

# *Art History*

Minor course

Oxford Tradition





This booklet contains extracts from student journals. Its purpose is to work both as an archive and to provide testimony to the students' divergent ways of understanding the complexity of the history of art. It contains stories written by the students after a visit to the Natural History Museum of the University of Oxford, doodled floral patterns drawn as part of a warm up activity and, most importantly, the students responses to Fernanda Eugenio's "Oracle city" ethnographic method of exploring cities. The reader will also find notes that the students took during a four week course of presentations concerning the methodologies that art historians have utilised in studying the iconography and iconology of such artworks as Pre-Raphaelite paintings. The booklet also contains documentation of an exercise carried out by the students in which they built an understanding of ancient art by attempting to reproduce it. In these pages you will also find their personal reflections and drawings occasioned by their visits to museums in addition to photos of them meeting museum staff such as Darren Mann from the Natural History Museum and Candela Yanez from the Ashmolean museum.

By Veronica Cordova de la Rosa.

*Because I'm an art historian, I have some experience of writing that comes out of close attention. That's what really art history is. You're looking at something very closely, and you try to write in a meticulous way about it. Teju Cole.*



# Caitlin Vickers

• The main thing I would like to learn is really the thought behind the art and just why the artist use what techniques they do and what motions are they trying to convey

• Andy Warhol

• Art continues to be important nowadays and will continue to be important in the future because it's shows different cultures, time periods, and it can tell us things without speaking - it's <sup>to show</sup> its own a language of

• I'm not sure what an artist's day is like. Maybe paint and travel and try to get inspired

• visitors go to museums to go and observe different pieces of art and our history. walk around and look at paintings



Like an open book - by Sir Howard Hodgkin <sup>↓ 97%arest painting</sup>  
 ↳ tried to commit suicide once

- Hodgkin does abstract painting
- was the cousin of Eliot Hoagkin (an English still life painter)
- his artwork is often compared to Matisse
- was knighted in 1992 & declared one of the top 100 most influential gay people in Britain
- Gets inspired by poems and books and such

↳ wasn't able to find much (Amazon website didn't help)

Jan Fabre

- balance of spirituality and science
- designs people dressed up as insects
- how humans are as fragile as insects
- ↳ turns stuff into film
- sculptures with beetles

Origin of Species by Caitlin ~~Vickers~~ Vickers:

Everyone asks the questions - "Where did we come from? Why are we here?" - at one point in their lives despite the fact we all know, no matter how much we may ask or try to find answers, there are none. Most people find the idea of simply disappearing into nothing after death too depressing so they turn to religion for comfort and in return they get vague answers, however if you are someone who looks to science the simple reality is this: we are made, we live, we die, we crumble to bones. So no matter what you believe just make sure you don't waste the time you know you have.

This is what it looks like:



vague

book in the center?

very modern!

Hodgkin paints his borders (frame)

He's painting an emotion

colorful & free



## Beginning of humans/world

Abigail Eldridge

One day, a long time ago, in ~~the~~ pre historic lands a half alligator, half man appeared on the beaches of pangea. He declared to a group of eager animals ~~and~~ that a new species would arise. This species would be curious and unaware of its potential. Then the hooded ~~and~~ alligator-man mixed a combination of crushed shells and plants, then pook the bowl exploded. As soon as the smoke cleared, there stood the two humans. Thus began the human species.

## Gabriela Ocasio

- 1) The main thing I would like to learn from the Art History course would be the backstory of different paintings and why the artist made his work the way it is.
- 2) My favorite artist is Picasso.
- 3) Art is extremely important to society nowadays because it allows people to express themselves in ways that words do not allow. Art also allows people to learn about others' feelings through an analysis of their work.
- 4) I think a day in an artist's life is a really spontaneous one, that he or she does not tie herself to a schedule, but rather runs on creativity.
- 5) In museums, I think people go to understand the feelings of the artists whose works are displayed there. I believe they also visit to learn about the cultures and history of the paintings.



# Isabella DiGiovanni

- I would just like to learn about the types of art, and the processes of making types of art that I don't know much about, and how to look at and think about the art.
- my favorite artist is Caravaggio, ~~or the~~
- I think that art is extremely important to current society. It's a means of expressing one's thoughts and feelings, and showing those thoughts to other people. It can be personal, or can serve to make a point or a statement.
- I think that artists spend their days/lives looking and seeing things from their own perspective and ~~expressing their~~ thinking about their art and their own life, thoughts and feelings.
- I think that in museums ~~people~~ visitors appreciate the artwork, they probably think about how it was made and why, sometimes they also might be there for inspiration, or made just to look and appreciate.

