

In this class we have examined several artists and authors whose work foregrounds the practice of observation and its socio-political dimensions. For this assignment you will inhabit the role of a young artist's apprentice where you have been asked to practice your skills of observation for the purposes of creating a scene for your mentor's next genre painting. Rather than recording what you see with your paintbrush, you will capture your subjects in writing over the course of a 2-3 page essay (double-spaced). To do this you will observe an outdoor location of your choosing for 30-60 minutes and record what you see. You will then compile a narrative based on your notes that describes your chosen scene (object, individual, grouping, landscape) with the intention of creating an image in the mind of the reader. As we have discussed in class with regard to artists like Ford Madox Brown and Gustave Courbet, their artistic labor has often been represented through their meticulous attention to detail. When you organize your observations and their description, think about how your words might translate to a finished painting. Be sure your paper addresses the following: a description of where you have chosen to observe; the time of day; your spatial orientation in relation to your subject; and who/what you have chosen to observe to serve as the basis for the scene.

Additionally, you might consider some of the following questions: What frames the scene you have chosen? How does this space organize people (yourself included) within it? Consider the role of nature and/or the built environment within your chosen location. To what degree is each featured? How do they interact? How are people interacting with the space vs. with each other? What kinds of relationships do you observe? Are there elements of your scene that are indicative of the time we are living in?