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Intro to Islamic Art and Architecture

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Writing Assignment 1: Formal Analysis

Due: Friday March 13, submitted via email in .doc format (not .pdf)

In Art History, a “formal analysis” is a piece of writing dedicated to analyzing the “formal properties” of art, for example line, color, composition, medium, texture, technique, etc. For this assignment, you will choose a work of art from the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Islamic Galleries. The work should fall within the time frame of the class (e.g. before 1600). Please visit the Met and plan to spend at least 20 minutes in front of the artwork taking notes and studying your chosen work closely. You may also want to take photographs for your records and to use as visual evidence for your paper. This assignment does not require consulting or citing any outside sources; all of the information you need can be found in the artwork itself.

Your formal analysis should describe the artwork in detail. How does the artist use color, shadow, line, shape, material, technique, etc.? What is the composition of the artwork? Where does your eye go when you look at the image? What is the subject of the image? If there are figures in the image, how does the artist use elements like pose, gesture, or expression; what about clothing, jewelry, hairstyle, or treatment of the skin?

While this paper is primarily descriptive, it should still be structured as an essay and include an introduction, thesis, and conclusion. Your introduction should include identifying information about the artwork like its artist, date, medium, and title, while your thesis should state a viewpoint or argument that can be supported with visual evidence. This paper should not include value judgments or personal reflections.

Your formal analysis should be 2-3 pages in length, double-spaced at size 12 of a standard font. Include at least one image of your artwork at the end of the paper; you should label your image(s) and reference them in your paper by number (e.g. Figure 1; Figure 2). Your image(s) should also be labeled with the “tombstone information” about the artwork that you will find on the museum label, i.e. artist, title, date, medium, and museum accession number.

Logistics:

Met admission is pay as you wish for New York residents with a valid NY ID or student ID. You must tell the cashier how much you want to pay.

The Met is located at 82nd St. and 5th Ave. From CCNY, the easiest way to get there is to take the 1 to 86th St, where you can either transfer to the M86 bus or walk across the park.

Note: Please consult the "How to Write A Formal Analysis" handout. I also recommend Sylvan Barnet's book *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*.