

What types of styles can be associated with works of art?

Recurrent and distinctive features in works of art (a definition for "style") can be described in relation to the following characteristics.

Temporal (time):

pre-historic (Paleolithic, Upper-Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Stone Age, Iron Age), Egyptian, Greek, Byzantine, Etruscan, Roman, Early Christian, Medieval, Carolingian, Ottonian, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, 18th century, 19th century, 20th century, Pre-Columbian, Ming, Sung, Chou, Han, Fujiwara, Kamakura, Ashikaga, and Nara.

Geographical (place):

African, American, Assyrian, Chinese, Egyptian, European, Greek, India, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Oceanic, Northern European, Persian, Peruvian, and Sumerian.

Cultural:

Balinese, Bamana, Celtic, Chinese, Egyptian, Eskimo, Ibo, Kwakwaka'wakw, Maori, Mayan, Minoan, Moorish, Navajo, Peloponnesian, Roman, Senufo, Sioux.

Types of Styles:

abstract, abstract-geometric, anti-mannerist, archaic, baroque, classic, impressionistic, manneristic, naturalistic, neoclassic, non-objective, painterly, realistic, representational, and romantic.

School/Custom/Tradition:

Abstract Expressionism, Ash Can, Barbizon, Bauhaus, Blaue Reiter, Byzantine, Cinema Verite, Constructivism, Hudson River, Impressionism, Coptic, Cubism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Florentine, Futurism, Hard-edge, Hellenistic, Minimal, Naturalism, New Realism, Op, Orphism, Pointillism, Pop, Precisionism, Primitivism, Realism, Regionalism, Siennese, Song, Surrealism, Venetian, Yamato-e.

Idioms (styles of individual artists, just a few examples):

Bergman, Bernini, Bramante, Brunelleschi, Cellini, Duccio, Fellini, Giotto, Kurosawa, Rembrandt, La Tour, Van Gogh, Frank Lloyd Wright.

Fusion of Styles:

Etruscan-Italian, French-Baroque, Greco-Roman, Hellenistic, Italian Renaissance, Northern Renaissance, Spanish Gothic.

Learning
About
Art

a multicultural approach

This site can be viewed in sequence or the user can address questions and issues by clicking on underlined items or on particular images, as noted. However, it is recommended that one move through the sequence of sections to grasp the full intent of this site, which is to introduce the user to the nature and values of the visual arts.

Introduction to Basic Questions

- * What questions might we ask about the visual arts?
- * What does a multicultural gallery of art look like?

Exploring the Nature of the Visual Arts

- * How do sign, symbol, and metaphor relate to the world of the visual arts?
- * How do the aesthetic dimensions of experience differ from other aspects of experience?
- * Why and how should art be defined broadly but critically?
- * How do we engage in the aesthetic analysis of works of art?
- * How does the expressive import of works of art differ from their historical-cultural contexts?

Exploring the Values of Art

- * How does art fulfill personal and psychological needs?
- * What are several vital social and cultural functions of art?
- * How does the study of art contribute to attaining the goals of formal education?

- * What do you study when you study art?
- * How does art relate to achieving and maintaining a thriving economy?
- * What careers and occupations can be associated with the visual arts?
- * What are the goals and methods of artistic versus scientific research?

Introduction

Questions About Art

When we use the term "art" in the context of this web site, we are referring to the visual arts. Works of visual art are constructed from very basic elements or components that we experience through our sense of sight and/or touch; namely, lines, two and/or three dimensional shapes, textures, colors, dark and light qualities, and actual or implied space. In fact, almost everything that we see can be described or interpreted in terms of these same visual (or sensory) components. Why do we ascribe the term "art" to some of these objects while others are merely described as useful or interesting or even beautiful? It is the purpose of this web site to explore answers to this question and many other issues that deal with the nature of art; for example, why art is important to us as individuals, and how art functions as a key player in both social and economic spheres.

A typical response when one is confronted with questions about art is "I may not know much about art, but I know what I like." What is implied by this forthright reaction is simply that one usually likes what he or she actually knows about art. It follows that if one's knowledge is limited, responses will also be limited. Unfortunately, many adults have not had the opportunity (or the desire) to explore the world of art in any systematic way. As a consequence, their reactions to art exist at a very basic level; "I like it or I don't like it" being the principle reaction to works of art, where ever encountered.

One need only review the following questions to gain some insight into the complexity of the world of art. Being able to provide reasonable answers to these types of questions would demonstrate one's ability to both understand and appreciate art, at least at a very fundamental level. Providing possible responses to these questions is the purpose of the information, discussions and activities within this web site. Our primary objective is to reveal a sampling of the types of thoughts and emotions that may be triggered when encountering works of art. We hope to facilitate achieving greater degrees of differentiation in one's responses to works of art and, as a consequence, enable reactions that

are more meaningful, encompassing and profound. We also hope to nurture an appreciation for the varied functions and values of art; to demonstrate that the visual arts are an extraordinary phenomena, and that they are essential to our well being, individually and as a society.

What is art?

- * Should natural objects be considered as works of art?
- * Is art anything we want it to be, or does the term "art" refer to objects that have special characteristics?
- * What conditions need to exist before we are willing to classify something as art?

While all types of objects and events may involve us in the aesthetic aspects of experience, are we willing to call all of them art?

- * What are the components of an aesthetic response?
- * How does an aesthetic focus differ from other types of emphases?
- * We may respond to the aesthetic qualities in a variety of objects produced by people who have no word for art in their language. Are we willing to call such objects art even though they were produced primarily as objects to give form to values and traditions, and not as art, per se; i.e., objects designed primarily to evoke responses to aesthetic qualities?
- * Can people who have not been taught how to make art produce works of art?
- * Are children able to produce art?

Is art found only in art museums?

- * Can objects that are primarily functional be considered as works of art?
- * Under what circumstances can we consider utilitarian objects as works of art?

What does a work of art express?

- * The intentions of the artist?
- * Only what art historians tell us about the work?
- * Anything we want it to express? Is it strictly an individual thing?

How does art serve the individual and society?

- * In what ways does art serve the psychological needs of artists and/or consumers of art?

- * What role does art play in a consumer oriented materialistic society?
- * Are there careers and occupations that require a background in the visual arts?

What are the differences between art and science?

- * How do artists and scientists differ in their approaches to their work?
- * What are the primary goals of artistic and scientific research?

A Gallery of Multicultural Art Works





An established work of art is depicted within each of the frames on this screen. What do you think of these works? Are there any that you would want to experience directly? Are they all equally important?

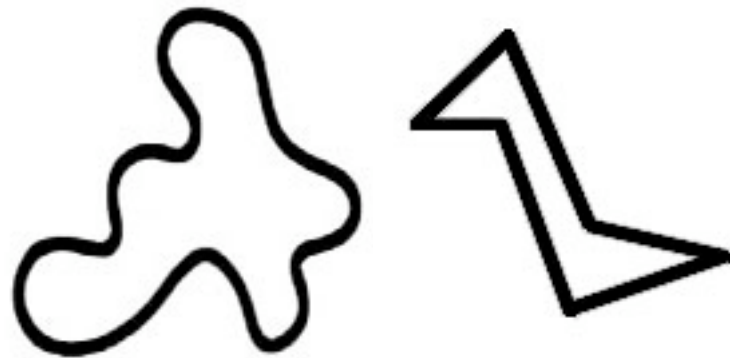
Clicking on any work of art will take you to the section where the work is discussed, but we recommend that you move through the sequence as prescribed (always moving to the next section) in order to more thoroughly understand and appreciate the nature of these art forms.

How do sign, symbol and metaphor relate to the world of art?

Works of art become most meaningful for us when they evoke thoughts and feelings. This occurs when we venture beyond merely identifying a work's visual elements (the character of its lines, shapes, colors, etc.) and the ways in which these elements are organized. It is essential to consider the proposition that works of art speak to us through both their formal organization and the signs, symbols and metaphors that can be associated with them. How these additional components can be defined and identified is demonstrated through the following series of exercises.

How does one move beyond what is literally there?

When we look at a painting all that we can actually see are shapes and the textures and colors of paint on the canvas which absorb and reflect varied amounts of light. But there is much more to react to if we contemplate the character of the shapes and colors and how they relate to each other. To illustrate this principle in a very direct way, carefully observe shapes A and B.



tactility

bambino

shape A shape B

Shapes A and B are drawings of simple shapes. To the left of these shapes are two words. Which word relates to which shape? If you sound-out each word

you should readily associate shape B with "tactility" because this word's piercing, staccato-like sounds correspond to the sharp angularity of the shape. The soft, undulating rhythms associated with "bambino" conform to the round, flowing character of shape A.

We have just demonstrated that there are implied meanings in both aural and visual forms that are elicited by the nature of what actually exists within these stimuli. Everyone can sense how differences in sound and appearance evoke variations in feelings and thoughts, even though there are only lines that define shapes or letters that create words.

In our next exercise we see another example of this phenomenon. Words can appear in type faces in such a way that what the word describes can actually be felt. The character of the letters evoke these kinds of associations.

Fashionable

Bold

Very Thin

A person's name may be spelled out without regard for any particular meaning, but the nature of the type selected may suggest something about a person's appearance or character. In the following exercise, what characteristics would you associate with each variation in the use of type to spell out the name Mary? Drag the cursor over the square before the most relevant characteristic.

MARY

pleasant
austere
quiet
whimsical

MARY

tranquil
joyous
tormented
elegant

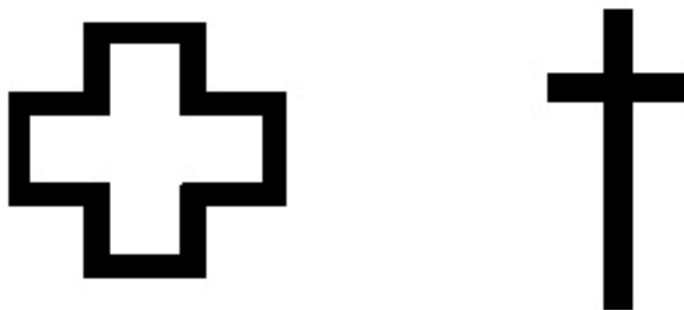
MARY

fervent
reserved
mischevious
assertive

MARY

morbid
distorted
authoritative
dreamy

Creating variations in implied meanings are among the basic building blocks that artists use to express emotions and ideas. But there are other aspects of visual forms that enlarge our response repertoire to works of art. These are illustrated on the next page.



Two intersecting rectangles appear in both shape A and B; these are their literal (actual) qualities, as are the variations in the thickness of lines that define these forms. What is not literal are the associations which we make with these two shapes. Western culture teaches us that when we see such intersecting rectangles we call such forms "crosses." These particular arrangements of shapes become signs for a cross. We also are taught that Shape A is referred to as a Greek Cross, and Shape B as a Latin Cross. Other shapes that we encounter elicit other associations. In works of art we often see signs (or representations) for hands, noses, shoes, trees, mountains, animals, houses, furniture, etc. None of these objects actually exist in works of art (except perhaps for tableaux, 3-D collages, interiors, etc.).

Signs also become symbols when they represent something else, but also through a process of association; i.e., a material object is used to represent something that is not visible. These crosses function as symbols for us because our western culture has taught us to make particular associations with these images. Shape A symbolizes some type of health service. Shape B stands as a symbol for Christianity.

In language, a metaphor is a figure of speech that transfers one thing to another through implied comparisons. It is used to infuse writing and speech with vitality, which make both more interesting; e.g., "he was really crucified by his competitors" or "the artist made minced meat out of his colors." Visual metaphors are implied as a consequence of analyzing the relationships between the formal structures and subject matter of works of art. In addition to their role as symbols, the crosses can also function as visual metaphors if we will take the time to analyze their form-content relationships.

How does art relate to the aesthetic aspects of experience?

What is art? Is art anything we want it to be, or does art refer to objects and/or events that have particular characteristics? We can begin to answer these questions when we think about how we react to what our senses enable us to perceive. We are capable of responding passionately to an extraordinary range of stimuli; e.g., the intensity of reds, oranges and violets in a tropical sunset; the striking black and white patterns on the bark of birch trees; or the extraordinary contrast in scale between humans and a massive water fall.



While such natural phenomena often evoke "ooh" and "ah" responses, manufactured stimuli can also elicit such reactions. For instance, the graceful arches in a suspension bridge, the thrust toward the sky of a very tall building, or the subtle elegance of a ceramic vase can provoke feelings ranging from astonishment to serenity.



These kinds of reactions are not always associated with responses to such forms. Natural and manufactured forms often serve as stimuli for thinking about other things. We may, for example, view the sunset to predict the weather for the following day. Or, we can look at the suspension bridge and estimate how much time will be saved by crossing it rather than taking an other route. But, when we focus on the inherent characteristics or qualities of a phenomenon, we respond to its non-utilitarian aspects, and become engaged in an "aesthetic" encounter. To clarify the nature of such a focus we need to contrast it with other types of encounters.

Non-aesthetic Encounters

When we look at something and think about its cost and whether it is affordable we are engaged in the economic dimensions of experience; e.g., do we have the toll fee to cross the suspension bridge? When we consider questions about the worth of proposals and actions in terms of what is good for the public we are involved in the political components of experience. When we focus on the "fun" elements associated with objects and events and their potentials to provide a diversion from daily routines we are concerned with recreational aspects of experience. When we explore the validity of what is being proposed or advocated -- the degree to which propositions are true or false -- intellectual factors are

being accentuated. Social components are emphasized when we are concerned primarily with relations among people. And when we speculate about what is holy, sacred or profane religious factors are emphasized.

What are the Aesthetic Dimensions of Experience?

In contrast to these other components of experience, aesthetic responses require attending to qualities that are intrinsic to -- that belong to -- the object or event being experienced. For example, responding to the color and shape of a tree, and not just speculating about how many board feet of lumber the tree may provide. This does not imply that being engaged in other aspects of experience precludes being involved aesthetically. A recreational focus, for instance, can also include aesthetic components. This occurs, for example, when one attends a football game to have fun but also is delighted by the patterns of color produced by the clothing worn by the spectators or is awed by the imaginary arc produced by a football as it is thrown down field.

Both non-utilitarian objects and articles that are primarily functional may evoke responses to their aesthetic qualities. We may experience a sense of pleasure when observing the smoothness of a surface or the repetition of shapes that unify a form within a coffee-maker or a painting. The most obvious functional object that we experience aesthetically is the automobile. In fact, for most of us, the appearance of a particular auto is as important as how it functions mechanically.

When we focus on the perceivable (acquiring information through our senses) qualities that permeate any experience -- variations in color, shape, values (dark and light), texture, space, scale, and composition -- coupled with identifying relevant signs and symbols, and then have thoughts and feelings that are stimulated by what we encounter, we are immersed in the aesthetic dimensions of experience. Exploring the meaning of the term "aesthetics".

Is Everything That Evokes a Response to Aesthetic Qualities Art?

While all types of objects and events -- existing in nature and manufactured by humans -- may evoke an aesthetic response, are we willing to call all of them art? Under what conditions will we classify particular objects and events as art? Can we really refer to a tree or a mountain as a work of art even though these phenomena were created by the forces of nature, and not as forms organized to involve us in their aesthetic qualities? Responses to the aesthetic (inherent) aspects of natural phenomena are based upon our human predisposition to react in this manner. We may refer to a tree as "lonely" or "stately" and to a mountain as "majestic" or "foreboding" but such responses are based upon our acquired sense of what constitutes such characteristics, and not anything that nature has prescribed within a given form.

We may respond aesthetically to a variety of objects produced by people who have no word for art in their native language. Are we willing to call such objects art even though they were produced as objects to give form to tribal values and traditions, and not as art, per se; i.e., objects to be experienced aesthetically? Why is it possible for art to be produced under such conditions? Because the qualities that we respond to aesthetically were implanted within the forms created, not by an accident of nature, but as a consequence of the imperatives of a human society. Tradition requires particular organization of inherent qualities that results in evoking responses that are congruent with responses to acknowledged works of art.

