Art History Survey Paper

M/W class due date: Monday 12/1

T/Th class due date: Tuesday 12/2

You will write a 2- to 3-page paper (400-600 words, not including footnotes) in which you take on the persona of a figure from the Middle Ages and describe a work of art and your reaction to it. Pick one of the options below and write in the first person as your historical character.

You may have to do some research for this assignment. Any information you get from outside of class (including your textbook, Websites, and/or library books) needs to be cited in a footnote.¹

Pick one of the following artwork/character combinations. In your paper, try to stay as true to your character’s historical context as possible.² You can mention historical events that your character may have been involved with or familiar with and that may be informing their reaction. As you write, consider what the artwork would have meant to a person of the time. But don’t give textbook-style information and description. Write as your character would.

Beyond the basic premise outlined above, you can be as creative as you want—make up a backstory for your character or a scenario. Just be sure to make it more or less historically plausible and be sure to make the artwork the focus of the paper.

Options:*

1. Write as a citizen of Ravenna walking into the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in the year 425 (8-15, 8-16, 8-17). For more images, see:
   http://mosaicartsource.wordpress.com/2007/02/05/galla-placidia-mausoleum-in-ravenna/

2. Write as Theodora or Justinian seeing the newly completed Hagia Sophia for the first time in 537 (9-5, 9-6, 9-7). For more images, see

¹ This is a footnote. You can make one by clicking on “Insert” in the Word menu and then “Footnote.” Next, type after the number that appears in the bottom margin of your paper. In this area, tell me where you got the information you are including. It doesn’t need to be in any particular format, you just need to give accurate information about your source.

² You can use the footnote to discuss about anything that you want or need to say in your own voice (such as where you got information). In the body of the paper, you must stay in character, but if you want to give information that your character wouldn’t know or wouldn’t say, you can give that here.
3. Write as an iconoclast looking at the Virgin and Child mosaic in Hagia Sophia (9-19) in 867. For better images, see
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagia_Sophia#mediaviewer/File:Apse_mosaic_Hagia_Sophia_Virgin_and_Child.jpg and
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/af/HagiaSophia_DomeVertical_Pano_%28pixinn.net%29.jpg

4. Write as an Anglo-Saxon pagan looking at the Book of Lindisfarne in the year 700 (11-7, 11-8). You can look through the entire manuscript at
http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_nero_d_iv There are also books in the library with good reproductions of the many of the pages.

5. Write as an Irish monk looking at the Book of Kells in the year 800 (11-1). You can look through the entire manuscript at
http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=MS58_003v. There are also books in the library with good reproductions of the many of the pages.

6. Write as a pilgrim (a merchant from Paris) looking at the tympanum of Autun Cathedral in 1140 (12-1). For more images see
http://www.medart.pitt.edu/image/France/autun/WestFacade/CentralPortal/Tympanum/Autun-WestFac-Portal-main.html

7. Write as a pilgrim (a shoe-maker from 100 miles away with a sick daughter) looking at the reliquary of Sainte-Foy in 1010 (12-2). For views of the reliquary in context, see http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_reliquaire_de_Sainte_Foy.


*If you have another idea for an artwork/persona combination, come and discuss it with me.