

Art Opinions

The question of “what is art?” has been asked a thousand times. We’ve been pondering over what art is for years upon years. Some say art must be beautiful to the eye, ignite an emotion, or reach out to the observer. Some say art is not art until it changes their point of view, belief, or opinion. Others say, art is simply a replication of human expression. With all these different opinions and ideas about what art is, could one really answer the question: “what is art?”

In order to attempt to answer this question, other questions must be asked. Does art have to be man made or can it be purely natural? Does art have to be manipulated and imitated by a human or can it just happen? Does art have to be seen by more than one person in order to be art? With all these questions a reasonable place to start finding answers is the dictionary.

There are 18 definitions of the word *art* on dictionary.com, with the first definition being, “Human effort to imitate, supplement, alter, or counteract the work of nature.” The second definition being, “The conscious production or arrangement of sounds, colors, forms, movements, or other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty, specifically the production of the beautiful in a graphic or plastic medium.” And the third definition being, “The study of these activities, the product of these activities; human works of beauty considered as a group, the high quality of conception or execution, as found in works of beauty; aesthetic value.”

These explications of what art is can adequately answer every prior question. However, one source cannot adequately answer this everlasting question, could it? The main idea of art lies primarily in human hands, so the opinion of human voices should be taken into consideration. I decided to ask people at random what they thought art was.

The first person I asked is in kindergarten, and happened to have been drawing. “Art is coloring” she answered. “And I’m a artist, see?” She held up her picture, which was a scatter of shapes and scribbles. “It’s my mommy in a garden, see?” No, I did not see her mom and the garden. I saw red and orange scratches across blue boxes. What I saw, and what she intended me to see were incompatible. I know that she is only five years old, but does art have to have a common visual understanding, or can many visual interpretations come from one piece? Art could easily be the mimic of a memory or experience, entirely created for and by the beholder, while the onlooker sincerely does that, observe.

A man, observing my interview with the little girl caught my attention as I was leaving. He’d been thinking about his answer for some time. “Art is human expression of the human condition.” He said with a matter of fact, but his answer is broad and vague. To this man, art could be anything a human does. To this man, art is simply a verb. Weeping, winking, pacing, peeing, snoring, snickering, or the conversation he and I were having. This list could go on and on. If art is merely a verb, then the life we lead is merely art. Art should have more meaning and depth to it. Art should capture the feelings of the creator as well as the beholder. Art cannot possibly be one’s monotonous daily routine. Instead, art should make one think twice about life.

Later that afternoon, I asked an SOU student the question, which was more difficult to respond to than she expected. "I don't know" she answered. She thought for a moment, then came up with an alternative answer for me. "Art is an intentional, tangible, display of human expression." For this student, art is anything and everything human made, art is simply a human invention. A coffee pot, a radiator, a sock, a shopping list, a piece of furniture, a toothbrush, or my beautiful composition. This list could go on and on as well. If art is an invention, then art is seen or used everyday, and once again becomes a part of everyday life. Art cannot be taken for granted, and therefore should not be categorized under ordinary objects. Art should take one's breath away and seize the moment.

The most useful quote I received in answering this question is from Mada Morgan. She did not think twice about her response. She simply stated that "art is a symbolic representation of a feeling, idea, or concept that works on both the artist and receiver to elicit a response; which, in turn, leads to a better understanding of the self and world." This answer is precise, resourceful and to the point. According to Mada, art lies solely in human hands, and can only be reproduced or appreciated if an emotional reaction is immersed. Art is not a part of everyday life. Art must impact one's life either through action or reaction.

This morning, I had an "artful" experience that corresponds somewhat to Mada's answer. Shortly before the sunrise, hundreds of birds came soaring through the haze, swaying and flowing together, all to land within inches of each other on a telephone pole wire. The wire was bare as far as the eye could see, except for the newly occupied section. The birds started chirping and singing to one another, each note getting louder

than the next. Their boisterous song cut through the silence of the morning. Then, without missing a beat, they stopped in unison and flew off into the sunrise, making the most beautiful patterns with one another. I watched them until they were gone.

Could my experience *solely* have been art? Or does my experience become art after I represent it through drawing, or sculpting, or writing, or story telling? I, as a receiver was touched by this experience, which influenced me to become an artist, who poorly recreated a symbolic imitation of the emotions I felt at that point in time. My description of this morning is but a glimpse compared to the experience itself. Unless chills crawled up your back while reading the description, there is little resemblance. Nonetheless, I was emotionally moved by my experience, and deem it as art.

Art. It's a personal, inexplicable, somewhat magical consciousness of emotions that create action or reaction. It's what the artist makes. It's how the onlooker perceives. It's why we think twice about life.

