

What Art Is and What Is Not Art

Part I: Below is a list of statements about art. Put a check mark next to all of the statements that apply to what you think art is. Feel free to check as many statements as you need to. Spaces have been provided at the bottom to add any additional thoughts you might have on the nature of art.

Statements About Art	What I Think Art Is
Must be beautiful	
Must make an important statement about life or the human condition	
Must contain the elements of design: line, shape, color, texture, value, form	
Must evoke an emotion	
Must have an uplifting theme or message	
Must be visually pleasing	
Must be a form of communication between the artist and the viewer	
Must be seen at a museum or gallery	
Must have monetary value	
Must reflect the spirit of the times in which it was created	
Must make the viewer think	
Must fit nicely into an office setting or coordinate well with home décor	
Must have been done by a recognized artist	
Must reflect the technical skill of the artist	
Must represent the artist's unique vision of the world	
Must represent an advancement or improvement over themes and styles of the past	
Must be unique	
Must have been reviewed by a recognized art critic	
Must be something that can only be understood by intellectuals and connoisseurs	
Must be expensive	
Must show a distinct break from the styles and techniques of the past	
Must be confusing or difficult to understand	
Must be original	
Can never be done using machines or other artificial devices	
Must say something important	
Must have a distinct mood that the viewer can identify with	
Must have value in the marketplace	
Must make important and relevant political statements	
Must have hidden meanings	
Must be interesting	
Is not a product but a reflection of the unique genius of the artist	
Can have a profound impact on how people perceive the world	
Anything can be art	
Must be one of the fine arts: sculpture, painting, photography, etc.; never crafts pieces like pottery or fiber arts Reflects the changes and concerns of a culture or time period	
A selection of specific subject matter from all possible subject matter that contains a	
Is never tainted by commercialism	
Is created by people who have a special insight into life, nature, and the human condition	

Part II:

Below is a series of Web sites that show a wide variety of art from all over the world. Go online and select a piece of art that best represents what you consider to be true art. If possible, print out the work you've selected and bring it to class.

An encyclopedia of art
<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/>

World Wide Arts Resources
<http://wwar.com/artists/>

Art History Resources on the Web
<http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHLinks.html>

The ARTchive
<http://www.artchive.com/>

Tips on Selecting a Piece of Art

- These distinctions are not absolute but should help guide you.
- Be patient with this search.
- Give yourself at least an hour of search time.
- Be aware of what subject matter appeals to you, what colors you find most pleasing, and what types of shapes in what relationship to one another most intrigue you.

When you have selected your piece of art, fill in the information below.

Title of piece _____

Artist _____

Nationality of the artist _____

Year the piece was done _____

Movement or period in art with which the piece is associated:

What makes this piece a perfect representation of art?

If you already have an artist or period of art history in mind, you can go directly to the works on these Web sites. You may also choose to look at examples of sculpture or photography.

If you don't have any particular favorites, use the following guidelines to direct your search:

If you like art that shows pictures of real people, places and objects, you will be looking for realistic art. This type of art can be found in the Renaissance, in the pre-Raphaelites, the baroque period, rococo, Byzantine art, the American ashcan school, the art of the romantics, classicism, neoclassicism, photorealism, Gothic art, regionalism, and the art of the Harlem Renaissance, to name a few.

If you like art that may not contain a discernable subject and is more evocative, you may want to look at abstract expressionism, cubism, minimalism, and dada, to name a few.

If you like art that is somewhere in between the two, look at impressionism, postimpressionism, pointillism, Der Blau Reiter, and fauvism, to name a few.