

History of Art: Prehistory to the Modern Era  
[Humanities HAR 180]

Fall 2019

Museum Project #1

Formal Analysis and Comparison: Sculpture

**Essays are due on Thursday, October 3.**

To demonstrate museum attendance, please attach your ticket receipt to the back of your paper and include a list of three objects on view near the objects you choose.

The project: A descriptive analysis and comparison of two sculptures representing or including the human figure. All sculptures are on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is located on Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street. The Museum is open Monday through Thursday and Sunday 9:30-5:15, and Friday and Saturday 9:30-8:45.

At the museum, pick up a map at the front desk. Locate the following galleries: Greek and Roman, the Medieval Hall, and the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, and Modern Art. Then, locate the works of art, making use of the accession numbers. It is best to examine closely all of the works listed before selecting one pair for your essay.

A part of this exercise consists in locating objects in the museum. The numbers in parentheses following media are accession numbers, which indicate the order of entrance into the museum's collection. Each number is therefore unique to a given object. Accession numbers are listed on the identifying card for every object on display. If you have difficulty locating any of the works below, you may inquire at the information desk in the Great Hall. Objects are routinely de-installed for conservation or collection rotation, and your object may have been removed from view.

Discuss one of the two pairs in a five-page (maximum), double-spaced essay. The essay should have a one-inch margin all around -- no larger. The essay will be graded on content, and attempts to fill space arbitrarily will therefore be unhelpful in this regard. Include the following information in the heading of your paper: your name, the date, and the names and other identifying information for the works of art you have chosen.

**Be sure to include a descriptive title for your essay.**

## Objects

### I. Mother and Child

Mali, Bougouni or Dioila area; Bamana

15 - 20th c.

Wood, H. 48 5/8 x W. 14 7/16 x D. 14 3/8 inches

1979.206.121

#### *Virgin and Child*

French Burgundian; From the Franciscan convent of the Poor Clares,  
Poligny; Attributed to Claux de Werve

1415 - 1417

Limestone with polychromy and gilding, 53 3/8 x 41 1/8 x 27 inches

33.23

### II. Marble statue of a *kouros* (youth)

Greek, Attic

Archaic period, c. 590 – 580 B.C.

Marble, Naxian, height without plinth 76 5/8 inches

32.11.1

#### Isamu Noguchi, *Kouros*

American, 20th century art

1944 - 1945

Marble, 117 x 297 3/16 inches

53.87a-i

### III. Statue of an Aristocratic Boy

Roman, Augustan period, 27 B.C.–A.D. 14

Bronze, height 52 1/8 inches

14.130.1

#### Limestone statue of a youth

Classical, early 5th century B.C., Cypriot

Limestone, height 43 7/8 inches

74.51.2457

### IV. Auguste Rodin, *Adam*

Modern, modeled 1880 or 1881, cast 1910

Bronze, overall (confirmed): 76 3/8 × 30 3/8 × 32 1/2 in., 831 lb. [11.173.1]

#### Commemorative Post: Male (Ngya)

Africa, Bongo peoples, late 19th century

Wood, height 75 1/2 inches [1973.264]

## Guidelines

Please do not fail to paginate and to staple together your essay.

**Note: It is best to fully analyze one sculpture before moving to the second.**

As you stand before each sculpture from the pair you have chosen, note your first impressions. Then take detailed notes for the writing of the paper. Note size; discern the main forms that are represented; note details and the sculptural qualities of shapes, volumes, contours, and surfaces. As regards writing, criteria for grading include originality, thoughtfulness, clarity, AND careful proofreading.

State the basic subject matter of each statue and provide a concise formal analysis for each of the two works before moving to a comparison/ contrast format. This will help you to structure the essay logically -- you should start with the simple analysis of each work before moving to the more complex analysis that comparison entails.

For each work, describe the rendering of their respective subject matters. Pay close attention to figural type and proportion -- pose, gesture, facial expression -- and the kinds of sculptural forms used (large, boldly modeled, etc.), the placement of the parts in meaningful relationship to one another, and the way in which these have contributed to a particular characterization of the human figure.

Organize your essay logically; letting the sculptures themselves suggest the order of the ideas and observations. The structure of your paper will depend on what you have to say, but it should include, at the very minimum, the following six sections: introduction; discussion of the first work of art; discussion of the second work of art; comparison of the two; contrast of the two; conclusion. The introduction should consist of a few sentences that state what each work represents, the material from which it is made, and its approximate size. State, also, what is most strikingly similar and different about the pair -- developed a bit, this primary idea will comprise your primary thesis statement.

These first statements are extremely important for orienting the viewer, and for setting up the detailed analysis that should follow. You may only be able to summarize the similarities and differences, in a few well-chosen phrases, after you have written the analysis itself. Although the introduction is always placed first, it is often written last.

Support all your statements with concrete observations about what can actually be seen in the works, and be sure to develop your observations. For instance, if one of the major differences between two sculptures is medium -- one is stone, another wood -- it is not sufficient to merely observe this. How does medium lend a particular characterization, and how does this contribute to the overall sense of the object?

Important: No research is necessary for this essay. But if you do incorporate material from any source (primary source reader, museum label, guidebook, etc.) be sure to footnote this material, and be sure to use quotation marks where appropriate. A failure to do so is plagiarism.