

Student Work: Reflective Writing in Blackboard Blogs

Prompt 1

Please reflect on your experience going to the Spencer; engaging? informative? puzzling? Include the reasons why.... Any thoughts about how/if you were inspired by the works we saw? Why do you think we went? Include any discoveries you made about the connection between visual art and acting....or any discoveries, period.

Novice

When we went to the Spencer, I didn't really know what to expect, but it was very inspiring to look at the works that were pulled out for us. They were beautiful but I was inspired by the way you could look at a still image and see the character's life bodies emanating from the image. I think that doing a class movement project on one of the pieces would be amazing. I think it should be as an ensemble rather than individually or in small groups because I feel like we are very strong as an ensemble and that it would be far more powerful. I think it would be a great way to work on moving the life body in stillness and really bringing that stillness to life. I think it would be a great project.

Developing

Before we arrived at the museum, I wasn't quite sure what to think. I was happy about viewing the museum for the first time, but I didn't know what to expect in terms of our journey. However, I'm very glad that we went. One of the things we discuss in this class is the use of imagery to give life to our movement. The images that we viewed initially portrayed a wide range of emotion and characters that I immediately imagined in real time. I imagined how my body might contort to form one image, or to bloat in order to embody another, or (perhaps more powerful), the image of oppression struck me very deeply and sent adrenaline running through me. I certainly wasn't expecting these images to inform me as much as they did. Also, the wonderful woman who was guiding us through Spencer (I'm embarrassed to admit that her name escapes me) seemed to be contextualizing the art into our language. The paintings and sculptures, and the way in which she discussed them, became food for creativity. For example, I saw holy, heightened images and immediately began playing with my posture - trying to discover what combinations radiated what effect, and why? I also gained a lot of appreciation for artists in fields other than the theater. It was amazing how interwoven the arts are, how we all capture, inform, and are informed by the human experiences that surround us. That realization alone was worth the trip. I also appreciate her (what is her name, Leslie?!) offer to view the pieces again, or other pieces for inspiration. I see that as a great opportunity to get the creative juices flowing, and also do a little historical character work. I loved the trip; it was immensely productive. I think we should do a project in the Spencer. My suggestion involves everyone doing an individual 1 minute movement scene, in which they depict the 30 sec before the image was captured, the time of the image, and the 30 seconds after. For example: I choose "Crying woman" So my movement scene involves the 30 seconds before the image was captured, the moment of the image, and 30 seconds after. So:perhaps she fell, is crying, and gets up and walks away (a crude, elementary example)but the point is to capture the essence of the image, and see if we can discover what is happening in real time. But is this employing movement toward the end of an image? And is that the reverse of what we want? What are your thoughts there?

Developing

I really enjoyed looking at the art pieces. At first I didn't know how looking at the art work would relate to what we have been working on. I found looking at the art piece to be extremely inspiring. I have always heard about using images when preparing a monologue. I always used images as a way to picture what I was talking about. I honestly never found this helpful. When I would come to a part where I had said I would use an image I found, I just used my imagination instead. But the idea of using images to create a character's physical body was truly eye opening. I would find a piece of art that caught my eye or inspired me and then I would try to put my body in the position of the characters in the art work and then I would see if that moved something in me. As actors we talk about people watching and observing behavior which is a good thing to do but when you people watch the one moment that might have the most inspiration to you is gone in a second. Artists people watch too and they capture that one moment that inspires them in their art and it's there forever to come back and look at. Knowing this it would seem stupid not to take advantage of art work as another thing to use for inspiration. I have heard that Johnny Depp uses images when building his roles. He says that when he reads a script two or three images will pop into his head about what the character is. As actors we could find two to three images in an art gallery that might work for our character in different situations of the play. I would be interesting in doing a performance piece. I think it would be a fun way to find if this image work really works for people in the class.

Advancing

The Spencer was an roller costar of emotions for me. At first I was excited to get there, not sure what we would be looking at, all I knew was that I love art museums and had never been in this one! When we went into the print room I enjoyed looking at the artwork, but once we sat down and Kate started talking I got a little tired and distracted with my mind wondering about each piece. Once I stood up however I was much more engaged and started listening to what she was saying about each piece and the background to each piece would help me to understand where the artist was coming from. I found it interesting what emotions each piece evoked in me, while she explained that the artist had other intentions in his/her work. For example Nuit Blanche was very tranquil and relaxing for me, while the discription of this piece was about the war and had much intensity behind it. These kinds of artists have only one moment for the audience to understand, while we as actors have a whole extra deminsion, as well as many more moments for the audience to understand and embrace our meaning behind our work. For me the piece allowed my mind to go on a tangent of "how did these people come to this place?" "where are their minds in this moment?" and "where are they going next?" These tangents allowed for the characters to come alive and move in my mind. I feel that this exercise was helpful for my mind to understand and want to discover each of these people so that I can develop a character. Someone once told me that when we put on a play it is only the actors catching these characters in a moment in time. Like the pictures. We don't know where they've been, or what's next but we can try to help the audience to understand this moment in time. My favorite piece of the entire collection that we looked at was the portrait of the roaring man in chair. This piece had so much weight behind it. It related to every part of the inner rage that a person can feel at any given moment. I want to be able to take that portrait and turn it into this character, expand it and understand why and where it came from. Kollwitz's work also interested me in a way that I could have seen each of these characters and scenes come alive and then stop again. In no way would I have been surprised if the characters continued on with what they were doing while I was standing there. Again, so much

weight and grief in all of these pictures. This is what I want out of this project. Weight. The ability to not necessarily feel...grief or rage...but to just feel. Whether its happiness, or tranquility, or sadness or grief. I want everything to feel worn out by the end of the project. But also be able to do it every day. To have energy from the weight. I want to take the moments of these pieces, make them understandable to the audience, bring them to life, then put them back again. Make them fit together. Whatever that means.

Advanced

My experience at the Spenser was eye-opening. I have a completely new appreciation for visual art now that I didn't have before. Before this visit, it wasn't that I didn't enjoy visual art, but more that I didn't know very much about visual art and my understanding of visual art was so limited that I had a hard time connecting with it. In the past, I have been drawn to beautiful works of art, or something that was meaningful to me or made me think. Perplexing art would draw my attention, but I didn't think about this in the manner that our guide made us think of it in.

I was honestly very impressed about how much our guide, I'm so sorry that I do not remember her name, knew about what we do as actors. She knew how to cater to our needs and speak to us in a language that was not too far from our own. I loved this. I'm sure she was selective about some of the words that she used, but I think that some of her vocabulary was most certainly vocabulary used for the visual arts. I was impressed by how much of that vocabulary was similar to our own!

I LOVED talking about what each art piece brought out in our thoughts. What each gesture meant. what the gesture means to us individually. Discussing what gesture the artist was trying to receive. I loved comparing different art works and discussing the similarity to it. Unlike other forms of art- such as literature, there is something more tangible to grab on to.... I have sat in many different literature classes and discussed the differences and similarities between two different writers and their works. However, I have never really sat in any type of seminar setting and talked about the differences and similarities between to pictures or paintings! This was a whole new experience for me. It evoked a whole different connection that I could make between my words and an actual thing I could look at, verses my imagination.

Before our meeting and after our meeting I did observe that the visual art that I am most attracted to are photographs. Photographs just speak to me more than paintings do. They always have, and I think they always will. Perhaps it is the fact that a photograph is a real depiction, not an attempt to make a depiction, that makes the work feel so much more tangible to me. I am afraid that for this assignment I am going to be more drawn to the works of a photographer than any other artist. Therefore, perhaps it would be good for me to pick works of art that I am not as connected to.