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# Ontology & Thesaurus Reorganization — Handoff Document

**Date:** 2026-03-17

**Builds on:** SPARQL\_Most\_Specific\_Property\_Query\_Handoff.md (2026-02-19)

**Purpose:** Document the ontology and thesaurus restructuring that resolved a multiple-triple TCAP query result, and record the evolved data modeling decisions for criticism instances.

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## Origin of the Issue

The TCAP (Type-Constrained Annotation Pipeline) SPARQL query was returning two triples instead of one when applied to `the:CrowdHingeBand`. The concept's `skos:broader+` chain reached both `the:Composition` (typed as `vad:Composition`) and `the:Criticism` (typed as `vad:ArtCriticism`). Since neither class is a subclass of the other, the query's cross-branch filter had no basis to eliminate either, and both `vad:hasComposition` and `vad:hasCriticism` survived as candidates.

The query was behaving correctly. The problem was structural: `the:Composition` was a child of `the:Criticism` in the thesaurus, creating a false `skos:broader` relationship. Composition analysis is not a kind of criticism — it is a parallel analytical tool that critics use.

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## Ontology Changes

### New Class: `vad:VisualAnalysis`

```
vad:VisualAnalysis
  rdf:type owl:Class ;
  rdfs:label "Visual Analysis" ;
  rdfs:subClassOf vad:VisualArts ;
  rdfs:comment "Analytical frameworks applied to the examination of visual artworks." ;
```

### New Property: `vad:hasVisualAnalysis`

```
vad:hasVisualAnalysis
  rdf:type owl:ObjectProperty ;
  rdfs:domain vad:CreativeWork ;
  rdfs:range vad:VisualAnalysis ;
  rdfs:label "has visual analysis" ;
```

## Revised Class Hierarchy

```
vad:Art
  vad:VisualArts
    vad:Vocabulary      # now corresponds to the thesaurus as a whole
      vad:DigitalLanguage # sole remaining child
    vad:ArtRealization
    vad:VisualAnalysis  # NEW
      vad:FormalAnalysis # NEW
        vad:ArtElements
        vad:ArtPrinciples
        vad:Composition  # moved from vad:Vocabulary
        vad:Perspective  # moved from vad:Vocabulary
      vad:ContextualAnalysis # NEW
        vad:ArtHistory    # moved from vad:Art
          vad:ArtCriticism
          vad:Provenance
```

## Key Moves

```
| Class | Previous Parent | New Parent |
|-----|-----|-----|
| vad:Composition | vad:Vocabulary | vad:FormalAnalysis |
| vad:Perspective | vad:Vocabulary | vad:FormalAnalysis |
| vad:ArtElements | vad:Vocabulary | vad:FormalAnalysis |
| vad:ArtPrinciples | vad:Vocabulary | vad:FormalAnalysis |
| vad:ArtHistory | vad:Art | vad:ContextualAnalysis |
```

**Note on vad:FormalAnalysis vs vad:ContextualAnalysis:** The distinction between formal analysis (applied directly to the work's surface) and contextual analysis (situating the work historically and culturally) is noted for clarity. It is not yet needed operationally but provides a principled structure for future classes such as `vad:CulturalContext` and `vad:Iconography` under `vad:ContextualAnalysis`.

**Note on vad:Vocabulary:** With `vad:ArtElements`, `vad:ArtPrinciples`, `vad:Composition`, and `vad:Perspective` moved to `vad:VisualAnalysis`,

`vad:Vocabulary` now has a single child (`vad:DigitalLanguage`) and corresponds cleanly to the thesaurus as a controlled vocabulary — an appropriate structural parallel.

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## Thesaurus Changes

### New Concept: `the:Interpretation` typed as `vad:VisualAnalysis`

`the:Interpretation` already existed as an untyped thesaurus root used operationally as a tag for AI criticisms. It is now annotated as `vad:VisualAnalysis`, giving it a structural role as the thesaurus anchor for the entire analytical branch.

`the:Interpretation`

    a skos:Concept, vad:VisualAnalysis ;

    rdfs:label "Interpretation" ;

    skos:definition "The process of analyzing a work of art and assigning it meaning." ;

### Revised `the:Composition` broader relationship

# Before

`the:Composition` skos:broader `the:Criticism` .

# After

`the:Composition` skos:broader `the:Interpretation` .

`the:Composition` and `the:Criticism` are now **siblings** under `the:Interpretation`, correctly reflecting that compositional analysis and criticism are parallel forms of interpretation rather than one subsuming the other.

### Resulting Thesaurus Structure (partial)

`the:Interpretation` (`vad:VisualAnalysis`)

`the:Criticism` (`vad:ArtCriticism`)

`the:Composition` (`vad:Composition`)

`the:SpatialCompositionStrategy`

`the:HorizontalFriezeBanding`

`the:HumanActivityFrieze`

`the:CrowdHingeBand`

`the:Evaluation`

`the:Assessment`

`the:TechnicalAssessment`

the:Opinion  
the:GalleryDescription  
the:Influences  
the:InterpretationSource  
the:GoogleGemini

After the fix:

the:Interpretation (vad:VisualAnalysis)  
the:Criticism (vad:ArtCriticism)  
the:Composition (vad:Composition)  
the:SpatialCompositionStrategy  
the:HorizontalFriezeBanding  
the:HumanActivityFrieze  
the:CrowdHingeBand  
the:Evaluation  
...

the:CrowdHingeBand's ancestor chain no longer reaches the:Criticism, so vad:hasCriticism is no longer a TCAP candidate. The query correctly returns a single triple: vad:hasComposition the:CrowdHingeBand.