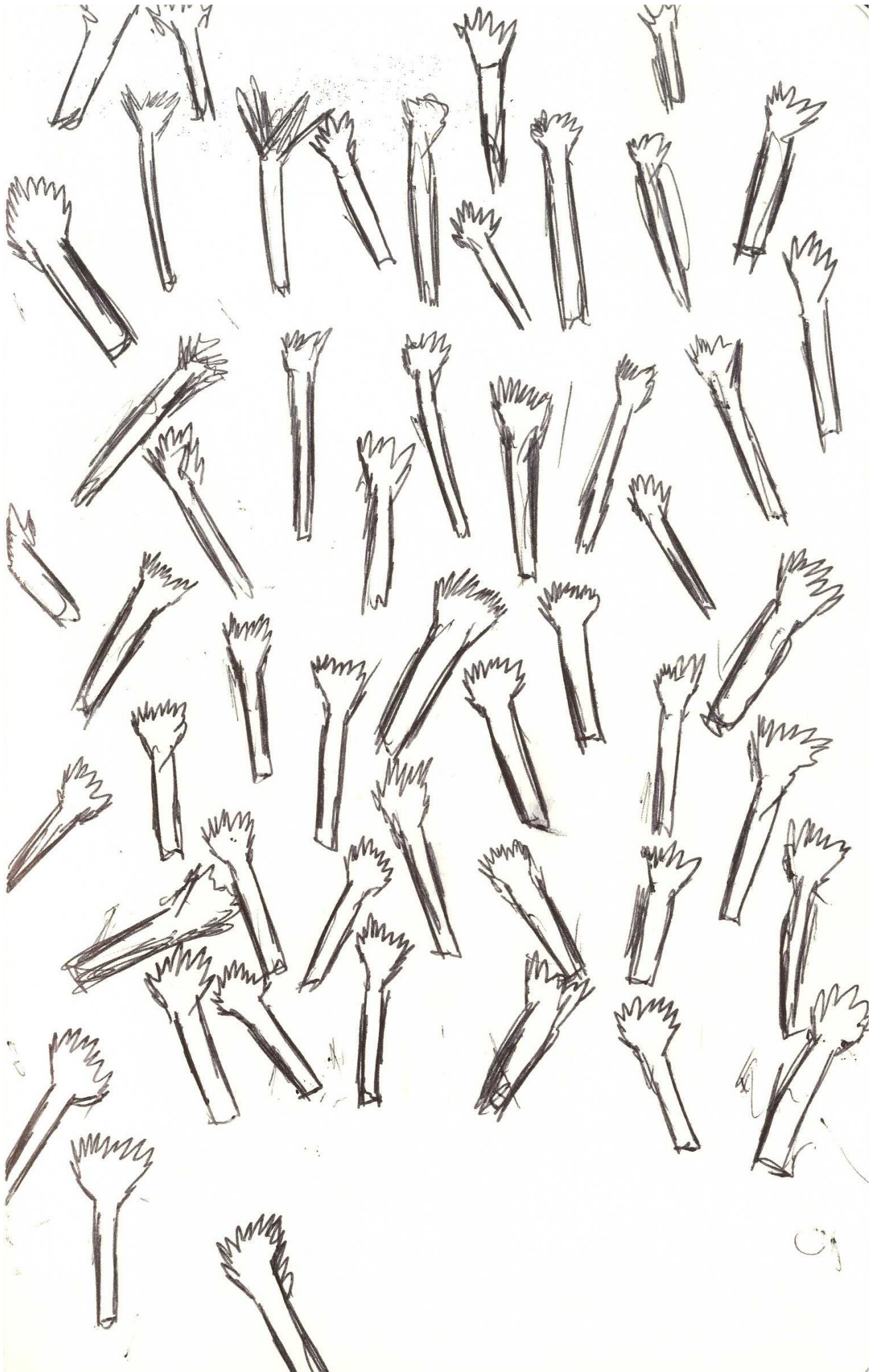


Pan Wongrassanee, Isabella Di Giovanni  
Broken Vows (1866) - Philip Calderon

1. A work of art is a piece of some kind of media that is an expression of feelings, ~~idea~~ or ideas. It's also something that is aesthetically pleasing and/or beautiful.
2. The steps are to look at the physical properties, analyze the visual forms and structures, identify the subject matter and ~~related~~ interaction with cultural context.
3. Broken Vows is made of Oil on Canvas.
4. The painting is ~~so~~ split down the middle by the door the wood meets the brick wall, making two distinct parts. All of the figures are looking at/facing toward the same point, ~~the~~ which for the figures at the top is diagonally downward, and for the women is diagonally upward. They are along the same diagonal line, yet in different directions. This draws the focus to the space between the two groups of figures, ~~which is also the brightest~~ brightest chunk that the lighting is also across the picture, from top left to bottom right.