Can people who have not been taught how to make art produce art? Can children produce art? The untutored and the child can produce art because the forms they create can and do involve us in aesthetic encounters. The organization of sensory elements -- shapes, colors, etc. -- that evokes our responses occurs, consciously or subconsciously, because of the predisposition of human beings to produce (and respond to) aesthetic stimuli. Untrained artists, referred to as primitives, have produced works that are in world renowned museums. Spontaneity, naiveté, and a direct appeal to our emotions are characteristics we often associate with works produced by three to ten year olds, which we classify as "children's art."



Anonymous, The Cat, c. 1840.
Museum of American Folk Art
Washington, D.C.



Angel, a watercolor painting by a 10 year old English boy, student of Richard Ott.

Apparently, if we think about art as manufactured forms (but not natural phenomena) which involve us primarily in the aesthetic aspects of experience, then it is possible to assign the term "art" to all manner of objects and/or events, including commercial and primarily utilitarian objects, as well as works produced in preliterate societies and by those without training regardless of age.

Exploring the meaning of the term "aesthetics"

When we discuss the aesthetic aspects of experience, we are employing "aesthetic" as an adjective that relates to the noun "experience". Aesthetic can also be used as a noun when it becomes a central topic for discussion; e.g., when we are engaged in the study of aesthetics. Reviewing the following three groups of questions will help to clarify the meaning of "aesthetics" as a domain to be investigated.

- * What are the subject and the theme of a particular work of art?
- * How are illusions of space and volume created?
- * What ideas and/or emotions are being expressed?

- * What social conditions existed when this particular work was created?
- * What artistic style is associated with this painting?
- * Who created this work of art?

- * How do ordinary and master works of art differ?
- * Why do works of art evoke emotional responses?
- * How are works of art different from other objects?

Which of these groups of questions relate to the area of aesthetics? The first group is concerned with identifying formal and expressive qualities in specific works of art, which implies engaging in art criticism. An interest in the socio-cultural context of particular works characterizes the second set of questions, which relate to art history. It is only the last set of questions that can be associated with the types of issues addressed by aestheticians, philosophers who study systematically the nature of art. When we discuss and argue and write about possible answers to these types of questions, we are engaged in activities that have occupied some philosophers for over 200 years. Philosophy is a field that is usually divided into three specialized areas:

- * speculative philosophy – concerned with metaphysics (first principles and causes) and epistemology (methods for gaining valid knowledge)
- * applied philosophy – relating philosophical concepts and methods to other fields (philosophy of science, philosophy of education, philosophy of history, etc.)
- * practical philosophy – concerned with ethics (worth of human actions, and judgments of what is right and good) and aesthetics (defining the nature of beauty and art, formulating principles governing its production and evaluation).

The area of aesthetics can be divided into five groupings of issues, questions and problems that are usually addressed by philosopher-aestheticians. When approached in ways that are relevant to particular groups, these areas can also be investigated by non-philosophers; e.g., students ranging from the primary grades through graduate school can also address the following questions in terms of their own levels of sophistication.

1) Defining what is and what is not art: what conditions must be present for something to be called art? what concepts enable us to identify qualities in works of art and the nature of its aesthetic form? what meanings can be conveyed by works of art?

2) Engaging in the aesthetic encounter and making valid responses to works of art: what is the nature of aesthetic experience? what are appropriate ways for looking at art? what does a work of art express?

3) Identifying standards and making critical judgments about art: what are the differences between personal preferences and objective judgments? can there be a set of standards for what is beautiful? how do we distinguish between beauty and ugliness?

4) Clarifying the role of the artist and the creative process: how does making art differ from other activities? what does it mean to be expressive, imaginative, or original?

5) Exploring the nature of the art world, and the relationships between art and ideology and morality: how do the meanings in works of art relate to the artist's culture? is art amoral? apolitical? are art forms part of other values? how does the "art world" relate to other cultural institutions?

There are, of course, no single "right" answers to these questions. It is when searching for the most logical, relevant and reasonable explanations and conclusions that one expands his or her understanding of and appreciation for the nature and values of art.

Art criticism:
judgement versus taste

To initiate our discussion, let us observe this full color reproduction of a portrait by Amedeo Modigliani. How might one react to this work of art? One person might assert that this lady was not to his liking, he could never fall in love with someone that looked like her. Another, might believe that she was just

plain ugly and, therefore, would hate this painting.



Amedeo Modigliani
La Femme de l'Artiste, 1918
Oil on canvas, 39 ½ x 25 ¾"
Norton Simon Museum
Pasadena, California

The Modigliani portrait distorts, exaggerates and simplifies facial and bodily features for expressive purposes. Its almost flat areas of color, delicate contour line, and gesture of head and hands echo the central figure in Botticelli's great Renaissance masterpiece *The Birth of Venus*. Modigliani's work is a metaphor for a classical view of femininity. Most people will observe these distortions but they do not readily see how these function to say something special about the subject of this portrait. What they respond to is the most superficial aspect of this work; what is most obvious to them as they rush to judgment and conclude that this is one ugly lady.

These reactions represent the kinds of biases and prejudices that come into play when people are unfamiliar with the world of art and are lacking in the skills to engage in objective art criticism. The most prevalent stance is to expect that works of art will be faithful to nature ...the more the work looks like the "real thing" the more it is valued. The inability to distinguish between subject and theme and between what is being represented and what is implied results in expressions of personal taste ranging from "I love it" to "I hate it" or statements like "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like" (which really means "I like what I know"). We need to cultivate abilities that enable going beyond such limited reports of one's personal state of mind. We need to develop the skills and knowledge required to make sense out of the visual qualities that permeate everyday experience as well as the vast world of art; i.e., being able to engage in making informed and objective critical responses.

The importance of being "art literate" becomes obvious when one compares the following quotation to the responses of the "uninformed" observer. It was provided by the French critic Claude Roy as he considered what is distinctive about Modigliani's style.

It is a portrait, most usually one of a woman, handled in the decorative portrait tradition of the Italian masters. The line meets the eye clearly at every point, clean-cut and firm. It animates the picture surface, organizing it throughout in a rhythm of sinuous curves, melodious and light as gossamer. It suggests the human body in all its plenitude by resorting to distortions which, while wholly arbitrary, are completely satisfying to the senses: neck and hands are inordinately -- yet exquisitely-- elongated; the torso as a rule is relatively short; the head, tiny in proportion to the body, is built up around the long straight line of the nose; the eyes are usually two almonds tinted light blue, gray or green, without any definite indication of the pupil. As a rule the model is seated on a chair in a graceful attitude of languid, dreamy melancholy, which we are free to interpret as morbidezza one hundred per cent Italian, as vegetative indifference one hundred per cent modern, or as the gentle afterglow of sensuality gratified. The sitter is almost invariably shown in front view. But it is in the layout ...always flawlessly accomplished, that the artist displays his superb inventive skill, his unerring taste, the subtlety of his visual computations, his gift of creating all-pervasive rhythm with all-but-invisible arabesques. Characteristic of the palette . . . is . . . an intensely warm and luminous flesh tint that makes the face, neck, arms and hands stand out against garments and background. It consists of orange, mixed with vermilion and two or three yellows, edged with a thin line of black or bistre.

Claude Roy, *Modigliani* (Albert Skira: New York, 1985), pages 72-74

Learn more about Modigliani

Although it cannot be expected that everyone can achieve this level of sophistication, instead of "I like it ...don't like it" responses, one can learn to provide reasons for preferences. When reasons are provided for one's judgments, a basis exists for both discussion and evaluation. Attempting to articulate the reasons for one's responses enables observing with greater clarity and accuracy.

Art criticism:
the values of knowing how to engage
in art criticism

The skills associated with making informed responses to visual stimuli are also related to other aspects of being art educated. In order to engage responsibly in the production of art, one must continually assess the nature of what is being created; i.e., the artist must serve as his or her own critic. This is accomplished intuitively (without conscious thought) and/or by engaging in the objective analysis of what is created. As was alluded to previously, making relative and comparative judgments requires that one possess a background of information that relates to what is being evaluated, therefore, the need for studying art history.

Explore the nature of art history

Relating philosophical issues (aesthetics) to art criticism consists of inquiring into and speculating about not only the possible values of art criticism but also its methodology. For example, speculating about the criteria that should be utilized to make judgments about the value of art forms. Or, discussing (talking or writing about) whether it is sufficient that a work of art involves us in aesthetic experience or must it possess other attributes in order to be judged truly exceptional: what about the level of the work's innovation? concern for important social values? reflection of significant historical events?

Reasonable expectations for what can be accomplished include asking ourselves to engage in identifying and discussing the visual qualities (sensory properties) in works of art, as well as in one's own works. As one attains greater sophistication, he or she should be expected to also begin to analyze how works are organized and to speculate about their possible meanings. When dis-

cussing works with others, agreed upon criteria should be employed for assessing the extent to which works have been successful in meeting these criteria. The wrong question to ask is "do you like it?" Much better questions are concerned with directing perceptual and analytical activity. What do you see? How is it organized? What ideas or feelings are being expressed? These are the types of more directive open-ended questions that provoke thought and discussion.

One of the best strategies is to actually study examples of art criticism, which are easily available in local and national newspapers. However, journalistic criticism is usually superficial compared to the more scholarly criticism that is found in books and journals; e.g., the quote about Modigliani.

When we carefully examine works of art, we are sharpening our perceptual tools; we are both building and utilizing our storehouse of the images required for making sense out of experience. When we make objective judgments about what works of art do for us emotionally and intellectually, we are engaging in analytical and critical thinking. Specifically, art criticism leads to a greater understanding and appreciation of works of art, ranging from recognized masterpieces to the monuments of our built environment to forms that make-up our popular culture.

The discipline of art history

Answering what, when, where, who, how, and why

Perceiving works of art aesthetically begins with an objective analysis of their inherent qualities or properties, which can reveal the following features of a work of art.

- * Sensory Properties – qualities that we experience through our senses: shape, line, texture, value, color, space, and scale.

- * Formal Properties – how sensory properties are organized to achieve a sense of unity, balance, movement, and dominance.

- * Technical Properties – appearances of shapes, values, colors, etc., that are due to the use of particular materials and techniques.

- * Expressive Properties – how a work's subject, for instance, a turbulent seascape or youthful portrait, combined with the other "properties" contribute to evoking: (a) feelings such as fear, loneliness or joy, or a sense of tension or tranquillity, and/or (b) ideas and ideals associated with, for example, the power of nature or the innocence of youth.

In addition to these properties, a work of art will reflect the time period and the geographic area in which it was produced, and/or the particular way its creator utilizes and organizes its properties. When a work of art is analyzed in terms of these characteristics, the nature of its "style" is being investigated. The style of a work of art refers to its distinctive features, a family of characteristics, that recur in particular works. For example, art forms which are rich in ornamentation and convey a sense of curving, undulating movement and deep space are referred to as "baroque" in style; Rembrandt's or Picasso's unique styles are identified by attending to their particular approaches to utilizing dark and light values, orchestrating color, and interpreting space and volume.

In addition to creating works with distinctive formal characteristics, artists of every age employ particular subjects, themes and symbols. Art historians help us to understand works of art by relating individual works to other works and to the ideas, values and events associated with the time and culture in which such works were produced. Identifying the style of works of art and the meanings associated with their subjects, themes and symbols are tasks for the art historian.

The styles that evolve are a reflection of the culture that spawned it. Culture can be defined as the aggregate of folkways, mores, values, institutions, fashions, systems of thought, modes of transportation and communication, etc. that distinguish one group from another. If it is the art historian's task to investigate how these various facets of culture impact upon particular works of art, the significant challenges confronting the art historian become apparent.

Art forms by designation

The tendency to produce works of art intentionally is a comparatively recent practice over the long history of the human species. Such works constitute forms produced by artists working in their studios primarily in response to commissions for painted or sculpted religious and secular objects. Within the last several hundred years, artists also produced works that reflected their own passions without regard to the interests of a particular patron. Whether commissioned or not, all of these works share one distinction: they were produced as "art forms;" i.e., although their functions might vary, their primary reason for being was and is to involve us in an aesthetic encounter. Examples of such works associated with styles that cut across time, place and culture would include: classical, romantic, baroque, realistic, impressionistic, abstract, surreal, and nonobjective paintings and sculpture.

Art forms by metamorphosis or transformation

In contrast to works of art created as Art, there are a vast array of forms and objects that were and are produced primarily for non-aesthetic reasons. These have been transformed into and classified as works of art because they are perceived as significant stimulants to aesthetic experience regardless of their primary purpose. Examples of these works include the myriad of objects created essentially to give form to beliefs and/or satisfy basic needs associated with food, clothing and shelter. Representatives of styles associated with such works range over time periods (e.g., Paleolithic) and particular regions and/or groups (e.g., precolonial Africa and Native Americas)

An example

The description that follow will serve to demonstrate the vital role of art history in broadening and deepening our understanding of the world of art. Our example is an object that we believe was originally made for religious purposes. It also is likely that it served as a status symbol. It has been transformed in 20th-century Western society into a work of art because of its extraordinary formal and expressive properties.



Akan peoples (Ghana), Kuduo (ritual vessel), 18th or 19th century, cast copper alloy. 21.9x16.8 cm. The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio.

This container, called a kudoku among the Akan peoples of Ghana, was made from an alloy of copper using the lost-wax casting technique. Recent research suggests that they began being produced roughly 500 hundred years ago by Akan artisans. The prototypes for the kudoku were vessels produced in Egypt and Syria 500–700 years ago, and carried across the Sahara Desert by merchants who traded the Middle Eastern containers for gold. One of the richest gold producing areas of the world is found in what is today central and southern Ghana, the home of the Akan peoples. It is likely that these same merchants introduced the technology, lost-wax casting, used to produce kudoku and other important objects used as status markers in Akan society. It is interesting to note that there are no significant deposits of copper located in West Africa. Therefore, copper and its alloys came to be a valued trade commodity, first imported from the north and later from the coast of West Africa where, beginning in the 16th century, European merchants brought copper alloy artifacts to trade for Akan gold.

Dating kudoku is difficult since the tradition, in effect, died out over one hundred years ago. A few kudoku are still in use, found in shrines and the treasuries of Akan chiefs, but no information about the origins of these objects is maintained. Most of the kudoku that are today maintained in museum and private collections, were found by accident while excavating new roads or digging the foundations for buildings. These objects do not carry any inscriptions identifying when or where they were made. Nor has a single kudoku been discovered in an archaeological context. In lieu of hard chronological data, one may hazard an educated guess that those kudoku that stylistically are most similar to the imported Middle Eastern vessels are the earliest examples of the tradition, and those that display Akan innovations, are later. We may tentatively date, based on style, the Toledo Museum of Art kudoku to the 18th or 19th century.

This "casket" kudoku, with its hinged and hasped lid, is embellished with figurative imagery that one would not find on a metal vessel from the Middle East, a leopard attacking an antelope. Such imagery is tied to a verbal/visual mode of communication that is central to Akan culture. Visual images, both figurative and abstract, carry meaning associated with an enormous body of proverbs. There, for instance, are many proverbs associated with leopards and antelopes. In this case, the leopard/antelope is a metaphor for power--the power of a paramount chief over lesser chiefs, or a chief over his subjects.

Kudoku were formerly made to serve as ritual containers used to hold the personal effects of wealthy individuals. They were often buried with their owner when he or she died. Examples like this one, ceased being produced at the end of the 19th century because there was no longer a local demand for such objects. However, by the third decade of the 20th century, kudoku began being

produced again, but for the tourist trade. Though there are many fine examples, few "modern" kudu match the quality of craftsmanship and elegance of form associated with the former tradition.

Why and how should art be defined

broadly but critically?

Describing art as manufactured forms that primarily involve us in aesthetic aspects of experience suggests that a great variety of objects can be called art. We also often use the word "beautiful" in relation to art.

- * Does something have to be beautiful to be called art?
- * Does the subject of the work have to be momentous for the work to be important?
- * Can works with "ordinary" subjects be important works of art?
- * Can works that deviate from representing the natural world be works of art?
- * Can works that have no recognizable subject -- nonobjective works -- be considered art?
- * What do we respond to if there is nothing to recognize?
- * Can works that are designed primarily to sell things be called art?

These are the types of questions that can stimulate us to think productively about the nature of art. One of the most provocative questions we can ask relates to the differences that exist between the many things we may designate as art. Are all works of art equally significant? Even though they may share the potential to involve us in their aesthetic qualities, it would be ridiculous to believe that a beautifully crafted bowl is as important as Michelangelo's David. Why?



