

# Museum of fine arts in houston | reflection



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**Cultural Response**

This cultural response essay will discuss my trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. I will be describing my favorite works of art, compare two pieces of art by Do Ho Suh, and then describe my experience at the museum.

The first part of the museum that I visited was the Audrey Jones Beck building on level 1. The exhibit was the Antiquities and American Art 1800-1970. I saw art given by Ima Hogg, Jackson Pollock, Severin Roesen, Louis Comfort Tiffany and Christian Edward Bottcher. I have visited the Hogg Plantation and being able to see the furniture and art that was given by Mrs. Hogg from her home was very interesting. The first piece of art that caught my attention was in section 107 of this level. It was called the "Victorian Bouquet" by the artist Severin Roesen in circa 1850-1855. Roesen was an American artist but was born in Germany in 1815. The media of the artwork is oil on canvas. The "Victorian Bouquet" features a wide variety of exquisite flowers and fruit. It revives the 17th century Dutch tradition of still-life portraits and paintings. The painting celebrates wealth, life, and aesthetic and physical comfort. It contains roses, poppies, morning glories, peonies, tulips, forget-me-nots, carnations, lilies, irises, peaches, raspberries, pomegranates, and a glass of wine among other things. Roesen provides a feast for the senses. What I love most about this work is how vivid, realistic, and beautiful he made the flowers and contents of the picture. The bright and rich colors chosen in contrast to the black background really create a beautiful scene.

The second artwork that I was impressed with was created by Louis Comfort Tiffany, who created the Tiffany lamps. This piece was in the same building but in section 109. He was an American artist and developed Tiffany Studios in 1900. The name of the piece is "A Wooden Landscape in Three Panels" created around 1905. The medium is glass, copper-foil, and lead. "A Wooden Landscape" is far more complex than any stained glass windows I have seen, which are usually put together like a puzzle. Usually they are layered together in multiple pieces with glass, one on top of the other. This is just like a painter layered his paint on a canvas. Tiffany used subtle choices of color in this artwork which changes with the variations of light that it has been exposed to. Like a living landscape, this artwork changes in appearance responding to the light surrounding it. The thing that caught my attention about this artwork was the size. Its overall size is 7.2 x 11 feet. Another thing that I liked about this artwork was that it was stained glass. I love stained glass windows and how Tiffany did this was gorgeous. My dad has collected Tiffany lamps and so when I saw this artwork I recognized the styling and technique quickly.

The Third portrait I found was in the same building as the other two but in section 113. The artist who created the work was Christian Edward Böttcher. Böttcher was a German artist who lived from 1818 to 1889. The name of the artwork was "Summer Night on the Rhine" which was created in 1862. The medium of the work was oil paint on canvas. It contained medieval castles, picturesque towns, friends gathered under a beautiful tree, and a vineyard sloping down the side of a hill. The Rhine valley is an extremely romantic scene which was captured perfectly in this artwork where there is an

exciting, charming, and nostalgic get-together. Laughter and happiness spill from the canvas and it makes you want to be a part of the celebration. The moonlight sets the perfect shadowing and colors to reflect the mood of the painting. What I found to be charming about this scene is how all 15 or so men are trying to court the women and are giving them flowers. It is almost like an extremely large match-maker party. Another fun thing about this picture is where the party is taking place. You can quickly tell that they are all from the upper class because of their dress and the castle that they are beside, but the party is under a big tree with a table underneath. A chandelier is tied to a limb of a tree with rope. This is a very exquisite oil painting and I sat and wondered at its detail for a very long while.

In the Caroline Wiess Law building, 2nd floor, gallery 200, I found the works of Do Ho Suh, a Korean artist living in America. The first piece I found was called " Fallen Star 1/5" which is 131 x 145 x 120 inches. It was created in 2008-2009 and is made up of ABS (plastic), basswood, beech, ceramic, enamel paint, glass, honeycomb board, lacquer paint, latex paint, LED lights, pinewood, plywood, resin, spruce, styrene, polycarbonate sheets and polyvinyl chloride sheets. The second piece of art created by Suh is called " Home within a Home" which was created in 2009. The dimensions of this piece are 131 x 145 x300 inches. It was created with resin. Do Ho Suh began using nylon and silk to create full size representations of his childhood home in Korea and his first American Apartment, a historical building in Providence, Rhode Island. The translucent quality of these materials creates the blurred line between the past and present, inside and outside. " Fallen Star 1/5" is an autobiographical representation of Suh's journey from Korea to the U. S.

The artwork shows us a traditional Korean scholar's house that has crashed into the building that housed his first American apartment. Each object in the house has been hand made by Suh. He made the house and its contents as realistic as possible to create the effect of being lived in and something the viewer can relate to. " Home within a Home" is a continuation of the piece " Fallen Star". In the earlier work, the two buildings were very much separate entities but in " Home within a Home", the Korean house and the apartment building have become a part of the same entity, growing and forming together as one. Suh's artwork is not trying to convey the idea of a violent collision between cultures, but rather about how they coexist together. He said maybe " If you start to move things around, maybe the Korean house loses its identity, sort of blends in with the American style-or the other way around. I would love to build a house like this because it raises very interesting questions. Are you in a Korean house or an American house? That's a constant question to myself" (MFAH description of artwork). Both pieces of art symbolize the destroyed Old Korea coming together with the merging New Korea and America. Both pieces of art are easy to compare because of their connection that was created by the artist. Both represent the story and journey of Do Ho Suh. They both show what " home" means to him and how he puts importance on his culture. The only big difference between the pieces is the materials used and the fact that " Fallen Star" they are two different houses, and in " Home within a Home" they are put together and morphing into one house. My favorite out of the two is " Fallen Star 1/5" because of how realistic it was. It took him 2 years to create this masterpiece and it is so amazing. I love how each room is made to look lived in and creates this warm, at home atmosphere. On the outside of the

building he uses an old style of architecture that I love and it was put together very intricately. There was a woman who was giving a tour to a middle school group and she described the artwork to them by comparing it to The Wizard of Oz. She did this because of how the Korean home is crashed into the apartment building. I thought this was humorous and helped the children relate more to the painting, " We're not in Kansas anymore!" The one thing I found interesting about " Home within a Home" was the material used, resin. Just gazing at the piece, you could see right through it and could see every detail of the staircases, hallways, windows, and the roof of the Korean house while still being very detailed on the outside. Both pieces by Do Ho Suh were very interesting and thought provoking. I would recommend any of my class mates to go see them both as soon as possible.

My experience at the Museum was very enjoyable and I hope to go there again very soon. I drove there with my mom which created a good bonding time and made the experience even better for me. When we first entered Houston I was actually confused about which building the Museum was a part of and we ended up in the parking garage of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, oops! Once we figured out where we actually needed to be, the right museum, we walked into the first room and were warmly greeted by the two women up front. I had a small, fun conversation with them both and they were extremely interested in my assignment and asked me about it and what I planned to do. Once they looked over my assignment sheet they informed me that my entrance into the museum would be free of charge. That was extremely nice of them to put that much importance into learning and reward students that way! As my mom and I wandered aimlessly around

the building taking in all there was to see, all of the employees greeted us and smiled. I noticed quickly that all of them were from different countries, mostly Asia and one man was even from Africa. While my mom and I walked around, we get turned around and confused as to where we were and every single employee we asked to help us was extremely kind. I have already recommended many of my friends to go visit this museum. The pieces of art I saw were amazing and I love that an establishment like this is as close to me as Houston. This trip was a great experience but unfortunately I did not have the time to stay and see all of the pieces and so I hope to go again very soon.