5. The subject matter is of a woman standing in the foreground in front of a brick wall, and of a man and a woman in the background behind the wall/fence. The man in the background is holding a pink flower to the woman next to him. There are also other flowers <sup>(say)</sup> around the woman in the foreground. The woman in the front looks sad or anguished. The two in the back look happy and amused. The pink rose but that the man is giving the woman is a symbol of new love and flirtation. The ivy vines behind the woman in the background represent her steadfast and true nature. There is a bracelet near the woman in the dark haired woman's feet, which is a gift from her lover that has been stolen and thrown away. All of this leads us to believe that the man and the dark haired woman are either married or in a serious relationship, but that this picture shows the man being unfaithful to her. He is flirting with and plotting his love to the blonde woman in the background, and the dark haired woman is listening in secret and is saddened and distressed by his infidelity. In the 1800s fidelity and marriage was very important, and what we thought was most interesting to this family was the separation of the foreground and background, and the contrast between what is happening in each of those sections.

at 15  
 looking at  
 the wall



Lexi Biegen

I would like to learn about how current events, politics, the economy, the environment, etc. influence the shifts in artistic motives and movements.

My favorite artist is <sup>probably Botticelli.</sup> ~~probably Botticelli.~~

I think art is very important to society these days. I think modern art is being used to try to express messages to society. ~~These messages are~~ about how the world is changing.

I think artists spend <sup>a lot of time</sup> ~~two days~~ thinking about the messages that they want to convey in their art ~~and~~ and trying to understand how to most effectively convey them.

I think visitors in museums try to understand the messages that artists are trying to express through their art.

July 12<sup>th</sup>

## My own "origin of species"

I believe in evolution, that I, as a human, evolved from older primates, who were a product of a previous evolution. I believe that humans are a product of evolution, but when did evolution begin? Was the earth created by the big bang? Was the big bang the beginning of evolution?

As a Jew I was taught the story of <sup>the</sup> creation, which God created the earth over the course of six days, and on the seventh day rested. But did God create evolution? I wonder how and when evolution began.

but I don't know

## ART HISTORY: Think about it

1.1 How would you define a work of art?

1.2 What are the four separate steps proposed here for characterizing the methods used by art historians to interpret works of art?

1.3 Choose a painting illustrated in this chapter and analyze its composition.

1.4 Characterize the difference between natural subject matter and iconography, focusing your discussion on one work discussed in this chapter

1.1 Art is a media of expression which ~~is~~ uses specific techniques to convey a message, be it social, political, economic, religious, etc.

1.2 Formal analysis, physical properties, iconography, and iconology (cultural context)

1.3 William Holman Hunt, "The afterglow in Egypt"; oil on canvas 82 x 37 cm

### COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

→ Identifying subject matter: An Egyptian woman in a blue dress carrying a cage of birds and a pot; she is accompanied by a cow; She seems to be in a field

↙ / physical properties

1.1 Art is a media of expression which uses specific techniques and strategies to convey a message to viewers be it social, political, economic, or religious.

1.2 Physical properties, formal analysis, iconography, and iconology (cultural context)

1.3 William Holman Hunt, "The afterglow in Egypt"

Composition: oil on canvas 82 x 37cm

Physical properties

→ <sup>lines:</sup> vertical figure in front of horizontal lines in the background (horizon)

→ light: figure is fairly dark, but the landscape in the background is light

→ color: the figure in the foreground is deep rich in color; the background is light & hazier (less in the focus of the piece)

→ form: her arm uses "foreshortening" technique (her elbow is protruding & light)

◦ overlapping figures (main woman, cow, and man in the background with animal); woman is portrayed in front of the background (perspective)

Subject matter: An Egyptian woman in a blue dress carrying a cage of birds and a pot; she is accompanied by a cow (seems to be in a field)





Name: Matnilde Sharmán

I would like to learn how art is connected to major political/social events in history.

My favorite artist is Vincent van Gogh because I first learned about his work as a child, and fostering my interest in art.

Art can unite people when it portrays their struggles and hopes, and it can help those affected by change or conflict express their pain.

An ~~artist's~~ artist's day involves both private and public reflection. Artists invest in observing the world around them and being aware.

~~General visitors walk around museums~~  
Depending on their respect and understanding of art, visitors explore museums with a combination of confusion, admiration, and awareness.

# Creation

\* July 13

My story of creation centers around the Biblical story of creation, yet incorporates elements of science.