This fourteen foot tall marble sculpture, started in 1501 when Michelangelo was 25, stands today in the Academy Gallery in Florence, Italy. David is recognized as one of the great masterpieces in the history of Western Art and as a superb example of works produced during the Italian Renaissance. This sculpture is the artist's interpretation of the heroic biblical tale of the boy, David, slaying the Philistine giant, Goliath. But David transcends both the time in which it was created and the subject it depicts. This extraordinary work of art serves today as a visual metaphor for aspects of character that are greatly valued in human beings: strength, grace and determination as one confronts life's challenges.

There appears to be a need to make some discriminations among works of art. What might some of the distinguishing factors be? Is it just a matter of personal

taste? How might we define art broadly but critically? The chart that follows diagrams one way to think about these distinctions.

POPULAR FORMS

decoration

illustration

commercial products

MASTERPIECES

prophetic significance

historical value

social and moral value

innovative significance

The Extent to Which Object/Events Involve Us Aesthetically

Forms that are capable of evoking responses to their aesthetic qualities are represented by the black line. This line is conceived as a continuum that ranges from works that involve us minimally (on the left) to works of art that move us deeply and profoundly. Such works range from current popular forms to recognized masterpieces that have withstood the "test of time." This framework could incorporate many types of manufactured objects from clothing to a particular office building, from monumental sculpture to works such as this simple 1,000 year old Chinese jar.



Glazed Clay Jar,
Song Dynasty (960–1279),
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

This deceptively simple form achieves its extraordinary beauty through its subtle variations of warm to cool colors and the dynamic contrast between the bulk of the body of the jar and its diminutive handles.

Why and how should art be defined
broadly but critically? [2]

POPULAR FORMS

decoration

illustration

commercial products

MASTERPIECES

prophetic significance
historical value
social and moral value
innovative significance

The Extent to Which Object/Events Involve Us Aesthetically

One can imagine emerging from the "popular forms" end of the black line four "threads" also to be conceived as continua; these represent additional attributes that can be associated with some works of art. The first thread deals with innovation. Although all works of art elicit aesthetic responses, some are more provocative than others because they confront us with new and novel approaches to organizing media and expressing ideas. The degree to which an object that involves us in aesthetic experience is truly original in the way it is made or in terms of what it has to say would certainly add to its importance as a work of art.

Many of the works of Louise Nevelson (1899–1988), one of the most renowned and original sculptors of the 20th century, serve as examples of this innovative variable. Her "sculptural walls" – free standing vertical boxes filled with pieces of wood – are representative of her experiments with a variety of materials ranging from metals and enamels to Plexiglass and Lucite. The materials and wall-like structure of Nevelson's monumental sculptures are reflective of architectural works, through which she creates visual metaphors related to urban and natural environments.



Louise Nevelson, 1899–1988
White, Vertical Water, 1972
Painted wood, 26 sections, 216 x 108 inches
Guggenheim Museum, New York

White Vertical Water evokes images of nature. The long undulating curves of the forms in the work's vertical box echo the cascading streams of a waterfall, while the free shape cutout layers in the upper-right squares imply squirming fish.

[Learn more about Louise Nevelson](#)

When a work distills the essence of the social forces of an era or depicts a specific event, or if a work lifts us morally or strengthens our faith, it acquires social and/or moral stature as well as aesthetic importance. This is represented by the second thread in the diagram. Conspicuous examples of such works are medieval Gothic cathedrals constructed in the middle-ages.



These images represent two views of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, completed in 1345 after 182 years of construction. Such extraordinary structures were built without benefit of either steam or electric power. Medieval cathedrals stand today as monuments to the skill, ingenuity and commitment of the hundreds of carefully trained workers who labored to build these magnificent structures.

It was during the middle ages that the Guild System emerged. Apprentices worked with master artisans and craftsmen until they acquired sufficient knowledge and skill to travel about the countryside (as Journeymen) seeking their own commissions, which would eventually be submitted for evaluation by the Masters for entry into their Guild. Only Masters were allowed to employ Apprentices. The guild system not only insured that works of the highest quality would be created, it also limited the numbers being allowed to enter the trades.

Such medieval structures were physical manifestations of prevailing beliefs in a literal, heavenly paradise which would be the ultimate reward for being a true believer and living morally and righteously. To this day, their soaring arches, shimmering stained glass and enormous scale provide a sense of exaltation for even the most casual visitor.

Why and how should art be defined broadly but critically? [3]

The third thread stands for historical significance. This category applies to works of art that either play an important role in the evolution of art, or reflect political and/or psychological aspects of history. When one views the history of art, certain works are prominent because they are superb examples of the forms which artists were creating during a particular period.

Such works may also serve to link older and newer methods for using media, conceptualizing ideas, and expressing feelings. In addition, art works often document events of the past or important beliefs; e.g., portraits of important spiritual or political leaders, genre scenes that inform us about the nature of daily routines, or works that distill the essence of the times in which they were created.

One example: Sandro Botticelli's masterpiece *The Birth of Venus* painted in 1486, which can be seen today in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.



The Birth of Venus was created during the height of the Italian Renaissance, when the intelligentsia turned away from the anti-intellectualism of the medieval world and embraced a reawakening of interest in scientific and objective reasoning associated with ancient Greece and Rome. Venus is shown being blown by the Zephyrs to her sacred island of Crete where the nymph Pomona waits to cover her with a protective cloak. In addition to involving us significantly in its aesthetic qualities because of its flowing contours and dramatic composition, Botticelli's work is also a compelling visual metaphor for a very prominent Renaissance allegory: the human soul exposed to the winds of passion must be clothed by the robes of reason.

Why and how should art be defined broadly but critically? [4]

The final category belongs to the rarest characteristic of art forms: the thread of prophecy. There are works of art produced throughout history that have predicted artistic and social trends. These may acquire historical significance because they contribute to the evolution of art itself. Such masterpieces forecast directions that artists would follow.

Some rare works seem to have also predicted sociopolitical events; e.g. Pablo Picasso's great cubist masterpiece, Guernica, painted in 1937, which depicts the slaughter that results from a new form of warfare, saturation bombing from the air. It also anticipated the horrors of WW II. This compelling and challenging work was for many years on loan to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Picasso, would not allow it to be returned to Spain until the fascist dictatorship was replaced by a democratic form of government. It is now housed in the Reina Sophia Art Center in Madrid.



This enormous work (10'x26'), rendered essentially in black, white, and shades of gray, serves as a frightening visual metaphor for how our technological sophistication can be employed to create devastating havoc and pain. The lack of color implies that the vitality of being alive has been torn out of and drained from these distorted figures. The newspaper-like visual texture leads us to conclude that this work appears to be reporting an actual event: the saturation bombing in April, 1937 of the ancient Basque capitol of Guernica by the Nazi allies of the Royalists during the Spanish Civil War.

Why do we classify some utilitarian and non-western forms as works of art?

If we use the previously mentioned categories (decoration, illustration, commercial products, innovative significance, social-moral value, historical value, prophetic significance) to think about the nature of art, we can surely conclude

that many works can involve us in an aesthetic encounter, and that some works are more important because they embody other qualities as well. We must also realize, however, that particular forms are not necessarily more significant than others simply because they are paintings or sculpture or because they stem from the Western tradition.

For instance, a particular chair design may be far more momentous than a given painting or sculpture because it may be a significant innovation and very important in the evolution of industrial or applied design. The molded plywood chair designed by Charles Eames and his associates, which emerged from the technological innovations developed during WWII, is an excellent example.



Here is a chair that appears to be very sculptural because of the strong contrast between its linear chrome legs and the masses formed by the seat and back. Its molded wooden seat and back conform to body contours and are attached to the chrome frame with large rubber washers, which creates a chair that is very comfortable. One can observe that the Eames Chair is a very sensuous form. It is considered such an important work of art that an example of this chair is on permanent exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Learn more about Charles Eames

Works from Asia and Africa often echo traditional styles and, therefore, may not appear to be very innovative in terms of Western criteria. But, if we explore the cultural context of such works, we may conclude that some are to be regarded highly because they reflect significant beliefs or provide insights into what is valued by both individual and society. Works of art are indeed culture carriers.

Transmitting the values and attitudes of a culture within a given society, from generation to generation and across cultures, is one of art's most important functions; in addition to its role in providing opportunities for aesthetic encounters.

When we learn how to identify the expressive character of works of art, even though we may not share the culture which produced particular works, these works may still serve as stimuli for responses to their aesthetic qualities. Learning how to respond to a work's expressive qualities regardless of its derivation is the objective of our next section.

How do we engage in the aesthetic analysis of works of art?

How do we make sense out of works of art? Very often a work's vital statistics (names, dates, styles) and its creator's views (if known) are the only items of information available. Can we only comment about a work's subject and the degree to which it is liked or disliked?

It is as if the question "what does a work of art express" can only be answered by citing its vital statistics, discovering the intentions of the artist or, even more frequently, by leaving it to personal preference; i.e., whatever one believes it expresses.

While these approaches have their merits they also have one great limitation: the expressive import of the work -- its content that involves us most profoundly in its aesthetic character, the primary basis for its emotional appeal -- is seldom investigated.

The most productive response to the question "what does a work of art express" is simply that it expresses itself! The feelings or thoughts evoked as a result of contemplating the work should be based primarily upon what is actually seen in the work; i.e. what belongs to the work, its actual properties. The sequence of questions should be: what do we actually see? how is what is seen organized? and what emotions and ideas are evoked as a result of what has been observed? In what follows, how these questions can be answered will be demonstrated.



The example to be used for this exercise is a reproduction of an oil painting by Edgar Degas, *The Ironers*, created in 1884, which is in the collection of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California.



How do you identify
what is in a work of art?

Sensory properties

A common practice when looking at a work of art is to briefly study its surface and then conclude what its subject appears to be and how much the work is to be admired. However, to begin to arrive at the actual aesthetic and expressive significance of the work, its surface must first be very carefully examined. The specific character of its lines, shapes, textures, values, colors, scale, space and volume, and the images these elements are associated with need to be identified. A description of our example's qualities that we experience through our senses, its sensory properties, will illustrate this approach.

1. Two women with vague facial features are depicted. The woman on the right irons a shirt with great concentration. The woman on the left holds a wine bottle in her right hand and appears to be rubbing her neck with her left hand while yawning. Both are wearing off-white, short sleeve blouses; the woman on the left wears a gray-blue skirt, the one on the right a dull orange skirt. They

both have reddish brown hair and a pale gray-brown cast to their skin. The hands and right arm of the woman on the left and the face, forearms and right hand of the woman on the right are also tinged with a pale orange. The work table in front of the women is a pale blue-gray; there are two ironed and folded shirts in the center of this table. The wine bottle is dark green; its lower portion is a deep brown, which implies that over half of the wine has been consumed. The iron is also dark brown.

2. In the shallow space behind the figures, hanging laundry is suggested by pale blue-white panels with subtle streaks of gray and beige. These are divided by a wide brown line which blends into a floor of the same color. The source of light appears to be from the right front because of the shadows cast on the left side of the figures and the ironed shirts, and the highlight on the right side of the wine bottle. Faint dark and light brown lines are used to outline the figures and to create an illusion of folds and creases in their blouses and skirts. The rectangular shapes of the shirts and the angular shapes created by the gestures of the women's arms contrast with the soft contours of their bodies and clothing.

3. There is very little strong value contrast; the figures do not stand out starkly from the background. The strongest dark and light differences exist between the curved back of the woman on the right and the light colored background and between the light colored blouse and sleeve contour of the woman on the left and dark earth colored floor.

4. The overall tactile texture of the painting is smooth because Degas apparently diluted his oil colors. Subtle visual textures are created through the incomplete blending of colors in all areas. The yawning woman's arms are painted with obvious vertical strokes which convey a sense of motion.

5. In terms of scale, more than half of the picture is devoted to the blue-gray-white color of laundry. The two figures, though larger than other objects, are wedged between an assertive white-blue-gray foreground and a large background area of similar color.



How are elements and images organized?

Formal properties

What can actually be seen in a work of art includes the ways visual elements and images have been arranged, how the work has been formed, in other words, its formal properties. A careful scanning of a work will reveal: the means used to achieve a sense of unity, the elements that appear to be dominant, the nature of implied movements, and how balance is achieved ranging between symmetry and asymmetry. A description of the formal properties in *The Ironers* follows.

1. A sense of unity is achieved through the repetition of cool blue-white colors which can be seen in front, on the right side and behind the figures. A secondary unifying color is the range of warm reddish brown appearing in the floor, hair, flesh tones, and skirt of the ironing girl. The cool color of the laundry is contrasted by the warm colors in the figures and floor.

2. The more animated figure on the left with her angles and curves is dynamically balanced (asymmetrical) by the intensity of the "V" shape created by the

ironing woman's arms. This dynamic relationship is countered by the prominent and static (symmetrical) position of the ironed shirts which are situated in the center of the foreground.

3. There are implied movements in the fatigued but open and relaxed gesture of the figure on the left, and the bent over, intense and compressed gesture of the figure on the right. Even though their gestures differ, they seem to belong together because the concave shape created by the left side of the relaxed figure is complemented by the convex shape formed by the arching back of the ironer.

4. The dominant element in this work is clearly the variation of cool blue-white colors which represents laundry and appears so prominently in foreground and background, with the two warm colored middle ground figures compressed between.



What are the roles of materials and processes?

Technical properties

While carefully observing a work's sensory and formal properties is essential to speculating productively about what the work appears to be expressing, noting how a work is actually constructed is also helpful.

If *The Ironers*, for example, were to be rendered in heavy paint and short strokes of lighter and brighter colors, it would appear to be very different from the work we are analyzing.

In the work by Degas, the paint is thinly applied and modulated colors are utilized. The result is a somber and somewhat tranquil painting.

What does a work have to say to us?

Expressive properties

After identifying a work's sensory and formal properties, we are now ready to speculate about how these particular properties contribute to what the work may be saying to us, literally, symbolically and metaphorically; i.e., its expressive properties. What appears to be the mood of the work (somber, gay, menacing)? What is its dynamic state (tension, conflict, relaxation)? What ideas and/or ideals does the work evoke (courage, wisdom, drudgery)? How these factors come into play is demonstrated in the following description of the expressive properties associated with *The Ironers*.

1. The lack of significant diagonal movement, bright colors, strong value contrasts and definite shapes creates a somewhat apathetic atmosphere and somber mood. Warm colors found primarily in the figures and floor in the middle of the painting seem to be caught between cool colors used so extensively in both foreground and background. This suggests that the two laundry women are captives of their oppressive task. The conflict generated by the different uses of warm and cool colors implies the tensions existing between human desires for diversion and the demands of society, which require being involved in tedious but necessary activities.

2. The dynamic relationships between the relaxed and working figures seem to complete the cycle of labor, rest, labor. But these relationships conflict with the symmetrical position of the starched and ironed shirts placed so assertively in the very center of the foreground. These shirts appear to be almost sculptural. They symbolize the magnitude of the task confronting the ironers. The impor-

tance of these shirts also suggests that even though one might take a break to sip some wine and rest aching muscles, one's labors must continue.

3. The women in this painting seem to be somewhat anonymous. Their femininity is hardly noted. It is the industrious aspects of their nature that is accentuated.

By not stressing the femininity or individuality of his characters and emphasizing, instead, the significance of their chore, Degas creates a provocative visual metaphor for the drudgery of many vocations usually reserved for women.



Why is aesthetic analysis
only an entry level encounter
with art?

The foregoing approach to making sense out of works of art can be described as aesthetic analysis because it provides a systematic means for encountering a work of art that results in responding to what is inherent within the work itself. As a consequence, the work of art acts upon the viewer, it speaks of its unique character, and forms the basis for both more objective and profound responses.

Obviously, aesthetic analyses can only inform us about the expressive nature of works of art. To fully appreciate the work and to appraise it critically, it is also essential to know about the historical-cultural milieu in which it was created.

To demonstrate the value of learning about the cultural context of works of art, the aesthetic analysis exercise that follows will also include reviewing some of the cultural components associated with the work.

How do we distinguish between aesthetic analysis and investigating the cultural context of works of art?

