DTI Seminar Proposal 2018: *The Fantastic Ekphrastic Scholastic*

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The relationship between poetry and art is ancient and rich. In fact, the practice of writing verse about visual creation is so long-established that the Classical Greeks felt compelled to name it: *Ekphrasis.*

One of the first known examples of the genre occurs in the Iliad, as Homer describes Achilles' shield, and from this foundational moment the relationship between the seen and the spoken has grown deeper and more textured through countless generations, styles, and iterations.

We know of Percy Shelley's great poem *Ozymandias*, a contemplation and critique of the basic impulse toward artistic ambition, and of John Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn,* the most elegant and ambiguous statement in English about the relationship of beauty to truth. And we know of Robert Browning's poem about the Duke of Ferrara, *My Last Duchess,* which opens the genre to poems about works of art that exist only in the imagination.

But Ekphrasis isn't just for the Ancients, the Romantics, and assorted Dead Poets. The practice of writing poetry about fresh, living, local, art is alive and well and growing in classrooms, museums, libraries, and community centers all over Delaware. Institutions as diverse as the Delaware Art Museum, the University of Delaware Museums, the Creative Vision Factory, The Creative District Wilmington, the Delaware Historical Society, and public arts installations all over the state embrace the genre, and will partner with *Fantastic Ekphrastic Scholastic* seminar participants.

Ekphrasis opens the exercise of writing to a variety of classroom practice, including explorations of poetic genre ranging from simple forms suitable for beginning writers such as Ballad and Haiku all the way to highly sophisticated and challenging forms such as Sonnet and Villanelle. The marriage of art to language offers mathematical challenges such as applying the reverse-triad structure of the Sestina to the geometries of abstract art, or the musical rhythms of *terza rima* to the visual representation of dance.

Ekphrasis is a discipline that emphasizes reading *and* writing, and is particularly well-articulated with the group of ELA Common Core standards concerned with *Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure,* and *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas,* especially standards involving the comparison or juxtaposition of multiple media. And since this seminar will also involve the actual writing of poems, it lends itself to the *Production and Distribution of Writing*.

Poetry about Art, or *Ekphrasis*, represents a powerful confluence of learning functions and communications skills that not only enriches practice inside the classroom, but also facilitates instruction outside of it. *The Fantastic Ekphrastic Scholastic* will exist at this exciting nexus weekly throughout the Spring and Fall of 2018.