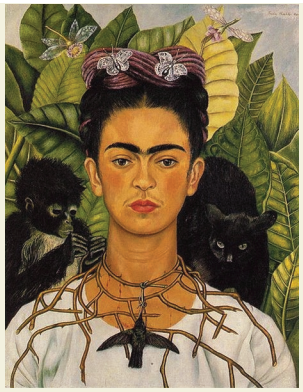


THE HUMANITIES THROUGH THE ARTS

Eleventh Edition

Lee A. Jacobus
Professor of English Emeritus
University of Connecticut

F. David Martin
Professor of Philosophy Emeritus
Bucknell University

Mc Graw Hill

THE HUMANITIES THROUGH THE ARTS, ELEVENTH EDITION

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 LCR 27 26 25 24 23 22

ISBN 978-1-264-06962-0 (bound edition)
MHID 1-264-06962-6 (bound edition)
ISBN 978-1-264-36019-2 (loose-leaf edition)
MHID 1-264-36019-3 (loose-leaf edition)

Executive Portfolio Manager: *Sarah Remington*
Product Developer: *Victoria DeRosa*
Product Development Manager: *Dawn Groundwater*
Marketing Manager: *Nancy Baudean*
Content Project Managers: *Mary E. Powers* (Core), *Katie Reuter* (Assessment)
Buyer: *Susan K. Culbertson*
Designer: *Beth Blech*
Content Licensing Specialist: *Sarah Flynn*
Cover Image: **(background):** *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1939,* **(left to right):** *dogmadesigns/123RF (Great ancient theater of Epidaurus Peloponnese Greece), Lee A. Jacobus (Temple Carving), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Mary Stillman Harkness, 1950 (Pipa)*
Compositor: *Aptara®, Inc.*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Martin, F. David, 1920- author. | Jacobus, Lee A., author.
Title: Humanities through the arts / Lee A. Jacobus, Professor of English Emeritus, University of Connecticut; F. David Martin, Professor of Philosophy Emeritus, Bucknell University.
Description: Eleventh edition. | New York, NY : McGraw-Hill Education, [2023] | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021029371 (print) | LCCN 2021029372 (ebook) | ISBN 9781264069620 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781264360192 (spiral bound) | ISBN 9781264360185 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Arts--Psychological aspects. | Art appreciation.
Classification: LCC NX165 .M37 2023 (print) | LCC NX165 (ebook) | DDC 700.1/9--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021029371
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021029372

mheducation.com/highered

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lee A. Jacobus (PhD, Claremont Graduate University) taught at Western Connecticut State University and then at the University of Connecticut (Storrs) until he retired in 2001. He held a Danforth Teachers Grant while earning his doctorate. His publications include *Shakespeare and the Dialectic of Certainty* (St. Martin's Press, 1992); *Sudden Apprehension: Aspects of Knowledge in Paradise Lost* (Mouton, 1976); *John Cleveland: A Critical Study* (G. K. Hall, 1975); *Aesthetics and the Arts* (McGraw Hill, 1968); *The Bedford Introduction to Drama* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018); and *A World of Ideas* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2020).

F. David Martin (PhD, University of Chicago) taught at the University of Chicago and then at Bucknell University until his retirement in 1983. He was a Fulbright Research Scholar in Florence and Rome from 1957 through 1959 and received seven other major research grants during his career, as well as the Christian Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching. Dr. Martin's publications include *Art and the Religious Experience* (Associated University Presses, 1972); *Sculpture and the Enlivened Space* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1981); and *Facing Death: Theme and Variations* (Associated University Presses, 2006). Professor Martin died in 2014.

We dedicate this study to
teachers and students of the humanities.

Peter Horree/Alamy Stock Photo

BRIEF CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Joan Marcus

PREFACE

Overview

The Humanities Through the Arts, eleventh edition, explores the humanities with an emphasis on the arts. Examining the relationship of the humanities to values, objects, and events important to people is central to this book. We make a distinction between artists and other humanists: Artists reveal values, while other humanists examine or reflect on values. We study how values are revealed in the arts while keeping in mind a basic question: "What is art?" Judging by the existence of ancient artifacts, we see that artistic expression is one of the most fundamental human activities. It binds us together as a people by revealing the most important values of our culture.

Our genre-based approach offers students the opportunity to understand the relationship of the arts to human values by examining, in-depth, each of the major artistic media. Subject matter, form, and content in each of the arts supply the framework for careful analysis. Painting and photography focus our eyes on the visual appearance of things. Sculpture reveals the textures, densities, and shapes of things. Architecture sharpens our perception of spatial relationships, both inside and out. Literature, theater, cinema, and video explore values and make us more aware of the human condition. Our understanding of feelings is deepened by music. Our sensitivity to movement, especially of the human body, is enhanced by dance. The wide range of opportunities for criticism and analysis helps the reader synthesize the complexities of the arts and their interaction with values of many kinds. All of this is achieved with an exceptionally vivid and complete illustration program alongside detailed discussion and interactive responses to the problems inherent in a close study of the arts and values of our time.

Organization

This edition, as with previous editions, is organized into three parts, offering considerable flexibility in the classroom:

Part 1, "Fundamentals," includes the first three introductory chapters. In Chapter 1, *The Humanities: An Introduction*, we distinguish the humanities from the sciences, and the arts from other humanities. In Chapter 2, *What Is a Work of Art?* we raise the question of definition in art and the ways in which we distinguish art from other objects and experiences. Chapter 3, *Being a Critic of the Arts*, introduces the vital role of criticism in art appreciation and evaluation.

Part 2, "The Arts," includes individual chapters on each of the basic arts. The structure of this section permits complete flexibility: The chapters may be used in their present order or in any order one wishes. We begin with the individual chapters *Painting, Sculpture*, and *Architecture*; follow with *Literature, Theater, Music*, and *Dance;* and continue with *Photography, Cinema*, and *Television and Video Art*. Instructors may reorder or omit chapters as needed. The chapter *Photography* logically precedes the chapters *Cinema* and *Television and Video Art* for the convenience of instructors who prefer to teach the chapters in the order presented.

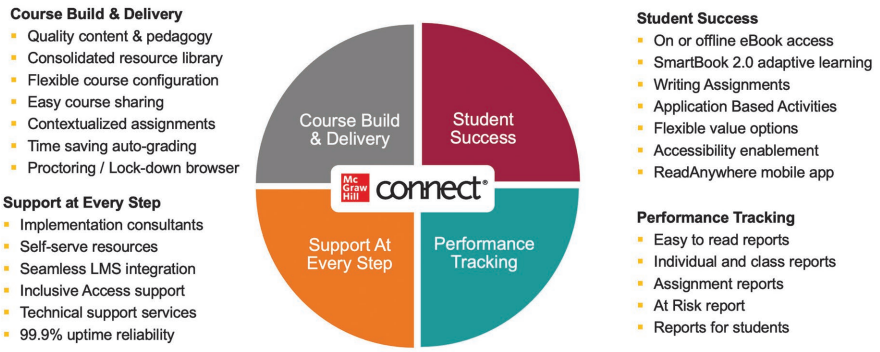
Part 3, "Interrelationships," begins with Chapter 14, *Is It Art or Something Like It?* We study illustration, folk art, propaganda, and kitsch while raising the question "What is art?" We also examine the avant-garde as it pushes us to the edge of definition. Chapter 15, *The Interrelationships of the Arts*, explores the ways in which the arts work together, as in how a film interprets E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End*, how literature and a musical interpretation of a Beaumarchais play result in Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, how Walt Whitman's poetry inspires van Gogh's painting *The Starry Night*, how a passage from Ovid's epic poem "The Metamorphoses" inspires the Bernini sculpture *Apollo and Daphne*, and more. Chapter 16, *The Interrelationships of the Humanities*, addresses the ways in which the arts reveal values shared by the other humanities—particularly history, philosophy, and theology.

Key Changes in the Eleventh Edition

The eleventh edition features the following changes:

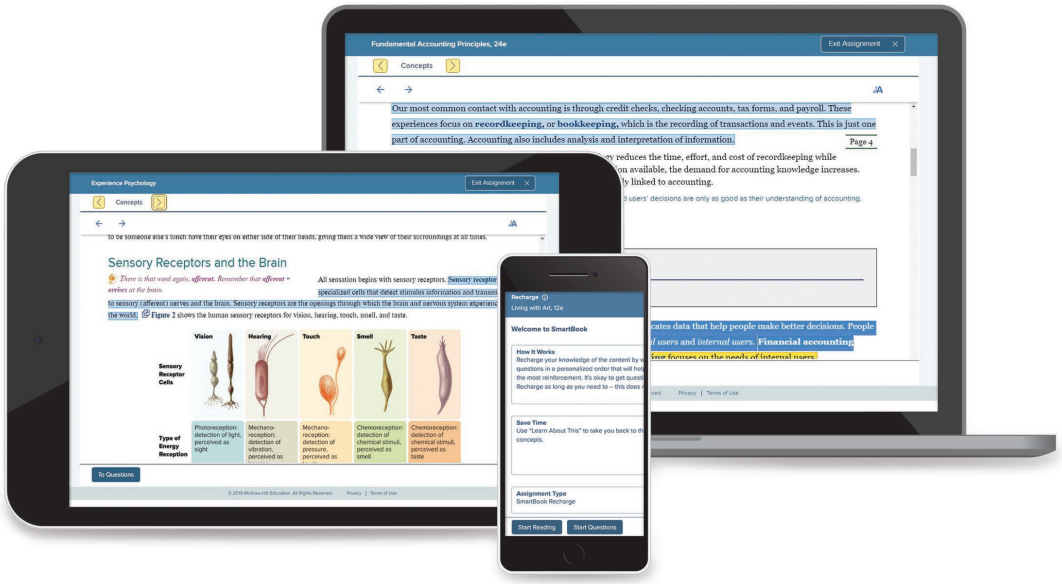
NEW Expanded Connect course with SmartBook 2.0. Connect is designed to help students be more productive with simple, flexible, intuitive tools that maximize study time and meet individual learning needs.

The Humanities Through the Arts now offers two reading experiences for students and instructors: SmartBook 2.0 and eBook. SmartBook 2.0™ creates a personalized reading experience by highlighting the most impactful concepts a student needs to learn at that moment in time. The reading experience continuously adapts by highlighting content based on what the student knows and doesn't know. Real-time reports quickly identify the concepts that require more attention from individual students—or



the entire class. eBook provides a simple, elegant reading experience, available for offline reading. Incorporate adaptive study resources like SmartBook® 2.0 into your course and help your students be better prepared in less time. Learn more about the powerful personalized learning experience available in SmartBook 2.0 at www.mheducation.com/highered/connect/smartbook.

New to this edition and available within Connect, the Writing Assignment Plus tool delivers a learning experience to help students improve their written communication skills and conceptual understanding. As an instructor you can assign, monitor, grade, and provide feedback on writing more efficiently and effectively.



SmartBook

DESIGNED FOR

- Preparing for class
- Practice and study
- Focusing on key topics
- Reports and analytics

SUPPORTS

- Adaptive, personalized learning
- Assignable content
- Smartphone and tablet via iOS and Android apps

eBook

DESIGNED FOR

- Reading in class
- Reference
- Offline reading
- Accessibility

SUPPORTS

- Simple, elegant reading
- Basic annotations
- Smartphone and tablet via iOS and Android apps

Updated illustration program and contextual discussions. More than 20 percent of the images in this edition are new or have been updated to include fresh classic and contemporary works. New discussions of these works appear near the illustrations. The 200-plus images throughout the book have been carefully chosen and reproduced in full color when possible, resulting in a beautifully illustrated text. Newly added visual artists represented include painters Edvard Munch, Robert Colescott, Emanuel Leutze, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Barkley Leonnard Hendricks, Philippe de Champaigne, Alfredo Ramos Martinez, Grace Hartigan, Rembrandt van Rijn, Frida Kahlo, Berthe Morisot, Charles Demuth, and Marc Chagall; installation artists Yayoi Kusama and Maurizio Cattelan; sculptors Donatello, Martin Puryear, Louise Nevelson, Piotr Kowalski, Annette Messager, Elizabeth Catlett, and Hagesander, Athenodoros, and Polydorus; photographers Mathew Brady, Charles Sheeler, Robert Cornelius, Susan Meiselas, Gillian Wearing, and Hannah Wilke; and video artists Cyprien Gaillard and Magdalena Fernandez. Newly added film and television stills represent Guillermo del Toro's film *The Shape of Water*, Jane Campion's film *The Piano*, Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing*, and the popular television shows *Black-ish* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Along with the many new illustrations and contextual discussions of the visual arts, film, and television, new works and images in the literary, dance, theatrical, and musical arts have been added and contextualized. These include works by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, Anton Chekhov, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Isabella Augusta Gregory, August Wilson, George Gershwin, Misty Copeland, Pam Tanowitz, and Savion Glover.

Increased focus on non-Western art and art by women and artists of color. This edition contains numerous new examples, including paintings by Emanuel Leutze, Robert Colescott, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Berthe Morisot, Grace Hartigan, Frida Kahlo, Barkley Leonnard Hendricks, and Alfred Ramos Martinez; sculpture by Louise Nevelson, Martin Puryear, Elizabeth Catlett, and Annette Messager; photographs by Hannah Wilke, Gillian Wearing, and Susan Meiselas; architecture by Zaha Hadid; literature by Chekhov, and Isabella Augusta Gregory; dances by Misty Copeland, Pam Tanowitz, "Lil Buck" Riley, and Savion Glover; installation art by Yayoi Kusama and Maurizio Cattelan; and video art by Magdalena Fernandez. Socially conscious films by Jane Campion, Guillermo del Toro, and Spike Lee are additions to the chapter on cinema.

