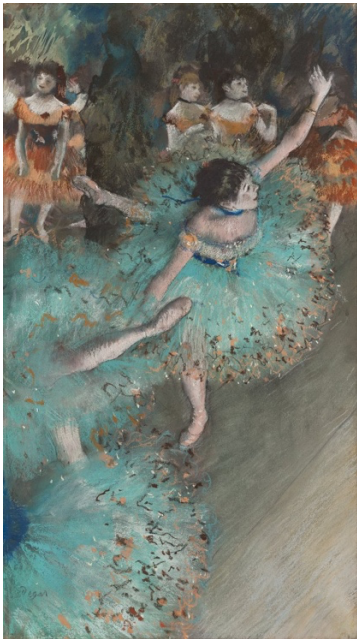


Art Analysis Worksheet #2

There are four basic steps: describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating.

Choose the work of art that you are researching for your Visual/Contextual Analysis paper. Include an image or URL for that image. The goal of having you do a full analysis of the work you are researching is for you to better understand the work. Analysis is the first step art historian take when researching a work of art. When you start to write your final paper, you must NOT simply copy what you wrote on this worksheet, as this is a being for your analysis just to get to you engage with the work. Through research and focusing on a thesis, your final Visual/Contextual Analysis paper may use what you discovered through this worksheet, but it should be specifically connected to support your thesis.



1. Describe:

What is depicted and how is it depicted? (objects depicted, medium, size, 2D or 3D, technique, etc.)

Title of Work: *Swaying Dancer (Dancer in Green)*

Creator (if known): Edgar Degas

Date and/or Period/Style: 1877-1879 Impressionism

Medium and/or Technique: Pastel and gouache on paper

Size, 2/D or 3/D: 64x36cm

Provide a URL for your work or include an image

Other descriptive information (**here you should provide a brief description of what is depicted**):

What do you see in the work? Please describe what is shown in the chosen work of art or design in detail here.

In this piece, the focal point is three bright and vibrant mint green ballerina costumes. These costumes are strapless with a royal blue belt, gold flecked, and have a knee length tutus that overtake the dancers (because of its voluptuous shape and size). The cropping in the piece helps to establish more of a central focal point, to the girl in full view who is positioned in the rule of thirds (upper right). This girl's arms are in full motion (left arm up right down) as she looks somewhere off the paper to the right, a pleasant and performing smile on her face in profile. Lastly, this main dancer's left leg is bent back and behind her and about at her head's level while her right leg is bent on the floor. The angle from which this is done seems to be up above the dancers so that our perspective is raised. In the background are three completely visible dancers but there is

subtle suggestion of more through scratches of colored pastel. These dancers appear to be waiting backstage for their turn to perform, as they are wearing peach pink costumes. These costumes are also strapless with sleeves horizontally across their arms as well as a knee length tutu. You cannot make out their faces because they are in less detail as a result of their distance from our perspective (they are smaller as compared to the mint costumed dancers). Looking at the background behind them, you see an abstract and patternless jumble of royal blue, mint, gold, and sort of a faded black. The stage beneath the dancers is gray and seems wood, angling on a diagonal and matching the angle of the main dancer's arms. This piece has a scratchy texture to it, showing each stroke that Degas did in using his pastels. This adds a greater sense of movement to the piece because it further emphasizes the fact that they are dancing and moving.

2. Analyze:

For more information on the formal elements of art see

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis.html

For more information on the principles of art/design see

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis2.html

THIS SHOULD BE THE LONGEST PART OF YOUR ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Discuss the **ELEMENTS OF ART** (line, shape, form, color-hue/value/saturation, texture and pattern, space, light and value, composition, etc.) and **PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN** (balance-symmetry and asymmetry, proportion and scale, rhythm, emphasis and subordination, unity and variety, movement, contrast, etc.)

- **Choose 5 elements of art to describe from your artwork. Think about how the creator uses these elements in the work of art/design. Consider how the elements work together to create the artwork.**