The sculpture depicted in this exercise is a Chi Wara Headdress, created within the Bamana Tribe of the Mali Republic in Africa. It is crafted out of wood, metal and threads. At planting time, men of the Chi-Wara association of farmers dance with such headdresses in the fields to honor Chi-Wara, the mythical "farming animal" that taught agriculture to the ancestors of the Bamana. The graceful curving shapes of this sculpture contrasted by its rhythmical, sharply angular elements create a provocative and exquisite object that possesses the potential to evoke significant responses to its inherent (aesthetic) qualities.

To assess the expressive import of this "chi-wara" headdress you must first analyze its sensory and formal properties; i.e., what do you see and how is what you are able to identify organized? This should be followed by assessing the work's expressive qualities by speculating about how its particular sensory and formal elements evoke thoughts and feelings. Finally, a discussion of the Chi-Wara's iconography will reveal additional symbolic and metaphorical meanings as the work is placed within its cultural context.

Sensory properties

At first glance this headdress, carved out of wood, appears to be some type of antelope figure, but it is very different from a naturalistic interpretation of such an animal.

Lines – Since this is a sculptural work, actual lines are utilized only to create textural variations within its head, horns, ears and scales along its back.

Shapes – Curvilinear shapes of varying character occur in this object: very subtle arcs appear in the horns, ears, head and torso; deeper arcs are repeated in four shapes that create the neck; and these curves are echoed in a very abbreviated form in the smaller shapes that make up the scales on the back of the neck. Small triangular shapes are repeated within two areas of the curving neck shapes.

Textures – Variations in texture occur primarily through the shallow incising within most of the shapes. The only areas that are smooth are the front of the neck, the torso and four legs; only slight variations appear due to the carving tools utilized. Metal and raffia attached to the upper half of the head provide additional areas of textural contrast.

Values (dark–light) – dark and light contrast occur primarily as a result of the negative and positive shapes that exist within this form. The darkest areas exist within the more deeply carved areas, between horns and ears and the long incision inside the ear shapes.

Colors – A warm brown patina is employed throughout except for the gray metal and orange colored raffia on the head.

Scale – Head and neck, and especially the ears and horns are significantly larger than the torso and legs. The neck shape is easily the largest area within this form.

Space – The interplay between positive and negative space is very obvious. Triangular negative spaces are echoed by the positive shapes in back scales. Negative spaces are cut into very subtly by the horns and aggressively by the scales.

Formal properties

Unity – The overall warm color, repeated mildly rough textural incising, and repetition of curvilinear and triangular shapes serve to unify this sculptural form.

Dominance – The dominant elements are the curvilinear elements that constitute the horns and back of this work.

Movement (actual or implied) – There is an obvious implied upward thrust conveyed by the horns, and an implied staccato rhythmic quality conveyed by the repeated triangles in the neck and scale shapes.

Expressive properties



Mood – Sweeping curves in a variety of configurations ranging from those associated with horns and ears to the repeated curves found in the body of the Chi-Wara create a very sensuous form and joyous mood.

Dynamic State – Strong contrasts between repeated curvilinear shapes and geometric triangular shapes that exist within an asymmetrical equilibrium create a very dramatic yet extraordinarily graceful form.

Ideas or Ideals – This exciting sculptural work has an obvious affinity to the animal world, while alluding to the human relationship with nature through the creation of repeated manufactured shapes and distortions which are incorporated within natural forms. It functions as a poetic visual metaphor for the organic relationship between humans and the cosmos.



Cultural context

Farming is greatly valued among the Bamana. It is considered the most important and noblest profession. The headdresses, always danced in male and female pairs, depict the antelope-like Chi-Wara and display the ingredients of successful cultivation.

The long horns of both male and female Chi-Wara stand for the tall growth of millet (an annual grass cultivated for its grains). In the male, the penis signifies the rooting of the grain. The female headdress represents the earth and the baby antelope carried on its back symbolizes infant human beings. The long ears of the male Chi-Wara refer to the cultivators' listening to the songs sung by women who encourage the men while they work in the fields. The open, zigzag pattern in the neck symbolizes the sun's path along

the horizon between the two solstices (the two times in the year when the sun is at its greatest distance from the celestial equator). Water is represented by the fiber costume (not shown in our example) attached to the headdress.

When danced by a pair of men chosen as exemplary farmers, the headdresses symbolically combine the elements the Bamana believe are necessary for good agriculture: sun, water, and a solid rooting of the plant in the earth.

Why learn about the cultural–historical context of works of art?

While a thorough aesthetic analysis of a work of art will reveal the nature of its formal and expressive content, it does not answer the following types of questions.

- * When and where was the work produced?
- * Who created the work of art, and what were the artist's motivations?
- * How was the work created and what were the sources for the artist's particular approach?
- * What is the style of the work and how does it relate to the world of art?

The answers to these questions provide insights into a work of art that enable a more comprehensive response to the work. Without such information an informed understanding of its content, its iconography, and a genuine appreciation for its relative significance are not possible. These latter categories are essential to engaging in art criticism. To demonstrate how the types of questions cited above might be addressed, two genre works that reflect the life experiences of their creators will be described.



Johannes Vermeer
Woman Holding a Balance, c.1664
Oil on canvas, 163/4x15 inches
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675) was born in Delft. Not very much is known about this extraordinary Dutch artist. Although it is believed that some of his works were lost, there are only 35 Vermeer paintings that have been documented.

Our example depicts a woman holding a weighing scale. This is the subject of the work, but its theme is more complex and can be inferred by identifying the actual objects in the painting and how these functioned as symbols within the Protestant and merchant centered culture of 17th century Holland.

A woman in a white fur trimmed dark blue jacket stands alone before a table, on which can be seen a blue cloth, two strands of pearls, a gold chain, and several open boxes. She appears to be contemplating a balancing scale held delicately in her right hand. A framed painting of The Last Judgment (which is about the weighing of souls) is depicted on the back wall. A faint, ethereal light from a high window illuminates the scene.

We may be enthralled by the solidity, serenity and peacefulness of this work due to the geometry of its composition (rectilinear and triangular shapes) and its subtle color and value contrasts. Although this may be the nature of the work's expressive character, engaging in some research about A Woman Holding a Balance will reveal that it is also an allegorical painting. The "weighing of souls" depicted in the painting behind her is echoed in her own actions and what is represented on the table. Before her are earthly treasures (symbolized by the jewelry on the table); behind her is the symbol for the eternal spiritual consequences for one's actions. While waiting for the balance to rest at equilibrium, the woman acknowledges the importance of judgments in weighing one's mortal actions in anticipation of the immortal life to come.

This work was created in 17th century Holland, often described as the "golden age" of Dutch art. The Spanish monarchy and Catholicism no longer dominated the country and ceased to be a drain on the nation's wealth. Enterprising merchants were engaged in world trade that transformed Holland into an extremely prosperous nation wherein wealth was more widely distributed than in any other European country. Artists also prospered and a vast number of paintings were created and purchased that illustrated the daily life of a people who put great value on living a productive and moral life, and who took great pride in maintaining a neat and attractive home. These domestic scenes are known today as genre paintings.

Another genre work

Our other example is by the acclaimed American artist, Jacob Lawrence, noted for his depiction of both the history and everyday life experiences of his fellow African Americans.

Jacob Lawrence, Builders #1, 1972
Watercolor and gouache over pencil
20 1/2 x 30 3/4 inches
The St. Louis Museum of Art



As in the Vermeer, rectilinear and triangular shapes appear to be dominant in this work. A muscular male figure is working with a chisel on a small piece of wood; a great variety of carpenter's tools are depicted. The mountain shape in the background (an allusion to Mount Rainier near Seattle's University of Washington, where Lawrence was a professor of art) seems to echo the monumental figure of the woodworker in the foreground. Although the shapes are similar to the Vermeer, colors are brighter, value contrasts are much stronger, and objects are rendered less realistically. The expressive consequences of these properties result in a dynamic tribute to the importance of this worker's task. But what were the forces behind this work? Why does it look this way?

Jacob Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey on September 7th, 1917. When he was thirteen his family moved to New York City. Jacob was enrolled in an after school arts and crafts program where he began to show an obvious talent, which was nurtured further at the Harlem Community Art Center. Living in New York offered many opportunities for exposure to very important historical and contemporary artists.

The range of art works and their creators that apparently inspired Lawrence includes: genre paintings by the great Flemish master, Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525? –1569); works depicting the horrors of war and poverty by the German expressionist, Kathe Kollwitz (1867–1945); paintings that exalt the efforts of workers by the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (1906–1987); and the flat, brightly colored compositions of the American abstractionist, Arthur Dove (1880–1946). Such sources coupled with living in a place where the beat of the Jazz Age was all pervasive resulted in Lawrence developing his own unique style. His works employ a compositional language that combines aspects of cubism, strong, flat colors, and a flair for draftsmanship, characterization and narration. Builders #1 reflects these attributes. It is from his most successful series of genre paintings.

Can historical works be employed
to create works that reflect our own times?

Cultural and historical context also come into play when one considers more direct influences of the past upon the present. Some contemporary artists employ acknowledged masterworks as the subject of their works. Modifications are made that change the theme of a given work, which makes the work more relevant to contemporary issues and values. An example of this process -- where the old is the source of inspiration for the new -- is a very popular 18th century portrait of a young man, often referred to as The Blue Boy.



Thomas Gainsborough
Johnathon Buttell: The Blue Boy, c1770
Oil on Canvas, 70 5/8x48 3/4 inches
Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California

Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) was a renowned painter of the wealthy in England; royalty and a rich merchant class provided him with a continual stream of commissions over most of his productive career. His Blue Boy is an acknowledged masterpiece of the art of portraiture. Although it is actually a portrait of the son of a wealthy hardware merchant, this work appears to epitomize the meaning of the term "aristocrat." It is a visual metaphor for the social aspirations of the truly "civilized" gentleman: to possess the self confidence that wealth and power bestow as well as a keen sense of fashion.

The contemporary painting, *Endangered Masterpiece*, utilizes the image of Gainsborough's portrait to express the artist's view of the sad plight of the endangered tiger, one of the most magnificent of nature's creatures. It is the encroachment of so called civilization that has caused the tiger to be endangered; and by assuming the pose and dressing the tiger in the clothing of the aristocrat, a visual metaphor for the abuses of the natural world by "civilized society" is created.



Ron Silverman
Endangered Masterpiece (detail), 1997
Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

How does art fulfill personal and psychological needs?

Art, although first and foremost a vehicle for involving us in aesthetic dimensions of experience, has many other functions and values, as well. An involvement with art can serve us personally and psychologically. Art has important social and educational roles to perform. In addition, art is essential to maintaining a healthy economy.

Enhancing the appearance of objects, whether they be utilitarian, recreational, religious and/or commemorative, is the most obvious and pervasive function of art. It would be hard to imagine a world devoid of art. Almost everything manufactured (as opposed to what is natural) that we see or use is, at least in part, the result of making choices and decisions that involve us in the aesthetic aspects of experience.

Although most manufactured or contrived objects and events would not be classified primarily as works of art, they are the result of humans deciding to make something appear to be, for instance, elegant, or comfortable, or high tech in appearance. In other words, an arrangement of visual elements -- shapes, colors, textures, etc. -- has been created for expressive purposes, which is one way to define art. Such objects range from cosmetics to autos, ski outfits to camping gear, prayer shawls to church altars, and from tomb stones to Rose Parade floats.

Objectifying thoughts and feelings

An important psychological function for art is to create an awareness of subjective reality because works of art reflect and give form to our inner thoughts and feelings, making them public and, therefore, perceivable and knowable. Works of art can offer cogent insights into a wide range of ideas, moods and passions derived from the repertoire of human experience. A compelling painting of a man carrying a basket of flowers is not merely a mirror image that denotes a particular activity. It may also connote a sense of the magnitude of the task and how such burdens must be endured when machines are not available.

Note the painting by the great Mexican artist, Diego Rivera. He makes known his feelings about the plight of individuals who must expend great effort to bring light-hearted pleasure to others. While ideas and feelings can be inferred by observing and identifying them in all types of phenomena, natural and manufactured, works of art offer focused opportunities to experience a vast range of thoughts and feelings. The Flower Carrier is an excellent example of the notion that works of art present to us portraits of feeling. By carefully observing this work, even though it is greatly reduced from its original 4' x 4' size, we are moved by the enormous task confronting the man represented.



Diego Rivera
The Flower Carrier, 1935
Oil and tempera on masonite
48" x 48"
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Diego Rivera gives form to the compassion one may feel when contemplating the enormity of the burden this peasant must endure. This emotion is evoked not just by the scale of the huge basket, but also by making the basket highly textured while everything remains rather flat by comparison. Emphasis on the man's burden is also the result of the axis of the "X" created where the shawl crosses the man's back and the fact that the greatest value contrast occurs where the shadow of the basket meets the white of the man's clothing.

Note also the rigidity of the man's arms and how compressed his hands appear to be.

How does art fulfill
personal and psychological needs? [2]

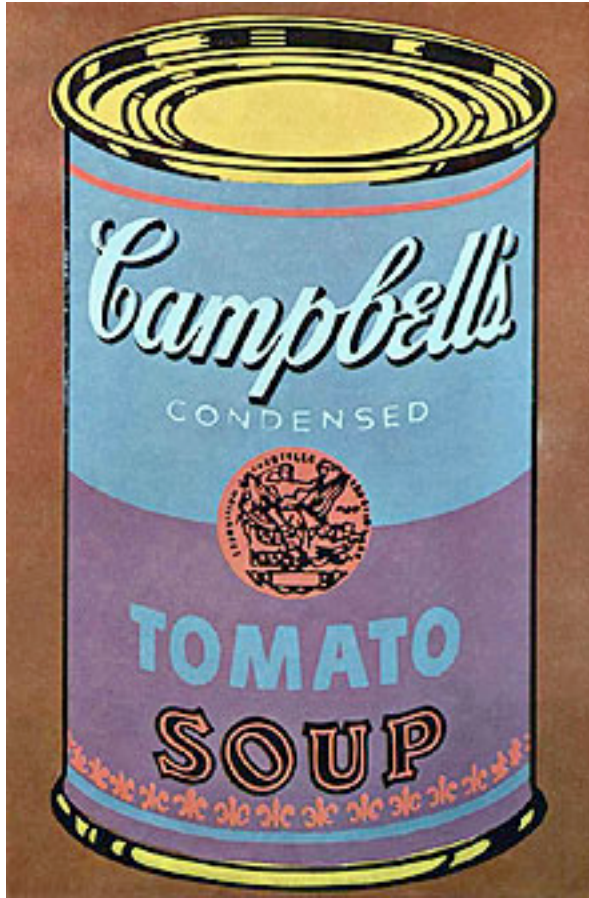
Exorcising emotions and
evoking pleasurable responses n

Art also possesses the potential to contribute to the release of tensions and the resolution of conflicts. For the artist, creating art is a vehicle for making inner thoughts and feelings visible and, therefore, more objective, which can have a cathartic, tension releasing payoff. What may have been repressed can be expressed through socially approved channels. This is the basic rationale for art therapy: through participation in art activity, what has been suppressed can be given form and, thereby, exorcised.

For the consumer of art, perceiving the organization of sensuous qualities in works of art can evoke feelings of excitement, pleasure, and a sense of equilibrium and euphoria (the principal reasons for purchasing art and/or visiting art museums and galleries). Works of art often involve us in those peak experiences that differ so markedly from the outcomes of routine encounters. These types of experiences are so satisfying that many of us are willing to make significant expenditures in time, effort, and money to be enriched by art.

Another way of knowing

Making and/or experiencing art involves reacting imaginatively and idiosyncratically to symbols and implied metaphors. Moving from general experience to the creation of a particular work that expresses and distills individual responses is the way of art. For example, observing the almost religious fervor that late 20th-century industrial societies engage in consumerism and are infatuated with the popular culture and then creating an appropriate icon: a painting of a soup can that assumes the importance of a traditional portrait.



Andy Warhol (1930–1987)
Campbell's Soup, 1965
Acrylic and silkscreen enamel on canvas
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Or, reflecting on the general customs associated with death in one's community and carving a funerary mask that evokes a sense of quietude and sadness to the Western observer.