Pedagogical Features

Four major pedagogical boxed features enhance student understanding of the genres and of individual works within the genres: Perception Key, Conception Key, Experiencing, and Focus On.

- The **Perception Key** boxes are designed to sharpen readers' responses to the arts. These boxes raise important questions about specific works of art in a way that respects the complexities of the works and of our responses to them. The questions raised are usually open-ended and thereby avoid any doctrinaire views or dogmatic opinions. The emphasis is on perception and awareness, and how a heightened awareness will produce a fuller and more meaningful understanding

of the work at hand. In a few cases our own interpretations and analyses follow the keys and are offered not as *the* way to perceive a given work of art but, rather, as one *possible* way. Our primary interest is in exciting our readers to perceive the splendid singularity of the work of art in question.

PERCEPTION KEY Abstract Painting

1. Turn any representational painting upside down. What effect do the colors have on you?
2. Turn Pollock's *The Flame* upside down. Does the organization of color and form have a new effect on you?
3. In which painting is the power of color and form most powerful: Georgia O'Keeffe's *Rust Red Hills* (Figure 4-13) or Gorky's *Untitled* (Figure 4-16)?
4. Is Grace Hartigan's *The Persian Jacket* (Figure 4-17) abstract or representational art?
5. With which of the abstract paintings in this book do you participate most deeply?

- We use **Conception Key** boxes, rather than Perception Key boxes, in certain instances throughout the book where we focus on thought and conception rather than observation and perception. Again, these are open-ended questions that involve reflection and understanding. There is no single way of responding to these keys, just as there is no simple way to answer the questions.

CONCEPTION KEY Value Decisions

1. How do you choose between positive and negative values? What kind of art has helped you choose?
2. Reflect about the works of art we have discussed in this book. Which of them clarified value possibilities for you in a way that might influence your value decisions? If so, how? Be as specific as possible.
3. Do you think that political leaders are more likely to make wise decisions if they are sensitive to the arts? How important a role does art have in politics?
4. Is there is any correlation between a flourishing state of the arts and a democracy? A tyranny?

- Each chapter provides an **Experiencing** box that gives the reader the opportunity to approach a specific work of art in more detail than the Perception Key boxes. Analysis of the work begins by answering a few preliminary questions to make it accessible to students. Follow-up questions ask students to think critically about the work and guide them to their own interpretations. In every case we raise major issues concerning the genre of the work, the background of the work, and the artistic issues that make the work demanding and important. Many of the Experiencing boxes are new to this edition, including those discussing Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*, Emanual Leutze's painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* and Robert Colescott's painting *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware*, Caravaggio's painting *The Denial of Saint Peter*, Auguste Rodin's *The*

Burghers of Calais, Frank O. Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, August Wilson's play *Fences*, George Gershwin's song "Rhapsody in Blue," Alvin Ailey's dance *Revelations*, Dorothea Lange's photograph *Migrant Mother*, and the television show *The Handmaid's Tale*.

EXPERIENCING Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* and Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*

1. If you had not read Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, what would you believe to be the subject matter of Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*? Do you believe it is a less interesting work if you do not know Ovid?
2. What does Bernini add to your responses to Ovid's poetry? What is the value of a sculptural representation of a poetic action? What are the benefits to your appreciation of either Bernini or Ovid?
3. Bernini's sculpture is famous for its virtuoso perfection of carving. Yet in this work, "truth to materials" is largely bypassed. Does that fact diminish the effectiveness of the work?

- In each chapter of "The Arts" and "Interrelationships" sections of the book, we include a **Focus On** box, which provides an opportunity to deal in-depth with a group of artworks in context, the work of a single artist, or a single work of art. New to this edition is a Focus On box discussing John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell's graphic novel *March.* Other Focus On boxes discuss the

FOCUS ON The Alhambra

The Alhambra (Figure 6-29) is one of the world's most dazzling works of architecture. Its beginnings in the Middle Ages were modest, a fortress on a hilly flatland above Granada built by Arab invaders—Moors—who controlled much of Spain. In time, the fortress was added to, and by the fourteenth century the Nasrid dynasty demanded a sumptuous palace and King Yusuf I (1333–1352) began construction. After his death it was continued by his son Muhammad V (1353–1391).

While the needs of a fortress were still evident, including the plain massive exterior walls, the Nasrids wanted the interior to be luxurious, magnificent, and beautiful. The Alhambra is one of the world's most astounding examples of beautifully decorated architecture. The builders created a structure that was different from any that had been built in Islam. But at the same time, they depended on many historical traditions for interior decoration, such as the Seljuk, Mughal, and Fatimid styles.

FIGURE 6-29
The Alhambra, Granada, Spain. Circa 1370–1380. "Alhambra" may be translated as *red*, possibly a reference to the color of the bricks of its outer walls. It sits on high ground above the town.

Daniel Viñé Garcia/Getty Images

pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Alhambra, the popular musical *Hamilton*, the classic film *Casablanca,* and the critically acclaimed television series *The Americans*. Each of these opportunities encourages in-depth and comparative study.

Digital Tools

McGraw Hill Connect offers full-semester access to comprehensive, reliable content for the Humanities courses. Connect's deep integration with most learning management systems (LMSs), including Blackboard and Desire2Learn (D2L), offers single sign-on and deep gradebook synchronization. Data from Assignment Results reports synchronize directly with many LMSs, allowing scores to flow automatically from Connect into school-specific gradebooks, if required.

Connect offers on-demand, single sign-on access to students—wherever they are and whenever they have time. With a single, one-time registration, students receive access to McGraw Hill's trusted content.

Instructor Resources

The Humanities Through the Arts, eleventh edition, includes a number of resources to assist instructors with planning and teaching their courses:

- **Instructor's Manual.** The Instructor's Manual offers learning objectives, chapter outlines, possible discussion and lecture topics, and more.
- **PowerPoint Presentations.** The PowerPoint presentations, including WCAG-compliant capabilities, highlight the key points of the chapter and include supporting visuals. All of the slides can be modified to meet individual needs.
- **Test Bank and Test Builder.** A Test Bank is available with multiple choice and essay questions. Available within Connect, Test Builder is a cloud-based tool that enables instructors to format tests that can be printed, administered within a Learning Management System, or exported as a Word document of the test bank. Test Builder offers a modern, streamlined interface for easy content configuration that matches course needs, without requiring a download.

Test Builder allows you to

- access all test bank content from a particular title.
- easily pinpoint the most relevant content through robust filtering options.
- manipulate the order of questions or scramble questions and/or answers.
- pin questions to a specific location within a test.
- determine your preferred treatment of algorithmic questions.
- choose the layout and spacing.
- add instructions and configure default settings.

Test Builder provides a secure interface for better protection of content and allows for just-in-time updates to flow directly into assessments.

Image Bank

Instructors can access a database of images from the eleventh edition of *The Humanities Through the Arts.* Instructors can filter by category or search by key terms. Categories include the following:

- Medium
- World Culture
- Style/Time Period

Images can easily be downloaded for use in presentations and in PowerPoints. The download includes a text file with image captions and information.

You can access *Image Bank* under the library tab in Connect.

Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave* Katsushika Hokusai/S. Oliver/Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)

Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, interior. View Pictures/UIG/Getty Images

Swan Lake with the corps de ballet of the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, London. Alastair Muir/Shutterstock

Create: Your book, Your Way

create® McGraw Hill's Content Collections Powered by Create® is a self-service website that enables instructors to create custom course materials—print and eBooks— by drawing upon McGraw Hill's comprehensive, cross-disciplinary content. Choose what you want from our high-quality textbooks, articles, and cases. Combine it with your own content quickly and easily, and tap into other rights-secured, third-party content such as readings, cases, and articles. Content can be arranged in a way that makes the most sense for your course and you can include the course name and information as well. Choose the best format for your course: color print, black-and-white print, or eBook. The eBook can be included in your Connect course and is available on the free ReadAnywhere app for smartphone or tablet access as well. When you are finished customizing, you will receive a free digital copy to review in just minutes! Visit McGraw Hill Create® —www.mcgrawhillcreate.com—today and begin building.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is indebted to more people than we can truly credit. We are deeply grateful to the following survey respondents for their help on this edition:

Michael Berberich, *Galveston College*; Jaime Burcham, *Florida Southwestern State College–Lee Campus*; Jennifer Carrillo, *Spartanburg Community College*; Debra DeWitte,

University of Texas at Dallas; Diane Gaston, *Cuyahoga Community College*; Sarah Graham, *Lewis–Clark State College*; Heather Pristash, *Western Wyoming Community College*; Frederick Smith, *Florida Gateway College*; Mary Elizabeth Valesano, *University of Detroit Mercy–McNichols Campus*; Terri Whitney, *North Shore Community College–Danvers Campus*; and Adrian Windsor, *Coastline Community College*.

We also thank the following reviewers for their help shaping previous editions:

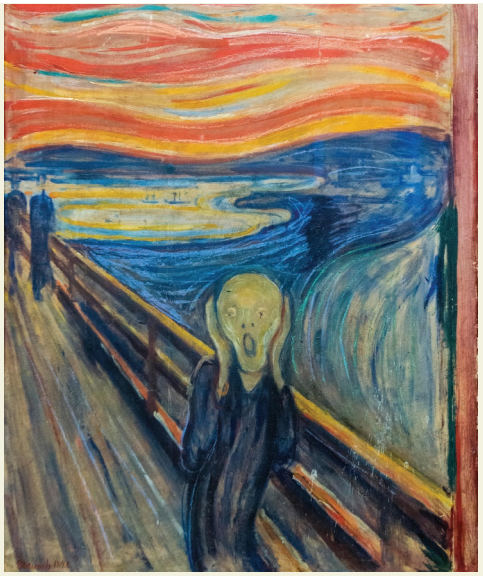
Micheal Jay Adamek, *Ozarks Technical Community College*; Addell Austin Anderson, *Wayne County Community College District*; Larry Atkins, *Ozarks Technical Community College*; David Avalos, *California State University San Marcos*; Michael Bajuk, *Western Washington University*; Bruce Bellingham, *University of Connecticut*; Eugene Bender, *Richard J. Daley College*; Barbara Brickman, *Howard Community College*; Peggy Brown, *Collin County Community College*; Lance Brunner, *University of Kentucky*; Alexandra Burns, *Bay Path College*; Bill Burrows, *Lane Community College*; Glen Bush, *Heartland Community College*; Aaron Butler, *Warner Pacific College Adult Degree Program*; Sara Cardona, *Richland College*; Linda Carpenter, *Coastline Community College*; Brandon Cesmat, *California State University San Marcos*; Jordan Chilton, *Ozarks Technical Community College*; Selma Jean Cohen, *editor of* Dance Perspectives; Karen Conn, *Valencia Community College*; Harrison Davis, *Brigham Young University*; Jim Doan, *Nova University*; Patricia Dodd, *Houston Community College*; Jill Domoney, *Johnson County Community College*; Gerald Eager, *Bucknell University*; Laura Early, *Highland Community College*; Kristin Edford, *Amarillo College*; D. Layne Ehlers, *Bacone College*; Jane Ferencz, *University of Wisconsin–Whitewater*; Roberta Ferrell, *SUNY Empire State*; Michael Flanagan, *University of Wisconsin–Whitewater*; Kathy Ford, *Lake Land College*; Jeremy R. Franklin, *Colorado Mesa University*; Andy Friedlander, *Skagit Valley College*; Harry Garvin, *Bucknell University*; Susan K. de Ghizee, *University of Denver*; Amber Gillis, *El Camino College–Compton Center*; Michael Gos, *Lee College*; M. Scott Grabau, *Irvine Valley College*; Donna Graham, *Ozarks Technical Community College*; Lee Hartman, *Howard Community College*; Daniel Hieber, *Ozarks Technical Community College*; Jeffrey T. Hopper, *Harding University*; James Housefield, *Texas State University–San Marcos*; Stephen Husarik, *University of Arkansas–Fort Smith*; Ramona Ilea, *Pacific University Oregon*; Joanna Jacobus, *choreographer*; Lee Jones, *Georgia Perimeter College–Lawrenceville*; Deborah Jowitt, Village Voice; Jennifer Keefe, *Valencia College*; Nadene A. Keene, *Indiana University–Kokomo*; Marsha Keller, *Oklahoma City University*; Paul Kessel, *Mohave Community College*; Edward Kies, *College of DuPage*; John Kinkade, *Centre College*; Gordon Lee, *Lee College*; Donny Leveston, *Houston Community College*; Susanna Lundgren, *Warner Pacific College*; Tracy L. McAfee, *North Central State College*; Jimidene Murphey, *Wharton County Junior College*; L. Timothy Myers, *Butler Community College*; Marceau Myers, *North Texas State University*; Martha Myers, *Connecticut College*; William E. Parker, *University of Connecticut*; Sven Pearsall, *Alpena Community College*; Seamus Pender, *Franklin Pierce College*; Debbi Richard, *Dallas Baptist University*; Ellen Rosewall, *University of Wisconsin–Green Bay*; Matthew Scott, *Ozarks Technical Community College*; Susan Shmeling, *Vincennes University*; Ed Simone, *St. Bonaventure University*; Timothy Soulis, *Transylvania University*; C. Edward Spann, *Dallas Baptist University*; Mark Stewart, *San Joaquin Delta College*; Robert Streeter, *University of Chicago*; Peter C. Surace, *Cuyahoga Community College*; Normand Theriault, *Houston Community College*; Robert Tynes, *University of North Carolina at Asheville*; Peter Utgaard, *Cuyamaca College*; Dawn

Hamm Walsh, *Dallas Baptist University*; Walter Wehner, *University of North Carolina at Greensboro*; and Keith West, *Butler Community College*.

