

Where is Art Going? Making Sense of New Art Forms

Today, more than ever, reaching a consensus on how to define art is challenging. Some are even contesting the possibility of finding a standard definition of art, as aesthetically and conceptually, art has evolved to a point where it is hard to find common ground. The lack of consensus on what art is has been evident ever since modern art strayed from the paradigm of classical definitions. Still, the development and use of new technologies are reshaping the ecosystem surrounding artistic creation in new ways. The more recent collaboration between artists and engineers resulting in new radical forms of art, called by some "new media art," is challenging the concepts that define the triad "art - art object - artist." Embraced with various degrees of enthusiasm, new genres of art use digital technology as the primary tool for producing, presenting, and archiving art. In such cases, information becomes the basis of the materiality of the art object. NFTs and art created by robots or artificial intelligence programs go far beyond what we could have imagined and cause stupor even among specialists initiated in the field. Starting from the accepted definitions of traditional art, using a comparative approach with more recent attempts to define new media arts, we will seek answers to the question that haunts us: where is art going, and how should we then relate to art and artistic creation?

Rodica Mocan is Professor at the Department of Cinematography and Media, specializing in digital media and the new media arts. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology (2005), with a focus on e-learning and a Ph.D. in Theater and Performing Arts (2016), with research on interactive digital art performances. She earned her Habilitation in Cinematography and Media with a thesis on Digital Media Arts. Her current research interests are on the impact of digital technologies on different aspects of life, particularly in the field of interactive digital arts and emerging artistic genres, such as interactive documentaries. She has multiple publications including various academic articles. Dr. Mocan is the founder and coordinator of the Digital Interactive Arts master program and a Ph.D. supervisor on digital arts themes.

I. Introduction to art in the Bible

Exodus 31:1-11

„Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the holy Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in carving wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent—the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand—and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.”

How?

The gift of: Wisdom; Understanding; Knowledge; Skills; craftsmanship.

Q: Which one of these is creativity? Are all men endowed with creativity? Creativity is a gift for some or is it part of human nature (of how we were created)?

What art form?

Artistic design

Sculpture in metal (gold, silver, bronze), stone, wood

Crafts

Q: Are there other forms of [visual] art? Is art an evolving concept or is it created once and for all?

Who?

Artists and Skilled helpers

Q: are there other categories of people that can be creative?

What kind of objects?

Tent (building)

Ark of the covenant (sculpture utilitarian)

Furniture (tables, lampstand, altar and utensils, basin)

Textiles (woven garments of priests, perfumes)

Q: Presuming there are other art objects not listed here, can concepts, or other abstract notions be classified as art?

For whom? Comissioned work: God is the client.

Q: Is God the client of every work of art ever made? Is it acceptable to work for "other clients"?

II. Attempting to define art as a modern, evolving concept

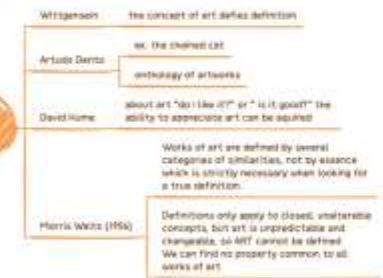
Together we will go through some of the definitions presented in the chart below.

Art definitions

Beginnings of aesthetics



Scepticism regarding art definitions



Intentionality



Traditional Definition



Hybrid definitions of art

Proceduralism and functionalism are not necessarily mutually exclusive. "Something is a work of art if and only if it has a subject about which it projects a certain attitude or point of view (has a style) by means of rhetorical (generally metaphorical) devices, which in turn engage the audience's participation in completing what is missing (interpretation)." In Carroll's account, the first condition corresponds to the requirement that the work be about something, and the others explain what is meant by the idea that the work is to embody the meaning of what it is about. Another consistent present in Danto's idea writing is that the work in question and its interpretations require an art-historical context." Davies (2013). This definition includes elements of functionalism, proceduralism, and historical reflexivity, suggesting that the role of art is to engage the public in interpreting the work's subject matter, invoking the art's historical context to determine the work's identity. Thus, Danto refers both to the structure and role of the art world and to the historical evolution.

Criticism of the hybrid definition: Methodological assumptions and the claim that a work of art is about something are challenged. It questions the claim that all art is meant to provoke interpretation and that such interpretations must overlap with what the artist intended.

