Paper Assignment #2 – Art History: Final Project

Due: Sunday, November 19th by 11:30 pm

3-5 pages in length
Times New Roman Font
Double Spaced w/ 1” margins
Formatted in Chicago Manuel of Style

Your final project will involve the broader study of an artist or art movement to include
the dominant visual elements and design principles, an informed contextual study and
synthesized conclusion. Along with the paper written in essay form (introduction, thesis
statement, supporting paragraphs and conclusion), you will present your work in the form
of a PowerPoint presentation and create a work of art that falls in line with the style of
your artist.

This paper will follow suit with your first paper in that you will begin with a brief
description of the work, incorporating (not copying) basic information drawn from the
museum or gallery label: artist/s or culture, title or type, date, medium and dimensions.

Following the description, the formal analysis concerns the choice of visual elements and
their orchestration into a whole by a means of design principles. Visual elements, the
“building blocks” of visual art, include line, shape, light, value, color, texture, space, time
and motion. Design principles, which organize these elements into an overall design, or
composition, include unity, variety, balance, emphasis and focal point, proportion and
scale, and rhythm.

The second part or contextual study, will include information related to the concept
behind the work, to include iconography (subject matter/forms with specific cultural
meaning) and style often related to the artist, period or culture. The original intention of
the work, how it was initially perceived by its original audience and socio-political
factors may also be included. Aside from its aesthetic value, why is this artist’s body of work important?

You should include at least three relevant academic sources that span a length of time. You may only include one internet website source, your other sources must be from a peer reviewed article, e-book, newspaper article, exhibition catalog etc… This is why the library meeting on November 2nd is very important (see syllabus).

Of course you will close the paper with a solid conclusion that reminds the audience of your thesis statement. The PowerPoint presentation will be a summary of the paper, highlighting your argument and should include a body of visual images.

The paper will include an artistic element in the style of the artist or something representative or symbolic of the artist/movement. See D2L for further insights.

VISUAL ELEMENTS: The building blocks of a visual design

Line:

Can be actual (seen) or implied (interpreted; can outline forms (contour), create textures, and establish directions and accents; can be thick or thin, curving or angular, smooth or rough, free or controlled.

Shape (two dimensions) and Mass (three dimensions):

Can be actual or implied, closed or open, geometric or organic, or combination of any of these.

Light:

Can be actual, as seen in sculpture and architecture, or illusionistic, as seen in naturalistic paintings (where you can often tell the angle of the “light,” and sometimes the time of day, from the placement of highlights and the direction of the shadows).

Value:
Refers to the scale of light to dark ranging from pure white to pure black. A work that stresses contrast between very high and very low values (like some photographs and most paintings by Rembrandt) is very different in effect from a work composed of values from a narrower range of the scale (like most frescoe paintings and watercolors, typically high on the value scale).

**Color:**

Individual colors are described in terms of hue (the pure colors of the color wheel), value (lightness or darkness, as above, which can be manipulated by adding white, for a tint, or black for a shade), and saturation or intensity (brilliance or dullness), which can be lowered by adding other colors. What we commonly call light pink, for example, is a low intensity tint of the hue red. Combinations of colors in a work (palettes) sometimes employ a scheme or harmony. Three common harmonies are complimentary, formed from two hues directly opposite each other on the color wheel (such as yellow and violet), analogous, formed from hues next to each other on the color wheel (such as blue-green, green, and yellow-green) and triadic, formed from three hues equidistant on the color wheel (such as red, yellow, and blue). These last three hues are also known as the primaries, because, in theory, all other colors can be mixed from them. Colors and their combinations are also perceived as having temperature: blue as cool, red and orange as hot etc..

**Texture:**

Can be actual (you can feel it with your fingertips) or illusionistic (it only looks as though you could); repetitively structured (as in the case of patterns) or irregular.

**Space:**

Can be actual, as in the case of the open space inside a building (usually called volume), or illusionistic, as in the case of two-dimensional works that imply three-dimensional spaces. There are many ways of creating and illusion of space: three of the most important are overlapping, linear perspective (in which receding parallel lines converge on a horizon line), and atmospheric perspective (in which distant objects are shown blurred and grayed).

**Time and Motion:**

Refer both to the time and motion a viewer needs to experience a work (to walk around a sculpture, to move through a building, even to peruse a complicated picture), and to the works themselves. Some works are designed to be temporarily or ritually altered, and
others are designed to move on their own (mobiles and video art). Some seek to create the illusion of motion: stop-action photography, many Impressionist paintings.

**DESIGN PRINCIPLES**: Work to organize the visual elements into an overall design, or composition.

**Unity and variety**:  
The repetition and simplification of some visual elements, the variation and complication of others. A work that stresses formal unity will probably seem more harmonious than one stresses formal variety, which on the other hand, may seem more exciting. In either case, contrasts to the general rule will tend to stand out.

**Balance**:  
The visual “weighting” of parts of a composition in relation to its boundaries. Like color, this is a complicated topic, but, in general, artistic balance is either **symmetrical** (clearly organized along centered points or lines) or **asymmetrical** (arranged in a less formal manner). It may seem very stable, implying permanence, or very unstable, implying movement, or somewhere in between.

**Emphasis and Focal Point**:  
When one or more visual elements work to draw attention to one or more areas of a work (there may be several areas of emphasis, but usually only one focal point, if that).

**Proportion and Scale**:  
Both have to do with size, but the first usually refers to the relationship between parts of the work, and the second to the relationship to the work and the outside world. All the parts of the Statue of Liberty are in naturalistic proportion to each other (it looks like a human figure), but its scale is immense (it is much, much larger than an average human figure).

**Rhythm**:  
A musical term with analogies in the visual arts, referring to the repetition and variation of visual “beats” within a work. This principle is particularly important in architecture, where it is often evident in the organization of a roofline, or of windows and doors.