We want to thank the editorial team at McGraw Hill for their smart and generous support for this edition. Product Development Manager Dawn Groundwater, along with Executive Portfolio Manager Sarah Remington, oversaw the revision from inception through production. Product Developer Victoria DeRosa guided us carefully through the process of establishing a revision plan and incorporating new material into the text. In all things she was a major sounding board as we thought about how to improve the book. We also owe thanks to Lead Content Project Manager Mary Powers, who oversaw the book smoothly through the production process; Beth Blech, who oversaw the interior design in both the print and online versions of the text as well as the cover; Peter de Lissovoy, who was an exceptionally good copyeditor; and Content Licensing Specialist Sarah Flynn who oversaw the permissions process. All the wonderful people who worked on this book made our job easier and helped make this book distinctive and artistic.

A Note from the Authors

Our own commitment to the arts and the humanities has been lifelong. One purpose of this book is to help instill a love of all the arts in its readers. We have faced many of the issues and problems that are considered in this book and, to an extent, we are still undecided about certain important questions concerning the arts and their relationship to the humanities. Clearly, we grow and change our thinking as we grow. Our engagement with the arts at any age will reflect our own abilities and commitments. But as we grow, we deepen our understanding of the arts we love as well as deepen our understanding of our own nature, our inner selves. We believe that the arts and the humanities function together to make life more intense, more significant, and more wonderful. A lifetime of work unrelieved by a deep commitment to the arts would be stultifying and perhaps destructive to one's soul. The arts and humanities make us one with our fellow human beings. They help us understand each other, just as they help us admire the beauty that is the product of the human imagination. As the philosopher Susanne K. Langer once said, the arts are the primary avenues to the education of our emotional lives. By our efforts in understanding the arts, we are indelibly enriched.



Chapter 1

THE HUMANITIES: AN INTRODUCTION

The Humanities: A Study of Values

The **humanities** and **sciences** are not as distinct from one another as current academic descriptions imply. Originally the humanities indicated a split from theological studies, which centered on God, because they concerned themselves with humans and human activities. The academic distinction centers on mathematics and the "hard" sciences, which depend on measurement and exact comparisons, while the humanities depend on ideas and research that can be understood and felt but rarely measured. Most colleges describe themselves as a college of arts and sciences. In this book we focus on the arts, but science sometimes enters the discussion as well.

The current separation between the humanities and the sciences reveals itself in a number of contemporary controversies. For example, the cloning of animals has been greeted by many people as a possible benefit for domestic livestock farmers. Genetically altered wheat, cereals, soybeans, and other food crops have been heralded by many scientists as a breakthrough that will produce disease-resistant crops and therefore permit humans to continue to increase the world food supply. On the other hand, some people fear that such tampering with genetics may become uncontrollable and possibly damage food supplies in the long term. Scientific research into the human genome has identified certain genes for inherited diseases, such as breast cancer or Alzheimer's disease, that could be modified to protect

individuals or their offspring. Genetic research also suggests that in a few years individuals may be able to "design" their future children's intelligence, body shape, height, general appearance, and physical ability.

Scientists provide the tools for these choices. Their values are centered in science in that they value the results of their research and their capacity to make them work in a positive way. However, the impact on humanity of such a series of dramatic changes to life brings to the fore values that clash with one another. For example, is it a positive social value for couples to decide the sex of their offspring rather than following nature's own direction? Should nature "control" the direction of genetics, or should we, a product of nature, be in control? This is a profound question, one that scientists leave to the discretion of politicians, religious leaders, and other humanists. In this case, who should decide if "designing" one's offspring is a positive value: the scientist or the humanist?

Even more profound is the question of cloning a human being. Once a sheep had been cloned successfully, it was clear that this science would lead directly to the possibility of a cloned human being. Some proponents of cloning support the process because we could clone a child who has died in infancy or clone a genius who has given great gifts to the world. For these people, cloning is a positive value. For others, the very thought of cloning a person is repugnant on the basis of religious belief. For still others, the idea of human cloning is objectionable because it echoes the creation of an unnatural monster, and for them it is a negative value. Because this is a worldwide problem, local laws will have limited effect on establishing a universal position on the value of cloning. The question of how we decide on such a controversial issue is at the heart of the humanities. Some observers have pointed to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's famous novel *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, which in some ways enacts the conflict among these values.

These examples demonstrate that the discoveries of scientists often have tremendous impact on the values of society. Yet some scientists have declared that they merely make the discoveries and that others—presumably politicians—must decide how the discoveries are to be used. It is this last statement that brings us closest to the importance of the humanities. If many scientists believe they cannot judge how their discoveries are to be used, then we must try to understand why they give that responsibility to others. This is not to say that scientists uniformly turn such decisions over to others, for many of them are humanists as well as scientists. But the fact remains that many governments have made use of great scientific achievements without pausing to ask the "achievers" if they approved of the way their discoveries were being used. Who decides how to use such discoveries? On what grounds should their judgments be based? These are questions that humanists, such as philosophers, artists, poets, writers, and religious leaders, must try to answer for the benefit not of science but of humankind.

Studying the behavior of neutrinos or string theory will not get us closer to the answers. Such study is not related to the nature of humankind but to the nature of nature. What we need is a study that gets us closer to ourselves, that explores the reaches of human feeling in relation to **values**—not only our own individual feelings and values but also the feelings and values of others. We need a study that will increase our empathy, our sensitivity to ourselves, others, and the values in our world. To be sensitive is to perceive with insight those aspects of values that cannot always be measured by objective standards. Such awareness can guide our

FIGURE 1-1
Cave painting from Chauvet Caves, France. Discovered in 1994, the Chauvet Caves have yielded some of the most astonishing examples of prehistoric art the world has seen. These aurochs depicted here may have lived as many as 35,000 years ago, while the painting itself seems as modern as a contemporary work.

important decisions and remind us that our decisions make a great difference. The humanities develop our sensitivity to values, to what is important to us as individuals and communities.

There are numerous ways to approach the humanities. The way we have chosen is the way of the arts. One of the contentions of this book is that values are clarified in enduring ways in the arts. Human beings have had the impulse to express their values since the earliest times. Ancient tools recovered from the most recent Ice Age, for example, are decorated with elaborate designs that make them not only useful but also beautiful.

The concept of progress in the arts is problematic. Who is to say whether the cave paintings (Figure 1-1) of 30,000 years ago that were discovered in present-day France are less excellent than the work of Picasso (Figure 1-4)? Cave paintings were probably not made as works of art to be contemplated. Getting to them in the caves is almost always difficult, and they are very hard to see. They seem to have been made for a practical purpose, such as improving the prospects for the hunt. Yet the work reveals something about the power, grace, and beauty of all the animals it portrays. These cave paintings function now as works of art. From the beginning, our species instinctively had an interest in making revealing forms.

Among the numerous ways to approach the humanities, we have chosen the way of the arts because, as we shall try to elucidate, the arts clarify or reveal values. As we deepen our understanding of the arts, we necessarily deepen our understanding of values. We will study our experience with works of art as well as the values others

associate with them, and in this process we will also educate ourselves about our own values.

Because a value is something that matters, engagement with art—the illumination of values—enriches the quality of our lives significantly. Moreover, the **subject matter** of art—what it is about—is not limited to the beautiful and the pleasant, the bright sides of life. Art may also include and help us understand the dark sides—the ugly, the painful, and the tragic. And when it does and when we get it, we are better able to come to grips with those dark sides of life.

Art brings us into direct communication with others. As Carlos Fuentes wrote in *The Buried Mirror,* "People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women of another culture, another creed, another race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we shall not recognize it in ourselves." Art reveals the essence of our existence.

Art, Commerce, and Taste

When the great sculptures and paintings of the Italian Renaissance were being made, their ultimate value hinged on how good they were and how fully they expressed the values—usually religious but sometimes political—that the culture expected. Michelangelo's great, heroic-sized *David* in Florence (1501-1504, Figure 5-2) was admired for its representation of the values of self-government by the small city-state as well as for its simple beauty of proportion. No dollar figure was attached to the great works of this period—except for the price paid to the artists. Once these works were in place, no one valued them because they would cost a great deal in the marketplace.

Today the art world has changed profoundly and art is sometimes thought to be an essentially commercial enterprise. Great paintings change hands for tens of millions of dollars. Moreover, the taste of the public shifts constantly. Movies, for example, survive or fail on the basis of the number of people they appeal to. Therefore, a film is often thought good only if it makes money. As a result, film producers make every effort to cash in on current popular tastes, often by making sequels until the public's taste changes—for example, the *James Bond* films (1962 to 2021) and the *Batman* series (1989 to 2021). *The Star Wars* series (1977 to 2019) cashed in on the needs of science-fiction fans whose taste in films is excited by the futuristic details and the narrative of danger and excitement of space travel. These films are considered good despite the emphasis on commercial success. But in some ways they are also limited by the demands of the marketplace.

Our study of the humanities recognizes that commercial success is fine, but it's not the most important guide to excellence in the arts. The long-term success of works of art depends on their ability to interpret human experience at a level of complexity that warrants examination and reexamination. Many commercially successful works give us what we feel we want rather than real insight and understanding. By satisfying us in an immediate way, commercial art can dull us to the possibilities of complex, more deeply satisfying art.

The saying "Matters of taste are not disputable" can be credited with making many of us feel righteous about our own taste. What the saying means is that

there is no accounting for what people like in the arts, for beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Thus, there is no use in trying to educate anyone about the arts. Obviously we can disagree. We believe that all of us can and should be educated about the arts and should learn to respond to as wide a variety of the arts as possible: from jazz to string quartets, from *The Three Stooges* to the films of Spike Lee, from Lewis Carroll to T. S. Eliot, from folk art to Picasso. Most of us defend our taste because anyone who challenges it challenges our deep feelings. Anyone who tries to change our responses to art is really trying to get inside our minds. If we fail to understand its purpose, this kind of persuasion naturally arouses resistance.

For us, the study of the arts penetrates beyond facts to the values that evoke our feelings—the way Miles Davis's jazz riffs can be electrifying, or Bob Dylan's lyrics give us a thrill of recognition. In other words, we want to go beyond the facts about a work of art and get to the values revealed in the work. How many times have we found ourselves liking something that months or years before we could not stand? And how often do we find ourselves now disliking what we previously judged a masterpiece? Generally we can say the work of art remains the same. It is we who change. We learn to recognize the values illuminated in such works as well as to understand the ways they are expressed. Such development is the meaning of "education" in the sense in which we have been using the term.

Responses to Art

Our responses to art usually involve processes so complex that they can never be fully tracked down or analyzed. At first they can only be hinted at when we talk about them. However, further education in the arts permits us to observe more closely and thereby respond more intensely to the content of the work. This is true, we believe, even with "easy" art, such as exceptionally beautiful works—for example, those by Giorgione (Figure 2-10), Cézanne (Figure 2-4), and O'Keeffe (Figure 4-13). Such gorgeous works generally are responded to with immediate satisfaction. What more needs to be done? If art were only of the beautiful, textbooks such as this would never find many users. But we think more needs to be done, even with the beautiful. We will begin, however, with three works that are not obviously beautiful.

The Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros's *Echo of a Scream* (Figure 1-2) is a highly emotional painting in the sense that the work seems to demand a strong emotional response. What we see is the huge head of a baby crying and then, as if issuing from its own mouth, the baby himself. What kinds of **emotions** do you find stirring in yourself as you look at this painting? What kinds of emotions do you feel are expressed in the painting? Your own emotional responses—such as shock; pity for the child; irritation at a destructive, mechanical society; or any other nameable emotion—do not sum up the painting. However, they are an important starting point since Siqueiros paints in such a way as to evoke emotion and our understanding of the painting increases as we examine the means by which this evocation is achieved.

FIGURE 1-2
David Alfaro Siqueiros, 1896–1974, *Echo of a Scream*. 1937. Enamel on wood, 48 × 36 inches (121.9 × 91.4 cm). Gift of Edward M. M. Warburg. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Siqueiros, a famous Mexican muralist, fought during the Mexican Revolution and possessed a powerful political sensibility, much of which found its way into his art. He painted some of his works in prison, held there for his political convictions. In the 1930s he centered his attention on the Spanish Civil War, represented here.

PERCEPTION KEY *Echo of a Scream*

1. What are the important distortions in the painting?
2. What effect does the distortion of the baby's head have on you?
3. Why is the scream described as an echo?
4. What are the objects on the ground around the baby? How do they relate to the baby?
5. How does the red cloth on the baby intensify your emotional response to the painting?