Danto (1973) - a work cannot be considered art unless it has a prepared place in the art world as a result of the previous history of art production, both in general and by the given artist.

Historical definitions can be reflexive: something is a work of art only if it stands in the right relationship to its artistic ancestors, but this presupposes the existence of a continuous tradition—that is, a historically and culturally unified body of work—to which the newly created piece is properly related.

Criticism of the historical definition: There are several "factions" of art "against the Western one. Most reflexive theories are condescending in that they regard as if there is only one "art world", that of the Western context, where "high art" (professional art) is produced, while ignoring "low art" (amateur art) and the non-western.

Historical reflexive definitions art

Dicke (1996): A work of art is an artefact or act of aspect which have been given candidate status for appreciation by a person or persons acting in behalf of the 'art world' (Artworld). A work of art is an artefact created to be presented to the art public. The artist is a person who consciously participates in the creation of a work of art. The public is an assembly of persons whose members are exposed to a certain extent to understand and appreciate an object presented to them. The art world is a setting for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an art world audience. The "art world" is the historical and social framework constituted by the changing practices and conventions of art, the legacy of works, the intentions of artists, the writings of critics, and so on.

Procedural definitions of art

Critique of proceduralism: Not all "art worlds" are sufficiently institutionalized to generate a structure of roles and authorities that might explain how art's status is conferred. The differences between the social practices of art production and the products of similar cultural activities is not clear enough to reveal what distinguishes them.

"A work of art is either an arrangement of conditions intended to provide an aesthetic experience suitable for its marked aesthetic character, or (incidentally) an arrangement belonging to a class, or type of arrangement which is usually intended to have this capacity (Beardsley 1982)."

Existing or intended functions are considered to be determinative of the work of art, so only definitions that are essentially related to the aesthetic - aesthetic judgments, experience or properties - will be considered.

Aesthetic definitions have been criticized for being both too narrow and too broad. They are considered to be too narrow because they are not able to cover influential modern works such as Duchamp's ready-mades and conceptual works, which seem to have no aesthetic properties. They are considered to be too broad because even beautifully designed, utilitarian, or commercial products are often created with the intention of being objects of aesthetic appreciation, but are not works of art.

Functionalist definitions of art

Criticism of functionalism: It's hard to find an angle or function that is served by all artworks. If all works must be functionally successful, then how do we discuss beautiful art.

III. New media art and the challenges that lay ahead

Definition: *New Media Art refers to art forms that are produced, modified and/or transmitted through some form of digital technology. The “new” in the title leaves the concept open-ended and encompasses all emerging forms that have not definition yet.*

Digital art – art that is being produced by means of digital software.

Internet art – is art that is being produced to be distributed via the Internet.

Generative art – is art that has been produced partially or totally by an autonomous system (a mathematical, mechanical or even biological algorithm)

Data visualization art – describes images that are generated from databases of information. There is beauty in information.

Information art – is a form of art that incorporates data, artificial intelligence, information systems.

AI generated art – is art generated by artificial intelligence systems, based on words, images or video.

NFTs – non-fungible tokens that incorporate a unique code of information, that can be a work of art. It relates to the notion of unicity... it can be owned by just one person. Dependent on block-chain technology.

IV. Conclusions

To be relevant in a world that was going through rapid changes, facing a public showered with information and bombarded with visual content, artists might benefit from a broader view of what art is in the contemporary digital world, if not to embrace new forms of art themselves, at least to understand the other artists. The same is true for the modern Christian that needs to make sense of the world around him. Digital content and new media art are windows into the soul of our society, and loving the neighbor might very well mean also understanding him.

V. Selected bibliography

- Adajian Thomas. (n.d.). *Defining_Art_Continuum_Companion_to_Aest.*
- Davies, S. (1990). Functional and Procedural Definitions of Art. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 24(2), 99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3332789>
- Nastasă, O. (2015). *The Definition of The Work of Art. A Procedural Theory of Art* [Ph.D. thesis]. ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ DE FILOSOFIE.
- Stephen Davies. (2013). The definition of art. In Berys Gaut & Dominic McIver Lopes (Eds.), *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* (3rd edition, pp. 213–222). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415249126-M006-1>