Mask, Guro people, Côte d'Ivoire
Carved wood
British Museum, London

This sculptural work consists of a very subtle and symmetrical oval shape that contains facial features which are small in area yet visually assertive. The symmetry of this form is emphasized through a raised narrow ridge which splits the head from its crown to the bridge of the nose. The character of this ridge is echoed by similar ridges which run from ear to chin on either side of the face. The smoothness of its wooden texture is altered only by incised linear hair pat-

terns, small ridges representing teeth, and the raffia (which has almost disappeared) at its chin. Value contrasts are minimal. These include a strong reflected light created by the vertical temple ridge and triangular nose, and the dark areas formed by eye slits and circular mouth.

The Guro funerary mask, with its symmetrical form and subtle but definite protrusions and depressions, conveys a sense of formal and quiet elegance. Facial features are present but are rendered as simple shapes. The eyes appear almost closed, as if in a state of repose. These qualities suggest that such a mask was utilized in a ceremony concerned with illness or death. Anthropologists who have worked among the Guro verify the assumption that such masks were used in magical practices at funerals for members of secret societies. Members of Guro society believed that emotions were expressed solely by the mouth; the pout conveys sadness. When one considers the formal and contextual qualities of this work – its emphatic symmetry that so elegantly symbolizes feelings of reflective sadness which often accompany death -- the value of this mask as a significant work of art emerges.

Conclusions

Science seeks consensus by utilizing logical and discursive approaches to whatever phenomena are being studied. Science moves from very careful investigations of specific phenomena to generalizations, laws and principles. The goal for science is to arrive at the "truth" about whatever is being investigated: the age of an artifact, the molecular structure of a cell, the beliefs of a population. The goal for art is to focus on the meanings and/or feelings implied in the created object or event: what it means or feels like to be mournful, old, aristocratic, cruel, demonic, angelic, heroic, wealthy, poor, oppressed, sensual, chaste, exhilarated, tranquil, or a poor peasant who must shoulder an enormous burden to bring light hearted pleasure to others.

What are several vital socio-cultural functions of art?

Because works of art give form to fundamental beliefs and feelings they serve as conduits for culture; they are, in effect, culture carriers. Such works make a significant contribution to transmitting ideas, values and attitudes from person to person and from generation to generation. Examples of these dynamic roles for art range from precolonial or "traditional" art from Africa to Gothic cathedrals.

Beliefs in the mystical and all powerful role of natural forces, or in the possibility of an immortal existence in paradise would be extremely difficult to communicate without such works. Art forms are essential to engaging in the rituals that serve as the ingredients required to nurture and sustain any society.

Works of art are significant players in the evolution of culture since they contribute both to cultural continuity and, through innovations in forms and techniques, to cultural change. An excellent example of this phenomenon is the bent plywood chair developed by Charles Eames in the 1940's.



This form-follows-function chair evolved out of the technological needs of World War II. It influenced the direction of many subsequent chair designs, and also has been highly influential in the move to the "ergonomic" orientation that prevails today. Several Eames chairs are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.



Another significant role for art is giving form to basic generative notions -- the ethos of a culture. Examples would include: the idealism of the ancient Greeks personified in "perfectly" proportioned sculptural figures; beliefs in an anthropomorphic pantheon embodied in Northwest Coast Indian totems and other forms; and the veneration of science and technology in 20th century America symbolized in the 630 foot, stainless steel "Gateway Arch" in St. Louis.

Although this monument, was created to commemorate the opening of the West, it is a reflection of the level of scientific and engineering sophistication that existed at the time it was built. It is also an extraordinary form to experience because of the way it soars into space; so huge, yet so graceful. When close to the base and looking upward, the arch appears to form a bridge to the sky.

This 20th century marvel was designed by the great Finnish-American architect, Eero Saarinen. It was completed on October 28, 1965. Known as the "Gateway to the West Arch" this monumental work of art was created to commemorate the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, and to celebrate the role of St. Louis in opening the West. The arch is a catenary (elliptical) curve that has an internal elevator which takes visitors to a viewing platform at the top. From a height of 630

feet there is a spectacular view symbolizing the expansion from east to west as a result of the 1803 act signed by President Jefferson.

Art functions in a myriad of ways for individuals and for society. A life without art or a society devoid of art would not only be drab, it would be unthinkable. It appears that humans instinctively seek to enhance and beautify their lives. The visual arts and her sister art forms -- literature, music, dance, theater, and film -- range from very primitive to very sophisticated models of expression and communication. However, to benefit from its many functions and to participate fruitfully either in producing art or in responding to its complexities, skills and sensibilities must be cultivated.

What are the educational values associated with studying art?

In the preceding sections the personal and social functions of art were discussed. Art plays an essential role in sustaining and altering culture. It enhances almost everything that humans manufacture. Art is so important in our personal lives and so fundamental as a vehicle of expression and communication that individuals and societies could hardly exist without art. But how does involvement in art contribute to cognitive development and to our growth and well-being? In other words, how does the study of art contribute to the goals of formal education?

How does studying art contribute to developing one's intellectual powers?

Being educated in a democracy implies developing abilities to function as a civilized person who can think and feel beyond the dictates of the popular culture. Autonomous decision making requires a well-developed intellect. Using one's mind, i.e., engaging in cognitive activity, includes acquiring and utilizing the storehouse of mental images that are the basis for concept formation and comprehending what one experiences. Art can make an important contribution to building this storehouse because it is an image-centered phenomenon. Making or responding to art requires that one be involved in either producing or decoding a variety of images.

For instance, understanding complex concepts such as tension, symmetry, and abstraction is dependent upon possessing relevant images (mental pictures or percepts) for these concepts. These images can be acquired by producing them in appropriate art activities or by observing them in particular works of art.

Picture-making and picture-study involve using one's imagination; i.e., engaging in generating or identifying images that are associated with particular ideas by relating percepts to concepts. Relevant mental pictures are developed and stored through appropriate learning experiences which include observing examples that incorporate these images and engaging in discussions that clarify similarities and differences.

For instance, creating an illustration for the mythological figure Paul Bunyan requires that one imagine his enormous size, as well as body and facial structure and the design of his clothing. As one produces such an illustration, images are created that reflect and define the following list of complex concepts: scale, proportion, gesture, space, illusion, power, strength, and asymmetry. In other words, as one engages in this art activity, opportunities are provided to increase one's comprehension and repertoire of important and essential concepts.

Responding to works of art requires the use of one's imagination to make sense out of the difference between what is implied and what actually exists (colored pigments on a canvas, carved or chiseled wood, etc.). Both images and concepts (ideas) are represented through the use of signs and symbols. Actual objects such as eyes or houses or trees are not observed in works of art.

Shapes and other visual qualities are fashioned to serve as signs for objects. We may recognize a particular rendering of a shape as a sign for a hand. If it is depicted in a certain way, as a fist for instance, the shape may also function as a symbol for power or strength. Transforming mentally shapes, colors and textures into signs and symbols is a complex intellectual task requiring both analytical and critical thinking.

What are the educational values associated with studying art? [2]

What are skills of impression and expression?

In addition to cultivating the imagination, making or responding to art also contributes to developing powers of observation; i.e., moving beyond what is obvious and learning to see variations and subtleties. By learning to react to the visual world in the mode of the artist or art critic, one develops abilities to observe carefully, and to identify, analyze, and evaluate what is experienced; these are the skills of impression.

For example: looking at an oak tree, identifying its inherent shapes, textures and colors, analyzing how trunk and branches relate to each other, and making judgments about the extent to which it evokes a sense of vigor or loneliness. Or, when viewing a sculptural work, identifying the nature of its texture, planes and convex and concave areas; diagnosing and articulating how these elements interrelate; and assessing the extent to which the art work's formal organization contributes or detracts from what appears to be its central message.

Being involved in learning how to create art implies developing abilities to represent and interpret feelings and thoughts, and to create personal responses to experience; these are the skills of expression. Such skills include abilities to produce illusions of space, volume and movement; i.e. utilizing linear and aerial perspective, and gesture and animation techniques. These types of abilities relate to primary mental aptitudes associated with spatial visualization and perceptual speed and accuracy.

Representing natural or manufactured objects and interpreting what is experienced visually requires making all kinds of choices about what to include and what to leave out, while producing objects that convey both ideas and feelings.

For instance, painting a still life of apples and other fruits requires one to create images of fruit that convey an illusion of three-dimensional, somewhat irregular spheres that possess both striking and subtle variations in color and texture. Apples and/or other fruits can also be depicted in ways that take us beyond their literal qualities. Depending upon how these objects are represented and interpreted, they can be used as a basis for caricature or satire, or for making more universal statements about nature's bounty.



Paul Cezanne
Still Life with Apples and Peaches
1905
Oil on canvas
National Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C

Here is an example of a painting of apples and other fruits that goes beyond its subject. Because of his emphasis upon creating a compositional structure that is very carefully balanced though very asymmetrical, Cezanne provides us with a dynamic metaphor for the monumental and universal qualities that may be found in even the most mundane of objects.

Learn more about Cezanne

Knowing how to "read" the visual world and how to "write" visual statements that express one's thoughts and feelings constitute being literate in nonverbal areas of communication. Such skills require that one be engaged at all levels of cognitive activity, ranging from identifying and/or producing simple visual qualities to analytical, critical, and creative thinking. These are among the ways that art education contributes significantly to the development of intellectual power, which is the central goal of all schooling.

What are the educational values associated with studying art? [3]

How does art contribute to learning about the past and other cultures?

Becoming historically and culturally literate is greatly facilitated by studying the art of the world, cutting across both cultures and time. By being exposed to images associated with various cultural contexts and periods of history, our understanding is maximized.

Concepts and phrases as diverse as Paleolithic and Neolithic societies, tribal rituals, Pharaonic culture, classical ideals, Moslem and Christian values, medieval spirituality, eastern monasticism and asceticism, and royalty and aristocracy would be vague indeed without the existence of relevant images that convey something of their character and substance. Such images are embodied in works of art that have been created within almost every known human society covering a span of some 50,000 years.

Our understanding of ancient civilizations and tribal societies, as well as historical periods in the East and West, such as Dynastic China, Medieval Europe and the Renaissance, is greatly facilitated through the images presented in relevant works of art.

Significant works of art not only reveal something of the physical character and the dominant social values of the period or culture in which they were produced, they also convey or transmit a "feeling" for the culture or period.

For instance, studying the enormous bronze-copper Amida Buddha in Kamakura, created in the 13th century in what was then the capitol of Japan, not only informs us about how Buddha's aristocratic birth and spiritual insight were symbolized (elongated ear lobes and a dot on his forehead, respectively), such study also generates empathy for the great reverence for Buddha reflected in this extraordinary sculpture. The Amida was beloved because he preached that one need not be an institutional religionist to achieve salvation; living a moral life was all that was required.



The Amida Buddha, known as the Kamakura Diabutsu, was cast in copper by the Japanese sculptor Ono Goroeman in 1252. It is 40 feet tall, weighs some 100 tons and has a circumference of 96 feet at its base. The divinity is portrayed in the traditional meditative position with hands in lap, palms up, and fingers touching.

How does studying art move one beyond our pervasive "pop" culture?

Acquiring the skills of impression and expression associated with being art-educated enables one to move beyond an often trite and banal pop-consumer culture to the appreciation of works of art that are among the highest forms of human achievement. These are the "masterpieces" that have been produced across history and cultures.

If art provides us with opportunities to be involved both intellectually and emotionally, the more substantial the stimulus the more profound will be our response. This is why it is essential to be exposed to the "best" our world has to offer. The phrase "garbage in, garbage out" applies not only to the computer, it

also refers to the way human behavior evolves. In addition, learning to understand and appreciate the best the world has to offer will acquaint us with significant creators, some of whom may share our ethnicity, which impacts positively upon our feelings of self-worth.

An art education that is mentally challenging and not merely craft oriented, has very important roles to play in cognitive development. Enriching one's store of images and cultivating perceptual acuity and the skills of expression and impression, while reviewing the history of human civilization through its legacy of art forms and master works, contribute uniquely and significantly to the development of the intellectual power needed to function productively in the 21st century.

Producing and creating art

- * Interpret a landscape
- * Draw a person's face
- * Paint a still-life
- * Carve a totem pole
- * Design a poster
- * Build a clay bowl
- * Design a web site

These activities are just a sample of the myriad endeavors which engage students in art classes. Some students are involved in a variety of activities using a wide range of tools and materials. Others, enroll in art classes that have a particular focus: life drawing, advertising design, ceramics, or Internet graphics.

Whether in general or special art classes, students often receive specific instructions for producing art. Directions are given about how to hold a brush, blend charcoal, or roll a clay coil. Teacher demonstrations frequently model how to apply a transparent wash, draw a nose, or fold and cut paper. And students routinely produce very credible works in response to such instructions.

But what have they learned? What is there to learn while being engaged in the production of art? How does participation in particular art activities contribute to acquiring important expressive skills and abilities for understanding and appreciating art?

These are fundamental questions that need to be addressed if art classes are to be perceived as more than an opportunity for the talented few to exercise their gifts, or as a holding area for academic misfits.

If art is to be construed as a mainstream academic subject, students must be able to articulate the values they derive as a consequence of their participation in particular activities. For instance, copying a black and white photograph while learning how to use charcoal to produce a range of grays from very light to very dark (a very common activity). Why should students acquire such a skill? What value is there in being able to use charcoal to produce a range of grays? Is copying a photograph an appropriate means for developing such skills?

Developing technical skills

If we define art education as the process for cultivating abilities for comprehending and utilizing the language of art, we need to identify the constituents of this language. The tools and materials utilized to produce visual qualities are a major component. If one is to make expressive visual statements that communicate meanings to others, some knowledge of how to use these media is required. If students are asked to use crayons or oil pastels, for instance, they should have opportunities to investigate the characteristics of these drawing media; e.g. learning how to use the point and side, how to apply more or less pressure to vary values and intensity, and how to mix and blend colors utilizing surface textures.

Examples of other technical skills include: stippling, hatching and cross hatching with pencil, pen, crayon or brush; folding, scoring, perforating, shredding, curling, and cutting paper; producing washes of flat and graduated color, and under painting, glazing, and scumbling with paint; and pounding, pinching, rolling, texturing, wheel-throwing, glazing, and firing clay.

A key pedagogical principle is that whenever students are asked to utilize particular media, students should have opportunities to acquire some measure of control over these media through their own explorations and/or via instructor demonstrations. Learning about the assets and limitations of media is a first step toward enabling media to function as the basic vocabulary for artistic expression. It is not sufficient, however, only to be able to produce "words." Grammatical skills – putting words together to generate meaning – are also required. These are the skills needed to represent and interpret what one experiences, which also requires learning how to see in distinctive ways.

Observational skills

Knowing how to look at something and see its essential character that is translatable into an expressive statement is yet another outcome of an appropriate

art education. It cannot be assumed that students will automatically focus on aspects of objects that reflect their essence. What we are describing is the way artists look at a tree, for example, in contrast to the way a botanist may observe the tree. Artists do not usually seek to reproduce the complexities that exist in nature. What is sought are the aspects of an object that will convey appearances and/or will serve as a stimulus to expressing something about the object; e.g., its majesty, loneliness, delicacy, or tranquillity. Utilizing an object or event as a stimulus for expression requires making decisions about what will be emphasized, minimized or distorted, which brings into play skills for representing and interpreting experience.

Skills of representation and interpretation

The visual arts employ a spatial aesthetic -- emotions or thoughts that may be evoked in response to works of art that possess visual qualities that exist in either actual or illusionist space. If the media of art are to be utilized for expressive purposes, skills need to be developed for employing such media to produce visual qualities that range from thin to thick and straight to curved lines, light to dark values, organic to geometric shapes, rough to smooth textures, and transparent to opaque and dull to bright colors. These fundamental skills are required to exemplify objects such as trees, houses, furniture, human and animal forms, and anything else that we encounter visually.

To interpret the nature of objects or events one needs to be able to depict a variety of images, but these are not merely to be copied or imitated. How to depict phenomena so that their basic characteristics will be conveyed is the challenge. Examples of the skills required to meet this objective include abilities to utilize: principles of linear or atmospheric perspective to produce illusions of varying aspects of size, volume and space; "gesture" drawing or painting to convey a sense of movement or action; and pushing, pulling and pinching clay to shape surfaces that are concave and convex.

