

# Reflection

What's the difference between art and pornography? That's the question that flashed through my mind when I saw *Seated Nude* by Erich Heckel in the Courtauld Gallery. Is "acceptable nudity" considered art, while "unacceptable nudity" is just porn?

According to the information at the Courtauld, Heckel's portrait of a nude adolescent girl "was a deliberate attack on the moral and artistic taboos" of his era. I have no difficulty imagining that the painting was absolutely scandalous in 1909. Even today, most Americans would dismiss it as perverted and without merit. If Heckel's intent was to use the painting as a social critique on the holdovers of Victorian morality, that political aspect of the piece would clearly put it outside the U.S. Supreme Court's definition of "obscenity," but is that enough to justify the painting's place in a prestigious London art museum?

The painting doesn't strike me as intentionally sexual *per se*, but the girl's pose--with her legs parted and facing the viewer, isolated on a bed--looks like exploitative kiddie porn. In fact, I got a little self-conscious just as I was snapping a picture of the painting, wondering if the other people in the room were glancing at the perv with the camera.

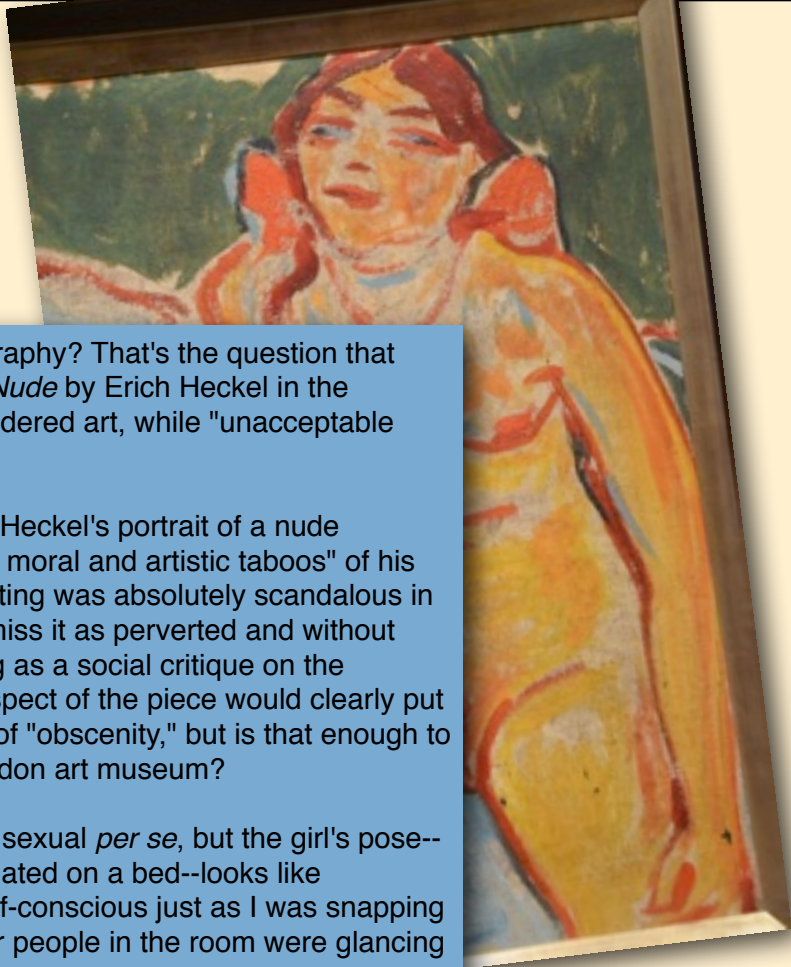
Then, instead of continuing to look at the painting itself, I parked myself across the room and watched other people as they approached the piece. As a rule, men gave it a side glance and moved on quickly, probably in an effort to not be seen as interested in the painting. Women either ignored it altogether, or looked at it for no more than 15 seconds. Maybe they were asking themselves the same art/porn question that had gone through my mind.

--Reflection from David Hubert, London Study Abroad Program  
<http://mercator99.weebly.com/study-abroad-to-london.html>

## Reflection is a Form of Metacognition

Highly productive and creative individuals think about their own thinking while they are thinking. This process, called **metacognition**, allows people to engage in a valuable conversation with themselves, exploring their background, questioning and correcting their thinking in the process, and pursuing the dynamic power of their minds.

--Ken Bain, *What the Best College Students Do.*



# Sample Reflection Prompts You Might Encounter

## Summative Reflection

- In what ways have you improved as a writer/artist/scientist/etc.? What brought about those improvements? Point to specific experiences, readings, assignments, or discussions in this course.
- What was your biggest accomplishment in the course? How did the signature assignment and other course elements help you reach it? Be specific.
- What skills did you master in this course? How are they reflected in the signature assignment and other course work? Be specific.

## Process Reflection

- What problems did you encounter in completing the signature assignment? How did you troubleshoot them, if you did?
- Talk about the aims and strategies that led to the completion of your assignment. How did your thinking about it evolve over time (point to specific experiences while working on the assignment)? How did the assignment evolve (or not evolve) with your thinking (again, point to specific experiences) about it? What went according to plan and what surprises did you encounter? What still needs work?
- Outline the steps you took to complete the signature assignment, and tell me about your thinking at each step.

## Evaluative Reflection

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your signature assignment? Explain while making specific references to your work.
- Discuss your best work for the course and explain why it's your best. Be specific.

## Reflection on Learning

- Make connections between what you studied in this course with what you've learned in other courses at SLCC or before. Make specific references to your work in this class and in the other courses. How did what you learn in the other courses enhance what you learned in here, and vice versa?
- Take a look at SLCC's learning outcomes for General Education at the end of this syllabus. Note that while no specific course helps students move toward achieving all of those outcomes, each Gen Ed course is supposed to help you make progress in achieving as many of those outcomes as are relevant to the course. Making specific references to your work in this course, tell me how you have progressed toward achieving at least three of those outcomes.
- Reflect on how you thought about (course topic) before you took this course and how you think about it now that the course is over. Have any of your assumptions or understandings changed? Why? What assignments/activities/readings were influential in this process? How will you approach (course topic) differently in the future?

## Suggestions for Reflection

- Use reflection to put your assignments into a broader personal or intellectual context.
- Reflection can often raise more questions than it answers, because you are pushing the boundaries of your learning--and that's a good thing.
- Think of reflection as a conversation with yourself.
- Elaborate: Just saying something like "I learned a lot" or "I liked this assignment" is not reflection.
- Intentional reflection can take on many forms: memoirs, personal essays, reflection essays, video diaries, audio tracks, documentaries, lab reports, research journals, etc.
- Reflection helps determine what you know and discover what you don't.
- Reflection is a more personal form of expression, so don't be afraid to take risks with it.
- Reflection is about more than what you feel; it's about what you are thinking and about connecting your thoughts to your recent actions and your future actions.
- Don't use reflection to evaluate the course or the professor.