

# making strange

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
CLOSE VIEWING



## SOURCES

- <https://thinkingmuseum.com/2020/02/12/learning-to-look-slow-looking/>
- <https://www.mfah.org/learn/practice-looking-art>
- <https://smarthistory.org/reframing-art-history/introduction-close-looking-approaches/>
- <https://www.terraamericanart.org/tools-for-teachers/discussing-art-and-common-core-anchor-standards/>
- <https://teachingpals.wordpress.com/2017/02/27/close-looking-art-in-the-classroom/>
- <https://massart.edu/app/uploads/legacy-files/Principles%20and%20Elements.pdf>

Pennsylvania  
Academy  
of the Fine Arts

**PAFA**

CURATED BY HAN MCCOY

## WHAT IS CLOSE VIEWING?

Close viewing, sometimes called slow looking, is a method of interpreting art by carefully focusing on it for a longer time. It involves thorough observation and taking in the details of an artwork, helping you to notice what you might miss with a quick glance.

## COMPOSITION COMPONENTS:



- **Subject Matter**  
object or person being represented
- **Form (3D)**  
the way shapes (2D) occupy space; notice dimensions, shading, perspective
- **Line**  
vertical, horizontal, diagonal; suggest movement and act as visual guides
- **Medium**  
material used to create an artwork; application of medium is technique
- **Pattern or Motif**  
a design that repeats colors, lines, and forms
- **Color**  
perception of hue, value, and intensity

## QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE CLOSE VIEWING:

- What adjectives would you use to describe this artwork?
- How does this artwork make you feel?
- What specific compositional details stand out to you?
- How does the arrangement of the composition components work to convey meaning?
- What do you think the artist intends to communicate with this artwork? Can you relate to the meaning?
- Does this artwork remind you of another object, place, or experience?
- In what ways can you relate one artwork to another in this space?

## BENEFITS OF CLOSE VIEWING:

- Encourages the use of descriptive language, further developing language skills
- Fosters thoughtful internal reflection and external dialogue
- Allows for multiple identities, perspectives, and experiences to be explored
- Increases overall engagement with art and creative thinking
- No prior art knowledge required, making art and museums more accessible to everyone!