God created the world in seven days, and in those days he created the organisms, processes, and cycles that we understand as science. God gave us the study of science, and we show love for His creation through it.

## Think About It : Roman Capriccio

### 1.3 — Composition of painting

- crowd grouped in foreground grouped around an aquifer
- Few people in background
- Three marble statues forming a triangle
- The height of the columns give the painting a sense of amplitude, magnitude, and power - Majestic painting.

### 1.4 — Natural subject matter vs.

- | <u>Natural Subject</u>  | <u>iconography</u>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• people getting water from common source</li><li>• vegetation intertwined with architecture</li><li>• grand architecture</li><li>• variety of plants</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• columns</li><li>• Colosseum</li><li>• statues</li><li>• aquifer</li></ul> |



Meaning,  
Symbolic  
meaning -  
new  
ideas

## 1.1 - What is a work of art?

A work of art is a ~~representation~~ man-made representation of anything the artist considers beautiful, ugly, valuable or + and relevant to his or her life.

## 1.2 - Steps for characterizing Art

A) Assessing physical properties

B) Analyzing formal structure

C) Iconology: ~~how painting~~ integrating ~~history~~ historical context

D) Iconography ~~what is happening~~ @ that time

## 1.5 -

A) - The combination of the crucifixion of Christ with the story of Adam and Eve

↳ We find it curious how the artist combines the sinful death of Adam with the noble death of Christ.

Merritt Barnwell

I want to ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> a wide range of knowledge about the history of art, artists, and everything having to do with art and how it influences the world around us and its importance.

Frida Kahlo and Gustav Klimt are my favorite artists.

Art is immensely important to the world around us. Without art we couldn't have anything. It is used to design anything and everything. It is used in symbols that are intentional. It is used in designing beautiful cities. and of course for pleasure and entertainment, either to please viewers or shock.

Being a rising artist myself, I find myself looking at everything in a way that could be expressed on a canvas. The shadows

on people's faces or a scene I see in a park. It is constant brainstorming and carrying out.

I believe art lovers ~~are~~ come to museums to embrace and analyze the great works of history, but for others it is to just say they went there and saw that. It mostly goes over their heads. That's why it is so important to learn about art history



## Origin of the species - Native American origin species

### Cherokee:

- all there was, was water, just sky/water
- water beetle explored depths, collected mud from the bottom of the ocean, began to grow in size, grew downwards - became Earth as we know it
- attached new land to sky w/ 4 strings, a buzzard prepared the wet land to live, but when he flew down he grew too tired and hit the ground, creating a mountain and valley, it was too dark, so created the sun to light it up

