CRITIQUE OF ARTWORK:
Potential areas of inquiry to support a written assessment of the artwork
Mahara T. Sinclaire

1) What are my first reactions to the work?
2) How did the artist get me to feel this way?
a. Composition
b. Palette (the colors he/she chose)
c. Medium/Materials (How does the physicality of the piece support intent?)
d. POV (Does the point of view provide insight?)
e. Style/Mood/Tone/Attack
3) Placing the work within the dialog of art history, what contributing factors are evidenced in his/her issues (This is an opportunity to equate/ parallel the work with significant contemporaries).
4) Curation: How is the work hung? Has the exhibitor supported the artist's intent via lighting or location?
5) Venue: Does the facility (i.e. gallery, museum) seem congruous to the work (enhance or detract)?
6) Reassess Question #1: Any further revelations into the artist's motives or technical devices?

WRITTEN CRITIQUE GUIDELINES

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Format: A two-page typed paper. Please attach an image of the artwork if possible.

I suggest opening with a quote (from show's catalog, from art critic, from famous person or even from an old saying/adage). This is not a required format, I only mention it because it is a common device that is generally quite successful.

Next, in the first paragraph, state the 'brass tacks' of what you saw (name of venue, name of artist, title of artwork, date of artwork's creation, medium, dimensions), as well as your reaction, synthesis, response, and/or feelings about the work.

Next, back up your reaction with technical support (a critical analysis of the piece). Discuss composition, medium, color, POV (point of view), size/scale, etc. Basically, you are trying to explain how the artist got you to feel this way, or perhaps how he/she let you down.

Next, address the work with regard to how it fits within the dialog of art history. Look for cues like style, fabrication techniques, and general approach that help you to place the work within the 'trend" grouping (tendency) that you feel this piece is most closely linked.

Should curation or venue factor into your appreciation of the work, or conversely, detract from your enjoyment of the work, it may be pertinent to mention it at this point.

Wrap up. Basically, you want to reemphasize your reaction to the work with a sense of authority. If you used a quote at the start, it is wise to reference it in your closing statement, often skewing the typical connotation of the saying to support your attitude/response to the work.