



## **Let's talk about Feldman's Model of Art Criticism**

by Idy NG

Welcome, art students, art enthusiasts and aspiring critics! In this post, we will delve into the insightful method of art criticism known as Feldman's Model. Developed by Edmund Burke Feldman, this approach provides a structured framework for analyzing and appreciating artworks. So, let's embrace the world of art appreciation and criticism in a professional manner!

### **Feldman's Model of Art Criticism**

According to Feldman, the process of art criticism can be divided into four stages: **Description**, **Analysis**, **Interpretation**, and **Judgment**. Let's take a closer look at each stage and understand their significance.

#### **Stage I: Description**

To begin your art criticism journey, it is essential to be specific and avoid jumping to conclusions. In the description stage, your task is to list what the art object includes without using loaded or value-based terms. This neutral approach allows you to focus on the visual evidence presented in the artwork.

When describing an artwork, you can focus on two aspects:

1. **Recognizable subjects:** In *representational works*, you can easily identify and agree upon the names of objects or subjects depicted, such as *people, trees, lakes, and animals*.
2. **Visual elements and their qualities:** In *abstract or nonobjective works*, since there might not be recognizable objects, you should describe the visual elements themselves. Pay attention to lines, colors, textures, shapes, forms, and spaces. Use adjectives that highlight specific qualities, such as *vertical, round, smooth, dark*, etc.

**Goal** in the description stage - to present a comprehensive and objective account of the artwork, laying the groundwork for further analysis.



## Stage II: Analysis

In the analysis stage, the focus shifts to *understanding the relationships among the various elements* of the artwork. This stage involves *formal or structural analysis*, which examines how the parts of the artwork *interact with and influence* each other.

Here are some key aspects to analyze:

1. **Size relationships:** Compare the sizes of different shapes or elements to understand their relative importance within the composition. Larger shapes often carry more visual weight and significance.
2. **Shape relationships:** Study how shapes are combined and interact within the artwork. Analyze the juxtaposition of curved, angular, or pointed shapes. Consider the edges of shapes, describing them as hard or soft, even or uneven, etc.
3. **Color relationships:** Observe and describe the colors used in the artwork. Note whether shapes have similar or contrasting colors, and analyze value relationships (lightness or darkness).
4. **Textural surface relationships:** Examine the surface qualities of the artwork, both actual and illusionary. Notice variations in texture among different shapes and consider how they contribute to the emotional and conceptual aspects of the artwork.
5. **Space and volume relationships:** Explore how the artist has created a sense of space within the artwork. Identify foreground and background elements, and observe techniques such as perspective, overlap, placement, and the use of light and shadows. Also, pay attention to negative spaces and their impact on the overall composition.

By analyzing these relationships, you can gain deeper insights into the *artist's intentions and the overall meaning* of the artwork.



### Stage III: Interpretation

Having completed the analysis stage, it's time to interpret the artwork based on the visual evidence and your observations. Interpretation involves making inferences and proposing hypotheses about the meaning of the artwork.

Consider the following guides for interpreting a work of art:

1. **Identify the "big" idea:** Look for a central concept or theme that unifies the various elements of the artwork. Describe this idea using words rather than merely describing the object itself.
2. **Reflect on your emotional response:** Share the sensations and feelings evoked by the artwork. How does it affect you on a personal level?
3. **Connect with your artistic experience:** Relate the artwork to your own artistic journey. Identify technical aspects that resonate with your own struggles or artistic problems.
4. **Relate to your knowledge of art:** Draw upon your knowledge of art history and artistic styles. Consider how the artwork addresses persistent artistic problems or engages with art movements.
5. **Connect with your knowledge of life:** Trust your observations, hunches, and intelligence. Even seemingly odd impressions can offer valuable insights into the artwork's meaning.

Interpretation allows you to engage with the artwork on a deeper level, exploring its potential significance and personal resonance.



#### Stage IV: Judgment

The final stage of Feldman's Model involves making judgments about the artwork. However, it's important to remember that judgments should be relative to a specific context and purpose, rather than based solely on personal preferences.

Here are three philosophies of art that can guide your critical judgments:

1. **Formalism:** Emphasizes the importance of the formal qualities and visual elements of art.
2. **Expressivism:** Focuses on the effective communication of ideas and emotions in a convincing and impactful manner.
3. **Instrumentalism:** Highlights the social intention or utility of the artwork.

When making judgments, it's crucial to have a well-thought-out rationale and support your claims with evidence from the previous stages of description, analysis, and interpretation. Consider the artwork's technical skill, conceptual depth, emotional impact, and relevance to the broader artistic and cultural context.

Remember, art criticism is subjective to some extent, and different individuals may have differing opinions. It's essential to provide a balanced and well-reasoned judgment that respects the artist's intentions and the diversity of artistic expression.

===== Ms NG's note =====

Feldman's Model of Art Criticism provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to analyzing and appreciating artworks. By following the stages of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment, you can engage with artworks in a thoughtful and informed manner.

Next time you encounter a work of art, whether it's a painting, sculpture, photograph, poster design or any other medium, consider applying Feldman's Model to enhance your understanding and appreciation of the artwork.

Happy art appreciation & art criticism!