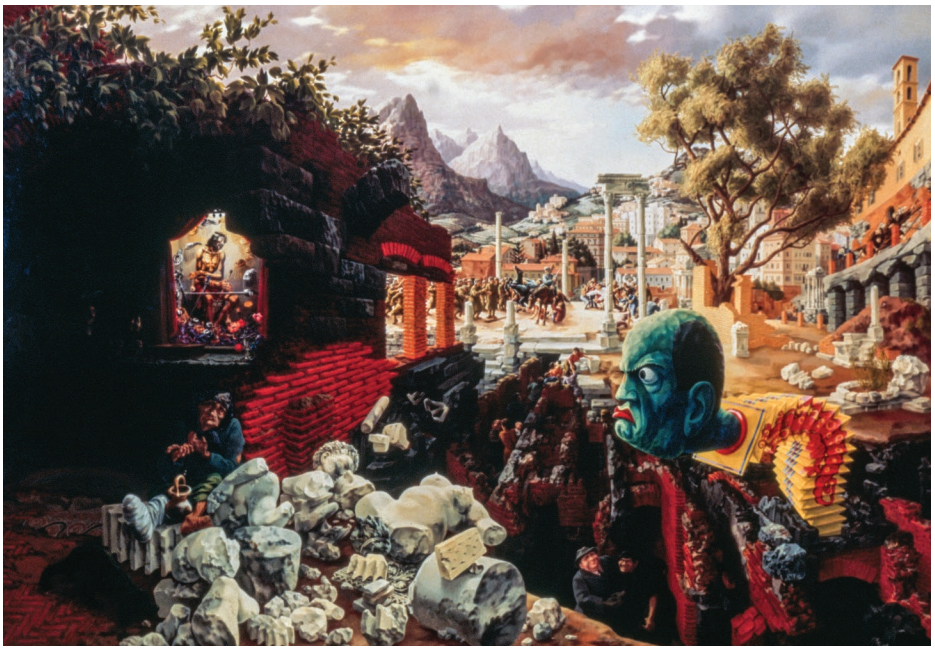


FIGURE 1-3
Peter Blume, 1906–1992, *The Eternal City*. 1934–1937. Dated on painting 1937. Oil on composition board, 34 × 47⅞ inches. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund. Born in Russia, Blume came to America when he was six. His paintings are marked by a strong interest in what is now known as magic realism, interleaving time and place and the dead and the living in an emotional space that confronts the viewer as a challenge. He condemned the tyrant dictators of the first half of the twentieth century.

Study another work very close in temperament to Siqueiros's painting: *The Eternal City* by the American painter Peter Blume (Figure 1-3). After attending carefully to the kinds of responses awakened by *The Eternal City,* take note of some background information about the painting that you may not know. The year of this painting is the same as that of *Echo of a Scream*: 1937. *The Eternal City* is a name reserved for only one city in the world: Rome. In 1937 the world was on the verge of world war. Fascists were in power in Italy and the Nazis in Germany. In the center of the painting is the Roman Forum, close to where Julius Caesar, the alleged tyrant, was murdered by Brutus. But here we see fascist Blackshirts, the modern tyrants, beating people. In a niche at the left is a figure of Christ, and beneath him (hard to see) is a crippled beggar woman. Near her are ruins of Roman statuary. The enlarged and distorted head, wriggling out like a jack-in-the-box, is that of Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator who invented fascism and the Blackshirts. Study the painting closely again. How has your response to the painting changed?

PERCEPTION KEY Siqueiros and Blume

1. What common visual ingredients do you find in the Blume and Siqueiros paintings?
2. Is your reaction to the Blume similar to or distinct from your reaction to the Siqueiros?
3. Is the effect of the distortions similar or different?
4. How are colors used in each painting? Are the colors those of the natural world, or do they suggest an artificial environment? Are they distorted for effect?
5. With reference to the objects and events represented in each painting, do you think the paintings are comparable? If so, in what ways?
6. Are there any natural objects in the Blume painting that suggest the vitality of the Eternal City?
7. What political values are revealed in these two paintings?

Before going on to the next painting, which is quite different in character, we will make some observations about what we have said, however briefly, about the Blume. With added knowledge about its cultural and political implications—what we shall call the background of the painting—your responses to *The Eternal City* may have changed. Ideally they should have become more focused, intense, and certain. Why? The painting is surely the same physical object you looked at originally. Nothing has changed in that object. Therefore, something has changed because something has been added to you, information that the general viewer of the painting in 1937 would have known and would have responded to more emotionally than viewers do now. Consider how a fascist, on the one hand, or an Italian humanist and lover of Roman culture, on the other hand, would have reacted to this painting in 1937.

A full experience of this painting is not unidimensional but multidimensional. Moreover, "knowledge about" a work of art can lead to "knowledge of" the work of art, which implies a richer experience. This is important as a basic principle since it means that we can be educated about what is in a work of art, such as its shapes, objects, and **structure**, as well as what is external to a work, such as its political references. It means we can learn to respond more completely. It also means that artists such as Blume sometimes produce works that demand background information if we are to appreciate them fully. This is particularly true of art that refers to historical circumstances and personages. Sometimes we may find ourselves unable to respond successfully to a work of art because we lack the background knowledge the artist presupposes.

Picasso's *Guernica* (Figure 1-4), one of the most famous paintings of the twentieth century, is also dated 1937. Its title comes from the name of an old Spanish town that was bombed during the Spanish Civil War, the first aerial bombing of noncombatant civilians in modern warfare. Examine this painting carefully.

FIGURE 1-4
Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*. 1937. Oil on canvas, 11 feet 6 inches × 25 feet 8 inches. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain. Ordinarily Picasso was not a political painter. During World War II he was a citizen of Spain, a neutral country. But the Spanish Civil War excited him to create one of the world's greatest modern paintings, a record of the German bombing of a small Spanish town, Guernica. When a Nazi officer saw the painting, he asked Picasso, "Did you do this?" Picasso answered scornfully, "No, you did."

PERCEPTION KEY *Guernica*

1. Distortion is powerfully evident in this painting. How does its function differ from that of the distortion in Blume's *The Eternal City* or Siqueiros's *Echo of a Scream*?
2. What are the most prominent objects in the painting? What seems to be the relationship of the animals to the humans?
3. The figures in the painting are organized by underlying geometric forms. What are they and how do they focus your attention? Is the formal organization strong or weak?
4. How does your eye move across the painting? Do you begin at the left, the right, or the middle? This is a gigantic painting, more than twenty-five feet long. How must one view it to take it all in? Why is it so large?
5. Some viewers have considered the organization of the images to be chaotic. Do you agree? If so, what would be the function of chaos in this painting?
6. We know from history that *Guernica* memorializes the Nazi bombing of the town of Guernica in the Spanish Civil War in 1937. What is the subject matter of *Guernica*: War? Death? Horror? Suffering? Fascism? Or something else?
7. Which of these paintings by Blume, Siqueiros, and Picasso makes the most powerful statement about the human condition?

The next painting (Figure 1-5), featured in "Experiencing: *The Scream*," is by Edvard Munch (1863-1944), one of the best known modernist painters. Despite the lack of a political or historically relevant subject matter, *The Scream*, with its intense blood-red sky and its expression of apparent horror, has become one of the most famous works of modern art.

EXPERIENCING *The Scream*

1. Munch's *The Scream* is one of the most famous paintings in the history of art. What, in your opinion, makes this painting noteworthy?
2. Because this painting is so familiar, it has sometimes been treated as if it were a cliché, an overworked image. In several cases it has been treated with satirical scorn. Why would any artist want to parody this painting? Is it a cliché, or are you able to look at it as if for the first time?
3. Unlike the works of Siqueiros, Blume, and Picasso, this painting has no obvious connections to historical circumstances that might intrude on your responses to its formal qualities. How does a lack of context affect your response to the painting?
4. Are the distant figures male and female? Are they coming or going? What can you say about the gender of the central figure? What pronouns would be appropriate for that figure?
5. Nature is revealed in the painting as a mass of swirling colors. Is the central figure visually related more to nature or to the society implied by the rigidity of the bridge? Is nature dominant in the painting? Is the sky natural? Are the landscape and waterscape portrayed naturally? What is the most unsettling aspect of the portrayal of nature in this painting?
6. The figures in the painting seem to be standing on a bridge whose straight receding flooring and rigid upright railing contrast with the swirling sky and landscape. Why do you think Munch contrasts the colors of the landscape and sky with the rigidity of the bridge? How do the colors and the contrast of straight and curved forms affect your response to the painting? What mood seems to dominate?

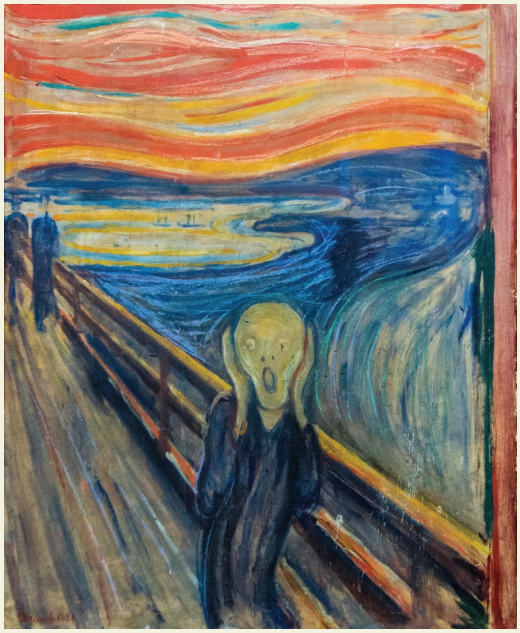


FIGURE 1-5
Edvard Munch, *The Scream,* 1893, Oil, tempera, pastel, and crayon on cardboard, 36 × 28.9 inches. National Gallery and Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway. Munch did several versions of this image over a period of almost twenty years. Some of them were stolen, creating a scandal in Norway, although they have been returned apparently unharmed. One version was recently sold at auction for almost $120 million.

7. How would you describe your emotional response to *The Scream*?

Experiencing a painting as frequently reproduced as *The Scream* takes most of us some special effort. Unless we study the painting as if it were new to us, we will simply see it as an icon of high culture rather than as a painting with a formal power and a lasting value. Because it is used in advertisements and on mouse pads, playing cards, jigsaw puzzles, and a host of other banal locations, we might see this as a meme or cliché.

However, we are also fortunate in that we see the painting as itself, apart from any social or historical events, and in a location that is almost magical or mythical. The landscape may be surreal, fantastic, and suggestive of a world on fire. Certainly it emphasizes fear and uncertainty. This figure is expressing emotions of horror, fright, fear, and terror—all of which are familiar to us both in life and in art. We are teased by the strange separation of the figures in the distant rear, who seem unaware of the scream, or as if they were indifferent. The portrayal of the land, water, and sky is more abstract than representational, although the power of the swirling lines produces a kinetic response. All is portrayed as if in motion and as if somehow threatening the figure in the foreground.

The intense colors, the spiraling lines of paint, and the expression on the face of the central figure point to a moment of severe emotional and psychological stress. The spiraling colors imply movement, while the fence posts are static. The figure has a masklike face, almost echoing the skull figures of Mexican Day of the Dead ceremonies. The effect of the figure's response to hearing nature's scream is to make the emotional expression universal rather than to limit it to the experience of an individual.

The painting has been interpreted in many different ways. Some people have seen it as an expression of terror resulting from the anxiety of the late nineteenth century's clash of ideas: evolution's threat to religious belief, psychotherapy's assault on cultural neurosis, the threats of war, and the rise of the lower classes. Others have thought of it as a note of personal crisis of the sort that many individuals suffer. *The Scream* has been popularly thought to represent the anxiety of modern man.

However one interprets it, *The Scream* speaks to people everywhere. Munch realized the power of the painting and repeated it four times, twice in paint and twice in pastels, over a period of twenty years. We know from Munch's notebooks that the painting resulted from a personal experience. Walking in Ekeberg, a neighborhood of Oslo, Norway, near an asylum in which his sister Laura was confined, Munch was on a path with two friends who went ahead without him. He wrote that the sky suddenly became blood red and he heard "an extraordinary scream pass through nature." From this experience, his painting was born.

Structure and Artistic Form

Your responses to *The Scream* are probably different from those you have when viewing the other paintings in this chapter, but why? You might reply that *The Scream* is hypnotizing, a carefully structured painting depending on a subtle but careful contrast in powerful colors and basic geometric forms, the strict horizontal and vertical lines of the bridge with the swirling forms of the landscape, waterscape, and flaming

red sky. The interacting force of such forms and colors, while operating subconsciously, is obvious on analysis. Like all structural elements of the artistic form of a painting, color and form affect us deeply even when we are not aware of them. We have the capacity to respond to pure form, even in paintings in which objects and events are portrayed. Thus, responding to *The Eternal City* will involve responding not just to an interpretation of fascism taking hold in Italy but also to the sensuous surface of the painting. This is certainly true of *Echo of a Scream*; if you look again at that painting, you will see not only that its sensuous surface is intrinsically interesting but also that it deepens your response to what is represented. Because we often respond to artistic form without being aware that it is affecting us, the painter must make the structure interesting. Consider the contrast between the structure of *The Scream* and the urgent complexity of the structures of the Siqueiros and the Blume.

The composition of any painting can be analyzed because any painting has to be organized; the parts must be interrelated. Moreover, it is important to think carefully about the composition of individual paintings. This is particularly true of paintings one does not respond to immediately—of "difficult" or apparently uninteresting paintings. Often the analysis of structure can help us gain access to such paintings so that they become genuinely exciting.

Artistic form is a composition or structure that makes the subject matter more meaningful. The Siqueiros, Blume, and Picasso reveal something about the horrors of war and fascism. But what does *The Scream* reveal? Perhaps it reveals just the form and structure? For us, structures or forms that do not give us insight are not artistic forms. Some critics will argue the point. This major question will be pursued throughout the text.

