilton Road Pottery (American, estab. 1865, closed 1882), manufacturer; Cincinnati Pottery Club (American, estab. 1879, closed 1890), affiliation; "All Baba" Vase; 1880; earthenware; Gift of Women's Art Museum Association; 1881.239