

Mid-Term Test Example of Writing

Here are some things you might say. All are not complete but designed to give you ideas about how to discuss these formal elements and how they relate to meaning.

1. Discuss Line and Composition. What kinds of lines are used? How does the use of line affect the meaning of the drawing? Speak generally about the composition. How does the placement of objects affect the meaning of the drawing?

1a. Giacometti still life—lines are sketchy and gestural, moving mostly horizontally and vertically over the page. The line quality gives the impression the artist did the drawing quickly, recording things and then restating the line to correct the perspective or proportions. The gestural lines also make the drawing look like it's vibrating.

The composition is almost symmetrically balanced, with the flowerpot directly in the center of the page. However, because the table is slanted into the page from the right side and it stops about 1/3 through the page, the left side has more negative space, making it feel more open.

Implied lines divide the space close to the center as the edge of the table moves up through the flower stem. Other divisions of implied line follow the back leg of the table up into some window divisions and off the page. Similarly, on the right side, the lamp, wire and window divide the page in 1/3.

1b. Leonardo sketch—Artists uses an active, gestural line that varies from really light to darker for emphasis and in areas where shadows will be seen. The active line enhances the sense of movement in the figures and allows the viewer to see specific shapes of the body. Lines are also used here to indicate shadow areas.

The composition is a complex arrangement of four figures all in different poses, or what may be a sequence of one person in different poses. The gesture and placement of each figure fills different sections of the page. The reclining figure at the bottom creates a vertical base running side to side through the picture bringing our eye into the scene from the bottom right corner. From there, the gaze and direction of the head, lead up the next figure's leg as they seem to be making eye-contact as one is about to hit the other. The diagonal placement of the body of this central figure leads our eye through the page on the diagonal, adding a dynamic feeling.

This figure is the focal point for all the reasons mentioned, including its placement directly in the center of the page. The other two figures, one leaning out to the left, the other to the right, fill the negative spaces while enhancing the sense of action. Restated line and the ghost of another figure reinforce movement and change.

2. Discuss Value and composition. How does the drawing make use of value? What kinds of Values are used? How does value use affect meaning or feel of drawing? Make general comments about arrangement of elements. How does placement affect meaning?

2a. Morandi still life—in this still life drawing, a light overall tone of values are used to create the illusion of three-dimensional objects sitting in a real space. Line disappears into the values which are so carefully rendered the evidence of the artist's hand is invisible. Values not only indicate light and shadow to reveal the forms of the objects, they also indicate texture and surface of different objects.

The composition is composed of three roundish shaped pots of varying sizes arranged almost symmetrically. The large pot is the focal point as it sits directly in the center with two smaller

ones to each side. The smaller pots create implied directional lines from each of the bottom corners to the top of the large one. They are arranged almost on the same baseline, in a linear horizontal. The table creates a rectangle and then the objects an additional rectangle, or triangle on top.

The light overall value system tends to make the drawing feel soft and approachable. Light that would create this type of value would be soft and veiled. It is as if we are viewing it through a veil or smoke.

The composition is extremely stable. Together with the soft values, this stability make the drawing feel comfortable, old and familiar.

2b. Dine foliage—Values in this drawing are mostly dark. The artist uses value as pattern moving our eye across the page from dark to light.

Composition is symmetrical as two color flowers are the focal point with opposite sides very similar in appearance. Focal point is almost directly in the center of the page with flower at about the 1/3 mark near the top. The active line makes the foliage appear to be moving except for the two central flowers.

The darker values and moving line make the drawing appear to be ominous as if there's a storm and these two little flowers are trying to stay safe.

3. Discuss composition and perspective. Be specific about how the drawing makes use of perspective and how that affects the meaning. Also make general comments about arrangement of elements.

3a. Mehretu abstract—this asymmetrical drawing makes use of an overall compositional arrangement, as there are directional lines and various elements throughout the page. Lines are light and heavy, indicating architecture, natural elements and abstract shapes. Color is used minimally and almost arbitrarily to bring attention to different sections and lead our eye around the space. However, a focal point seems to be in the upper right hand corner where the straight lines and curved lines seem to point to a sunrise or explosion of some kind.

Various types of perspective are used ranging from the architectural background being linear 2-point with other elements laid on top existing in their own rational space. This device that allows each part of the picture to have it's own, different perspective, gives the drawing an unrealistic, overwhelming and chaotic feel.

Everything in this drawing is designed to this end.

3b. Student still life drawing, boot— This composition divides the page in vertical sections. At the far left, a shadow extends from top to bottom about 1/4 way into the page. Then the boot and lace divide the page again from top to bottom, almost in the center of the page. The edge of the shadow, or wall, provides another division. A curved form in the lower left hand corner and the rounded clamp light at the top softens these strong verticals.

Values are used to create the illusion of form but also create pattern across the page as darks and lights are enhanced.

The perspective is linear rational, 2-point. The 2-point perspective is designed to create the illusion of real 3-Dimensional space. It gives the feeling we are looking at the set-up ourselves. It implies a real situation with real things.

As opposed to Mehretu's drawing where we know we are not looking at something real.

4. Discuss perspective and proportion. Make general comments about composition.

4a. Xilu still life—For the most part this drawing does not rely on linear perspective. Though the pears are 1-point, lined up across the top red baseline, the strength of this drawing is not about perspective but rather proportion.

Part of the proportion issue here is compositional. The page is divided into three distinct sections each with its own treatment of perspective and proportion.

The top section, which is lighter and about 1/3 of the page, has dancing and diving reindeer and/or bears. They are rendered in a flat beige color punctuated with red. Looking closely, one can see they are shaped as if they are in perspective but because the shapes are flat, perspective is merely implied. Also in this section of the drawing are three pears. The relationship of proportion of the pears to the animals is unrealistic. Both are almost the same size. All three pears are about the same size but two are darker and one lighter.

The next division of space, moving down the page is a band of red. In this red band are designs and patterns in a lighter red that resemble lace. This band of red divides the page from left to right, edge to edge.

The bottom section of the page has varying tones of blue-green some shaped like dragonflies. The dragonflies are large compared to the pears or animals in the other section. They are all viewed from the top and though we could say, in 1-point perspective, it is somewhat irrelevant since they are rendered as shape, not form. So, to talk about perspective doesn't really make sense.

5. Which design elements affect the meaning of this drawing and how?

6. In what ways has this artist created interest in the drawing?

There are many things that can be discussed in this drawing. Here are a few.

Almost Symmetrical composition, interest created because of shape added to the right side breaking the negative area and complicating our understanding of the subject matter. Strong vertical lines are broken by the horizontal limbs and oval in the center. Dark center vertical and then light and implied lines lead our eye up through the center of the composition.

Use of line—artist uses line to define form and create texture. Line is light and fluid in some areas and darker in others. Darker lines imply heaviness, places where there is shadow or heavier stems. Line used for texture in tree and bark around.

Value used for illusion of form and pattern. White background, then dark center with lighter tree trunk moves eye across the page. Texture of the bark, dirt, or whatever the dark background is, enhances the visual interest of the dark, and makes the tree trunk move forward.

All these elements come together to create a drawing that looks real and not real at the same time. It is beautiful, sensitive, and mysterious. It looks finished and unfinished and there are things we don't understand.