PERCEPTION KEY *The Eternal City* and *Echo of a Scream*

1. Sketch the basic geometric shapes of each painting.
2. Do these shapes relate to one another in such a way as to help reveal the obscenity of fascism? If so, how?
3. Is *Echo of a Scream* actually an echo of Munch's *The Scream?*

Perception

We are not likely to respond sensitively to a work of art that we do not perceive properly. What is less obvious is the fact that we can often give our attention to a work of art and still not perceive very much. The reason for this should be clear from our previous discussion. Frequently we need to know something about the background of a work of art that would aid our perception. Anyone who does not know something about the history of Rome, who Christ was, what fascism is, or what Mussolini meant to the world would have a difficult time making sense of *The Eternal City*. But it is also true that anyone who could not perceive Blume's composition might have a completely superficial response to the painting. Such a person could indeed know all about the background and understand the symbolic statements made by the painting, but that is only part of the painting. From seeing what Edvard Munch can do with form, structure, color, and expression, you can understand that the formal qualities of a painting are neither accidental nor unimportant. In Blume's

painting, the form focuses attention and organizes our perceptions by establishing the relationships between the parts. Each of these four paintings draws your immediate attention to a figure or form. As you examine the painting, the relationships of other elements begin to slowly reveal the importance of the subject matter. Look back at those paintings to see which figure attracts your attention most immediately, and then see how your attention is drawn through the entire painting.

Abstract Ideas and Concrete Images

Composition is basic in all the arts. Artistic form is essential to the success of any art object. To perceive any work of art adequately, we must perceive its structure. Examine the following poem by Robert Herrick (1591-1674) and consider the purpose of its shape. This is one of many shaped poems designed to have a visual formal structure that somehow illuminates its subject matter.

THE PILLAR OF FAME

Fame's pillar here at last we set,
Out-during marble, brass or jet;
Charmed and enchanted so
As to withstand the blow
Of overthrow;
Nor shall the seas,
Or Outrages
Of storms, o'erbear
What we uprear;
Tho' Kingdoms fall,
This pillar never shall
Decline or waste at all;
But stand forever by his own
Firm and well-fixed foundation.

PERCEPTION KEY *"The Pillar of Fame"*

1. What is a pillar and in what art form are pillars used?
2. In what sense is fame the subject matter of the poem?
3. Herrick is using a number of metaphors in this poem. How many can you identify? What seems to be their purpose?
4. In what sense is the shape of the poem a metaphor?
5. To whom does the word "his" in the last line refer?
6. The poem includes abstract ideas and concrete things. What is abstract here? What is the function of the concrete references?

Robert Herrick, a seventeenth-century poet, valued both honor and fame. During the English Civil War he lost his job as a clergyman because he honored his faith and refused to abandon his king. He hoped to achieve fame as a poet, in imitation of the great Roman poets. His "outrages" and "storms" refer to the war and the decade following, in which he stayed in self-exile after the "overthrow" of King Charles I. He portrayed fame as a pillar because pillars hold up buildings, and when the buildings

become ruins, pillars often survive as testimony to greatness. Herrick hoped his poem would endure longer than physical objects, such as marble, brass, and jet (a black precious jewel made of coal), because fame is an abstraction and cannot wear or erode. Shaping the poem to resemble a pillar with a capital and a stylobate (foundation) is an example of wit. When he wrote poetry, one of Herrick's greatest achievements was the expression of wit, a poetic expression of intelligence and understanding. This poem achieves the blending of ideas and objects, of the abstract and the concrete, through its structure. The poem is a concrete expression of an abstract idea.

In *Paradise Lost,* John Milton describes hell as a place with "Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and shades of death." Now, neither you nor the poet has ever seen "shades of death," although the idea is in Psalm 23, "the valley of the shadow of death." Milton gets away with describing hell this way because he has linked the abstract idea of shades of death to so many concrete images in this single line. He is giving us images that suggest the mood of hell just as much as they describe the landscape, and we realize that he gives us so many topographic details to prepare us for the last detail—the abstract idea of shades of death.

There is much more to be said about poetry, of course, but on a preliminary level, poetry worked in much the same way in the seventeenth-century England of Milton as it does in contemporary America. The same principles are at work: Described objects or events are used as a means of bringing abstract ideas to life. The descriptions take on a wider and deeper significance—wider in the sense that the descriptions are connected with the larger scope of abstract ideas and deeper in the sense that these descriptions make the abstract ideas vividly focused and more meaningful.

The following poem is highly complex: the memory of an older culture (described as "simple") and the consideration of a newer culture (described as "complex"). It is by the Nigerian poet Gabriel Okara (1921-2019); and knowing that he is African, we can begin to appreciate the extreme complexity of Okara's feelings about the clash of the old and new cultures. He symbolizes the clash in terms of music, and he opposes two musical instruments: the drum and the piano. They stand, respectively, for the African and the European cultures. But even beyond the musical images that abound in this poem, look closely at the images of nature, the pictures of the panther and leopard, and see how Okara imagines them.

PIANO AND DRUMS

When at break of day at a riverside
I hear jungle drums telegraphing
the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw
like bleeding flesh, speaking of
primal youth and the beginning,
I see the panther ready to pounce,
the leopard snarling about to leap
and the hunters crouch with spears poised;
And my blood ripples, turns torrent,
topples the years and at once I'm
in my mother's lap a suckling;
at once I'm walking simple
paths with no innovations,
rugged, fashioned with the naked
warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts

in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.
Then I hear a wailing piano
solo speaking of complex ways
in tear-furrowed concerto;
of far-away lands
and new horizons with
coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint,
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth
of its complexities, it ends in the middle
of a phrase at a daggerpoint.
And I lost in the morning mist
of an age at a riverside keep
wandering in the mystic rhythm
of jungle drums and the concerto.

PERCEPTION KEY *"Piano and Drums"*

1. What are the most important physical objects in the poem? What cultural significance do they have?
2. Why do you think Okara chose the drum and the piano to help reveal the clash between the two cultures? Where are his allegiances?
3. The term "daggerpoint" is a printer's obelus†, implying that a footnote is to follow or that the comment is incomplete. What does daggerpoint mean in the context of the poem?

Such a poem speaks directly to people in African nations that achieved independence, as Nigeria did in 1960. But consider some points in light of what we have discussed earlier. In order to perceive the kind of emotional struggle that Okara talks about—the subject matter of the poem—we need to know something about Africa and the struggle African nations have in modernizing themselves. We also need to know something of the history of Africa and the fact that European nations, such as Britain in the case of Nigeria, once colonized nearly all of Africa. Knowing these things, we know, then, that there is no thought of the narrator of the poem accepting the "complex ways" of the new culture without qualification. The narrator does not think of the culture of the piano as manifestly superior to the culture of the drum. That is why the labyrinth of complexities ends at a "daggerpoint."

We have argued that the perception of a work of art is aided by background information and that sensitive perception must be aware of form, at least implicitly. But we believe there is much more to sensitive perception. Somehow the form of a work of art is an artistic form that clarifies or reveals values, and our response is intensified by our awareness of those revealed values. But how does artistic form do this? And how does this awareness come to us? In the next chapter we shall consider these questions, and in doing so we will also raise that most important question: What is a work of art? Once we have examined each of the arts, it will be clear that the principles developed in these opening chapters are equally applicable to all the arts.

Examine and analyze Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* (Figure 1-6).

FIGURE 1-6
Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*. 1942. Oil on canvas, 33⅛ × 60 inches. The Art Institute of Chicago wrote: "Edward Hopper said that Nighthawks was inspired by 'a restaurant on New York's Greenwich Avenue where two streets meet,' but the image—with its carefully constructed composition and lack of narrative—has a timeless, universal quality that transcends its particular locale."

FineArt/Alamy Stock Photo

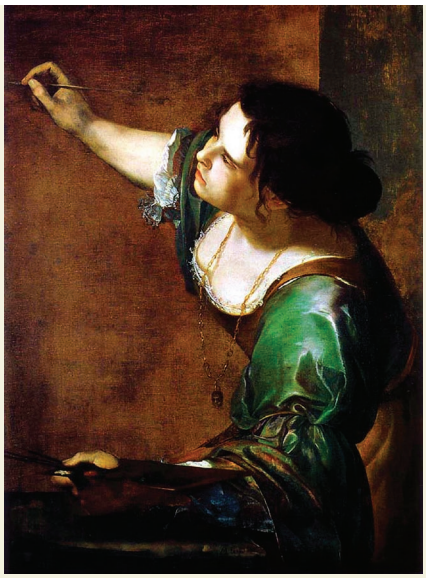
Nighthawks is a large painting, almost 3 by 5 feet, so a viewer at the Art Institute of Chicago could see the people in more detail. The woman, who was modeled by Hopper's wife, Josephine, is handling what seems to be cash (or a book of matches). The man next to her has a hawk-like face, possibly prompting the painting's title. The man whose back is to us bears a strong resemblance to Hopper himself. The diner is an urban emblem that stays open all night. This diner, with no visible entrance, and therefore no obvious way out, is marked by intense light, possibly inspired by the recently developed fluorescent lighting, which harshly exposes the patrons and permits them to be examined minutely. The darkness of the outside contrasts with the interior light flooding the street. The curves of the glass seem to wrap the figures in a bell jar as if they were specimens to be studied. The loneliness of late-night insomniacs in the city had already been established as a trope in the urban films of the 1930s during the Great Depression. Hopper implied that he was also inspired by an Ernest Hemingway short story, either "The Killers," which depicts a marked man waiting alone for his assassins, or "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," which focuses on a young man and woman waiting in a café for a train that would take her to a hospital for an abortion. Hopper said that loneliness was less a subject matter for him in the painting than the possibility of predators late at night.

PERCEPTION KEY *Nighthawks*

1. If you did not know the title of this painting, what emotions might it excite in you?
2. How does Hopper's title, *Nighthawks*, direct or enrich your emotional response?
3. What are the concrete objects represented in the painting? Which are most obvious and visually demanding? Which provide you with the most information about the scene?
4. What abstract ideas or feelings are suggested by the painting?
5. Which person or persons are most prominent and important? What seems to be the relationship of the people to each other?
6. Would the painting be any different if it were titled *A Clean Well-lighted Place?*
7. What is the subject matter of the painting?

SUMMARY

Unlike scientists, humanists generally do not use strictly objective standards. The arts reveal or clarify values, and fields in the humanities study values. "Artistic form" refers to the structure or organization of a work of art. Judging from the most ancient efforts to make visual representations, we can assert that the arts represent one of the most basic human activities. They satisfy a need to explore and express the values that we live by and that link us together. By observing our responses to a work of art and examining the means by which the artist evokes those responses, we can deepen our understanding of art. Our approach to the humanities is through the arts, and our response to art connects with our deep feelings. Our response is continually improved by experience and education. Background information about a work of art and increased sensitivity to its artistic form intensify our responses.



Fine Art Images/Superstock

Chapter 2

WHAT IS A WORK OF ART?

No definition for a work of art seems completely adequate, and none is universally accepted. We shall not propose a definition here, therefore, but rather attempt to clarify some criteria or distinctions that can help us identify works of art. Since the term "work of art" implies the concept of "making" in two of its words—"work" and "art" (short for "artifice")—a work of art is usually said to be something made by a person. Hence, sunsets, beautiful trees, "found" natural objects such as grained driftwood, songs by birds, and a host of other natural phenomena are not considered works of art, despite their beauty. You may not wish to accept the proposal that a work of art must be of human origin, but if you do accept it, consider the construction shown in Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (Figure 2-1).

Fountain is on display at the Tate Museum in London. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) was a part of a family of artists and was thought to have a major talent. However, like many artists during World War I (1914–1918), he saw a need to reject traditional art as a reflection of the bourgeois values that he saw as contributing to the war. He submitted *Fountain* to a show by the Society of Independent Artists, of which he was a founding member, but the board rejected the piece because of its association with bodily waste and the fear that it might shock female viewers. Duchamp resigned from the Society and took the urinal with him, one of the first of several "readymades" that he presented as works of art. Some critics saw *Fountain* as anti-art, a term which Duchamp may have approved. However, the result was a revolution in the art world that lasted through the 1960s' world of Pop Art. Is Duchamp's *Fountain* a work of art?

We can hardly discredit the construction as a work of art simply because Duchamp did not make the urinal. After all, we often accept objects manufactured to

FIGURE 2-1
Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*. 1917. Porcelain, 14.17 × 18.89 × 24 inches.

specification by factories as genuine works of sculpture (see the Calder construction, Figure 5-13). **Collages** by Picasso and Braque, which include objects such as paper and nails mounted on a panel, are generally accepted as works of art. Museums have even accepted objects from other **Dadaist** artists of the early twentieth century, which in many ways anticipated the works of Andy Warhol, Robert Raushenberg, Jasper Johns, and others in the **Pop Art** movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Duchamp presented *Fountain* as a work of art. Even though it was seen by relatively few people, it was considered revolutionary. The original was lost and survived only in a photograph by Alfred Stieglitz until it was replicated in 1964. Now, when we see it at the Tate, it is an earthenware replica of what had been a porcelain industrial design.