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## Note on Visual Analysis vs Interpretation

A semantic distinction worth preserving for future reference:

In art education frameworks (e.g., Feldman's four-step method), “visual analysis” and “interpretation” are treated as sequential discrete steps — analysis being objective examination of formal elements, interpretation being the subjective assignment of meaning. In actual critical practice this boundary dissolves: the choice of what to notice, what vocabulary to apply, and what relationships to foreground is already interpretive. The selection is never algorithmic.

For the purposes of this ontology, vad:VisualAnalysis as a parent of both vad:FormalAnalysis and vad:ContextualAnalysis is defensible regardless of this distinction — it groups analytical frameworks applied to visual art without committing to a particular critical theory about where analysis ends and interpretation begins. The term the:Interpretation in the thesaurus sits comfortably above both.

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# Evolved Data Modeling: Criticism Instances

## The Distinction

A conceptual distinction emerged during TCAP annotation of Saint Mark's:

- **Conscious creative choice** → property on the work instance (e.g., `vad:hasWatercolorTechnique the:variegatedWash`)
- **Analytical observation by a critic** → tag on the criticism instance

Attaching a compositional concept like `the:CrowdHingeBand` directly to the work implies artistic intent. Attaching it to the criticism instance accurately represents it as the critic's observation. The work instance should describe what the work *is* and what went into *making* it; criticism instances capture what analysts *observed* about it.

## TCAP on Criticism Instances

The TCAP query was successfully applied to a criticism instance, using `vad:hasComposition` and `vad:hasCriticism` as the promoted properties on the criticism instance rather than on the work. The query operates identically — only the subject changes from a work URI to a criticism instance URI.

## Tag Role

`the:tag` (symmetric `owl:ObjectProperty`, domain `rdfs:Resource`, no range constraint) connects criticism instances back to the work instance without asserting ontological properties on the work. Tags are queryable facets and serve as the lightweight annotation layer for analytical content.

## Workflow

1. **Work in progress** — tags accumulate organically on the work instance from notes and AI criticisms
2. **TCAP on work** — promotes tags to typed properties where concepts represent conscious creative choices or established facts about the work
3. **TCAP on criticism** — promotes tags to typed properties on the criticism instance, capturing the critic's analytical vocabulary without asserting it as a property of the work
4. **Full text** — the criticism instance references the Google Doc containing the complete argument; the RDF instance provides queryable facets and entry points

## Saint Mark's Instance Data (final state)

**Work instance** (`work:bfbe7147...`) — production facts only:

- [vad:hasWatercolorPaint](#) — 19 pigments
- [vad:hasWatercolorTechnique](#) — pigment discovery, reserved whites, glazing, variegated wash
- [vad:hasPaper](#) — Fabriano Artistico cold press
- [the:tag](#) — links to four associated instances (see below)

**Criticism instance** ([work:769448d1...](#)) — Updated Saint Mark's Criticism:

- [vad:hasComposition](#) — [the:VisualHierarchy](#), [the:FigureGround](#), [the:OpticalAbstraction](#), [the:CrowdHingeBand](#)
- [vad:hasCriticism](#) — [the:ComplementaryMixedGray](#), [the:PublicGathering](#), [the:ChromaticShadows](#), [the:UltramarineShadows](#), [the:CoolColors](#), [the:CivicSpace](#), [the:VerticalIconographicAxis](#), [the:PlacePainting](#), [the:Staffage](#), [the:MonumentalArchitecture](#), [the:AcquaAlta](#)
- [the:document](#) → Google Doc (full criticism text)
- [the:tag](#) → work instance (symmetric back-link)

**Tag network on work instance:**

| Instance | Role |

|———|———|

| [work:855471c8...](#) | Saint Mark's Criticism — claude.ai (early criticism) |

| [work:b06f2cdf...](#) | Saint Mark's Criticism — ChatGPT (early criticism) |

| [the:St.MarksBasilica\\_20260110](#) | St. Mark's Basilica Notes (field research, iconography, technique notes) |

| [work:769448d1...](#) | Updated Saint Mark's Criticism (TCAP-annotated, finished work) |

| [work:5e053ee5...](#) | Painting Trajectory (multi-work contextual discussion) |

## Files Affected

- Ontology: CWVA — class hierarchy under [vad:VisualArts](#)
- Thesaurus: [interpretation.ttl](#) and composition/criticism concept files
- Work instance data: Saint Mark's ([work:bfbe7147...](#))

## Transcript Reference

Full development conversation:

[/mnt/transcripts/2026-03-17-ontology-thesaurus-reorg-criticism-instances.txt](#)