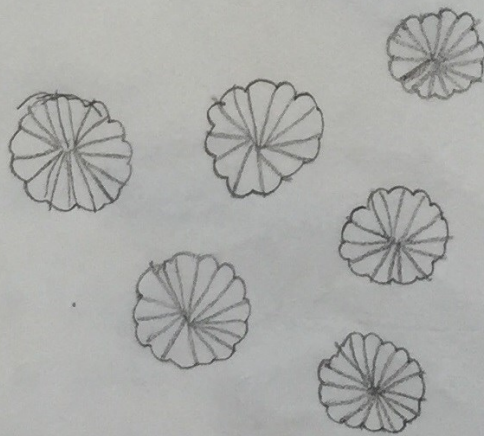
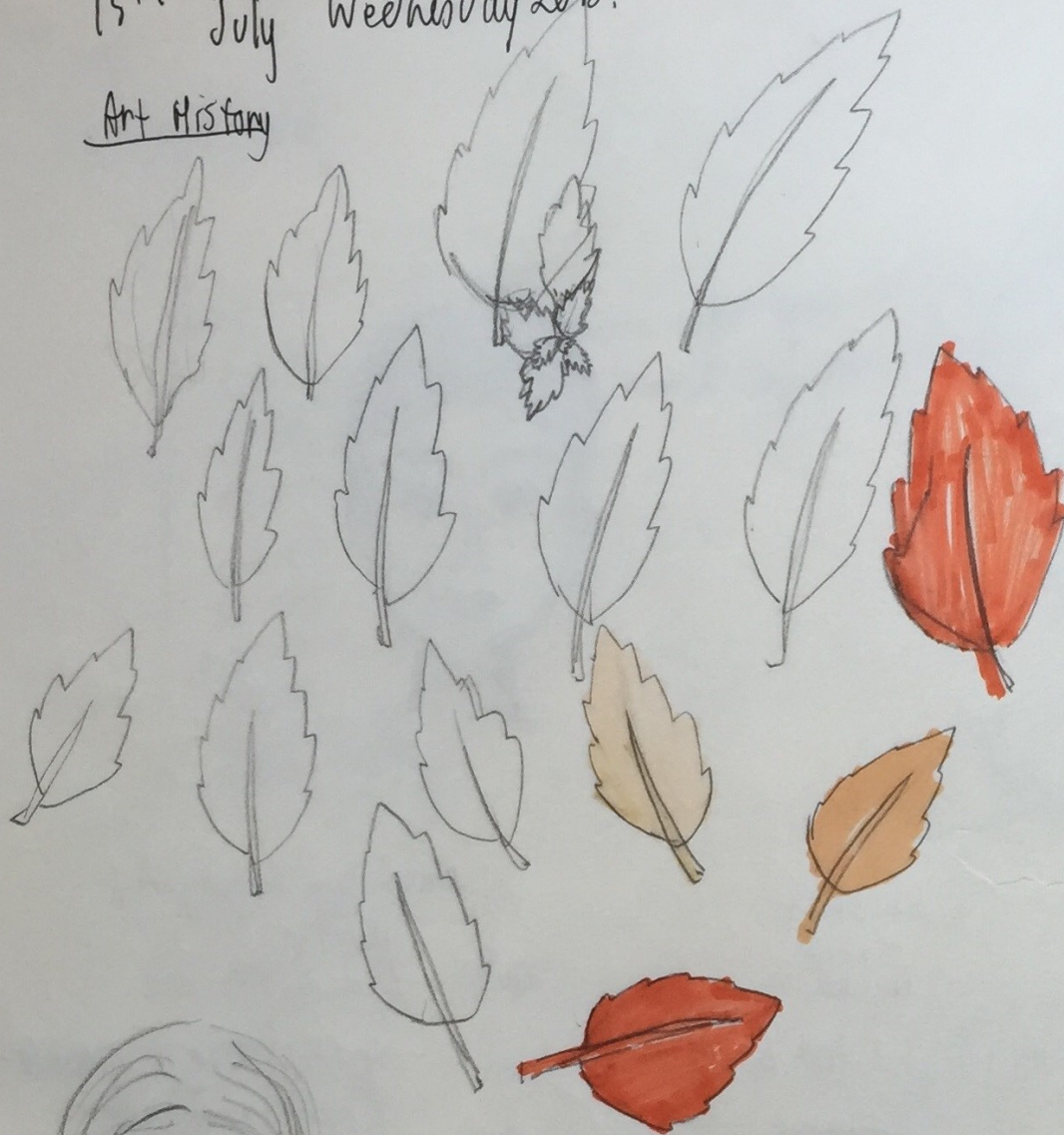


Pan (Nichada Wongrassamee)

1. ~~The~~ Recognise the historical time that the building / art piece is created and link it to ~~the~~ how ppl live at that time.
- 2.
3. Art influences our perspective and in advance the standard / style of living. However nowadays especially in Thailand it is underpromoted. People do not recognise or they usually misinterpret their value. But it does really expressing feelings, sending messages and entertainment.
4. Artist's life ~~would~~ can vary differently. Some can spend a life to live a normal individual but they see the world different from us. Note their thoughts down or create art works.
5. General visitor would explore the visual art through the art pieces in the museum and get feeling of that culture or interpreting ~~at~~ their lives through the artists' works -  
own

15<sup>th</sup> July Wednesday 2015.

Art History



Mark Wood Painting





# Peter Ogden

- I want to learn how to date paintings / pieces of work along with the understanding of how and why they were constructed.
- Van Gogh for his work in thinking outside of the box in an experimental fashion of emotions.
- Art contributes to culture and culture contributes to society without art the culture bringing people together in a society would be weak and there for the society would be too.
- Artists live their life through constant days of pondering and planning, using this to discover the most enlightful way to communicate their works to others.
- visitors spend time trying to understand the artists through the messages hidden within their work.



- would compare the bodies of humans to smaller insects then use this comparison to inspire his work

- overall goal: to prove that humans are as fragile as insects.

→ mentally emotionally, physically

→ created sculptures to prove this

Ex: Beetle Rhino

Hw: How human's evolved based on Darwin's Theory

- Ever since the beginning of time, change has occurred. It is rare when one thing stays the exact same for a period of time.