Interpretative skills always come into play because we do not actually produce or reproduce the objects and events that are stimuli for expression. When we look at a painting or sculpture of a man or woman, for instance, we are not responding to a real person; the person is not actually present. It is always the artist's representation and interpretation of the person to which we respond. We may look at a nose or hand, but we do not see a nose or hand. We see a "sign" for the object; i.e., shapes and colors that add up to an image that represents a nose or hand.

In addition, objects or subjects are interpreted in ways that convey meanings that go beyond what is literally there, what is being denoted. As appearances are produced they carry connotations of strength, weakness, elegance, fragility, etc., which are evoked as a consequence of how media are utilized and visual qualities are produced. For example, rendering a hand using pale colors and very thin lines may convey a sense of delicacy.

Being able to produce art implies possessing some control over media coupled with skills for observing the visual world artistically (not just scientifically), and for representing and interpreting visual qualities while producing an assortment of appearances that convey a variety of meanings. Utilizing these skills imaginatively and in personal ways contributes to a major goal of art education: developing the skills of creation; i.e., engaging in expressive activities while acquiring abilities to produce works that are novel, innovative and/or original.

Creative skills

Creativity is a term that is often used indiscriminately. Distinctions are not made between "making," "producing" or "creating" works of art. Students are expected to create such works whenever they are engaged in art activities. "Creative self-expression" is a very common phrase in art education discourse. It implies that when students are expressing reactions to their own experiences they are being creative ... even though what they produce may be very similar to what they have produced before or to what their peers "create".

In addition, it is often believed that students' abilities to create art are dependent on inherited traits, which are not easily altered by classroom experiences. Because of these assumptions, the nature of creative behavior is not sufficiently differentiated, and there are seldom any specific efforts made to develop particular creative skills.

Articulating the skills associated with the production of art includes clarifying the aspects of creative behavior that are amenable to change in the art class. For example, "fluency" and "flexibility" are traits that are associated with creative behavior. In order to insure that these traits are nurtured, art activities must be assigned that require students to generate a variety of responses (fluency) and/or easily alter their works (flexibility) to increase their expressive impact.

To return to our initial example, how can copying a black and white photograph to develop rendering skills contribute to attaining these objectives? Only if the assignment is changed to eliminate copying while encouraging students to ren-

der different sections of the photograph (flexibility) in as wide a range of grays as possible (fluency) while creating their own composition.

Creativity is also nurtured when students are asked to use their imagination, which is stretched when assignments include employing symbols, allegory and/or fantasy. Originality is addressed when students engage in art activities that are open-ended and idiosyncratic responses are rewarded.

Designing a poster around the theme of "drug abuse", in addition to expecting students to use media effectively, should require students to illustrate symbolically the aspects of this theme that are most meaningful to them. The choice of subject is theirs, and how they wish to give form to their views is also theirs. It must be remembered, however, that the extent to which students will be successful and creative (producing a poster that is both worthy as art and innovative) will depend on the student having acquired an adequate repertoire of the technical, observational, representational and interpretative skills that are essential to the production of art.

An excellent example of an artist who obviously possesses all of the skills discussed in these sections is the extraordinary American master, Georgia O'Keeffe. After making her first trip to New Mexico in 1929, she became interested in the objects and scenery that characterize the American Southwest; e.g., the sun dried skeletons of animals that had perished in the desert. *Red, White, and Blue*, one of O'Keeffe's most famous works, is among her earliest studies of a single animal bone isolated from its natural environment. It is an abstraction of a cow's skull and a symbolic image that raises issues of religion and nationalism. The religious connotation is reinforced by the cross configuration of the extended horns and vertical support. *Red, White, and Blue* is symbolic of America as O'Keeffe saw it, represented by the New Mexico desert, its relics and the three colors of the American flag.



Georgia O'Keeffe
Red, White and Blue, 1931
Oil on Canvas, 40 x 36 inches
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The educational implications of
learning to produce art

Acquiring the skills and knowledge associated with art production is obviously critical for those who aspire to be artists, designers, architects, etc. Involvement in art production activities is also necessary when educating the general student who only aspires to become an informed consumer of art.

Why? Because research has demonstrated that learning about many key concepts associated with the visual arts can be enhanced when students engage in relevant art-making activities. Take, for example, understanding and appreciating the differences between analytical and synthetic cubism (two very cogent approaches artists employ for interpreting the visual world). Students can read, talk and write about cubism, but their comprehension and discourse will be enhanced significantly when they also attempt to create works that embody analytical and synthetic principles. This occurs because they are more totally and

personally involved -- physically and emotionally as well as intellectually -- as they investigate and attempt to create compositions based on these principles.

When students are asked to apply what has been verbalized, nuances and subtleties will be noted and specific concepts will guide their art production efforts. This level of involvement results in generating empathy for what is being studied. Cultivating empathic responses is especially important because we are primarily concerned with the depth of feeling activated by our interactions with works of art. This is the principal reason why art production contributes both to understanding and appreciating many of the ideas encountered when studying the history of art and art criticism.

Art education, as we have been describing it, contributes to the development of a very important area of literacy by cultivating abilities to utilize a non-verbal language of expression and communication. It is a language that permeates contemporary life, but while many are manipulated by it, all too few are empowered to utilize it or respond to it critically. Acquiring the skills of art production should contribute in no small measure to correcting this inequity.

What do you study
when you study art?

Visual-aesthetic education can be defined as the process whereby one learns how to produce art, engage in the aesthetic and critical analysis of art, and to talk, read and write about art. Although this definition is broad in scope, it does not begin to describe the concepts and activities involved in becoming visually and aesthetically literate. The process of learning has both form and content; form is concerned with how one learns and content pertains to what is actually learned. Students of art are confronted with two basic questions:

What do I want to learn about art?

What skills and knowledge do I want to acquire as a result of my efforts?

To answer these questions, one must first be familiar with the ideas, images and practices associated with the visual arts. The varied facets of the subject need to be investigated in order to recognize which aspects would be most appropriate at particular times and for particular needs. What is already known must be identified before one decides what has yet to be learned. It is, therefore, essential to consider the topics which constitute the subject matter of art.

What types of art forms and events are there?

The most obvious topic associated with the visual arts to be explored is the variety of aesthetic phenomena described as art. This exploration should not be based upon a narrow interpretation of what constitutes art. One needs to be exposed to a multiplicity of stimuli ranging from functional objects to monumental sculpture. For example: domestic, commercial and industrial architecture; automobiles, furniture and fashions; photography and film making; all manner of hand crafts; as well as painting, sculpture, and printmaking.

Who makes art?

Another topic which requires consideration is identifying the producers of art. There are, of course, many types of artists. Artists are people who make aesthetic decisions as they produce objects (paintings or pottery) and/or organize events (motion pictures or television programs). Artist-designers plan and/or produce all manner of commodities. These range from packages for food to children's toys which stimulate imagination, from photographs and illustrations for books and magazines to symbolic forms which enhance religious ceremonies. Learning about the people who produce art, in its myriad forms, is an important aspect of studying the subject.

What types of problems and situations have aesthetic dimensions?

There are many occasions which are potential sources for aesthetic experiences. Translucent light qualities can be observed when looking at the action of sunlight on trees and shrubs; the angularity or flow of sculptural planes can be sensed when looking at an automobile; or changes in texture and color can be identified as pliable materials such as clay and cloth are stretched, flattened or crumpled.

Problematic situations may also contain the ingredients for aesthetic encounters. Deciding what to wear requires attending to relationships between shapes, values, colors and textures. Even athletic contests include aesthetic components. These are experienced if one has been sensitized to carefully observe and feel the contrast between the arc of a swinging bat and the angularity of the baseball player's body, or the counter movements of right and left legs as they pivot out from a kicker's hips when a football is punted.

One must realize that aesthetic experience exists within the eye of the beholder and can be evoked by all manner of stimuli. It is important to emphasize that

whether one responds to an athletic event, social celebration, recognized work of art, or objects created by natural forces, aesthetic components are experienced meaningfully (and not superficially) primarily by those who have developed an "educated eye."

How do artists create art?

Do artists, for instance, merely stand in front of a canvas or block of wood and begin to paint or carve? This view is reflected in the belief that one simply takes brush or chisel in-hand and creates a work which expresses one's interests or feelings. Such a naive conception of artistic behavior is very misleading because it neglects the roles played by the unique preparatory experiences and motivations of the artist. Investigating sources for artists' inspiration provides one with innumerable alternatives for generating ideas for their own works. Acquiring such knowledge forms another segment of the subject matter of art which needs to be studied.

The variety of sources artists use for their ideas and visual studies include:

- * people, animals and still-life;
- * views of land, sea and sky;
- * social, historical and political events;
- * myths, dreams and fantasies;
- * philosophical, psychological and scientific theories;
- * art forms produced at other times and in other places;
- * artistic and scientific innovations;
- * and the technical possibilities of materials and the functional purposes of objects.

Examples of how several of these sources of inspiration are utilized would include: studying the differences in the use of oil paints in landscapes by the Spanish-Greek artist, El Greco (1541-1614) and the Dutch artist, Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Indiscernible brush strokes and the smooth application of paint characterize El Greco's interpretation of a Spanish hillside city. Van Gogh's works typically display the artist's penchant for applying his paints thickly (*impasto*) and with obvious brush strokes.



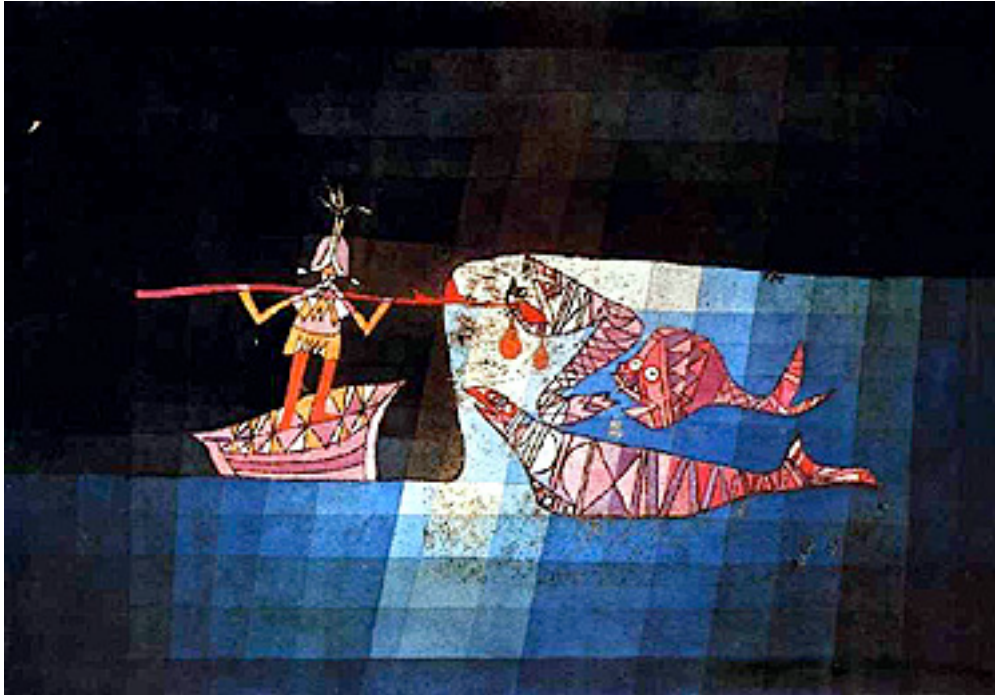
El Greco, View of Toledo, 1597
Oil on Canvas
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Vincent van Gogh
The Starry Night, 1889
Oil on canvas

Sources of inspiration

Identifying fantasy themes in the works of the Swiss artist Paul Klee (1879–1940) serves as another example of investigating sources of inspiration.



Paul Klee
Battle Scene from the Comic Opera "The Seafarer," 1923
Colored sheet, watercolor and oil drawing
Private Collection, Fran T. Durst-Hass
Muttenz, Switzerland

Examples of the ways artists interpret ideas and feelings also need to be investigated. Beliefs and emotions may be dealt with: realistically, depicting objects as they might actually appear (a portrait of a lady by the Netherlandish artist Rogier van der Weyden, 1400–1464); symbolically, reflected in personal views or social conventions (portrait of a wedding couple by the Flemish painter Jan van Eyck, 1395–1441); or dramatically, exaggerating scale or dark and light qualities (the chiaroscuro effects in a portrait by the great Dutch master Rembrandt van Rijn, 1606–1669).



Rogier van der Weyden
Portrait of a Lady, c.1455
Oil on wood, 14 1/2" X 10 3/4"
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

This remarkable portrait presents an image of a woman who appears to possess great inner strength, which can be attributed to the strong and almost equilateral triangle created by her head dress and the unequivocal dark and light contrast.



Jan van Eyck
The Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and
Giovana Cenami,
1434
Oil on wood, 32 1/4" X 23 1/2"
National Gallery of Art, London

Several of the symbols in this painting implies that the couple are standing on the holy ground of matrimony and the dog in the foreground stands for faithfulness and love and loyalty between husband and wife.



Rembrandt van Rijn
Head of Christ (Detail), 1650
Oil on canvas

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Dramatic effects are emphasized through the manipulation of values, which conveys an extraordinary mood of both vulnerability and saintliness.

What roles are played by media and techniques?

As has been mentioned before, almost anything can be used to make art. However, whether media are traditional or non conventional, the visual qualities they produce should become the focus of study. One needs to recognize that particular media are utilized in different ways to produce qualities such as roundness, thickness, sharpness, fuzziness, and brilliance. These qualities can be organized to evoke various feelings and meanings for the viewer. One can experiment by painting lines which convey a sense of vigor or repose, drawing a tree which appears to be ancient and decayed, or manipulating clay to create a form which evokes an illusion of fragility.

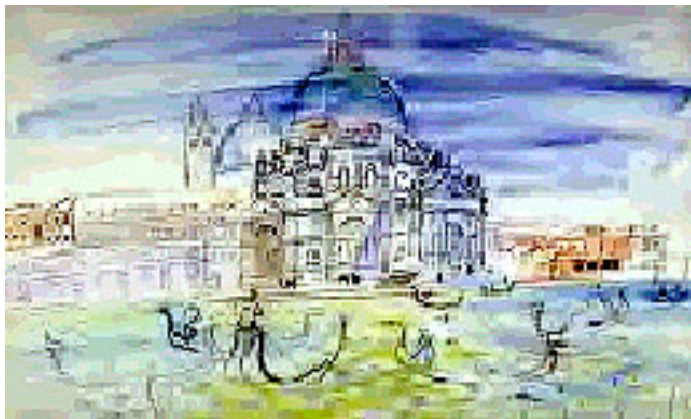
What variables affect the appraisal of works of art?

In addition to studying expressive factors, consideration must be given to variables involved in responding to existing art forms. One needs to comprehend technical, formal and symbolic aspects of art. Technical considerations include knowing how works of art are actually constructed. All art forms contain 'formal' elements such as shapes, values and some form of balance. It is essential to practice identifying and describing these elements because (a) the ways they are organized evokes feelings such as a sense of tranquillity or tension and (b) this kind of analysis precedes interpreting the possible meanings in a work of art. One should also realize that art works often depict or employ objects which represent or symbolize particular meanings and feelings.

Being aware of how judging works of art can be conditioned by cultural, political and economic values is also important. Thus, studying art as a subject should include the consideration of variables which affect responses not inherent within the forms, themselves. For instance, over valuing 'technical control' (as in the example below by the American Regionalist painter, Grant Wood, (1892–1942) may deter one from reacting positively to a 'loosely' rendered work such as the watercolor by the French Fauvist artist Raoul Dufy (1877–1953).



Grant Wood, Stone City, Iowa, 1930
Oil on wood panel, 30 ¼ x 40 inches
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska



Raoul Dufy, Gondolas in Front of Santa Maria della Salute, 1938
Watercolor on paper, 50 x 66 cm
Fine Art Museums of San Francisco

One needs to be conscious of the fact that appraisals of art are always relative to particular criteria. By making these criteria explicit, it is possible to develop logical justifications for one's judgments about art. In addition, objective justifications, rather than mere expressions of personal preference (e.g., "I

love it" or "I hate it"), make provocative and productive discourse about particular works of art feasible.

What constitutes the vocabulary of art ?

