

Museum Assignment

Meet at _____ in atrium on _____

Download, and print in the times for yourself. Bring it to the museum. If you don't arrive on time, we'll have gone upstairs, and you'll miss the lecture and wander around desperate! Be there!

Bring this sheet, plus pencils, paper and your copy of *Into the Light* to write on, and in. (Ink pens and Sharpies definitely not allowed upstairs, for obvious reasons.) Allow fifteen minutes extra time to check your coat and backpack (for free) downstairs. (A thief once swiped a large painting from the Louvre by rolling it into his umbrella!)

Please see the class syllabus and Break Your Writer's Block for detailed information on how the paper is to be typed and written. This field work paper will be five pages long and will count as the midterm. Due: Two weeks from our next class. No email submissions!



BEFORE MUSEUM, TO HELP YOU FOLLOW WHAT'S HAPPENING, READ THE ASSIGNMENT IN INTO THE LIGHT OF THINGS. Read 168-174, about how and why Cage came up with 4'33". This TREMENDOUSLY HISTORIC PAINTING which triggered off the very end of Art in the West, is mentioned on 169, long before I knew we had it here in SFMOMA!

_____ PM** DOING JOHN CAGE'S 4'33" THE TRANSMISSION OF THE DHARMA. SECOND FLOOR, IN FRONT OF THE ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG WHITE PAINTING.

We're not just here to talk about the avant garde. I'm going to initiate you into the Pop Art branch of it. Learn by doing! SFMOMA (second floor) contains one of the Robert Rauschenberg paintings which were the "last possible" painting before the famous "end of art," inaugurated by John Cage's 4'33" of Silence. At _____ we will perform together four minutes and 33 seconds of silence in front of the very painting which gave Cage the idea.

The Tao te Ching and the Zen masters agree, mysticism can't be transmitted in words, only in experiences. The only way you know if you've got it, is if someone who already has, guides you—and since he can only know if an acknowledged Master tells him, there is a chain of transmission back through people who worked with one of the Masters. This painting's presence in San Francisco created an unforeseen opportunity to transmit the "dharma" I received working with Cage, Kaprow and Antin directly to you, in the very place Cage had the idea that art objects could be dispensed with and we can take the world straight. You can stand by the painting or at a distance. Just listen for the signal to start, then silently listen and look around you. I won't explain there, we can't stop the flow of traffic. Spread out and let people through.

At _____ in the Atrium CONCEPT ART, a KAPROW HAPPENING: THE "KAPROW CONCERTO" FOR CELLPHONE, OPUS ____, DATE _____

READ ASSIGNMENT ON KAPROW IN INTO THE LIGHT OF THINGS FIRST. Read 187-190 about this kind of art's goal: the "transfiguration of the commonplace," the mystical wonder of ordinary things.

We'll learn what CONCEPT ART is by doing it, an "art" which no longer creates objects, but experiences—experiences through which we see all the reality around us freshly. Concept art came naturally out of 4'33" but it's often as whimsical as a Zen Koan. Pioneered by Cage's student Allan Kaprow, these "Happenings" in the 1950s and 60s ultimately became Earth Day, in 1969 (a 24'00"), and furthered the Ecology Movement, and now the Global Warming Movement.

THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT, DUE TWO WEEKS FROM OUR NEXT CLASS:

Follow these directions closely, number your answers carefully.

Part 1: GO THROUGH THE _____ EXHIBIT ON THE _____ FLOOR. In your paper, Describe in minute detail ONE PART OF IT which reminded you of Cage, Kaprow, or what you read in Into the Light of Things. or place in the museum you choose to contemplate. Make notes in the museum. Number that, Part 1. One page, maximum! Weight: ONLY 10 points.

Part 2: Find a favorite artwork on the 2nd floor. Sit, contemplating your piece, for at least four minutes and thirty three seconds. Once one of my students contemplated a Robert Ryman for nearly two hours, but he had been a Zen monk. Expect it to be hard work. There will be alternating periods of boredom and interest. You've practiced.

