

Contextualizing Stylistic Eras 2

Artwork + Iconography

FIN 106 Art History + Visual Culture

For this assignment you will **select one artwork** from the SPAIN Field School that you will identify, research, and analyze, this artwork can take any form: painting, drawing, sculpture, utilitarian object, mural. Choose an artwork that resonates with you.

- Required reading for this assignment: **Introduction to Iconographic Analysis by Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank** ([Reading LINK](#))

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

- Assignment will be typed in 11 or 12 size font, 1.5 or double spaced, and 1 inch borders.
- Use the headers that are provided in this worksheet.

PHASE 1: SELECT ARTWORK

- **DUE JUNE 3 @ 11:59pm (... or earlier:)**
- Post an image of the selected work on the discussion board along with questions you have for the instructor.

PHASE 2: ROUGH DRAFT

- **DUE JUNE 13 @ 11:59pm (... or earlier:)**
- The rough draft will incorporate the headers outlined in the worksheet. This phase is to gather and develop the foundational content. At this stage point-form notes are acceptable. Evaluation will be based on meeting the parameters of each section.
- The instructor will offer feedback for the final draft.

PHASE 3: FINAL EDIT

- **DUE JUNE 27 @ 11:59pm**
- The content will be refined and incorporated into the FINAL PROJECT
- Evaluation will be based on meeting the parameters of each section, thoughtful engagement, and clarity of writing. Take the time to develop and articulate your answers using your own words.

CONTEXT What/Who/ Where/ When/ Why/ Stylistic era	/10
FORMAL ANALYSIS Art as Physical Object and the Visual Experience	/10
ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS identifies the cultural icons and symbols to discover the works original meaning and intent	/10
CULTURAL CONNECTION How does it connect to the Field School theme: Southern Spain: A Meeting of Four Worlds: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Indigenous 711-1614 CE	/10
BIBLIOGRAPHY	/5

CONTEXT

Outline the basic factual elements: What/Who/ Where/ When/ Why

For this section you are not going into much detail, just simply lay out the basic facts (½ page max).

What: Christopher Columbus at the Court of the Catholic Monarchs

Who: Juan Cordero, Mexican artist sponsored to study in Rome at Accademia di San Luca.

Became an important painter in Mexico, tried to become the director of Academia de San Carlos in Mexico.

Where: Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City Mexico.

When: 1850, exhibited at Academia de San Carlos in 1851.

Why: return to romanticization of Columbus and his era during this period. Many artists and intellectuals writing, painting and otherwise creating about Columbus. This moment was a popular depiction as the 400th anniversary approached.

FORMAL ANALYSIS

Art historians use visual formal analysis to describe and understand the experience of the work. This approach focuses on form rather than subject matter or historical context.

A formal analysis consists of two parts:

- description of the visual features of a work
- and analysis of their effects.

To describe visual properties systematically, art historians rely on an established set of terms and concepts. These include characteristics such as format, scale, materials, composition, and viewpoint; treatment of the human figure and space; you could also include form, line, color, light, and texture. Your description should be thoughtful but concise (1page max).

Christopher Columbus at the Court of the Catholic Monarchs sits at an impressive 2.5 by 1.8 meters, which allows viewers to take in many details and explore the artistic choices. This is a traditional oil on canvas piece, which feels contextually appropriate as it was the media form used for centuries to record moments like this. In the piece, Columbus presents three Native Americans along with goods from America to the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand, and Isabella. The royal court is also present, but depicted as side characters, both literally placed on the edges of the painting, and by giving them all similar colour and style of dress. We view the scene from an outsider's perspective rather than a member of the court, as if there were a court painter present to record this moment. More a recording of history than part of the scene. Since this work was created in the 19th century the scene has a sense of depth that earlier paintings in this style lacked. The perception of depth creates a better feeling of being present in the moment depicted. The depth also creates a better sense of space within the work; the viewer can orient themselves in the image.

ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Iconography or "image-writing" conveys the idea that an image can tell a story. For an iconographic analysis, art historians look at the icons or symbols in a work to discover the work's original meaning or intent. To accomplish this kind of analysis, they need to become familiar with the culture and people that produced the work.

Outline the cultural story that connects to the work, point out the various symbols, motifs and/or gestures that are utilized to convey this story. Your answer should also include an image of the artwork (1 page min - 2 max).



Ferdinand and Isabella's positions and expression in this moment are very important. The artist is clearly displaying the Monarchs' interest in who and what Columbus has returned to Spain with. Having the king stand from his throne shows the viewer that Ferdinand is shocked and perhaps enamored; for a king to rise for an explorer is an unusual thing. While Isabella remains seated her posture shows she is just as intrigued as her husband. The choice to keep her seated could also be interpreted as keeping with the tradition that the queen be depicted in a physically lower position to the king in all portrayals. If you look closely at the monarchs' eyelines Isabella seems to be more interested in Columbus himself,

perhaps alluding to her being his patron and having a closer relationship than Ferdinand did. The King is clearly looking to the wealth that Columbus has brought back as proof of his exploits. The positions of those at court is also worthy of note, as they are clearly curious and leaning in to look and discuss among themselves. The body language of the native Americans shows submission to the royal court. They are either kneeling or inclining their heads towards the Monarchs, this submissive posture implies some level of consent in being here rather than as captives.

The lighting in this piece is intriguing as well. The artist has clearly cast the king and court in bright light, while the natives being presented are in shadow. Choosing to do this is almost odd, since the focal point of the Monarchs' view is on these people. The native Americans have also been literally sidelined in this piece. They are placed on the very edge of the canvas, like how they're remembered by history in this moment, just side elements in the larger Spanish narrative of conquest.

The Catholic Monarchs' thrones and clothing in this work are full of valuable signifiers. The thrones each have different crests on them. While it is difficult to see in the digital images, it is a safe assumption that upon closer inspection these crests would represent Ferdinand and Isabella's original kingdoms coat of arms. They are also the only people in the piece who are clothed in fur, a common royal signifier in clothing and paintings. Their robes and gown respectively are more elaborate than anyone else in the work, marking them as the focal point of the work and making it clear to the viewer who these people are.

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Why does this work resonate with you?

How does the work connect to the Field School theme: Southern Spain: A Meeting of Four Worlds: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Indigenous 711-1614 CE. (½ page min - 2 page max)

For this assignment I wanted to study and artwork which brought in the indigenous theme.

Originally, I had chosen a bronze relief of this same event, but after feedback I switched to this oil painting, which has much more information written about it. This work allowed me to investigate the connectivity of Christianity, colonialism as it relates to Spain and the larger impact on the modern people of the Americas. I was intrigued by this work being created in the 19th century when the event that is being depicted is in the 15th. I found the artists choice to depict this moment interesting, as it has such a colonialist nature. This scene and the way it has been depicted is very much a glorification of Columbus's exploits and carries a sense of romanticization of this era of Spain's history. The moment which is being depicted here is demarcation line where an era of relative understanding and tolerance of religious difference ends. During this time the Catholic monarchs have achieved total control of today's Spain and begin their propaganda of religious zeal to bring Spain under "one faith". This moment was interesting to me symbolically as the ending of an era and the beginning of a new one.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Include a typed bibliography of sources consulted for the assignment content. This can be an informal format that should include the following:

- Source Title,
- Author (if available)
- URL link - for websites and eBooks
- publisher and year - for books

Christopher Columbus at the court of the Catholic Monarchs, Google Arts and Culture:
https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/cristopher-columbus-at-the-court-of-the-catholic-monarchs/uAG_1n4q2DLcuA

About the Artist, Artvee: <https://artvee.com/dl/cristopher-columbus-at-the-court-of-the-catholic-monarchs/>

Juan Cordero: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Juan_Cordero
