

Four Stance Portfolio

Presented by
K. B. Basseches, Ph. D.

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Essential Philosophical Questions

Can "art" be defined (or What is "art")?

Who gets to define the concept of "art?"

Who makes art?

Can children make art?

Can animals make art?

Is art found in nature?

What is the value of art? For whom and at what time?

Does art have to be beautiful?

What is the function of art?

What materials constitute art materials?

How is art similar to and different from craft?

Definitions

Mimesis- (Gr. Imitation) n. an important concept in ancient aesthetics: Aristotle held that art imitates nature and, by representing the character, actions and destinies of persons, brings out the universal (Poetics, chapter 9). Plato had a low opinion of most art forms because of their imitative nature, which makes them far removed from the truth, from "the real thing." In the Republic, Book 3, 395c, he also warns that bad qualities may rub off on the artist who imitates a bad character. Mimetic adj. (Mautner, 1999, p. 355). (Fortunately, Aristotle valued the cathartic qualities of art).

art looks like nature

Instrumentalism- n. i. the view that theories...are not strictly speaking true or false but are to be regarded as tools...Some theories prove more useful...than others. An...example is the view that a statement attributing a belief or a desire to a person can be perfectly true, although there are no real "inner states" of that nature...[this view] seems to identify truth with usefulness. (Mautner, 1999, p. 277)

art has function

Formalism- n. This word has many senses...2 (in literary criticism) an approach to the analysis and criticism of literary texts...It shuns subjective interpretation, and attends to narrative techniques, relations between phonetic and semantic features, and various structural characteristics. An important assumption is that features of this kind that make a text into a work of art (rather than the content, the author's intentions or general circumstances, or other externalities)...(Mautner, 1999, p. 203).

art shall be beautiful composition

Expressivism/Expressivist- n. the view that words or statements of a certain kind are typically used by a speaker to express a feeling, an attitude a desire, etc. but not to assert (truly or falsely) that something is the case. Expressivism about moral judgments for instance, has as a central claim that they do not purport to state facts and cannot, strictly speaking, be evaluated as true or false, but that they serve to express certain attitudes or dispositions (Mautner, 1999, p. 189).

The Stances, Simplified

Stance	A good example of art	Theory proposed by:	Approx. time period started
Mimesis (Imitationalism)	A good work of art should imitate nature.	Plato and Aristotle	Ancient Greeks
Instrumentalism (Utilitarianism, Functionalism or Pragmatism)	A good work of art should serve a utilitarian purpose.	pragmatists (such as Peirce, Dewey, and James) as well as by some positivists, (e.g., Mach, Schlick).	Early 20 th century (although the practice is evident earlier and around the world)
Formalism	A good work of art should provoke an "aesthetic emotion;" a good work of art should demonstrate "significant form," effectively use the formal properties and even be "beautiful" (art for art's sake).	Clive Bell and Robert Fry	1914
Expressivism (Emotionalism)	A good work of art should express or evoke emotions (expression vs. expressiveness).	Leo Tolstoy and R. G. Collingwood	1896 1930's

Instructions for the activity:

- Look through the selected images
- Identify the particular stance you believe is exemplified by the image.
- Discuss your ideas with others at your table.
- Cut and past images onto the panel.
- Label the stance along with a short explanation for the rationale that you used in selecting the stance.

References:

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Other stances to know about and consider in the future:

Sensationalist: That which gives me pleasure is art (sometimes addressed in discussions about whether art is “play”).

Expertist: That which has gained the favor of the experts in the discipline of art is art (sometimes considered the institutional value of art).

Spiritualist: That which serves to glorify, exemplify, and extol power or to help the viewer to contemplate in a religious manner is art.

Contextualist: That which represents a particular time, place and people is art.

The Expressivist stance: is sometimes separated into two stances, Expressionist and Emotionalist or Emotionalist and Ideaist.

an original ^{creation} expression of an artist's view
of culture, media and humanity

formalist

expressivist

instrumentalist

expressivist