

Part of developing your design skill is developing your individual artistic voice. Beyond simply representation, this includes sharpening your creative response to include concepts big and small, ideas, philosophies, emotions, dreams, symbols, allowing for chance and a clearer recognition of circumstance. As art does not happen in a vacuum, informed critiques, like another set of eyes or ideas, quickly become a valuable asset in approaching these goals. Both having your work critiqued and critiquing another's work will help you work outside yourself, thus expand your comfort zones and build up your artistic vocabulary.

The following are a few suggestions on Critique or "Crit" strategy. These suggestions are merely starting points so that your criticism can be constructive and supportive for both you and the artist you are critiquing.

1. So you like it (or don't). Great. Now what? The first thing to do is ask why.
2. If asking why does not stir further review, try picking out some particular aspect of the work that you responded to at first viewing. Maybe it was the work's overall feeling, maybe it was merely the line quality, or contrast, its experimentation, its balance, its textures, its value handling, its creation of space, its underlying structure and concept, etc. Pick that first thing and more than likely you will be able to move that aspect into further questions.
3. Look for symbols, possible metaphors, or some other aspect of story telling. Art is communication. Every art piece says something.
4. Don't be afraid to guess. It's virtually impossible to fully understand artistic intent as we are not the artist and probably were not there when the piece was created. Another way of looking at it is that the artist probably doesn't know the full meaning of any particular piece either. As well, don't be afraid to ask. By posing your guess as a question into possibility, your opinions become constructive.
5. Ask yourself, "What do you think the artist was trying to achieve?". Look for little clues, first before heading to big conceptual ones.
6. It's OK to suggest alternatives. It is, after all, "constructive" criticism. You can think badly of an artwork, but be prepared to explain what you might have done differently. There are good ways to say the work is not up to your standards.
7. Limit critique of craft, or at the very least try to understand what the artist's intentions were in their choice and application of the particular media. Learning to be an artist is not a muscle-flexing exercise. To be good at the craft is not enough. Ask yourself: What did you learn by doing this project with this media. Compare those thoughts to the project you are critiquing.