Back at home, re-read Into the Light of Things, 3-5, 12-17, 86-88, about this kind of art's goal: the "transfiguration of the commonplace," the mystical wonder of ordinary things. Does it relate to your experience with the painting? Quote the book, be specific. Title this Part 2. Minimum, three pages. I'm only looking for your new command of the technical terms and concepts relating to this topic! You don't have to reach nirvana or satori! Weight: Eighty points! Spend time here. Write according to the hints in Break Writer's Block.

Part 3, one page only. OPTIONAL. Tell me if you had any visual or auditory experiences after contemplation that struck you as novel or unusual. (Avoid telling me you found faces, skulls, etc. hidden in the painting. People can find them even in clouds, if they look long enough.) The experiences usually will happen within 72 hours after you left the museum. You may not realize they happened until well after they did. If you had none, just report that, in good prose. Amazingly, most people will have one. That's why we value this kind of art: it works. Weight for Question 3: 10 points IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO IT. (for the prose, not for the experience or lack of it.) NO DEDUCTION FOR SKIPPING THIS QUESTION.

Be specific! Answer the assigned questions. Follow Break Writer's Block guidelines!!!! Use quotes, footnotes. Don't write less than 3 pages on the difficult question, # 2. Part 2 will count most when I mark.

"But I'm a complete beginner!"

I know. We're not trying to make art scholars out of you, remember: this is, at bottom, JUST practice in persuading someone of something in writing. Look at the sample museum paper provided on the website.

Don't write vaguely how "this painting makes me feel mystical and in touch with life, a deep spirituality infuses this painting." Too hippie trippy. Resist the urge to bull me. Don't give a history

of your conclusions: "At first when I walked in I thought this painting was dull and drab but as I look at it further I discover that...." Just give me your final conclusions. Please, please, no personal history, "When I was growing up in Barstow little did I dream that one day I would be in San Francisco going to a beautiful museum like this, thanks to the wonderful assignment by Prof. Leonard etc."

Now, relax! I know you've probably never done this before and I don't expect a masterpiece. Honest efforts will be rewarded. We're doing all this because Mysticism insists that I can't teach it to you with words. You have to do it to know it. Let's try.

Museum Feedback Assignment: Helping SFMOMA serve college students better.

THIS ASSIGNMENT IS WORTH A PLUS OR MINUS ON MUSEUM TRIP PAPER, DEPENDING ON PARTICIPATION. DO THIS ON A SEPARATE PAGE THAT CAN BE SENT TO THE MUSEUM.

GOALS OF THIS TRIP: 1. "Museums" have changed so much, as they became widely popular, that by now they really need a new name. This complex club-like place now belongs to you—but only if you take possession of it. That's another of our primary goals today. 2. In college we don't "give" you an education. It would be obsolete in a few years. We teach you how to keep educating yourselves the rest of your life-- in this assignment, about art.

I ASSURE YOU THAT THE TOP ADMINISTRATION WANTS YOU WELCOMED AND ENCOURAGED. They run countless programs and "College Nights." There's an entire Koret Visitor Center to welcome you. HELP THEM HELP YOU.

ONE PAGE ESSAY: Evaluate, for helpfulness and the quality of their welcome to college students who may have no extensive museum experience,

1. The security staff. They must do their job, of course, but the whole trick is not to ruin the experience of the visitor, or what's the use coming? This is the most vital information for the museum to have. 2. The information desk people, Koret Visitor center people. Were you welcomed? Were they polite? 3. Boxoffice staff. WHAT ARE THEY DOING RIGHT? WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?

Give me anecdotes, if you have any. Be frank! Think of all the people like you that you're helping to take possession of what is supposed to be everybody's museum. Say what needs to be improved, and thank people for good experiences by name, if you can. Positive reinforcement works best.

DUE: ON A SEPARATE PAGE, HAND IN WITH PAPER, TWO WEEKS FROM OUR NEXT CLASS.