

How to Annotate Artwork

For your own design work:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the trial (essentially, do you like it or not, and why?)
You should consider three things: aesthetics, the communication of meaning, and the use of media/materials.

- **AESTHETICS:** Discuss the aesthetics of the design, using sophisticated art language. Some things to consider:
 - Do you like the **colours** and/or **tones** used? Why/why not? (do they help to communicate your theme, or are they effective aesthetically)?
 - What kind of **line**-work has been used?
 - Is the **scale** appropriate? (should the work be larger or smaller?)
 - Discuss the **composition** – is the piece well **balanced**? Do elements within the frame need to be repositioned?
 - What is the **focal point** (and what draws our eye to this point)?
 - Do you like the **forms** in the artwork (especially relevant in portraiture and sculpture).
 - Is the work **textural**? (does this help to communicate your theme, or is it effective aesthetically)? Texture might be visual (like in a painting or photograph) or physical (like in a sculpture, textile piece, or thick oil painting).
 - Does the work have **movement**? (this might be implied by lines and forms in a painting or drawing, or might be more literal in an installation or film piece).
 - Does **light** play a role in this work (either in its depiction through paintings/drawings/photographs, or physically in an installation or sculptural work).
 - Are other elements like **sound** involved (for film or installation work). Are they effective?
- **COMMUNICATION:** Discuss whether this work communicates your theme well, and (if necessary) how it could be improved.
 - Do any of the element contribute to the communication of meaning (such as the use of colour symbolism?)
 - Do the materials used help to create meaning?
 - Is there any other symbolism in the work?
- **MEDIA/MATERIALS:** Talk about the media, materials and techniques (paint, pencil, pastel, clay, different kinds of paper, photography, etching etc.) used.
 - Did it work well? Why/why not?
 - Was it the right media for what you were trying to achieve? Did you use it effectively?
 - Does the chosen media contribute to the communication of meaning?

Please remember, you should not just state what is there – you are always aiming to **EVALUATE** these elements.

For research/inspirations:

For each piece of work that you include in your folio, you need to start by asking yourself the question - why does this work inspire me? Once you have established this, you can write your annotations. See the points below to help you establish that which you might discuss (and use the lists above to help you flesh-out these questions).

Does it inspire you through the effective use of a particular media/material?

- If so, write a few dot points discussing how you think (or better yet, how your research tells you) the artist went about making this work- consider their process and technique.
- Discuss why you like the use of this material/process/technique AND discuss how this technique might be useful in your own work.

Does it inspire you because of the style/aesthetic of the work?

- If so, say what you like about the style of the work, and how this might benefit you in the creation of your own work.
- Use your art language - talk about the use of elements and principles

Does it inspire you because of what it depicts or communicates?

- If so, discuss how this thing is depicted/communicated and suggest how this might be helpful to your own work.

A few things to note:

FOR YOUR DESIGNS: Sometimes you do not need to discuss all three points on the list: if it is just a material trial (which makes no real improvement on other design aspects) then you only need to discuss the use of media/materials. If it is just a design sketch, with no material trialing, you might only discuss aesthetics and the communication of meaning.

FOR YOUR INSPIRATION: Your inspiration might be there for just one reason (like the use of media), or it might be there for all three. **Discuss that which is relevant to your work!** If you love the application of paint, but the artist's themes are utterly irrelevant to your own work, say so, and then just evaluate the media.

PLEASE NOTE: Annotations don't need to be full analyses. You only need to talk about the most effective, prominent or important things. Sometimes you can group images on a page and write one annotation for all of them if they are all playing with the same technique, idea or media/material. They can be in dot point form, or can be in the form of short paragraphs – whatever works for you!