

Culture and Art

Art can be defined as “the skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others.”

Artistic works have existed for almost as long as humankind. They may have both decorative and practical value.

The oldest forms of art such as sculptures, cave paintings, rock paintings and petroglyphs date from the Upper Paleolithic. Many great traditions in art have a foundation in the art of great ancient civilizations such as Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece and Rome, Persia, China, India, etc. Because of the size and duration of these civilizations, more of their art has survived, and more of their influence has been transmitted to other cultures in later times. Some kinds of art have also provided the first records of how artists worked. In Ancient Greece they showed the musculature of a human being, poise, beauty, and anatomically correct proportions. Medieval art focused on the expression of Biblical and religious truth and showed the glory of the heavenly world. Renaissance art emphasized a realistic depiction of the material world and the place of humans in it. The western Age of Enlightenment showed artistic depictions of physical or rational certainties of a clockwise universe. Later artistic movements such as Symbolism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Dadaism, etc., lasted for a short time after their invention. In the 20th century art showed a search for new standards. With increasing global interaction we can see the influence of different cultures on an artist’s work (e.g., Pablo Picasso was influenced by African culture; Japanese woodblock prints were influenced by Western Renaissance draftmanship).

Andy Warhol, a pop artist, became influential through work including and possibly criticizing popular culture).

Art can be divided into fine art and creative art. **Fine art** expresses the artist’s creativity and engages the audience’s aesthetic sensibilities or draws the audience towards a consideration of finer things. The purpose of works of art may be to communicate ideas, create a sense of beauty, explore the nature of perception, give pleasure, or to generate strong emotions. The

purpose may also be seemingly nonexistent. If the skill is being used in a common or practical way, people consider it to be a craft instead of art. If the skill is being used in a commercial or industrial way, it may be considered commercial art. Crafts and design are sometimes considered applied art.

The creative arts are divided into more specific categories according to their techniques, or medium, such as decorative arts, plastic arts, performing arts, or literature. Art has had a great number of different functions throughout its history. It has had many unique and different reasons for being created. On the one hand, art is creativity, i.e., something humans must do by their very nature. In many cultures art is used in rituals, performances and dances as a decoration or symbol. On the other hand, it refers to intentional actions on the work of artists who want to express their specific emotions and moods, illustrate another discipline (maps in geography), sell a product, or use art as a form of communication or entertainment (films, DVDs). Art is also used by art therapists and psychologists to determine personality traits. It is therefore helpful in the process of healing. Art is often utilized as a form of propaganda. There are also various types of street art, i.e., graphics and images spray-painted or stenciled in public places, e.g., walls, buildings, bridges, buses or trains and usually without permission. Certain art forms, such as graffiti, may also be illegal if they break laws.

Art is sometimes perceived as an upper-class activity associated with wealth, the ability to purchase art, and the leisure required to enjoy it.

Nowadays most modern museums are opened to the public (the Louvre in France, the National Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) to have art available to everyone. There have also been attempts by artists to create art that cannot be bought by the wealthy as a status object. The marker of a person's status becomes understanding the work instead of owning it.

Answer the questions:

1. How great is your interest in art?

2. Do you think children should study art at school?
3. What kind of art do you like? Why?
4. Does art change the way you think or feel?
5. How would the world be different without artists?
6. Describe the artwork in your house.
7. What kind of art is your country famous for?
8. What's the name of the best gallery you have been to?