The most noticeable thing I see when looking at this piece is the use of color. The contrast between the mint and peach of the dancer's costumes really distinguishes the dancers closer to us as a more prominent focal point. In addition to that, mint and peach on the color wheel are complimentary, which is why these colors are so soothing and perfect together. Looking at the mint, it is very vibrant and saturated as compared to the faded pink of the dancers waiting their turn. The use of peach tones is also very prominent in the skin tones, tights, and ballet shoes. This pink is less saturated and flesh like, making it realistic. And lastly with color is the blues, mint, gold, and black of the background. This was strategically chosen, as it brings out the colors in the mint costumes even more (also emphasizing the black hair of the main dancer). Another thing that I notice is the sense of space within the piece-- Degas does this through his use of proportion. The girls dancing are closer to us and therefore bigger compared to the girls behind them. Space is also created through the overlapping of all the dancers and through the fuzzy quality of the dancers in back (this fuzziness is characterized by less detail and more obvious pastel strokes). In taking a closer look, there is an obvious texture to the piece. Whether this is a result of the pastels or an intentional feature, it is definitely noticeable. Looking closely at the dancers' skin and costume in the forefront, it's as if you can see each stroke that Degas made, showing an extensive attention to detail. This works to give the tutus and costumes an almost scratchy texture and with the fuzziness of the skin, it almost seems to propel the dancers into motion. The dancers' skin in the background seems smoother (as they are standing there), though the texture of their costumes remains consistent. Line is also a very prominent element in this piece, the most noticeable one being the diagonal of the main dancer's arms. This diagonal that goes up from left to right implies motion, due to the fact that Degas depicts the dancers while they're performing. Another line is within the foot of a faceless dancer coming out of a jumble of tutu (a little below the main dancer and to the left). Her leg bends at an angle and is pointing right up to the main girl in full view, bring your eyes to her once again. Other lines are the implied lines of the floor, created by light and dark shades of grey and they are parallel with the dancer's arms. And lastly, the shapes within the piece all seem to be soft and organic. The thing that stands out the most to me is the tutu around the dancer in full view. Because our angle is a little above everything, the tutu forms a full circle

around her, creating a very satisfying view-- almost like a target for our eyes. Other shapes created by the posing/dancing girls are soft because of the flesh and the frilly costumes contain no rigidity. The fluid form of these shapes seem to emphasize the dancers' gracefulness and ability to hit poses in an elegant manner.

- **Choose 5 principles of design to describe from your artwork. Think about how the creator uses these principles in the work of art/design. How do they work with the elements of art you already discussed?**

One principle of design I notice is the use of an emphasis, as mentioned earlier. The dancer in the upper right of the composition (rule of thirds) stands out quite obviously because she is the only dancer performing in a full body view. Degas' technique of cropping creates this emphasis because it simplifies our view and gives us one main thing to focus on. There is also a great sense of movement in this piece, not only because it is depicting moving dancers but because of the visible pastel strokes which imply motion-- the strokes imply motion because a person or thing in motion tends to have a fuzzy quality to it because of their movement through the space. Other kinds of movement include your eye throughout the piece, as mentioned earlier the protruding leg from the left brings your focus right back to the focal point. Repetition of dancers also creates a sense of movement as your eyes follows the line of them. There are two main strings of dancers that portray rhythm, the first being within the dancers performing. Though this repetition is not so much created by their bodies but by their flowing tutus that stick out in all directions. The first of the tutus is in the bottom left corner, with no legs sticking out, just what appears to be a floating bodiless skirt (angled so that the person coming out of the top is cropped out). Going up a little from there is a similarly angled tutu, yet the dancer's leg is behind them and bent at the knee while, pointing up to the dancer in full view. And this is all we can see of this dancer, almost identical to the tutu below except for the somewhat visible legs (the other being grounded but mostly covered by the tutu beneath). And lastly, looking at the dancer in full view, this is where our eyes rest after following the curving string of mint and gold-flecked tutus. As for the peach costumed dancers behind them, they are in a straighter line and also portray rhythm. These girls span across the horizon and are unevenly spaced out, as there is a gap between them a little off center to the left. Within these dancers, our eyes go across them but almost as an afterthought, because they are smaller and more distanced from our perspective. They also work to break up the composition, almost showing us the horizon line but not quite, as their feet are mostly covered by mint tutus. This piece is also asymmetrically balance, the three mint dancers take up about 75% of the composition, while from the line of peach dancers and up is roughly 25%. Within the mint dancer portion, the space seems to be balanced, just not symmetrically: the dancer in full view accounts for the two tutus on the left with no upper body. In addition to that, the three mint-colored costumes seem to balance out the peach-colored costumes. This is because there are more dancers in peach than those in the mint (unclear how many peach costumes there are exactly because not all of them are full depicted). Though because they are smaller, it seems to almost balance out the two contrasting colors. And lastly with balance, there seems to be a distinguishable difference between areas with energy and areas that are still. The still areas being that of the diagonal floor below the mint dancers and of the still peach dancers waiting their turn to perform. These elements add a calming quality that then counteracts the sporadic mint tutus and bodies performing as well as the energized background colors. And overall, this piece displays a nice sense of unity, as the desaturated pinks of the skin and legs are the same between both the performing and waiting dancers. Unity is also shown because the gold, and grey tones of the abstract background really bring out the color of the floor. All of these aspects work to tie together the different portions and things going on in the piece, making it overly satisfying to look at.

