

3 basic questions:—this order is important, why?

- 1. What does this artwork show?** —corresponds to the 1st step below
- 2. When was it made?**—corresponds to the 2nd step below
- 3. Where did it come from?**—corresponds to the 2nd step below

1st Look & “listen”—use visual thinking strategy (VTS—quiet looking, followed by: what’s going on in this artwork? what do you see that makes you say that? what more can you find?)

- 1. composition**—horizontal, vertical, broken, continuous, hierarchical, rhythmic
- 2. color**—limited, harmonious, contrasty, bright, soft, symbolic
- 3. posture(s)**—at ease, dynamic, inert, contrived, natural
- 4. physical embellishments**—ornate, simple, neutral, realistic, imaginary, clothing, no clothing, jewelry, hat, carrying anything, hairstyle
- 5. landscape, setting**—part of it? situated in one, elements of landscape related to main figure or? realistic? made up? symbolic? emotional?
- 6. narrative elements**—is there a story being told? how can you know that? what do you see in the artwork that indicates that?
- 7. cultural signifiers**—the deeper meaning, but also the cultural container that carries it? do they add or detract from that meaning for you

2nd Sleuth—do your research

examples of contextual identifiers

- country of origin
- date
- materials
- inscriptions
- iconographical elements
- historical figures vs non-historical figures
- school of Buddhism
- donors, commissioning patron, artist, workshop
- geographical and cultural clues like:
 - identifiable structures/landmarks, clothing, jewelry, hair styles,
 - decorative backgrounds and patterns
 - specific use of colour
 - stylistic similarity with other works that have been certifiably identified