This applies to life and humanity through the theories created and made famous by Charles Darwin. The first human's on earth thousands of years ago in northern African countries realized early that improvement lies ~~over~~ within the idea of change. It is impossible to obtain a society if no change ever occurs. So,

2,600 years A.D. a man by the name of Khartum witnessed his first disaster when his clay home was ruined by a flood and could not continue growing his crops due to the poor soil/environment near his home. He realized he needed to move further away from the river that was causing this problem in his life. He then moved deeper into the desert away from his family and friends

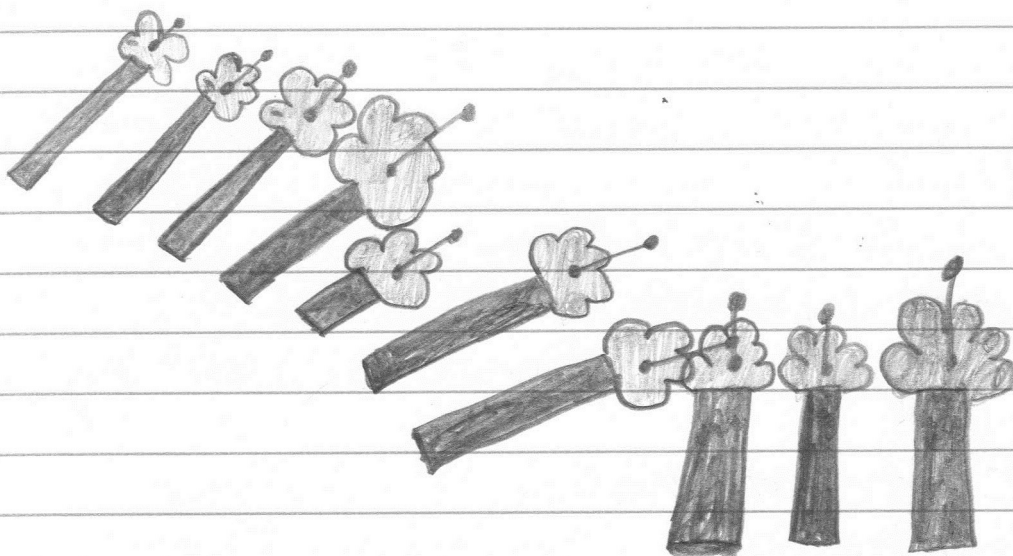
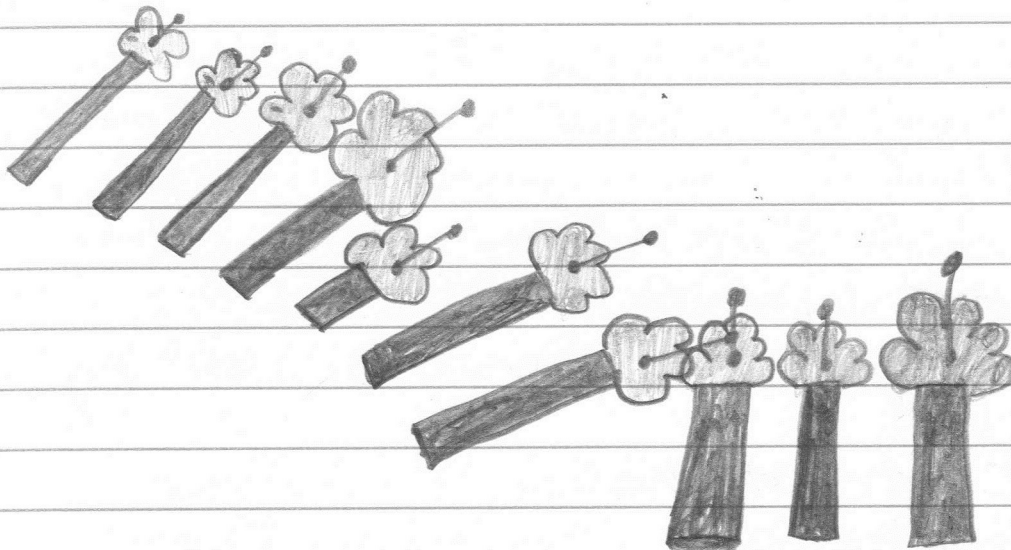
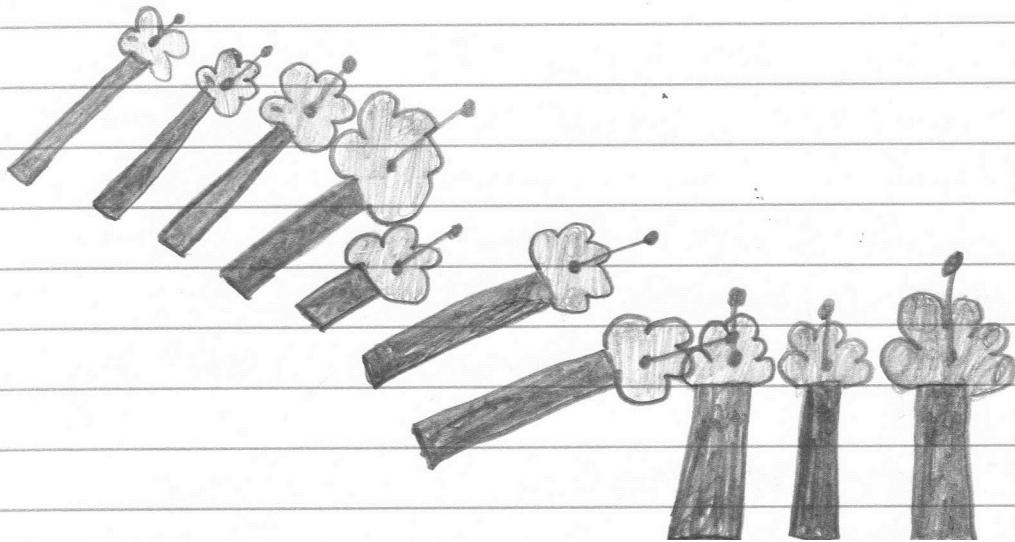
where the growing conditions were better suited. Khartum ended up surviving and passing on his genes because he was able to eat unlike his friends who died due to starvation from trying to grow produce at the river. Khartum discovered change and thus was able to advance humans due to the knowledge and birth given to his children.