3. Interpret:

- **What might the content or meaning(s) of this artwork be, considering the visual structures, style(s), and subject matter you described above and through analysis?**

I think this piece is meant to capture a scene without leaving out any details to show the benefits of drawing right from observation. The dancers in the background could have been excluded overall but Degas chose to incorporate them because they were in his line of view along with

the performing dancers.

- **Why do you think this work was made?**

Drawing from what I already know about the piece, I believe that it was made in order to study the human body in different poses and to get better at drawing from observation. In addition to that, it could be to prove to other artists how complex pastel can be, as others thought of it as unusable. I also think that Degas did a study on dancers because he had a passion for it.

- **What is the artist trying to communicate?**

I feel like the artist is trying to show his success with working from observation in how realistic this piece is. I also think the artist is trying to communicate that pastel is actually a very versatile medium and can be used to make figures seem in motion (because of its texture) and to layer color.

- **What signs/symbols does the artist employ to communicate this message?**

Things that Degas does to communicate this are within his deep and rich colors and also allowing his pastel strokes to show to imply movement. Other signs include the very accurate proportions of the dancers' bodies and once again showing the dancers waiting behind.

- **What do these signs/ symbols mean within their time period/ style?**

These signs fit in with the impressionism style because the colors are very vibrant and rich. Another characteristic from a lot of pieces within the time is showing their strokes with the medium they use. Movement and drawing something "ordinary" are also characteristics of impressionism, which Degas definitely takes advantage of.

4. Evaluate:

- **What is the style (or styles) used in this artwork? What in the work connects it to this style (or styles)?**

Impressionism is definitively the style in Degas' piece. This is characterized by rich colors and visible strokes made by the artist and also by depicting everyday scenes. Another thing that Degas does that ties it to this style is his use of an open composition.

- **Is the style (or styles) associated with a specific movement or trend in the history of art from when the artwork was made? What is the social/political/historical context of the work, and what in the work connects it to the context?**

The impressionist style was very popular in 19th century France where Degas made this piece. Historically, I do not believe drawing dancers in the studio and performance was very common because it is so ordinary. And as compared to other impressionist artists, I think it was more common to use paint than pastel, though both can be used to achieve vibrant colors. Using pastel and depicting dancers made Degas work stand out because of their unique qualities.

- **If the style (or styles) do not correspond to the popular trends of the time period in which it was made, how does it differ?**

N/A

- **What is the significance of this work based on your evaluation?**

I feel that some significance can be placed within what Degas is depicting. He is showing that intricate art can be made from just an everyday scene. Other significance is within the fact that working from observation adds a very realistic quality to a piece when you focus on making everything just as you see it. And lastly, this piece shows the capability within pastel and how it is possible to achieve bright colors as well as a detailed structure.

5. Historical Precedence:

- **Does this piece recall one or more previous works of art or design? How and why?**

The only piece of art I can recall that is even remotely close to this one is *The Wedding Dance* by Pieter Bruegel. This scene shows a large crowd of common folk dancing together informally in celebration of a wedding. The common thread being the theme of dancing and also the vibrant colors in both.

- **Does it reflect or reject a traditional treatment of the subject? How and why?**

I can't really say that this is like or unlike the depiction of a dancer from another time because I have not really seen anything like this. Other artworks of people dancing tend to be of common folk with little dancing experience and everyday clothes.

- **Does it introduce a new subject to the history of art? How and why?**

I believe that Degas is introducing a new subject because not many other artists seem to have taken no interest in performances or with the dancers' studio time. I would think that other artists only think of these events as something to enjoy and not recreate, because dancers are constantly in motion. Though after Degas study of dancers came out, I'm sure that other artists were inspired by it to look at ordinary things around them and make art of it.

- **Does it contain visual aspects typical of a previous artistic period/style? How and why?**

I do not believe that anything I have seen very much resembles this. Most artworks of the past seem to have been painted and not with pastel and it is unknown if professional/experienced dancers of these kind were very prevalent in earlier times.

- **What does this piece tell us about the time period in which it was created?**

This piece demonstrates to me that people were either able to dance because they loved it or simply for the viewing of others (likely more people from the upper class). To be in such extravagant costumes kind of suggests to me like these performances were for more of the upper class as entertainment. This piece also reinforces that the idea and technique of impressionism was very prevalent at the time.