Identifying Art Conceptually

Three criteria for determining whether something is a work of art are that (1) the object or event is made by an artist, (2) the object or event is intended to be a work of art by its maker, and (3) recognized experts agree that it is a work of art. Unfortunately, one cannot always determine whether a work meets these criteria only by perceiving it. In many cases, for instance, we may confront an object such as *Fountain* (Figure 2-1) and not know whether Duchamp constructed the urinal, thus not satisfying the first criterion that the object be made by an artist; whether Duchamp intended it to be a work of art; or whether experts agree that it is a work of art. In fact, Duchamp did not make the currently displayed replica of his urinal, and this fact cannot be established perceptually. One has to be told.

PERCEPTION KEY Identifying a Work of Art

1. Why not simply identify a work of art as what an artist makes or chooses to call art?
2. If Duchamp actually made *Fountain,* would it then unquestionably be a work of art?
3. Suppose Duchamp made *Fountain* and it was absolutely perfect in the sense that it could not be readily distinguished from a mass-produced urinal. Would that kind of perfection make the piece more of a work of art or less of a work of art? Suppose Duchamp did not make the original but did make the replica. Then would it seem easier to identify it as a work of art?
4. Find people who hold opposing views about whether *Fountain* is a work of art. Ask them to point out what it is about the object itself that qualifies it for or disqualifies it from being identified as a work of art.

Identifying art conceptually seems to not be very useful. The fact that someone intends to make a work of art tells us little. It is the *made* rather than the *making* that counts. The third criterion—the judgment of experts—is important but debatable.

Identifying Art Perceptually

Perception, what we can observe, and **conception**, what we know or think we know, are closely related. We often recognize an object because it conforms to our conception of it. For example, in architecture we recognize churches and office buildings

as distinct because of our conception of what churches and office buildings are supposed to look like. The ways of identifying a work of art mentioned in the previous section depend on the conceptions of the artist and experts on art and not enough on our perceptions of the work itself.

We suggest an approach here that is simple and flexible and that depends largely on perception. The distinctions of this approach will not lead us necessarily to a definition of art, but they will offer us a way to examine objects and events with reference to whether they possess artistically perceivable qualities. And in some cases at least, they should bring us to reasonable grounds for distinguishing certain objects or events as art. We will consider four basic terms related primarily to the perceptual nature of a work of art:

"Artistic form": the organization of a medium that results in clarifying some subject matter

"Participation": sustained attention and loss of self-awareness

"Subject matter": some value expressed in the work of art

"Content": the interpretation of subject matter

Understanding any one of these terms requires an understanding of the others. Thus, we will follow what may appear to be an illogical order: artistic form; participation; participation and artistic form; content; subject matter; subject matter and artistic form; and, finally, participation, artistic form, and content.

Artistic Form

All objects and events have form. They are bounded by limits of time and space, and they have parts with distinguishable relationships to one another. Form is the interrelationships of part to part and part to whole. To say that some object or event has form means it has some degree of perceptible unity. To say that something has **artistic form**, however, usually implies a strong degree of perceptible unity. It is artistic form that distinguishes a work of art from objects or events that are not works of art.

Artistic form implies that the parts we perceive—for example, line, color, texture, shape, and space in a painting—have been unified for the most profound effect possible. That effect is revelatory. Artistic form reveals, clarifies, enlightens, and gives fresh meaning to something valuable in life, some subject matter. Our daily experiences usually are characterized more by disunity than by unity. Consider, for instance, the order of your experiences during a typical day or even a segment of that day. Compare that order with the order most novelists give to the experiences of their characters. One impulse for reading novels is to experience the tight unity that artistic form usually imposes, a unity that ordinarily reveals an insight into the values explored in the narrative. Much the same is true of music. Noises and random tones in everyday experience lack the order that most composers impose.

Works of art differ in the power of their unity. If that power is weak, then the question arises: Is this a work of art? Consider Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (Figure 4-9) with reference to its artistic form. If its parts were not carefully proportioned in the overall structure of the painting, the tight balance that produces a strong unity would be lost. Mondrian was so concerned with this balance that he often measured the areas

of lines and rectangles in his works to be sure they had a clear, almost mathematical, relationship to the totality. Of course, disunity or playing against expectations of unity can also be artistically useful at times. Some artists realize how strong the impulse toward unity is in those who have perceived many works of art. For some people, the contemporary attitude toward the loose organization of formal elements is a norm, and the highly unified work of art is thought of as old-fashioned. However, it seems that the effects achieved by a lesser degree of unity succeed only because we recognize them as departures from our well-known, highly organized forms.

Artistic form, we have suggested, is likely to involve a high degree of perceptible unity. But how do we determine what is a high degree? And if we cannot be clear about this, how can this distinction be helpful in distinguishing works of art from things that are not works of art? A very strong unity does not *necessarily* identify a work of art. That formal unity must give us insight into something important.

Consider the news photograph—taken on one of the main streets of Saigon in February 1968 by Associated Press photographer Eddie Adams—showing Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, then South Vietnam's national police chief, killing a Vietcong captive (Figure 2-2). Adams stated that his picture was an accident, that his hand moved the camera reflexively as he saw the general raise the revolver. The lens of the camera was set in such a way that the background was thrown out of focus. The printing of the negative blurred and almost erased the background, helping to bring out the drama of the foreground scene. Does this photograph have a high degree of perceptible unity? Certainly the experience of the photographer is evident. Not many amateur photographers would have had enough skill to catch such a fleeting event with such stark clarity. If an amateur had accomplished this,

FIGURE 2-2
Eddie Adams, *Execution in Saigon*. 1968. Silver halide. Adams captured General Loan's execution of a Vietcong captive. He said later, "The general killed the Vietcong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapon in the world."

Eddie Adams/AP Images

FIGURE 2-3
Francisco Goya, *May 3, 1808*. 1814–1815. Oil on canvas, 8 feet 9 inches × 13 feet 4 inches. The Prado, Madrid.
Goya's painting of Napoleonic soldiers executing Spanish guerrillas the day after the Madrid insurrection portrays the faces of the victims, but not of the killers.

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

we would be inclined to believe that it was more luck than skill. Adams's skill in catching the scene is even more evident, and he risked his life to get it. But do we admire this work the way we admire Siqueiros's *Echo of a Scream* (Figure 1-2)? Do we experience these two works in the same basic way?

Compare the Adams photograph with a painting of a somewhat similar subject matter—Goya's *May 3, 1808* (Figure 2-3). Goya chose the most terrible moment, that split second before the crash of the guns. There is no doubt that the executions will go on. The desolate mountain pushing down from the left blocks escape, while from the right the firing squad relentlessly hunches forward. The soldiers' thick legs—planted wide apart and parallel—support like sturdy pillars the blind, pressing wall formed by their backs. These are men of a military machine. Their rifles, flashing in the bleak light of the ghastly lantern, thrust out as if they belong to their bodies. It is unimaginable that any of these men would defy the command of their superiors. In the dead of night, the doomed are backed up against the mountain like animals ready for slaughter. One man flings up his arms in a gesture of utter despair—or is it defiance? The uncertainty increases the intensity of our attention. Most of the rest of the men bury their faces, while a few, with eyes staring out of their sockets, glance out at what they cannot help seeing—the sprawling dead smeared in blood.

With the photograph of the execution in Vietnam, despite its immediate and powerful attraction, it takes only a glance or two to grasp what is presented. Undivided attention, perhaps, is necessary to become aware of the significance of the event, but not sustained attention. In fact, to take careful notice of all the details—such as the patterns on the prisoner's shirt—does not add to our awareness of the significance of

the photograph. If anything, our awareness will be sharper and more productive if we avoid such detailed examination. Is such the case with the Goya? We believe not. Indeed, without sustained attention to the details of this work, we would miss most of what is revealed. For example, block out everything but the dark shadow at the bottom right. Note how different that shadow appears when it is isolated. We must see the details individually and collectively, as they work together. Unless we are aware of their collaboration, we cannot fully grasp the total form.

Close examination of the Adams photograph reveals several efforts to increase the unity and thus the power of the print. For example, the flak jacket of General Loan has been darkened so as to remove distracting details. The buildings in the background have been "dodged out" (held back in printing so that they are not fully visible). The shadows of trees on the road have been softened so as to lead the eye inexorably to the hand that holds the gun. The space around the head of the victim is also dodged out so that it appears that something like a halo surrounds the head. All this has been done in the act of printing sometime after the picture was taken. Careful printing helps achieve the photograph's artistic formal unity.

However, we are suggesting that the Goya has a higher degree of perceptible unity than Adams's photograph. We base these conclusions on what is given for us to perceive: the fact that the part-to-part and the part-to-whole relationships are much stronger in the Goya. In addition, the balance of colors in the Goya work to produce unity, though the black and white limits of the Adams photograph also produce a unity of their own. Now, of course, you may disagree. No judgment about such matters is indisputable. Indeed, that is part of the fun of talking about whether something is or is not a work of art—we can learn how to perceive from one another.

PERCEPTION KEY Adams and Goya

1. How is the Goya painting different from the Adams photograph in the way the details work together?
2. Could any detail in the painting be changed or removed without weakening the unity of the total design? What about the photograph?
3. Does the photograph or the painting more powerfully reveal human barbarity?
4. Do you find yourself participating more with the Adams photograph or the Goya painting?
5. How does blurring out the buildings in the background of the photograph improve its visual impact? Compare the effect of the looming architecture in the painting.
6. What do the shadows on the street add to the significance of the photograph? Compare them to the shadows on the ground in the painting.
7. Does it make any significant difference that the Vietcong prisoner's shirt is checkered? Compare it with the white shirt on the gesturing man in the painting.
8. Is the expression on the soldier's face, along the left edge of the photograph, appropriate to the situation? Compare it to the facial expressions in the painting.
9. Can these works be fairly compared when one is in black and white and the other is in full color? Why or why not?
10. What are some basic differences between viewing a photograph of a real man being killed and viewing a painting of such an event? Does that distinction alone qualify or disqualify either work as a work of art?

PARTICIPATION

Both the Adams photograph (Figure 2-2) and the Goya painting (Figure 2-3) tend to grasp our attention. Initially for most of us, probably, the photograph has more pulling power than the painting, especially as the two works are illustrated here. In its setting in the Prado in Madrid, however, the great size of the Goya (it is more than 13 feet long) and its powerful lighting and color draw the eye like a magnet. But the term "participate" is more accurately descriptive of what we are likely to be doing in our experience of the painting. With the Goya, we must not only give but also sustain our undivided attention so that we lose our self-consciousness—our sense of being separate, of standing apart from the painting. We participate. And only by means of participation can we come close to a full awareness of what the painting is about.

Works of art are created, exhibited, and preserved for us to perceive with both undivided and sustained attention. Artists, critics, and philosophers of art (aestheticians) generally agree on this. Thus, if a work requires our participation in order to understand and appreciate it fully, we have an indication that the work is art. Therefore—unless our analyses have been incorrect, and you should decide for yourself about this—the Goya would seem to be a work of art. Conversely, the photograph is not as obviously a work of art as the painting, despite the fascinating impact of the photograph. Yet these are highly tentative judgments. We are far from being clear about why the Goya requires our participation but the photograph may not. Until we are clear about these "whys," the grounds for these judgments remain shaky.

Goya's painting tends to draw us on until, ideally, we become aware of all the details and their interrelationships. For example, the long, dark shadow at the bottom right underlines the line of the firing squad, and the line of the firing squad helps bring out the shadow. Moreover, this shadow is the darkest and most opaque part of the painting. It has a forbidding, blind, fateful quality, which in turn reinforces the ominous appearance of the firing squad. The dark shadow on the street just below the forearm of General Loan in the photograph seems less powerful, but the bottom half of General Loan's body is ominously dark, as are the victim's trousers. The subject matter of the photograph is dark, instant death. That is also true of the Goya. The question is, do we feel the power of darkness emotionally in these two works? Sustained attention or participation cannot be achieved by acts of will. The splendid singularity of what we are attending to must fascinate and control us to the point that we no longer need to will our attention. We can make up our minds to give our undivided attention to something. But if that something lacks the pulling power that grasps our attention, we cannot participate with it.

The ultimate test for recognizing a work of art, then, is how it works in us, what it does to us. **Participative experiences** of works of art are communions—experiences so full and fruitful that they enrich our lives. Such experiences are life-enhancing not just because of the great satisfaction they may give us at the moment but also because they make more or less permanent contributions to our future lives. Does Munch's *The Scream* (Figure 1-5) heighten your perception of a painting's underlying structure, the power of simplicity of form, and the importance of a figure's pose? Does Robert Herrick's poem "The Pillar of Fame" (Chapter 1) affect your concept of fame? Do you see urinals differently, perhaps, after experiencing *Fountain* by Duchamp (Figure 2-1)? If not, presumably they are not works of art. But this assumes that we have really participated with these works, that we have allowed

them to work fully in our experience, so that if the meaning or content were present, it had a chance to reveal itself to our awareness. Of the four basic distinctions—subject matter, artistic form, content, and participation—the most fundamental is participation. We must not only understand what it means to participate but also be able to participate. Otherwise, the other basic distinctions, even if they make good theoretical sense, will not be of much practical help in making art more important in our lives. The central importance of participation requires further elaboration.