7/13/15 Oracle City Exercise

Question: "Will my values change as I grow?"

Observations:

- 1.) silent respectful individuals
- 2.) circle of cables
- 3.) grand stone arches
- 4.) steel pipe organ
- 5.) stone pillars
- 6.) sounds of echoing footsteps
- 7.) wooden beams
- 8.) wooden footsteps
- 9.) wonderful stain glass windows in the array of colors ranging from blue, red, green, and yellow.
- 10.) small stone angel heads
- 11.) wood supported ceiling
- 12.) stile like flooring
- 13.) painting of mother holding baby (saint Mary)



# Sydney Crews

- I want to be able to learn about the different time periods of art, and be able to recognize what period a piece is from based on color use/techniques/etc.
- I like many of Picasso's pieces.
- Art is integrated into basically everything we do/sec. Based on aesthetics and trends art will develop and grow with generations. Being able to always think about art can give someone a unique perspective of the world around them.
- Artists absorb everything around them and constantly think of how to transform their art to go with or against what trends are at that moment.
- in museums people explore perspectives and minds by being able to look at the art in the museums.



## Human Origins & Evolution

July 13th, 2015



As humanity was created each person was created. By a layer  
being people were sculpted and created out of clay. Each  
ended up different, though had the same likeness since all were  
from the same artist. Though, as artists do, the creator ideas,  
techniques and structures changed. Softer features, taller, stronger, human  
always changed as the creator realized more of its talent.

Xinyi Shi

1. I hope to learn some background information about several periods in art history, especially information about Renaissance and Impressionism.
2. By now I ~~have~~ appreciate the paintings of Monet and Van Gogh the most.
3. Art makes ~~me~~ people feel the existence of beauty, this ~~is~~ can encourage them to think, or simply purify ~~the~~ them (the word 'purify' may sound religious, but I do believe beauty is something that ~~is~~ makes everything seems perfect, even ~~is~~ just in a second).
4. I guess an artist need to live a different life, like finding ideas from travelling, or even doing some dangerous things. They grab ideas from the difference, otherwise a normal life generally tend to be unattractive, ~~is~~ since everyone lives that life and they do not need more explanations to their life.
5. Visitors may find some art works they especially appreciate, and ~~they~~ spend some time observing it, or ~~is~~ just walk around and feel it.

## Natural History museum

1. Physical task: eat something in the coffee area
2. Interactive task: Greet someone
3. Meditative task: Observe someone.

1. People here tend to come with friends, but also several families with little kids. For most families the ~~and~~ grandparents come with kids. Friends could be talking endlessly.

2. I did greet the cashier <sup>she said 'good afternoon'</sup> ~~at~~ the café, but she ~~was~~ kept glimpsing at my ~~notebook~~ (kind of alertly), not sure what she was thinking, perhaps she thought I was gonna do some random interview?

Take some time and sit alone, maybe with your favorite books or ~~some~~ your electronic device. Have a look at your favorites, close your eyes and think about them. Catch the first flash ~~the~~ through your mind.

How can I  
find my  
direction in  
life?

You may want to find a friend, sit down, and have a casual talk. You can talk about any topic you like, and perhaps when you are talking you can evaluate the importance of these topics are to you.

