THE DOCENT PROJECT

ARS EST PRAECEPTIÔ:
ART AS PRECEPT AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

A Guide for Getting Started

In the anonymously written treatise known as Rhetorica ad Herennium, an ancient Roman guide to the process of public speaking, the author offers his readers a useful definition of art, explaining that “ars est praeceptio, quae dat certam viam rationemque faciendi aliquid.” Art is a precept – or a teaching tool, you might say instead – that gives people a clear path and a reason for doing something. That is a particularly useful way to think about the work that lies ahead of us, as we embark upon a second round of the Docent Project: this time, you see, in addition to teaching your students about the art, you will become the artist yourself, and you will use the original version you have already chosen at the museum as your own precept or guide for the process.

Through observation, thoughtful research, and listening to your classmates-cum-students, you will once again become a docent of classical art, from the Latin verb doceo, meaning “teaches.” And to help you in your teaching, you will prepare a recreation of that ancient work, with the guidance of mentors, who might be as excited about the process as – dare we say it – the anonymous ancient artists themselves.

Here are the steps...

1. You will prepare a written background, just like last year, after researching your work of art and working with your research coach, Mr. Sommer. Also like last year, you will have Mr. Sommer sign a form you fill out related to this process. (We'll look at that in a later class.)

2. You will recreate your work of art alongside your research, something new to this year, working with your art coach, which will be Mr. Sommer, Mr. Kim, or Mr. Nauman. (Mr. Nauman will work with those of you doing work in the Innovation Lab; Mr. Sommer will work with those of you doing work in the art studio; and Mr. Kim is available in either space.) And like Step #1, your art coach will sign a form you fill out related to this process, too. (We'll look at this form in a later class, too.)

3. You will teach your classmates – er, museumgoers – about your work of art! (For details, see the Form for Feedback, which we will also look at together in a later class.)

Due Dates

Since we will be turning Latin class into a virtual museum once again (well, the first twenty minutes or so, anyway) alongside our regular study of Latin, we’ll need to look at the calendar first and schedule each of your docent projects around that.

Also, an optional rough draft (if you’d like feedback from me before your lesson) is due no later than two class periods before your presentation, via old-timey paper or submitted via e-mail.

The final version of your written background presentation is due immediately following your lesson, via old-timey paper or submitted via e-mail. (You need not hand in your recreation of the art.)

But first, let’s head to our course calendar on MyHewitt so each one of you can choose the date for your presentation. (We’ll do this together now as a class.)

Please take out pens and planners. Let’s get started!