Attempting to respond to art logically and analytically will demonstrate the importance of words (concepts) in guiding perception, and developing understanding and appreciation. There are, of course, many terms which comprise the vocabulary relevant to art. When these terms are known, and employed with precision, they facilitate discussions about art as well as contributing significantly to increasing levels of visual-aesthetic literacy. The following is an extensive listing of a variety of terms which can be associated with art. This list should prove to be an invaluable aid to becoming acquainted with the scope of the subject, and when thinking, writing or speaking about the visual arts.

Manufactured forms as potential sources for aesthetic experience:

advertisement, arch, architecture, aquatint, assemblage, basketry, bas-relief, book, bridge, building, calligraphy, caricature, cathedral, chapel, ceramic, church, collage, computer graphics, computer sculpture, construction, costume, design, drawing, embroidery, enamel, engraving, etching, factory, film, fountain, fresco, furniture, garden, glass, graphics, happening, highway, house, illumination, medal, mezzotint, mobile, monument, mosaic, mural, musical instrument, palace, painting, photograph, porcelain, poster, print, rug, sculpture, serigraph, stained glass window, statue, synagogue, temple, textile, tomb, tool, typography, utensil, vase, watercolor, and woodcut.

What media can be employed for making art?

acid, brush, canvas, casein, cement, chalk, charcoal, clay, concrete, crayon, dye, enamel, encaustics, fabric, film, gem, gesso, glass, gouache, ink, ivory, lacquer, light, metal, paint, paper, pastel, pencil, plaster, plastic, reed, resin, rouge, rubber, sand, solder, stone, stucco, varnish, wax, wood, yarn.

What techniques can be used for processing media?

abstraction, alla prima (direct application of paint without under painting), allegory, animation, annealing, bending, blowups, burnishing, carving, casting, cementing, chasing, chiaroscuro (effects of light and shading), cire-perdue (lost-wax casting), close-ups, coiling, composition, contrast, contraposition (where one part of the figure turns or twists away from other parts), cross-hatching, cutting, design, developing, dissolves, drawing, drilling, dry brush, dry-point, dubbing, dyeing, editing, embossing, enameling, engraving, imagery, imitation, impasto (thickly applied paint showing marks of the painting tool), inlaying, intaglio (engraved or incised), juxtaposition, knitting, laminating, laying-out, lettering, lighting, modeling, naturalism, painting, pattern, perspec-

tive, polishing, printing, programming, proportion, raising, recording, repetition, repousse, representation, rubbing, sanding, sawing, scraping, sfumato (the melting of tones into one another), shading, sketching, soldering, etching, fade-in, filling, filming, focusing, fusing, glazing, gluing, gouging, graining, hammering, illusionism, spinning, spraying, staining, stenciling, superimposition, symbolism, tenebroso (dark tonality), throwing, tooling, turning, weaving, welding.

How can surface qualities be created or altered?

Surface or sensuous qualities are produced by the use of a medium and are perceived through the senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling. These qualities are perceived (a) on a continuum such as coarse to smooth, dull to bright, or dark to light, or (b) as pervasive phenomena; e.g., angularity, fluidity or gradual modulation. Surface qualities would be modified by altering their character across a range of possibilities as follows.

Light: artificial-natural, bright-dim, direct-reflected, light-shade, bright-dull, dark-light, direct-indirect, night-day, reflected-absorbed.

Form or shape: concave-convex, conical, curvilinear, foreshortened, free-bound, geometric-biomorphic, natural, artificial, parabolic, pyramidal, rectangular, rigid, simple-complex, transparent-opaque, triangular.

Mass or volume: big-small, bulky, empty-filled, heavy-light, solid-open, stable-unstable.

Line: convergent-divergent, dark-light, heavy-light, jagged-smooth, parallel, pointed-obtuse, straight-zigzag, thick-thin.

Texture: artificial-natural, coarse, even-uneven, granular, harsh, metallic, pebbled, porous, raised-lowered, real-simulated, regular-irregular, rough-smooth, soft-hard.

Color: advancing-receding, bright-dull, light-dark, opaque-transparent, pure-mixed, saturated, strong-weak, warm-cool.

Size: changing-stable, exaggerated, large-small, little-big, microscopic-telescopic, natural (real), proportional, reduced, relative, tall-short.

Space: deep-shallow, empty-filled, extended-enclosed, narrow-wide, open-closed, vast-small.

Movement: (imagined to real) accelerated, circular–straight, convergent–divergent, crosswise–lengthwise, fast–slow, forward–backward, real–virtual–implied, side–diagonal, spontaneous–directed, up–down.

Energy or tension: active–passive, diminishing–augmenting, directed–free, free–bound, high–low, stable–unstable, static–dynamic, strong–weak.

What are the bases for organizing surface qualities?

Visual components and their sensory characteristics are organized to create forms which embody the content of works of art. Forms may be structured intuitively or objectively in relation to particular principles such as: asymmetry, complexity, continuity, contrast, emphasis, gradation, harmony, multiplicity, pattern, proportion, radiation, repetition, rhythm, simplicity, symmetry, tension, transition, unity, and variety.

How do subject and theme differ?

Subject matter:

Images or topics which comprise the subject matter of a work of art include but are not limited to:

- * dreams, emotions, fantasies, figures (allegorical, mythological, nudes, single and group portraits), historical and/or political events, landscapes, religious events, still–life (flowers, interiors, tables of fruit).

Some possible themes:

Ideas which appear to permeate a work of art reflect themes such as:

- * anguish, barbarism, bravery, brutality, debauchery, delicacy, domesticity, fear, gracefulness, horror, humor, injustice, joy, love, passion, patriotism, pleasure, sadness, terror, and tranquillity.

What are the functions of art forms?

Terms describing purposes for which a work is created (for aesthetic, intrinsic appeal or utility in serving a religious, domestic or industrial function) include:

- * aesthetic, amusing, artistic, cathartic, commemorative, commentative, commercial, cultural

- * decorative, economic, educational, entertaining, experimental, expressive, historical, hypnotic, instructional

- * magical, moral, persuasive, political, practical, propagandistic, psychological, religious

* satirical, sensitizing, social (didactic, satiric), spiritual, stimulating, and therapeutic.

What words can be used to describe the processes for making art?

Terms which describe what is done when one participates in the art making process include:

- * accomplish, achieve, act, adapt, add, adjust, alter, amplify, assemble, attain
- * bring about, build, carry out, carry through, cause, change, collect, combine, complete, compose, construct, control, correct, create
- * demonstrate, develop, devise, display, do, elaborate, employ, enlarge, erect, execute, exhibit, expand, experiment, express, extend
- * fashion, form, formulate, fulfill, gather, generate, improve, improvise, incorporate, indicate, invent, join, make, manage, manipulate, modify, obtain, operate, order, originate, perform, plan, practice, prepare, present, produce, put together
- * realize, rearrange, render, reorder, represent, reshape, reveal, revise, set up, shape, show, structure, succeed, symbolize
- * transform, try out, use, utilize, work, work out.

What vocabulary is associated with responding to works of art?

The preceding list of terms associated with making art will be especially helpful when formulating procedures for developing expressive, art-making skills. This final listing is concerned with the types of terms to be used when examining and evaluating art.

Perceive: apprehend, attend, be acquainted with, be aware of, be conscious of, comprehend, conceive, detect, discern, discover, distinguish, experience, get the idea, grasp- identify, know, look, make out, name, notice, observe, realize, respond, see, sense, view, watch, witness.

React: apprehend, be aware of, empathize, encounter, examine, experience, feel, go through, handle, hear, know, listen, look, manipulate, perceive, react, respond, see, sense, smell, suppose, sympathize, taste, touch, undergo.

Talk: acknowledge, admit, analyze, answer, argue, ask, cite, comment, comment upon, communicate, consider, concede, contend, contest, converse, convey, deal with, debate, declare, disclose, discuss, dispute, examine, express, generalize, go into, handle, hypothesize, investigate, justify, mention, name, note, observe, present, propose, prove, question, rationalize, reason, recall, recite, reflect, relate, remember, reply, report, review, say, speak, speculate,

state, suggest, take sides, take up, talk, talk over, theorize, treat, verbalize, verify.

Analyze: account for, arrange, catalogue, categorize, characterize, choose, cite, clarify, classify, compare, contrast, define, delineate, demonstrate, depict, describe, differentiate, discriminate, draw, examine, exclude, explain, explore, express, give reason for, give the meaning of, grade, group, illustrate, list, make clear, match, name, organize, outline, pair, pick, picture, place, point, portray, prefer, prove, question, rank, read into, represent, select, symbolize, test, translate, understand, verify.

Judge: accept, appraise, approve, ascertain, assess, assume, believe, comment upon, conceive, conclude, consider, criticize, decide, determine, disapprove, dislike, estimate, evaluate, favor, feel, find, form an opinion, gather, guess, have an idea, imagine, infer, justify, look upon, object to, oppose, predict, rank, rate, regard, reject, resolve, review, suppose, theorize, think, tolerate, understand, value.

Valuing art: admire, appraise, appreciate, assess, care for, estimate, evaluate, gauge, give importance to, like, order, prefer, prize, rank, rate highly, regard, respect, think highly of, treasure, weigh.

What types of styles can be associated with works of art?

Recurrent and distinctive features in works of art (a definition for "style") can be described in relation to the following characteristics.

Temporal (time):

pre-historic (Paleolithic, Upper-Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Stone Age, Iron Age), Egyptian, Greek, Byzantine, Etruscan, Roman, Early Christian, Medieval, Carolingian, Ottonian, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, 18th century, 19th century, 20th century, Pre-Columbian, Ming, Sung, Chou, Han, Fujiwara, Kamakura, Ashikaga, and Nara.

Geographical (place):

African, American, Assyrian, Chinese, Egyptian, European, Greek, India, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Oceanic, Northern European, Persian, Peruvian, and Sumerian.

Cultural:

Balinese, Bamana, Celtic, Chinese, Egyptian, Eskimo, Ibu, Kwakwaka'wakw, Maori, Mayan, Minoan, Moorish, Navajo, Peloponnesian, Roman, Senufo, Sioux.

Types of Styles:

abstract, abstract-geometric, anti-mannerist, archaic, baroque, classic, impressionistic, manneristic, naturalistic, neoclassic, non-objective, painterly, realistic, representational, and romantic.

School/Custom/Tradition:

Abstract Expressionism, Ash Can, Barbizon, Bauhaus, Blaue Reiter, Byzantine, Cinema Verite, Constructivism, Hudson River, Impressionism, Coptic, Cubism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Florentine, Futurism, Hard-edge, Hellenistic, Minimal, Naturalism, New Realism, Op, Orphism, Pointillism, Pop, Precisionism, Primitivism, Realism, Regionalism, Siennese, Song, Surrealism, Venetian, Yamato-e.

Idioms (styles of individual artists, just a few examples):

Bergman, Bernini, Bramante, Brunelleschi, Cellini, Duccio, Fellini, Giotto, Kurosawa, Rembrandt, La Tour, Van Gogh, Frank Lloyd Wright.

Fusion of Styles:

Etruscan-Italian, French-Baroque, Greco-Roman, Hellenistic, Italian Renaissance, Northern Renaissance, Spanish Gothic.

How does the study of art relate to economic issues?

Thinking about a world without art would seem inconceivable because art permeates our personal lives, and is a primary transmitter of our multicultural heritage. The contributions that art can make to our intellectual development and to understanding the past and other cultures, while offering an alternative to a banal and pervasive pop culture, forms the bases for asserting that studying the fine arts should be a part of everyone's education. While these reasons are indeed substantial, the "super practical" among us may still contend that art is not essential since it has little to do with the economy and the workaday world. Art is viewed as something we reward ourselves with only after more

fundamental needs have been met. Art is seen as the frosting on the cake, not basic "bread and butter stuff" like science and mathematics.

The practical rationale for studying art is no different than for studying math and science. We must educate the mathematicians and scientists of the future because our lives and the economy are dependent upon having talented workers in these areas. A population that is sufficiently quantitatively and scientifically literate to function as supporters and consumers of their efforts is also required. In addition, math and science are essential in the education of workers in many other areas such as medical fields, engineering, and marketing.

If we substitute the term "visual arts" for science and math, it can be demonstrated that the study of art is also essential in our "practical" and highly materialistic society. Consider the number of individuals who earn their living as artists or in art related fields. The chart in the next section, Careers and Occupations Associated With the Visual Arts, lists several hundred occupations that require knowledge and skills in the visual arts. Can we function as a society in the 21st century without workers in these fields? Their basic education must occur at all levels of schooling, just as such education is provided for future scientists and mathematicians.

An audience for what these artists and designers produce must also be educated. Without a population that has achieved a reasonable level of art literacy, many shoddy and marginal products will be manufactured, marketed and purchased. What will this do to our economy, to the balance between imports and exports? If we do not have an aesthetically literate society and workers in the arts that are skilled and innovative, how can we compete with nations that include art as an essential component of everyone's schooling?

Art as a primary player in the economy

The questionable notion that art exists for its own sake (and is thus nice but not necessary) is a very recent phenomenon. Prior to the industrial revolution, which resulted in the separation of the fine and applied arts, the visual arts were viewed as very practical indeed. It is believed that the magnificent animal drawings produced at Lascaux and Altamira caves some 15,000 years ago were created for rituals concerned with insuring the hunter's dominance over animals used for food, clothing and bartering.

These are examples of the many drawings to be found at Lascaux. The caves are in the Dordogne River Valley in Southern France, and were accidentally discovered in April, 1940 by four French boys, ages 15 to 17, chasing after their

dog. One can readily observe the apparent sophistication in these works which achieve illusions of both animation and volume.



These superb drawings serve to illustrate the notion that art does not improve. Works of art created today are actually no more significant than those produced 100, 500, or 15,000 years ago. Science is better today but not art. Why? Simply because works of art reflect what is important at a particular time to a particular culture and/or to a particular artist. Science provides us with a truer picture of the natural world today than ever before. Art is primarily concerned with the expression of meaning and values, what was important in the culture that spawned the work of art, be it a work of architecture, sculpture, painting or utilitarian craft.

Careers and occupations associated with the visual arts

Food

DESIGNER OF: Cooking and Baking Utensils, Dinnerware, Flatware, Packages, Paper Goods ALSO: Ceramist (dinnerware– pottery), Chef, Merchandiser, Pastry Decorator

Clothing and appearance

FASHION: Buyer, Commentator, Coordinator, Designer, Editor, Illustrator, Photographer, Writer ALSO: Costume Designer, Dress Maker, Fabric Draper, Furrier, Hair Stylist, Jewelry Designer and Jewelry Maker, Make-up Consultant, Milliner, Textile Designer

Shelter

ARCHITECT: Commercial, Domestic, Industrial, Landscape, School DESIGNER OF: Fabric, Floor Coverings ALSO: Cabinet Maker, Ceramist (tiles), City Planner, House Painter, Paperhanger, Stained Glass Designer/Maker, Stonemason, Woodworker

Education

PRE SCHOOL: Aide, Sitter, Teacher ELEMENTARY: Art Consultant, Art Supervisor, Principal, Teacher SECONDARY: Arts Supervisor, Art Teacher, Artist – in – Residence, Craft – Home Economics – Industrial Arts – Photography Teacher POST SECONDARY: Community College Art Instructor, University Studio – Art History – Art Education – Aesthetics Professor

Museum

Catalogue Designer, Curator, Director, Educator, Exhibition Designer/Builder, Framers, Photographer, Restorer, Conservator

Mass media

BILLBOARD–POSTER: Designer, Painter, Printer, Serigrapher MAGAZINE: Art Critic, Art Director, Art Editor, Cartoonist, Comic Strip Creator, Illustrator, Letterer, Photographer MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION: Animator, Art Director, Camera Operator, Costume Designer/Maker, Hair Dresser, Make-up Artist, Mock-up Builder, Set Designer and Builder, Titles Creator, Cartoonist COMPUTER: Web Site Designers, Computer Images and Graphics

Religion

Architect, Illustrator, Silversmith, Stained Glass Designer and/or Fabricator

Transportation

AIRPLANE: Interior Stylist, Technical Illustrator, Trademark – Uniform Designer
AUTOMOBILE: Body Repairer, Brochure Designer, Illustrator, Customizer, Map
Cartographer, Model Designer/ Maker, Painter, Stylist BICYCLE–MOTORCYCLE:
Body Stylist, Painter, Pin–Striper MOBILE HOME: Equipment – Interior – Exterior
Designer RECREATION VEHICLES: Equipment – Interior – Shell Designer; Exterior
Scenic Painter TRAIN: Interior – Sign – Station Designer TRUCK: Designer,
Painter, Sign – Poster Designer/Painter

Services

MEDICAL: Art Therapist, Illustrator, Model maker, Occupational Therapist LI-
BRARY: Fine Arts Librarian, Sign/Display Maker POLICE: Composite Sketch Art-
ist, Court Artist, Photographer MILITARY: Aerial Photographer, Arts & Crafts In-
structor, Combat Artist/Photographer, Training Aids Designer/Builder

Shopping

Advertising Designer, Advertising Agency Art Director, Catalogue Designer/
Illustrator, Direct Mail Designer, Florist, Gift Wrapper, Point–of–Sale Display
Designer/Maker, Product Designer, Toy Designer, Window Decorator

The arts

BALLET/OPERA/THEATRE: Costume Designer, Publicity Designer/Photographer,
Program Designer, Set Designer/Builder LITERATURE: Book Binder, Book Jacket
Designer, Story Illustrator, Layout/Type Designer VISUAL ARTS: Calligrapher,
Enamelist, Glass Blower, Jeweler, Mosaicist, Muralist, Painter, Printmaker, Potter,
Sculptor, Silversmith, Weaver ALSO: Arts & Crafts Camp Counselor, Art Auction-
eer, Candle maker, Circus Wagon – Poster Designer, Heraldry – Trophy – Award
Designer, Parade Float Designer/Builder

How does the study of art relate to economic issues? [2]

Ancient Athenians, 700 years before the Common Era, created pottery of such beauty and utility that their wares were easily traded for essential food products they were unable to produce. Gothic cathedrals were the central structures

within medieval cities. They could have only been created through the joint efforts of hundreds of highly skilled members of specialized craft guilds; e.g., stone masons, sculptors, and stained glass fabricators. The wages earned and spent by these artists contributed significantly to the prosperity of farmers and merchants within their communities.