As participators, we do not think of the work of art with reference to categories applicable to objects—such as what kind of thing it is. We grasp the work of art directly. When, for example, we participate with Cézanne's *Still Life with Ginger Jar and Eggplants* (Figure 2-4), we are not concerned with the fruit and ceramics as if we were in mind to purchase them. We see these objects as powerful color forms. During the period Cézanne was working on still lifes, this arrangement of melon, apples, and ginger jars fascinated him enough to produce a good many versions of this painting. He was committed to revealing form through color. He said, "Everything in nature is modeled after the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder." In this painting we see examples of all these forms and more. The way Cézanne presents these forms, the shading, the coloring, and the dynamic of color contrasts and blendings, makes us look with a peculiar intensity. Our eye is drawn first to the bright yellow and orange apples, then to the larger lavender ginger jar, on to the even larger and darker green jar, which then leads us to the lighter green melon and the single yellow lemon. The colors lead the eye in an arc kinetically, giving the otherwise static

FIGURE 2-4
Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Ginger Jar and Eggplants*. 1893–1896. Oil on canvas, 28½ × 36 inches. The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. Cézanne painted still lifes throughout his career. He painted several versions of this arrangement of crockery, fabrics, and fruit in part because they were readily available subjects.

Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

imagery a sense of motion. Moreover, the apples are on a white plate that is situated in such a way as to threaten to fall. Indeed, we can hardly imagine why the apples have not already fallen.

The eggplants, which hang above the apples, seem almost an afterthought, but they, too, represent a natural ovoid form. They are absent from several other paintings of this scene, but Cézanne seems to have felt they add a necessary contrast, both in color and form. This painting's subject matter may look as if it is fruit and jars, but in reality it is color and form, which we realize in part because Cézanne produces a color palette that was at that time completely original. Even today we see these colors as almost instantly identifying the painting as one of his signature productions.

Before concluding our search for what a work of art is, let us seek further clarification of our other basic distinctions—artistic form, content, and subject matter. Even if you disagree with the conclusions, clarification helps understanding. And understanding helps appreciation.

Participation and Artistic Form

The participative experience—the undivided and sustained attention to an object or event that makes us lose our sense of separation from that object or event—is induced by strong or artistic form. Participation is not likely to develop with weak form because weak form tends to allow our attention to wander. Artistic form clearly identifies a whole, or totality. In the visual arts, a whole is a visual field limited by boundaries that separate that field from its surroundings.

Both Adams's photograph (Figure 2-2) and Goya's painting (Figure 2-3) have visual fields with boundaries. No matter what wall these two pictures are placed on, the Goya will probably stand out more distinctly and sharply from its background. This is partly because the Goya is in vibrant color and on a large scale—eight feet nine inches by thirteen feet four inches—whereas the Adams photograph is normally exhibited as an eight by ten-inch print. However carefully such a photograph is printed, it will probably include some random details. No detail in the Goya, though, fails to play a part in the total structure. To take one further instance, notice how the lines of the soldiers' sabers and their straps reinforce the ruthless forward push of the firing squad. The photograph, however, has a relatively weak form because a large number of details fail to cooperate with other details. For example, running down the right side of General Loan's body is an erratic line. If this line were smoother, it would connect more closely with the lines formed by the Vietcong prisoner's body. The connection between killer and killed would be more vividly established.

Artistic form normally is a prerequisite if our attention is to be grasped and held. Artistic form makes our participation possible. Some philosophers of art, such as Clive Bell and Roger Fry, even go so far as to claim that the presence of artistic form—what they call "significant form"—is all that is necessary to identify a work of art. By "significant form," in the case of painting, they mean the interrelationships of elements: line to line, line to color, color to color, color to shape, shape to shape, shape to texture, and so on. The elements make up the artistic medium, the "stuff" the form organizes. According to Bell and Fry, any reference of these elements and

their interrelationships to actual objects or events should be basically irrelevant in our awareness.

The authors of this book disagree on the presence of artistic form in Adams's photograph and Goya's painting. One author feels that the Goya is a work of art, while the Adams lacks artistic form and is therefore not a work of art. The other author feels that both works possess artistic form because both organize the formal elements in a manner designed to produce the powerful interrelationships that characterize artistic form. That author regards the Adams photograph as a work of art because the photographer has suppressed the irrelevant visual details in such a manner as to emphasize and clarify the most important visual forms—General Loan and the Vietcong captive—in action, thus producing artistic form.

Both of these works portray man's inhumanity to man, but that only represents a portion of their content. We feel that the content of a work of art goes far beyond the simple representation of an action, such as these executions. Yes, the executions are important in the Goya and terrifying in the Adams, but there is more to the content of a work of art. To discover what that "more" is, we must examine these works carefully.

Content

Let us begin to try to answer the question posed in the previous section by examining more closely the meanings of the Adams photograph (Figure 2-2) and the Goya painting (Figure 2-3). Both basically, although oversimply, are about the same abstract idea—barbarity. In the case of the photograph, we have an example of this barbarity. Since it is very close to any historically aware person's interests, this instance is likely to set off a lengthy chain of thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings, furthermore, may seem to lie "beyond" the photograph. Suppose a debate developed over the meaning of this photograph. The photograph itself would play an important role, primarily as a starting point in a discussion of man's inhumanity to man.

In the debate about the Goya, every detail and its interrelationships with other details become relevant. The meaning of the painting may seem to lie "within" the painting. Yet, paradoxically, this meaning, as in the case of the Adams photograph, involves ideas and feelings that lie beyond the painting. How can this be? Let us first consider some background information. On May 2, 1808, guerrilla warfare had flared up all over Spain. By the following day, Napoleon's men were completely back in control in Madrid and the surrounding area. Many of the guerrillas were executed. According to tradition, Goya portrayed the execution of forty-three of these guerrillas on May 3 near the hill of Principe Pio just outside Madrid. This background information is important if we are to fully understand and appreciate the painting.

The execution in Adams's photograph was of a man who had just murdered one of General Loan's best friends and had then killed the man's wife, six children, and elderly mother. The general was part of the Vietnamese army fighting with the assistance of the United States, and this photograph was widely disseminated with a caption describing the victim as a suspected terrorist. What shocked Americans who saw the photograph was the summary justice that Loan meted out. It was not until much later that the details of the victim's crimes were published.

With the Goya, the background information, although very helpful, is not as essential. Test this for yourself. Would your interest in Adams's photograph last very long if you completely lacked background information? In the case of the Goya, the background information helps us understand the where, when, and why of the scene. But even without this information, the painting probably would still gain and hold the attention of most of us because it would still have significant meaning. We would still have a powerful image of barbarity, and the artistic form would hold us on that image. In the Prado Museum in Madrid, Goya's painting continually draws and holds the attention of innumerable viewers, many of whom know little or nothing about the rebellion of 1808. Adams's photograph is also a powerful image, of course—and probably initially more powerful than the Goya—but is the form of the photograph strong enough to hold most of us on that image for very long?

With the Goya, the abstract idea (barbarity) and the concrete image (the firing squad in the process of killing) are tied tightly together because the form of the painting is tight. We see the barbarity in the lines, colors, masses, shapes, groupings, and lights and shadows of the painting itself. The details of the painting keep referring to other details and to the totality. They keep holding our attention. Thus, the ideas and feelings that the details and their organization awaken within us keep merging with the form. We are prevented from separating the meaning or content of the painting from its form because the form is so fascinating. The form constantly intrudes, however unobtrusively. It will not let us ignore it. We see the firing squad killing, and this evokes the idea of barbarity and the feeling of horror. But the lines, colors, mass, shapes, and shadowings of that firing squad form a pattern that keeps exciting and guiding our eyes. Then the pattern leads us to the pattern formed by the victims. Ideas of fatefulness and feelings of pathos are evoked but they, too, are fused with the form. The form of the Goya is like a powerful magnet that allows nothing within its range to escape its pull. Artistic form fuses or embodies its meaning with itself.

In addition to participation and artistic form, then, we have come upon another basic distinction—**content**. Unless a work has content—meaning that is fused or embodied with its form—we shall say that the work is not art. Content is the meaning produced by artistic form. If we are correct (for our view is by no means universally accepted), artistic form always informs—has meaning, or content. And that content, as we experience it when we participate, is always ingrained in the artistic form. We do not perceive an artistic form and then a content. We perceive them as inseparable. Of course, we can separate them analytically. However, when we do so, we are not having a participative experience. Moreover, when the form is weak—that is, less than artistic—we experience the form and its meaning separately.

PERCEPTION KEY Adams and Goya Revisited

We have argued that the painting by Goya is a work of art and the photograph by Adams is questionable. Even if the three basic distinctions we have made so far—artistic form, participation, and content—are useful, we may have misapplied them. Bring out every possible argument against the view that the painting is a work of art and the photograph may not be a work of art.

Subject Matter

The content is the meaning of a work of art. The content is embedded in the artistic form. But what does the content interpret? We shall call it subject matter. Content is the interpretation—by means of an artistic form—of some subject matter. Thus, **subject matter** is the fourth basic distinction that helps identify a work of art. Since every work of art must have a content, every work of art must have a subject matter, and this may be any aspect of experience that is of human interest. Anything related to a human interest is a value. Some values are positive, such as pleasure and health. Other values are negative, such as pain and ill health. They are values because they are related to human interests. Negative values are the subject matter of both Adams's photograph and Goya's painting. But the photograph, unlike the painting, has no content. The less-than-artistic form of the photograph simply *presents* its subject matter. The form does not transform the subject matter, does not enrich its significance. In comparison, the artistic form of the painting enriches or interprets its subject matter, says something significant about it. In the photograph, the subject matter is directly given. But the subject matter of the painting is not just there in the painting. It has been transformed by the form. What is directly given in the painting is the content.

The meaning, or content, of a work of art is what is revealed about a subject matter. But in that revelation you must infer or imagine the subject matter. If someone had taken a news photograph of the May 3 executions, that would be a record of Goya's subject matter. The content of the Goya is its interpretation of the barbarity of those executions. Adams's photograph lacks content because it merely shows us an example of this barbarity. That is not to disparage the photograph, for its purpose was news, not art. A similar kind of photograph—that is, one lacking artistic form—of the May 3 executions would also lack content. Now, of course, you may disagree with these conclusions for very good reasons. You may find more transformation of the subject matter in Adams's photograph than in Goya's painting. For example, you may believe that transforming the visual experience in black and white distances it from reality while intensifying its content. In any case, such disagreement can help sharpen your perception of the work, provided the debate is focused. It is hoped that the basic distinctions we are making—subject matter, artistic form, content, and participation—will aid that focusing.

Subject Matter and Artistic Form

Whereas a subject matter is a value—something of importance—that we may perceive before any artistic interpretation, the content is the significantly interpreted subject matter as revealed by the artistic form. Thus, the subject matter is never directly presented in a work of art, for the subject matter has been transformed by the form. Artistic form transforms and, in turn, informs about life. The conscious intentions of the artist may include magical, religious, political, economic, and other purposes; the conscious intentions may not include the purpose of clarifying values. Yet underlying the artist's activity—going back to cavework (Figure 1-1)—is always the creation of a form that illuminates something from life, some subject matter.

Artistic form draws from the chaotic state of life, which, as Vincent van Gogh describes it, is like "a sketch that didn't come off." In our interpretation, a work of

art creates an illusion that illuminates reality. Thus, such paradoxical declarations as Delacroix's are explained: "Those things which are most real are the illusions I create in my paintings." Artistic form is an economy producing a lucidity that enables us to better understand and, in turn, manage our lives. Hence, the informing of a work of art reveals a subject matter with value dimensions that go beyond the artist's idiosyncrasies. Whether or not Goya had idiosyncrasies, he did justice to his subject matter: He revealed it. The art of a period is the revelation of the collective soul of its time.

Participation, Artistic Form, and Content

Participation is the necessary condition that makes possible our insightful perception of artistic form and content. Unless we participate with the Goya painting (Figure 2-3), we will fail to see the power of its artistic form. We will fail to see how the details work together to form a totality. We will also fail to grasp the content fully, for artistic form and content are inseparable. Thus, we will have failed to gain insight into the subject matter. We will have collected just one more instance of barbarity. The Goya will have basically the same effect on us as Adams's photograph except that it may be less important to us because it happened longer ago. But if, on the contrary, we have participated with the Goya, we probably will never see such subject matters as executions in quite the same way again. The insight that we have gained will tend to refocus our vision so that we will see similar subject matters with heightened awareness.

Look, for example, at the photograph by Kevin Carter (Figure 2-5), which was published in the *New York Times* on March 26, 1993, and which won the Pulitzer Prize for photography in 1994. The form isolates two dramatic figures. The closest

FIGURE 2-5
Kevin Carter, *Vulture and Child in Sudan*. 1993. Silver halide. Carter saved this child but became so depressed by the terrible tragedies he had recorded in Sudan and South Africa that he committed suicide a year after taking this photograph.

Kevin Carter/Sygma/Getty Images

is a starving Sudanese child making her way to a feeding center. The other is a plump vulture waiting for the child to die. This powerful photograph evoked a public outcry, and the *New York Times* published a commentary explaining that Carter chased away the vulture and took the child to the feeding center. Apparently overwhelmed by his witnessing barbarity in the modern world, Carter committed suicide in July 1994.

PERCEPTION KEY **Adams, Goya, and Carter**

1. How does our discussion of the Adams photograph affect your response to Carter's photograph?
2. To what extent does Carter's photograph have artistic form?
3. Why are your answers to these questions fundamentally important in determining whether Adams's photograph, Carter's photograph, Goya's painting, or all of them are works of art?
4. Describe your experience regarding your participation with either Adams's or Carter's photograph or Goya's painting. Can you measure the intensity of your participation with each of them? Which work do you reflect upon most when you relax and are not thinking directly on the subject of art?
5. The intensity of your reactions to the Adams and Carter photographs may well be stronger than the intensity of your experience with the Goya. If so, should that back up the assertion that the photographs are works of art?

