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What is art?

E.A. Bucchianeri said that “art is in the eye of the beholder, and everyone will have their own interpretation.” Art is highly subjective, and so for me, I have to agree with Milton Glaser that if it moves you to attentiveness, then that is art. If it doesn’t move you, then it is something else. I have never seriously thought about this question before. In fact, before this I would have said that art is a creative craft; it can be drawings, paintings, sculptures, architecture, music, movies, and more. Then I would add that there is good art and bad art. However, after watching the suggested videos and after reading the first chapter of our book, especially Pablo Picasso’s comment that art doesn’t need a reason to exist and that it doesn’t even need to be understood, I have to reevaluate that definition.

Art has a right to exist for its own sake, no matter what price or monetary value it is assigned. So, the thing that is art to me, or to anybody, can be appreciated for its own sake. I found it very interesting that Picasso asked, “why does one love the night, flowers, everything around one, without trying to understand them?” So this for me extends the definition of what is art to just anything that moves me to attention without needing to assign meaning. I think I can more easily recognize if something moves me or not, and I don't need to judge anything more than that.

In response to the police depicted as pigs and the thin blue line issue, I believe that whether it is offensive or not, that has to be art if I define art as something that moves one to attentiveness. That form of art appears to have the effect of a visceral or repulsive response in the senator and surely others. So I would qualify that as an example of art.

Discussion response #1

I don’t necessarily agree with the thoughts on art by Milton Glaser that you mentioned, in that in order for it to be art it must create a response from the audience. Vincent Van Gogh did not gather a crowd when he created his paintings although after his death they became popular, were they always art or were they only art when people noticed them?

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody is there to hear it, does it make a sound? I think the answer to this and to your question is: of course, except nobody witnessed it. I think Glaser’s definition of what makes art is excellent, because it allows for personal interpretation as well as consensus. Obviously, there is a consensus about what is art, because we have museums, curators who work in the field, art brokers, and a very intense market for art. I think something that’s very relevant and that makes a big difference in people’s opinions of what is art is what was discussed in the BBC documentary: provenance. What is the history of the art piece and of the artist? That’s what makes a piece valuable in terms of money and even personal meaning for a lot of people. Have you ever read about or seen The Monuments Men? Our own soldiers were trying to save art and architecture which was and is still culturally significant during WWII.

To go back to your example of Van Gogh, had he never become well known, then his paintings would just be some guy’s paintings. They’d be exactly as artful as the ever where, with the same amount of talent poured into them, but without the provenance that comes with the Van Gogh name, nobody

would pay as much money for them as they do. And still, people exist who've never heard of Van Gogh, or for whom the name and history doesn't carry any weight, who maybe think he wasn't an especially talented painter. They might not consider his paintings good art, may call it bad art, or may not necessarily consider it art. In fact, I would bet good money that there are tons of very excellent and talented artists who live in obscurity their whole lives even today, and whose art (whatever medium it may be) sits in attics or basements without ever being appreciated. Anyway, that's what I think about that, and why I especially liked Glaser's definition of what makes art. It's a personal thing, very subjective, and there is room for consensus about what is art.

## Discussion response #2

### What is Art?

At first I thought this would be an easy question to answer, but after reading the textbook, watching the videos and doing my own research it is more complex to define what Art is.

"If it moves you to attentiveness it is Art, if it moves you to something else it is not." Milton Glaser, YouTube 2012, What is Art, and What is not. That really made me reflect on what types of Art brought me to attentiveness. Religious, War, propaganda, realism, abstract, symbolism, what type brings you to attentiveness? Does it have to be just one style or type?

I liked the video "What is Art for?", by The school of life, on youtube. It gives you a few ideas of what Art is for. It tells the viewer "Art keeps us hopeful, Art makes us less lonely, Art makes human suffering seem normal, Art rebalances us, Art is propaganda for what really matters to us. Art is a constant support source of encouragement for us to become our better selves."

Art uses many different words to help us understand the complexities that go into making Art. You have the "subject" which is the what - people, places, things, theme, processes, events, ideas. (Understanding Art, 11th edition, Fichner-Rathus) Line, Shape, Value, Color, Texture, space, time, and motion are the visual elements of art. Principles of design refer to the visual strategies that, along with elements of art, are used to construct a work of art. They include unity, variety, emphasis, focal point, balance, rhythm, scale, and proportion. (Understanding Art, 11th edition, Fichner-Rathus)

I will expand on just a few of the words to help us get a better understanding of Art. Rhythm - in art can be related to the different beats in music. In Art it describes recurrent visual motifs (like patterns) and compositional accents, movement, and flow. (Understanding Art, 11th edition, Fichner-Rathus)

Below you will see an example of Rhythm

rhythm example.jpg

Lines and shapes are another area that are not easy to define. Line itself has so many different meanings, which I found out after reading chapter two in the textbook. There are thin lines, thick lines, actual lines, implied lines, psychological lines, directional lines, outlines, contour lines etc.. I found the following words interesting "even the simplest lines can suggest different

moods, elicit different emotions, lines can be calm, forceful, assertive, tender or brutal. I loved the example in the textbook of Matthew Ritchie's work, the lines reflect a clear human presence, energy, personality, movement, that changes with each line.

matthewritchie.jpg

There are many ways to define Art, I could go on with all of the different aspects that make up art. The terms in the book, the feelings you get when looking at different pieces. But, I have learned after reading and watching different videos that art is a personal relationship for each person. Just as Milton Glaser put it "Art at its fullest compacity makes us attentive", it makes the audience, or observer come to a fullness that only they can describe, or define.

I feel that if I were to define art in my own terms, it would be that art moves me in such a way to become alert clear down to my soul. Even if the piece that I am looking at is something that I would not agree with, if its violent, sad, racist, it still renders an emotion from me. It makes me want to research the meaning behind the suffering, the meaning behind the beauty, the meaning behind the lines. Sometimes you will never find the meaning and that will leave the observer questioning, but that is part of the beauty of art.

Andria, I think you and I have a very similar new take on what makes art. It's totally subjective. I loved Glaser's definition, too. I think hearing that really clarified the meaning of art for me. In the past if I wanted art to decorate my walls I might have looked for something that most people might consider art. I think as a teenager I had a poster of Starry Night by Van Gogh in my room. However, while I think it's a nice painting, it doesn't really move me to attention; in fact, I am pretty sure I ignored the print from the moment I hung it up until I moved away. It's everywhere, well known, and I think that's why I picked it at the time. Today the art that I have decorating my walls is photos I've taken of my family, friends, and children. Those photos make me stop and look at and think about them all the time. So, they are art to me. Would they be art to anybody else, and does the answer to that question matter? So, it makes complete sense to me that art is art if it moves you to attention.