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## Longwood University

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SHORT PIECES  
**LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY**  
**CLAIRE BLACK MCCOY**

Honors students studying art history often find it challenging to think and work creatively—discovering formal relationships between works of art or recognizing the transmission of a style or tradition through visual analysis rather than research. Often they are most comfortable with very concrete and somewhat limited paper topics such as an analysis of a particular painting, iconic image, or the work of an artist during a discrete period.

To overcome this limitation, I have students create virtual exhibitions that require them to leave their textbooks and MLA handbooks behind and develop their own groups of paintings and/or sculptures that are linked on a thematic or formal level. First, students choose the images that interest them and that seem to relate to one another on a purely visual level. These pictures form the exhibition and the basis for a very simple web page that includes the digital images and identifying information. Second, they write a short statement that explains what the pictures or sculptures have in common and why they were chosen. It may be on the page with the pictures or may be set up as separate linked page. One might consider this page to be the initial text that one sees on a wall at an actual exhibition. The third component is a paragraph about each image with a brief bibliography at the end. Most students link this paragraph directly to the pictures they have chosen. In evaluating the students' work, I focus on the choice of images and the students' interpretations of the paintings or sculptures. I look for images that show imaginative thought and a willingness to risk daring interpretations. Freed from the comfortable confines of writing papers, the students seem to think and write with greater independence of thought.

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