

Interview with Dr Charles Howard, cont.



6. How much formal knowledge must one have to appreciate and enter into an encounter with a work of art?

It is *not* necessary to have extensive formal knowledge of artist biographies or art historical periods to enter into a deep and meaningful encounter with a work of art. While formal art historical knowledge can be helpful, it is not a prerequisite for viewing and appreciating a painting, sculpture, monument or building. I truly believe that great art can connect with anyone, regardless of age or background or formal training.

To paraphrase Ralph Lieberman, an art historian and scholar of Michelangelo: great art calls on the individual viewer to draw upon *all* of his life experiences. That is to say, a real masterpiece asks you to recall everything you've seen, heard, and learned in life – and to bring those things into your personal encounter.

In this way, one performs a psychological and intellectual dance around a great work of art, as the masterpiece asks you to think of everything *outside* of art history itself. So, when I stand before Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, I often think of a wide range of items: Biblical knowledge, my own faith journey, my understandings of love and mortality, my knowledge of Italian food and Greek mythology, etc.

The real trick to a great encounter with great art: you have to be patient, look closely, and be open to the possibility of surprises!

7. How did you come to teach at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville? What do you teach at Episcopal? What engages your students about art history?

After completing my doctorate, I met the Rev. Adam Greene, Headmaster of the Episcopal School of Jacksonville, and spoke with him about opportunities at his school. Father Greene expressed an interest in re-starting the AP Art History program at Episcopal and rejuvenating students' interest in the field. I've been at Episcopal for three years now, where I've been teaching AP Art History, World History, and a term-long course on modern and contemporary

art. It is a wonderful school, and the students are really engaged in the visual arts. They truly enjoy visiting art galleries and viewing art in person, whether in the on-campus Munnerlyn Gallery or at the Cummer Museum in Jacksonville.