

1	Visitors make statements that tell us more about them and their lives than they tell us about the work of art. They interject stories and characters that are not necessarily evident in the work at hand.
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“I don’t like art.”

“I have a dog, and that photo has a dog in it, so I like it.”

“That abstract painting makes me think of the flower garden in my neighbor’s yard.”

“That reminds me of how my mom used to make me get dressed up for church.”

2	Visitors make statements using a pre-determined value system: pretty/ugly, expensive/cheap, good/bad. Tend to be drawn to colorful, hyper-realistic, highly skilled works that look like the artist spent a great deal of time making. They might consider their own observations to be factual instead of subjective.
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“It is pretty / that is so ugly.”

“It looks so real!”

“That probably took a month to make!”

“It looks messy; the artist wasn’t very good. I can’t believe someone paid money to own that.”

3	Visitors might qualify their observations with visual evidence; they will be objective and responsive to each other’s comments. They have the ability to reason abstractly. They recognize the work as a statement of the artist and realize their own subjectivity, and they are open to considering the meaning of works in a variety of styles and media.
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“I understand how you think this is a happy image, but I think the colors seem dark and dismal.”

“I don’t think it is beautiful, but the message is powerful.”

“The artist really captured the subject’s emotion.”

“The artist put more emphasis on the left side of the sculpture.”

4	Visitors demonstrate sophisticated art vocabulary, and they might reference the work of other artists to support their observations. With experience and education in art history or production, they are able to put the work of art into social and historical contexts. They might prefer certain styles or artistic movements, but they are open to many art forms.
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“I wonder if this artist went to the same school as Jackson Pollock.”

“That is a good example of Abstract Expressionism.”

“The artist incorporated images from Renaissance Italy.”

“I recognize the artist’s reference to American Pop culture.”

5	Visitors will consider a work of art from various perspectives. They contemplate universal concerns and recognize the work of art as a product of a culture, not just the artist. They are responding to the work of art at a scholarly level, and can appreciate various works of art using a range of methodologies. They might be connoisseurs of particular genres.
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“People with different socioeconomic backgrounds might interpret this in another way.”

“The way the artifact is displayed separates it from its original cultural context, making me focus on the aesthetic properties rather than the spiritual function.”

“Knowing about the artist’s personal background as a Korean immigrant gives this work an entirely different connotation, considering domestic traditions.”

“Looking at that work from a feminist perspective, I wonder if the artist shared the same misogynistic viewpoints as the European Renaissance church.”