Artistic Form: Examples

Let us examine artistic form in two examples of work by the Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lichtenstein became interested in comic strips as subject matter. The story goes that his two young boys asked him to paint a Donald Duck "straight," without the encumbrances of art. But much more was involved. Born in 1923, Lichtenstein grew up during the hey-day of newspaper comic strips. By the 1930s the comic strip had become one of the most well known and enjoyed forms of popular media. Adventure, romance, sentimentality, and terror found expression in the stories of Tarzan, Flash Gordon, Superman, Wonder Woman, Steve Roper, Winnie Winkle, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Batman and Robin, and the like.

The purpose of the comic strip for its producers is strictly commercial. And because of the large market, a premium has always been put on making the processes of production as inexpensive as possible. Therefore, generations of mostly unknown commercial artists, going far back into the nineteenth century, developed ways of quick, cheap color printing. They developed a technique that could turn out cartoons like the products of an assembly line. Moreover, because their market included a large number of children, they developed ways of producing images that were immediately understandable and striking.

Lichtenstein reports that he was attracted to the comic strip by its stark simplicity—the blatant primary colors, the ungainly black lines that encircle the shapes, the balloons that isolate the spoken words or thoughts of the characters. He was struck by

the apparent inconsistency between the strong emotions of the stories and the highly impersonal, mechanical style in which they were expressed. Despite the crudity of the comic strip, Lichtenstein saw power in the directness of the medium. Somehow the cartoons mirrored something about ourselves. Lichtenstein set out to clarify what that something was. At first people dismissed his cartoon art, but his work became known as Pop Art in part because of its popular origins.

Lichtenstein saw how adaptable the Pop Art style was for his work. He produced a number of large oil paintings that often appropriate cartoon strips. Lichtenstein was known as an imitator, but he made his work brash and used brilliant primary colors that are sensational and visually overwhelming. Much of his early work in this vein involves war planes, guns, and action scenes. The cartoon style permitted him to be serious in what he portrayed.

Artist's Studio "The Dance" (Figure 2-6) appropriates the idea of Henri Matisse's art studio, with an allusion to his great painting *The Dance* (Figure 15-11) in the background. Lichtenstein's line is recognizable as that of a skilled cartoonist, and the figures and background are monochrome. The lemons allude to Matisse's many paintings of fruit, the cans of brushes allude to the artist's ordinary set-up for painting, and the musical notes allude to Matisse's companion painting *Music* (Figure 15-12). With these elements, this painting becomes an homage to Matisse.

Hopeless (Figure 2-7) is an appropriation of a black and white commercial cartoon treating an emotional moment familiar to everyone who has ever experienced the breakup of a love affair. Lichtenstein made the woman's hair bright yellow, and the emotional content is intensified by using powerful colors and enlarging the image to three and a half feet on all sides. In the cartoon on which this painting is based, the hair is the darkest form, taking up the most room and attention in the

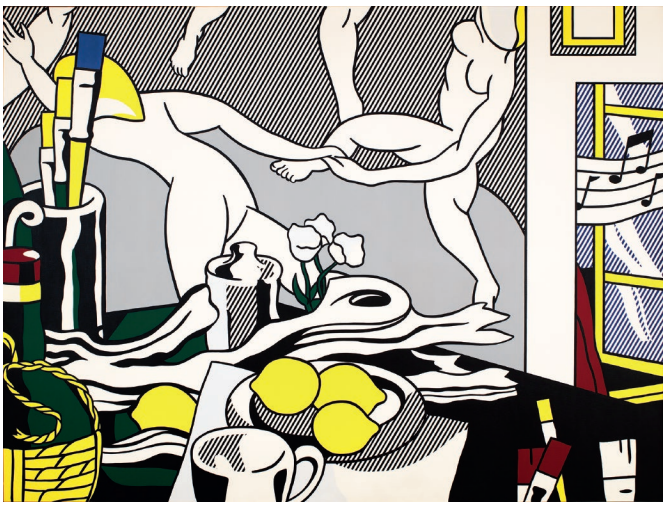


FIGURE 2-6
Roy Lichtenstein, *Artist's Studio "The Dance."* 1974. Magna (acrylic) and oil on canvas, 8′1/8″ × 10′8′1/8″. Museum of Modern Art.

FIGURE 2-7
Roy Lichtenstein, *Hopeless.* 1963. 44 × 44 inches. Magna on canvas.

panel. Lichtenstein's polychrome revision shifts the viewer's attention to the face. By smoothing out the tone of the skin (by removing the mechanical "dots" in the cartoon version) he makes the face more visually prominent. By placing the dialogue balloon close to the woman's ear and removing the background, which is very prominent in the original cartoon, Lichtenstein gives the woman's representation much more space in the panel. Painting an oversized single panel takes the image out of the narrative context of a cartoon strip, forcing us to look at it as a single emotional moment. The question of whether these paintings are works of art is still being debated in the popular press.

PERCEPTION KEY Cartoon Panel and Lichtenstein's Transformation

1. Begin by establishing which formal elements are the most clearly those that you would expect to see in a commercial cartoon strip.
2. Then establish what Lichtenstein omits from the cartoon-like panels. What seems to you the most important omission? Does it strengthen or weaken the overall visual force of the work?
3. Lichtenstein uses size and color to make his work distinct from cartoons. Which of these two works is most clearly identifiable as a cartoon. Why?
4. The power of the line makes commercial cartoons distinct. Compare the strength of the line in each work. Which is more satisfying? Which is stronger? Is there a difference?
5. Is it fair to say one of these is a work of art and the other is not? Or would you say they are both works of art? Would you say neither is a work of art?

Examine Figure 2-8, Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting*. We feel this is a particularly powerful example of artistic form. For one thing, Gentileschi's challenge of painting her own portrait likeness in this pose is extraordinary. It has been supposed that she may have needed at least two mirrors to permit her to position herself. Or her visual memory may have been unusually powerful. Artemisia Gentileschi was one of the most famous female artists of the seventeenth century. This painting was done in England for King Charles I and remains in the Royal Collection.

The painting is an **allegory**, which is to say it represents the classical idea of *the painting,* which was expressed as a female goddess, La Pittura. The color of her silken, radiant clothing is rich and appropriate to the painter. Her right arm is strong in terms of its being brilliantly lighted as well as strong in reaching out dramatically in the act of painting. Her clothing and décolletage emphasize her femininity. Her straggly hair and her necklace containing an image of a mask (a symbol of imitation) were required by the conventional allegorical representations of the time describing Pittura. The contrasting browns of the background simplify the visual space and give more power to the figure and the color of her garment. One powerful aspect of the painting is the light source. Gentileschi is looking directly at her painting, and the painting—impossibly—seems to be the source of that light.

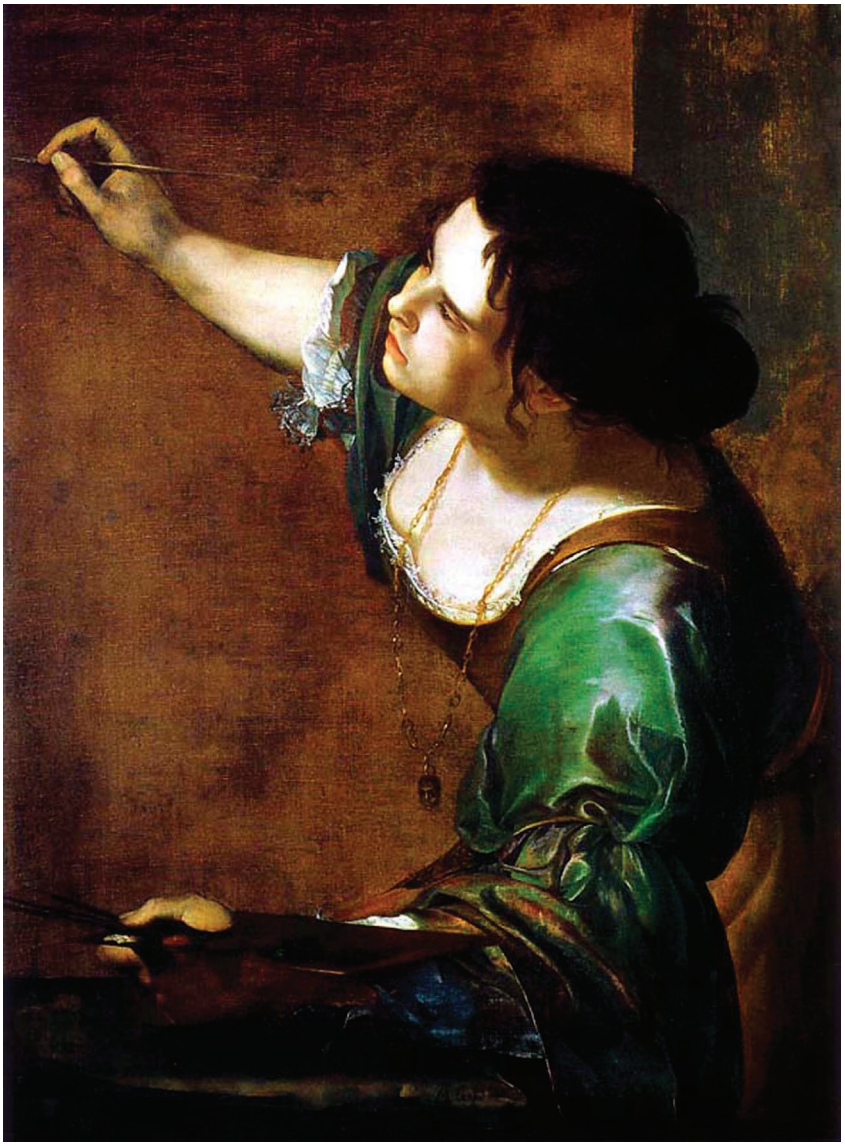


FIGURE 2-8
Artemisia Gentileschi, Rome 1593–Naples 1652, *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (La Pittura). Circa 1638–1639.

Fine Art Images/Superstock

The subject matter of the painting seems to be, on one level, the idea of painting. On another level, it is the act of painting by a woman. On yet another level, it is the act of Artemisia Gentileschi painting her self-portrait. The content of the painting may be simply painting itself. On the other hand, this was an age in which women rarely achieved professional status as royal painters. The power of the physical expression of the self-portrait implies a content expressing the power of woman, both allegorically and in reality. Artemisia is declaring herself as having achieved what was implied in having the allegory of painting expressed as a female deity.

As in the painting by Goya and the photograph by Adams, the arms are of great significance in this work. Instead of a representation of barbarity, the

PERCEPTION KEY **Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting***

1. How does the simplicity of the background help clarify the essential form of the painter? What are the most powerful colors in the composition?
2. Place yourself in the same pose as Gentileschi. How would you paint yourself in that position?
3. What forms in the painting work best to achieve a visual balance? How do the visual forms in the painting achieve unity?
4. How does Gentileschi achieve artistic form? If you think she does not achieve it, explain why.
5. The painting title includes the word *allegory*, which is an image that symbolizes hidden meaning. What does this painting symbolize? Does it work for you as a symbol?
6. How does answering these questions affect your sense of participating with the painting?

FIGURE 2-9
***Venus of Willendorf*. c. 28,000 BCE–25,000 BCE. Oolitic limestone, 4.4 inches tall. Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.** This sculpture of a woman is one of the oldest discovered. It may be a goddess, a fertility figure, or a good luck object. It is one of almost 50 intact such figures and has been thought to represent a female ideal.

Lefteris Tsouris/Shutterstock

painting is a representation of art itself, and therefore of cultivated society. The richness of the garment, the beauty of Artemisia, and the vigor of her act of painting imply great beauty, strength, and power. We are virtually transfixed by the light and the urgency of the posture. Some viewers find themselves participating so deeply that they experience a kinesthetic response as they imagine themselves in that pose.

What significance does the artistic form of the painting reveal for you? How would you describe the content of the painting? Would the content of this painting be different for a woman than for a man? Would it be different for a painter than for a non-painter? What content does it have for you?

Subject Matter and Content

While the male nude was a common subject in Western art well into the **Renaissance**, images of the female body have since predominated. The variety of treatment of the female nude is bewildering, ranging from the Greek idealization of erotic love in the *Venus de Milo* (Figure 2-12) to the radical reordering of Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (Figure 2-14). A number of female nude studies follow (Figures 2-9 through 2-18). Consider, as you look at them, how the form of the work interprets the female body. Does it reveal it in such a way that you have an increased understanding of and sensitivity to the female body? In other words, does it have content? Also ask yourself whether the content is different in the two paintings by women (Figures 2-16 and 2-17) compared with those by men.

Most of these works are highly valued—some as masterpieces—because they are powerful interpretations of their subject matter, not just presentations of the female body as erotic objects. Notice how different the interpretations are. Any important subject matter has many different implications. That is why urinals and soup cans have limited utility as subject matter. They have very few implications to offer for

FIGURE 2-10
Giorgione, *Sleeping Venus*. 1508–1510. Oil on canvas, 43 × 69 inches. Gemaldegalerie, Dresden. Giorgione established a Renaissance ideal in his painting of the goddess Venus asleep in the Italian countryside.

Superstock

FIGURE 2-11
Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Bather Arranging Her Hair*. 1893. Oil on canvas, 36⅜ × 29⅛ inches. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Chester Dale Collection. Renoir's impressionist interpretation of the nude provides a late-nineteenth-century idealization of a real-life figure who is not a goddess.

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington