Formal or Critical Analysis – 1st assignment

This assignment requires a detailed description of the "formal" qualities of the art object (formal here means "related to the form," not "fancy" or "elegant"). In other words, you're looking at the individual design elements, such as composition (arrangement of parts of or in the work) in the elements; color, line, shape, texture, space, time and motion and light and valueYour primary concern in this assignment is to introduce the artwork to us and to explain how the artist arranges and uses these various elements of design.

Usually you have to go and look at the object for a long time and then write down what you see. As you will quickly see from the page length of the assignment, your instructor expects a highly detailed description of the object. You might struggle with this assignment because it is hard to translate what you see into words—don't give up, and take more notes than you might think you need.

Why would your instructor ask you to do this assignment? Instructors who assign formal analyses want you to look—and look carefully. Think of the object as a series of decisions that an artist made. Your job is to figure out and describe, explain, and interpret those decisions and why the artist may have made them.

Translating something from a visual language to a textual language helps you to see how the artist created the work. Your instructors realize that you are not accustomed to scrutinizing objects in this way and know that you need practice doing so.

Start the paper with a title such as “A Critical Analysis of *Fiori di Como* by the artist, Dale Chihuly, written by (your name)” In the first paragraph tell why you are writing this paper, what do you expect to accomplish? Give the title of the art and the artist name. Continue with the date the work was done and where it was completed and where it is now. Tell what materials the artwork is made of and if this is a certain style or movement in Art History.

In the second paragraph and the remaining paragraphs of this 1st assignment, explain how this artist in this artwork used the Elements of Design to create this work. Start with Line. Describe the kinds of line used what the different lines can mean. Discuss if they are thick lines, thin, curvilinear or rectilinear, etc. (everything about line we discussed in class and is in the text book). Continue with the other elements; color, texture, shape, light and value, space, and time and motion. I expect you to be very descriptive. If your artwork does not have one of the elements, tell me that, but describe all of the elements that it does have.

I will read these and if I think that you are mistaken about part of your description I will point that out and have you edit your paper and resend it to me by email. That is one reason that you need it on a flash drive or saved on your computer, or attached to an email to yourself so that you can make adjustments to the paper and resubmit it.

Send me a copy to my email. Be sure to save the paper for yourself because you will eventually turn it in electronically to “turnitin.com.”

I am sharing an example of a good paper. Do not copy it but feel free to use it as a guide.

Also contact me by email about any questions you have. I will be happy to review what you have written and help you.