**Dr. Rodney Nevitt, Arth 1381, Fall 2018**

**Paper Assignment 2**

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston consists of two building complexes: the two older buildings, now together called The Law Building, and the Beck Building, 5601 Main Street, across Main Street from the “old” museum, between Binz (which turns into Bissonet) and Ewing. The Law and Beck buildings are connected by a tunnel. The paintings you will be writing on are on the second floor of the Beck building. If you show this paper assignment and your UH student ID at the entrance desk, you will be able to visit the museum free-of-charge. Also, note that Thursdays are free for everyone.

Museum Hours: Tues., Wed., 10 am-5 pm; Thurs., 10 am-9 pm; Fri.-Sat., 10 am–7 pm; Sun. 12:15 pm – 7 pm; closed on Monday, except Monday holidays. Closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. On Thursdays, admission is free for all visitors.

The paintings are in galleries 205 and 207 on the second floor of the Beck Building. **NOTE: I WILL ALSO POST IMAGES OF THE PAINTINGS ON BLACKBOARD.** The first will be familiar to you because it is one of the paintings you discussed in your first paper:

**(Gallery 205, Vinson and Elkins LLP Gallery)**

**Antoniazzo Romano, Italian (Roman), c. 1430-1512**

***Virgin and Child with a Donor*, c. 1480, tempera and gold leaf on wood**

**The Edith A. and Percy S. Straus Collection 44.551**

**(Gallery 207, Ben and Kitty King Powell Gallery)**

**Carlo Dolci, Italian (Florentine), 1616-1687**

***The Virgin and Child with St. John the Baptist*, c. 1635, oil on wood**

**Gift of Herbert Godwin 46.23**

Your paper should be five pages, typed and double-spaced. The paper will be primarily a formal (visual or stylistic) comparison of these two paintings to each other.

In discussing the Romano painting, you may be repeating some points you made in your first paper. However, consider how setting the Romano painting in comparison to the Dolci—rather than to the Straus Madonna—also subtly changes how you view it. You are now comparing the Renaissance (the Romano) to the Baroque (Carlo Dolci). In your paper, discuss how each painting fits into the visual characteristics of its period: think about and discuss how the following questions about visual form relate to this basic contrast of Renaissance and Baroque.

Both paintings are similar in subject: both depict the Virgin and infant Jesus, though Romano includes a portrait of the donor, and Dolci includes the young St. John the Baptist (the boy on the left). The pairing of Jesus and St. John as children was a traditional theme, as in Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks*. Beyond this, what similarities and differences do you see in the paintings by Romano and Dolci? Consider the following points.

Note the visual characteristics of each picture. (1) Which painter thinks more in terms of precise edges to his forms, and which allows his figures and objects to have softer contours, so that they seem to fade into the shadowed background? (2) Describe the quality and use of color by each artist: does one painting contain more intense colors than the other? (3) Does one painting have greater contrast in value (light and dark) than the other? How do these qualities of color and light/dark contrast affect the overall visual effect of the paintings? (4) Can you discern how the artist applied the paint to the support (wood panel in both cases)? (Hint: note the use of lines / hatchings in Romano’s painting, a characteristic of tempera). Do you think any of the visual qualities you have described is related to the use of different media (tempera vs. oil)? Note also the use of gold leaf in Romano’s painting.

What are the similarities and differences in composition in the two paintings? (1) How are the figures posed? Within a roughly similar pyramidal arrangement of figures, which composition employs more diagonal visual accents? Describe these. (2) How does each painter create the illusion of three-dimensional form and space? Is one painting relatively more “three-dimensional” than the other? Why does it have this effect? (3) In which painting does the artist think of discrete, individual forms, and in which is there a greater “unity” of forms—i.e., so that the figures, limbs, etc. are more closely and dynamically intertwined with each other? (4) In which painting is the composition completely contained by the frame, and in which does it seem to extend beyond the borders of the frame? How does this affect our perception of the relation between “our” space—the viewer’s space—and the space of the picture?

Consider the figures on an emotional level. (1) How do the Virgin and Child relate to each other and to the viewer? You may focus on their poses, gestures, facial expressions, gazes, etc. (2) Note the figure of St. John the Baptist in Dolci’s painting: do you see any parallels in how it functions within the scene to the figure of the donor in Romano’s picture? (3) In general, how do these paintings compare to each other in their expressive, emotional content? Is one, relatively, more “restrained” and the other more intensely emotional than the other?

In writing your paper, organize your responses to these questions in a way that make sense to you: do not necessarily follow the order in which I pose them here. Remember that the underlying theme of the paper is the contrast between the Renaissance and Baroque periods in Italian painting. Consider how the paintings exemplify basic contrasts between those two periods.

**PLEASE SUBMIT THE PAPER TO THE TURN-IT-IN LINK FOR “SUBMIT PAPER 2” ON BLACKBOARD BY SATURDAY, DEC. 1 AT 11:59 PM.**