For thousands of years individual artists, working alone or with apprentices, have been commissioned by royal and powerful patrons to create forms that express their nobility, religious beliefs, and/or social and economic status. A brief sampling of these commercial artists of the past would include great masters such as Phidias, the sculptor/architect of the Parthenon, and great masters such as Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Goya. Modern day commercial artists emerged in the 19th century when designers and craftsmen had to be trained to produce objects that would be competitive in the world markets generated by the industrial revolution.

Today, corporations and all levels of government have become the chief patrons of the arts. Billions are spent annually to design and market a vast variety of consumer goods. The "corporate image" is projected primarily through visual design forms such as trademarks, packaging and advertising. To enhance their corporate image and to improve the quality of life within communities where their employees work, American businesses contribute annually hundreds of millions of dollars to the arts. Many states have percent-for-art laws and art-in-public-spaces programs, in addition to arts councils which complement the efforts of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The enormous audience for the arts not only provides employment for artists, designers, etc. This audience also supports hotels, restaurants, and retail stores, which are patronized in association with visits to "blockbuster" shows at museums and other cultural events. For example, it is estimated that when the Pharaoh Tutankhaman Exhibit was in New York City several years ago, 11 million dollars in extra revenue was generated for the city's hotels, restaurants and retail businesses.

The need for informed consumers

Americans constitute just five percent of the world's population, but we consume twenty-five percent of what the world produces. Clearly, we are the "Homo consumens" of the world and the economies of many countries are dependent upon our high levels of consumption. In addition, our mass media have convinced many of us that consuming is the high road to happiness. But what is the nature of this consumption? Does the purchase of a great variety of goods necessarily result in increased satisfaction? Often, purchases based upon

pressures to conform to current fashions rather than upon sound principles result in increased levels of frustration.

The arts are concerned with the quality of life rather than the quantity of commodities that can be consumed. Abilities to deal with qualitative dimensions of experience need to be cultivated. One simple example of the need for this type of education relates to the notion of "scale" or proportion. If a concern for proportion is ignored when purchasing furniture or clothing and purchases are based simply upon what is being "pushed" by the popular culture, items can be purchased that are entirely too large for the size of an existing room, or clothing may not enhance one's physical appearance.

What we are discussing is a need for being an informed consumer. Not only in terms of function (will the item work and last) but also in terms of its potential to provide true enjoyment and pleasure because purchases are based upon aesthetic principles rather than what is currently in vogue.

Informed consumers will have a positive impact upon the quality of our lives. Such consumers will demand and receive higher levels of performance. This is possible because we live in an open society where the market place determines what will be produced. If consumers are informed, they will respond very positively to the availability of quality products. It is no more expensive to create beauty than ugliness. And where the knowledge and skill to create and/or appreciate beauty exist, communities prosper.

There are several examples throughout the nation where residential and/or shopping areas have been planned to meet the demands of sophisticated consumers. These areas have been designed with a great deal of concern for aesthetics. As one drives or walks through such areas, one experiences a designed landscape that complements the built environment, evoking feelings of joy, euphoria, and/or tranquility.

In what ways do the goals and methods of artistic and scientific research differ?

While the values of research in the natural and social sciences are widely recognized, the fact that artists are also engaged in research must also be acknowledged. The research operations associated with creating art, however, are quite different from the research activities of scientists. Because research in our society is highly valued, it is essential for us to understand why being engaged in legitimate art-making tasks implies that one is also engaged in worthwhile research activities.

Research in the sciences

Research in both natural and social sciences relies upon measures that generate quantitative data from which qualities are inferred; i.e., a high number equals intensity of agreement, pressure, what is valued, etc. Counting the number of times something occurs reflects on the level of its significance. For example, if when excavating an ancient temple a particular symbol appears again and again on a variety of objects, it is concluded that the symbol was important to the ancients who built and used the temple.

Specific instances of behavior are identified and quantified very carefully. These are translated into qualities which become the basis for formulating generalizations about phenomenon. These formulations become principles or constructs that govern our understanding of the natural and social world. For instance, "social stratification" is a construct for thinking about social status. It is based upon carefully observing how people live in terms of their wealth, place of residence, type of employment, numbers of years of education, and political power. Class distinctions reflect the extent to which individuals and groups relate to these categories.

Another example is "style" in art and architecture, a term used by both art historians and art critics. Style is actually a construct for thinking about reoccurring characteristics in works of art. A particular style is inferred from observing and categorizing common elements in works produced by a variety of artists, or in the works of an individual artist. The terms that evolve -- baroque, cubist, impressionist, realist, neo-realist, Ashcan, minimalist, etc. -- are descriptive of pervasive qualities associated with the works and/or other factors such as regions, religions, or historical periods. These terms have been developed and are used by social scientists called art historians.

The artist as researcher

Artistic research is not concerned with either identifying or quantifying data. Artists rely upon their individual perceptions of the natural and social world; e.g. focusing on the appearance of objects or their interpretations of feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and values associated with objects or events. Perceptions are translated into personal, often unique and innovative statements. A most obvious example: the varied, personal interpretations of nativity scenes associated with the birth of Christ.

The focus of research activity

Careful observation is central to the efforts of scientists. Examining phenomena -- the behavior of rats in a maze, the chemical reactions of compounds, the concentric rings in a tree trunk, the varying beliefs of a given population re-

garding political events -- is the basis for generating the information required for translating observations into facts and generalizations.

It is the experience of phenomena and the qualities that permeate such experience that is the focus of the artist's research. As artists respond to objects and events -- the physiognomy of a king, queen or saint, the struggle for democracy, the vastness of a mountainous area, the varying character of graphic media -- particular feelings or thoughts are evoked that are translated into personal statements. These responses relate to qualities such as the intensity of colors and variations in spatial forces and tensions that are associated with experiencing particular phenomenon. For example, when viewing a dramatic sunset, the artist senses the intensity of color and the disorienting light that skewers perspective and flattens space. A scientific response would be to observe the sunset as a predictor of hot weather based upon having quantified how often such sunsets are followed by hot days

In what ways do the goals and methods of artistic and scientific research differ?
[2]

Methods for generating data

In order to observe phenomena as objectively as possible, scientist utilize standardized techniques and approaches which have been established empirically. Their methods are logical in character and can be replicated by other scientists.

The artist's methods for generating materials for his works are non-standard. Observational techniques and what artists will respond to are idiosyncratic and are often dependent upon the artist's frame of mind. Rather than being logical in character, the methods used by artists for generating data are expressive; e.g., creating accidental colors when spreading paint, or attending to and distorting particular facial features or a spatial field.

Forms for reporting data

Scientists utilize a variety of devices for reporting the nature and findings of their research; e.g., graphs, pie and bar charts, etc. There are standardized methods for describing data and even standardized writing styles for reporting one's findings. These standardized approaches are essential to communicating objectively, efficiently and effectively the results of research activities.

For the artist, who is expressing personal reactions to experience, standardization is anathema. In addition, the particular form that is employed is inseparable from the content of what is being expressed. For example, a symmetrical

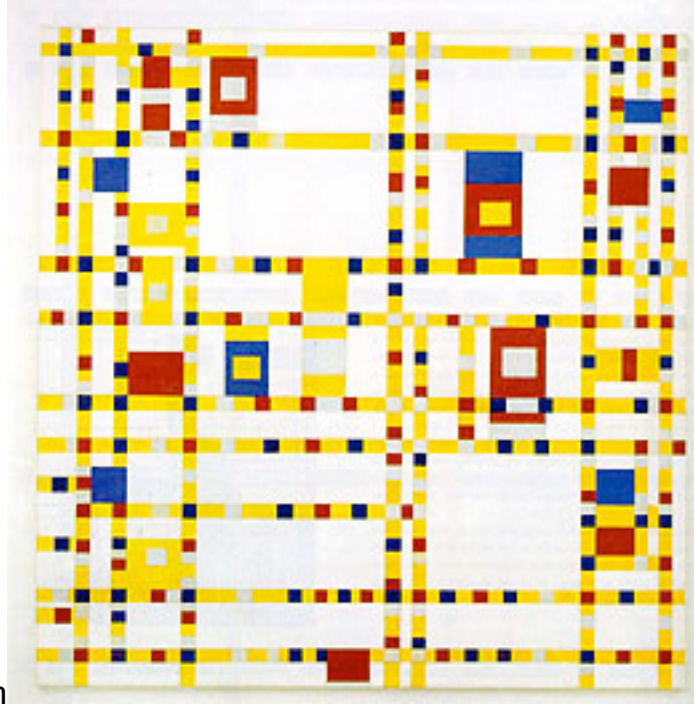
and static organization of visual elements impacts differently upon what is ultimately expressed than would an asymmetrical and dynamic arrangement.

In what ways do the goals and methods of artistic and scientific research differ?
[3]

Ways of representing results of research

Discursive, serial, logical, and literal interpretations and descriptions of observations are employed by scientists to represent their activities and findings clearly and unemotionally.

Artists employ poetic, non-literal, symbolic and metaphoric interpretations of their experience. Compositions are designed to convey a vivid and imaginative sense of one's experience. The literal aspects of the research of artists is limited to the actual physical nature of the materials or media of expression; e.g., tactile (not visual) textures of paints or pastels, projected colored light (films), concave or convex volumes (sculptural forms), etc. Almost everything else is a representation or an interpretation of experience. Particular arrangements of shapes and colors can denote signs for hands or feet or facial components, etc. Signs become symbols when relevant associations are made. For instance, a pursed mouth in a carved mask may symbolize sadness within the culture where such an association has evolved. When technique and form merge into meaningful content, the artist's efforts may serve as a visual metaphor for feelings and beliefs. Two examples: Piet Mondrian's (1872–1944) *Broadway Boogie Woogie* is a visual metaphor for the dynamic, pulsating atmosphere of New York City; Hokusai's (1766–1849) *The Great Wave at Kanaga* creates a metaphor about the scale and power of natural forces.



Piet Mondrian
Broadway Boogie Woogie
1942–43.
Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches
Museum of Modern Art,
New York

[Learn more about Mondrian](#)



Katsushika Hokusai
The Great Wave at Kanaga, c.1831–33
Polychrome woodblock print 10 1/8 x 14 15/16 inches

Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York

Learn more about Hokusai

Nature of generalization

Scientific research flows from the particular to the general. Findings from investigations of specific phenomenon are the bases for stipulating broader generalizations. These are often statistical in character: the mean (arithmetic average) temperature for a given month or decade in a particular city or region; the average life span for a given group; modal responses (the one expressed most often) to questions about race or religion; etc. Trends and central tendencies are of primary concern. For instance, generalizing about which broadcasting system has the most viewers based upon carefully surveying the viewing habits of a representative sample of the population.

Artistic research flows from the general to the specific. Works of art are created in response to life's experiences, which are reflected in distinctive statements that embody particular aspects of broad experience. The artist studies trees in general and then creates a particular work concerning trees. But particular works also embody generalizations. For example, a painting of a single elm tree may not only suggest all elm trees, it also may serve as a metaphor for grandeur or loneliness; a distinctive portrait of an individual may also project a general sense of ennui or dignity or a demeanor of restrained elegance, as in Van der Weyden's Portrait of a Lady.

In what ways do the goals and methods of artistic and scientific research differ?
[4]

Interest in prediction and control

Scientists are very concerned with carefully controlling the nature of their experimentation and/or study. Controls are essential to generating data that are both reliable (stable) and valid (accurate). It is these kinds of data that are of interest to scientists because such information can be used to formulate testable hypotheses and to confidently predict future events.

Neither control nor prediction are of interest to artists. Their concerns are centered on making a heuristic (exploratory and self-educating) effort when engaged in creating expressive forms. The results of these efforts are not predetermined because it is essential to remain ready to take advantage of unforeseen, serendipitous events ("happy" accidents) as one's work evolves.

Criteria for establishing the worth of research

Within the realm of science, establishing the worth of one's activities and findings is achieved through the use of formalized procedures and instruments. For instance, particular statistics, selected on the basis of the nature of one's research, are computed to project the levels of confidence one can have in the reliability and validity of one's findings.

The validity of the artist's effort -- the work of art created -- is based upon judging the credibility of the relationship between form and content, as well as the integrity of the artist's personal view; is it phony, contrived, borrowed or original. These criteria can be employed by the artist and/or the viewer either intuitively or objectively.

Ultimate aims of the research

The ultimate aim of science is to discover the truth. Scientists strive to generate true statements about reality by describing the physical and social world with ever increasing fidelity. Their investigations move from examining particular objects and events to the exposition of facts (reliable knowledge) and valid generalizations. Because of its logical and cumulative nature, science is always improving; i.e., we have a truer picture of the physical and social world today than we have ever had before.

Self-expression and the creation of meaning are the ultimate aims of artists. They seek to produce images that will be reflective of one's particular interpretation of the meaning of one's experience, which includes both individual and cultural attitudes and values. Art moves from a general view of experience to a particular interpretation of the meaning -- the import -- imbedded in that experience.

Because it is primarily concerned with expressing the perceptions and beliefs of individual artists living within particular cultures, art does not improve. The art forms produced today are no better than those produced thousands of years ago.

The primary concern of art is the exposition of meaning; what it means (and feels like) to be old, delighted, awed, exalted, attacked, maimed, elated, exhausted, somber or sober, peaceful or agitated, conflicted or tranquil. Art speaks to us metaphorically about the nature of phenomenon and one's emotional (as well as intellectual) reactions to life's experiences. And the value of artists and their works is based upon the extent to which the meanings created

are significant and cogent expressions of both the artist and the psychological and social contexts in which works of art are created.

Wrap-up

This concludes our exploration of the nature and values of the visual arts. It is hoped that the materials encountered have been helpful toward enlarging your view of the world of art. If this site provides information that you believe may contribute to increasing understanding of and appreciation for the multicultural and essential roles that art performs, feel free to download whatever will be useful to you.



Ron Silverman, Multicultural Gallery 1997
Acrylic on canvas, 36"x36"

Art works from 14 different countries from around the world are represented in this painting: India, Belgium, Mexico, Prehistoric France, Korea, Japan, Spain, Holland, Cameroon, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, Ancient Egypt, and the United States. Can you locate the work of art associated with a particular country?