

03 Definition of Aesthetics

Tuesday, January 12, 2016 8:17 PM

Today:

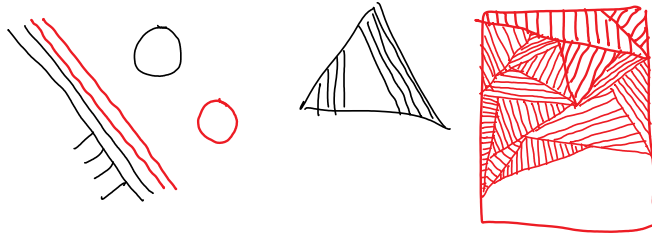
Admin stuff,
Aesthetics definition,

Talk to the people at your table. What are you doing for Upcycle? Exchange at least one question or one suggestion

Check out the 99% Invisible podcast.

Design oriented podcast. 99% of design work is invisible. Quite varied content.

Don't forget to start your design notebook. Doodling counts.



Major Art Theories

What is art? What good is art?

Realism

- Plato (500 BC): Representations should be truthful. Beauty = truth. Human perceptions are fallible, invisible true world has ideal 'Forms'.
- Aristotle: Beauty = both appearance (order, harmony, symmetry) and functionality. Form is inseparable from the purpose of art: to represent.

Expressionism (1850's)

- Art is to embody and stimulate emotion, often through metaphor.
- Cognitivism: Art can teach. Dewey's 'aesthetic experience' gives meaning and value.

Formalism (1900's):

- Only the form is important. Emotion, narrative, functionality are irrelevant.
- Abstract art context

Postmodernism (1968)

- Art and aesthetics cannot be separated from the social, ethical and political world.
- Pluralism. No theory is absolute; context is essential.

Barrett, Terry. *Why Is That Art?: Aesthetics and Criticism of Contemporary Art*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.

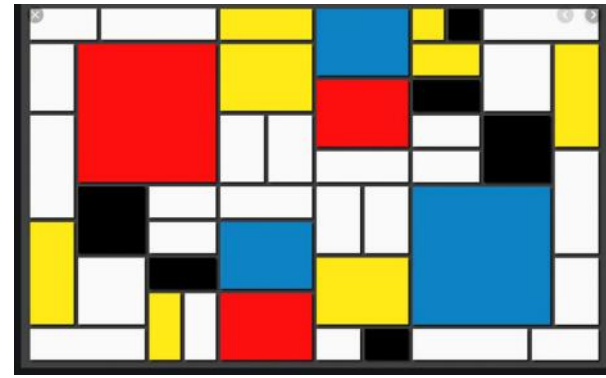
Clickers

Which major theory fits each work?





Starry Night by Van Gogh



Piet Mondrian



Edward Hopper, "Nighthawks" (1942)(Photo: Art Institute Chicago via Wikimedia Commons Public Domain)

Kitsch



Jeff Koons
Three Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Two Or J Silver Series, Spalding NBA Tip-Off) 1985
Tate
© Jeff Koons

A Theory of Art

- Art is the embodiment, the instantiation, the execution of an extraordinary vision.
- Mundane, routine activities don't make the cut.
- Any endeavor can be raised to the level of art: Mathematics, physics, cooking, sports.
- Art is not a luxury, not something extra for times of prosperity, not an afterthought to necessary work.
- "Art and aesthetics give meaning to our lives, and are actually crucial for explaining / getting through the difficulty, racism, wars, and pressures of the world." -Anonymous AesDes student

Definitions of Aesthetics

- Study of beauty
- Metric for art: is it art? Is it good art?
 - "Aesthetics of XYZ" describes a non-unique scale for evaluation of art. Once a vision or an intent has been defined, an artifact can be compared to it, be measured by it.
 - Is money an aesthetic?
- Psychological measure of affect
 - *[We define]aesthetics to be the study of those mental processes that underlie disinterested evaluative experiences that are anchored at the positive end by feelings that would accompany verbal expressions such as "Oh wow! That's wonderful! I love it!" and at the negative end by "Oh yuck! That's awful! I hate it!"*
- Set of guidelines, design rules that define an artist or a movement

Palmer, Stephen E, Karen B Schloss, and Jonathan Sammartino. "Visual Aesthetics and Human Preference." *Annual Review of Psychology* 64 (January 3, 2013): 77–107. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100504.

Student discussion on 'what is aesthetics?'

Previous year's responses

Visually pleasing
Pleasing to senses
Categories ; different type of aesthetic; hipster, hobo,
Aesthetics are related to intended target
Not necc. Pleasing, but has emotional impact; goth, big ugly shoes, intentionally repellent
Eye catching, pleasant or not
Thought it was beauty, now it's reaction, there are disturbing aesthetics
Measure of impact
100% subjective
Appreciation of beauty; is subjective, personal
Pleasing within its intention; context dependent
A measure of the effort made to achieve an ideal
A shift from the physical to the intangible characteristics
Nature can be aesthetic even if not 'made'
Can give inanimate a 'personality'

What makes things cool. Familiar enough to be comfortable, novel enough to be interesting. Goal of aesthetics.
How it makes you feel; subjective. Dutch word for warm response to furniture: Gezelligheid or Danish: Hygge

Sales aspect, tied to ergonomics, look pretty too.
Aesthetics as a set of beliefs, response to PT Cruiser
Artist trying to invoke a specific response subtly in the audience
Combination of color and shape (form) and function and beauty
Aspect of design that humanizes it, creates emotion
Gets at all senses
Evokes a way of thinking
As a visual appeal, and other senses. Not good or bad, can invoke + or - emotions
Nonverbal communications

Examples from students:

Beer: color depends on style
European architecture: Domes in Rome
Aesthetics of food appearance: careful plating
Street food
Hipsters: flannel, beer, beards,
Communicates a clear message- good graphics communicate, intuitive use

Aesthetics Tour

Images taken from Google search unless otherwise noted.

Using an aesthetic as a metric requires art, an artistic vision, to be defined, to set the context for the scale.

Let's look at some specific artistic visions, and the associated artifacts to get a sense of 'an aesthetic'.

The range of artifacts is broad: Design theorist Victor Margolin divides design into three categories:

- 1) Industrial design, including products, graphic, stage, interior, and fashion
- 2) Engineering or computer design
- 3) "Immaterial products": techniques, services, processes, urban design

Let's start with an aesthetic we can all recognize. Suggestions?

Minimalism

Hallmarks: not a lot of color; grayscale

Uses a lot of space

One color, limited palette

Single function; one purpose

Limited object or focus point

Well lit (room)

Simple, not busy

Only has essentials, not decorated

Functionally efficient; tiny home, minimalist lifestyle

Hipster:

Espresso

Beard

Scarves

Facial piercings

Record players

Retro technology; VW van, film camera, analog

Small businesses

Organic food, localvore

Circular glasses (John Lennon)

Tight pants

Indie bands

Craft beer

Beanies, hats

Earth tones

Tattoos

Levels of irony

Small carbon footprint

Sustainable lifestyle