Then pick some time to think deeper into the most important or interesting topic, and

# THE ORACLE'S CITY

## Questions and answers.



How do I appear to people; What is their impression of me?/  
Covermarket

Dear person,

Though you may feel at odds when you first meet someone people view with fondness. Sometimes, people may give you strange looks or act weird, but you are accepted by the people who admire you and your personality. The people you surround yourself with like you for you. Surround yourself with people who accept who you are. When you are confident in yourself you would love who you are and impression won't matter.

Will I be able to be successful in the real world?

Anyone may be successful if they work hard and with determination (set their mind to it). The real question that emerges from this question is what is the difference between the real world and the "imaginary" world. My understanding of this is that you mean the change from your imagination childhood life where most grow up living in a bubble to the "adult" world where one first experiences things on their own (independence). From my trip through Oxford I began to answer this question... from someone who is emerging from my "imaginary" world to a certain unsurance of being alone in the world at the age of 16 there is a certain unsurance of being alone in the world for the first time. The real world has no unicorns or wizard but there are weird people from foreign place. In order to begin living in this "real" world we must first learn to be comfortable with ourselves on our own and trying new things. The real world is definitely a harsher world but I am convinced if have determination and you don't stop trying, you will find your wayJ.

Will I ever find my place? (Whether it be with people or physical location)/Pitt Rivers Museum

Look at where you are right now, that is your place, wherever you are you have been led to by a person or force and you followed it. Establish where you are and where you are. The environment will grow from there and anyone worth keeping will place themselves with you. Meet new people. Go new places. Be that place. Be the life of wherever you end up and that is your place.

Will I find a place that belongs to me?

When you least expect it, you will find the place where you belong. Whether it is a physical location, an activity, or simply another person, you will feel at home. But even though you will not plan it, you will have to make an effort to find that comfortable environment. Reach out to others, appreciate art, and look at photographs. But, also do not forget to look within yourself, because maybe that home you're looking for is already within you.

Will I pursue a career in the arts?/Blackwell's art book store

Is this question even bother you at all, if it matters to you? If 'Arts' means a lot to you, so what are you afraid of? You are young, do what you want. Do it! find how it's like. Do it first and yourself, rather than spending your whole life doing something you do not like. This is a test and you are the only one who knows the answer.



How can I find my direction in life?/Natural History museum

Take some time and sit alone. Maybe with your favourite books or your electronic device. Have a look at your favourites, close your eyes and think about them. Catch the first flash through your mind.

Should I do what I like or should I be realistic and choose a job/major based on money and chance?

You should do what you like, because that way you will pretty much know that you will live your choice and that you will be happy doing it. If you pick something based on what you think will be safe, you may not like it as much and not enjoy it as much as something that you like and pick yourself. You should choose your own path in life, and do whatever you like and what make you happy. You never know, what you like and what makes you happy might also make you very stressful. So you should follow your own instincts and what you are positive about.

Could/will I move to England and enjoy it? Would I be happy and successful here?/Bodleian Library

If you move to England you will find happiness. You will need to be open minded and willing to adapt to your new environment with a cultural understanding, but you will definitely be able to find happiness and success. The people in Oxford are friendly here and there is a strong sense of community between them. People smile and wave and hug each other on the street. They come together to listen to a street performer singing opera. It will be easy for you to integrate yourself into this community if you seek out friendship and reciprocate the kindness of others. Moreover there are many opportunities for success here. There is all kind of people here who pursue a great variety of professions. As long as you are willing to follow your passions, and put yourself out there, you will be successful.

Will I be successful in making a living doing what I love?/Bodleian Library

Everyone was moving forward some with more confidence than others. Based on appearance, I could tell where each person had been and could make an assumption about their background. We met a guide at the library who showed an interest in our question. Based on these observations. You will be able to support yourself doing what you love, but that reward will be more of a process, a security you must daily strive toward.

Will my values change as I grow?/St Mary Church Tower.

Through the eyes of the circular candles displayed underneath the grand stone arches. I, the oracle hear the soft-spoken words of growth. The monotonous whispering voice of change found within only a building of age but respected by today's modern youth. These stale values that have remained for centuries intact as society itself has changed.

Analysis note:

Values will stay the same as you grow up, example: The city growing up around the old church. The church represent the values.

Will I experience the different cultures and place around the world?

Don't be hesitant or shy. Be curious and observant. Don't overlook or hide away because you will begin to see and recognize the melting pot that is our world, the streets we are filled with different cultures, languages, foods, you will have to meet people from around the world, even if you just step out of the streets. You will enter shops and restaurants and connect with people over topics as broad as art or as specific as a favourite artist, or painting. You don't need to get on a plane, just look around and listen.









