

The Nature of Art

Lecture 1:

Introduction: “Art in our lives”

Art plays a large part in making our lives infinitely rich.

Imagine, just for a minute, a world without art! (You may think "So what?", but please consider the impact that lack of graphics would have on your favorite video game.)

Art stimulates different parts of our brains to make us laugh.

Art gives us a way to be creative and express ourselves.

For some people, art is the entire reason they get out of bed in the morning. You could say "Art is something that makes us more thoughtful and well-rounded humans."

On the other hand, art is such a large part of our everyday lives, we hardly even stop to think about it. Look at the desk or table where you are right this minute. Someone designed that. It is art. Your shoes are art. Your coffee cup is art. All functional design is.... Art

. So, you could say "Art is something that is both functional and (hopefully) aesthetically pleasing to our eyes."

This leads us to question “What is Art”?

What is Art?

Art lacks a satisfactory definition. It is easier to describe it as the way something is done “the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others” rather than what it is.

Many other definitions emphasize that

1. Art is subjective and art is more subjective than objective.(Art for art itself)

2. Art is form and content.(there is always a concept).
3. There is a connection between beauty and art and beauty is the measure of quality of art.

It has to be said that defining art is just like defining life itself. I think now we can appreciate the depth of the question "what is art?"

II. Purposes and Functions of Art

Living with Art

the role of art in human life is to transform man's widest metaphysical ideas, by selective reproduction of reality, into a physical form—a work of art—that he can comprehend and to which he can respond emotionally.

Form & Meaning
Order & Structure
Exploring Aesthetic Possibilities

Functions of an artist

- Create places for human purpose
- Create extraordinary version of ordinary objects
- Record & commemorate
- Tangible form to the unknown
- Form to feeling and ideas
- See the world in new ways

Why Study Art?

Expression
Social Values
Human Intelligence

You might even say "Art is subjective, and means something different to every single person on earth.

End of lecture 1

Please just have a look on these questions and answers which emphasize that: Art is form and content.

Questions About Art

What is art?

People classify a wide range of objects as art by general agreement. Every culture on earth has produced objects of visual interest, involving ornamentation, design, picture-making, and abstraction. Many of these objects serve no purpose except to feature such things, and we regard them as art. Some of them have a purpose - to tell a story, to venerate a god, to memorialize someone - and we usually regard them as art too. A well-rounded education in art includes fine examples of architecture and crafts. In recent times, people have presented objects that lack visual qualities in art-viewing contexts, such as a gallery, and we usually take it on faith that the objects qualify as art. But the mainstream project of art produces objects that engage and delight the eye. Many things qualify as art, and many don't. Some things lie on the blurry boundary of art. One might like to draw a definitive line somewhere, but it matters more to have a good eye that can discern quality, or lack thereof, in an object put forth as a work of art.

What is the purpose of art?

Art objects provide visual delectation. People can make art objects serve a wide variety of additional functions, and have done so. These other functions may make them interesting for historical or intellectual reasons, but don't have any goodness (or badness) in themselves. It happens, especially in contemporary art, that an artist presents an object with poor visual qualities, with functions other than visual delectation. Such objects often have the intention to provoke thought in some way. Whatever interesting insights they may prompt, the strategy resembles using a broken hammer to prop open a door - using a tool that doesn't perform its original purpose well for another purpose unrelated to its category. That it works, in its way, doesn't inspire celebration.

How do I know whether a work of art is good?

When you taste food, you detect its goodness with your tongue. When you hear music, you detect its goodness with your ear. When you look at art, detect its goodness with your eye.

What does 'good' mean in art?

Art objects can have any number of virtues. Only one virtue matters to art specifically: successful form. Without successful form, other virtues matter little. So 'good' means 'good form.' You might call the other virtues 'good' in some larger sense, but if they exceed the goodness of an art object's form, the object is suffering from artistic compromises.

I sometimes see a work of art in a museum or gallery that I think is terrible. What's going on?

Good taste doesn't appear as often as you might think in the art world. Talent for looking at art occurs more commonly than talent for making art, by far, but it operates at high levels in a relatively small number of people. Education in art, furthermore, often consists of the indoctrination of taste rather than its cultivation. Many people with bad and middling taste pursue art professionally, and such people feel as much gratification indulging their tastes as people with good taste feel when indulging theirs. Because the category of art has blurry boundaries, people with questionable taste often think that objects that lie on them have sophisticated and progressive properties. People sometimes latch on to specific traits about art that they believe lend greatness to works in every case, even though no such trait exists. Its place in the museum or gallery sanctions it professionally, but not artistically. Artistic sanction can only come from you, and you should give it only according to your eye.

I sometimes see a work of art in a museum or gallery that I don't think qualifies as art. Is it, just because they say it is?

You will find it impossible to prove that something presented as art doesn't belong in the category of art objects. Its very appearance in an art context proves that someone is using it for artistic purposes. It can feel strange, even galling, to accept objects that lack visual qualities as art. Some artists strive for that reaction deliberately. The galling feeling comes from a long-held idea that art, the term, designates a special class of beautiful, well-made visual objects. Thanks to the aforementioned artists and their champions, it no longer does. On the other hand, you can easily judge such work as bad - your taste belongs to you. Play offense: say that the work may qualify as art, but it also qualifies as terrible. Demand that its supporters prove its worth.

What makes good art good?

We can't say. Artists and art lovers wish they had a list they could follow to make and identify good art. None exists. We can name a long list of widely-displayed virtues in art: draughtsmanship, craft, composition, originality, and on and on. This brings up two problems. One, when we try to talk about why these virtues have virtue, what constitutes good craft or good draughtsmanship, for example, we walk down a philosophical staircase that has no bottom. Two, for any virtue we might name, we can find a low-quality exemplar and a high-quality counterexample. But although we can't say, we can still detect goodness: a color feels right, a design looks snappy, a fine

composition seems to preclude other possible compositions. We work with that felt response.

Do I need to know art history to understand art?

Usually, but note the difference between understanding art and appreciating art. You appreciate art with your eye and your taste. You understand it with your intellectual capabilities. You may like something and not understand it. You may understand something and not like it. You may have good taste and poor knowledge, or the converse. But if you know iconography, general movements and their intentions, color theory, and other art-related topics, your powers of detection improve. Best of all, you might try to make some art yourself. Nothing clarifies the difficulties involved quite like trying to solve them with your own hands.