

# 03 More Art Theory

Tuesday, January 12, 2016 8:17 PM

## Today:

Admin stuff,  
Art Theory  
Aesthetics definition

### Schedule

Due tonight: Syllabus agreement in Canvas.

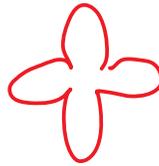


Table Tents: bring them to every class

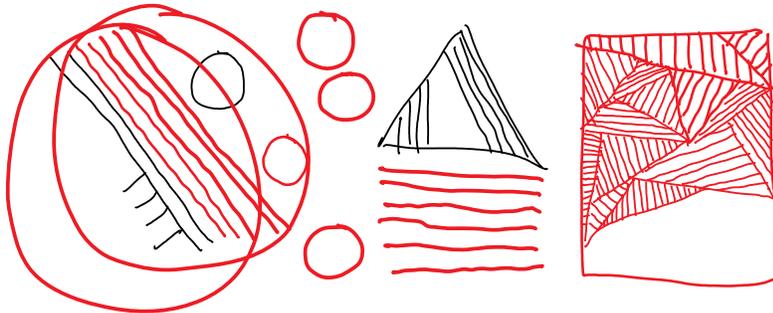
### Check out the 99% Invisible podcast.

Design oriented podcast. 99% of design work is invisible. Quite varied content.  
<https://99percentinvisible.org/>

### Yes, clickers today

An update to the iClicker student app was recently published. Any student experiencing issues signing in to the student app should delete the app from their device and reinstall the newest version from the Apple App store or Google Play. Students requiring assistance can reach out to [iClicker's support team](#).

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



Today: Straight lines, circle practice. Choose a pattern and repeat it to fill a triangular space. Part of the challenge is to keep it consistent; don't make changes partway through.

### Upcycling Check In

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

# Major Art Theories

## What is art? What good is art?

- A
  - 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.
- B
  - 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.
- C
  - Formalism (1900's):
    - Only the form is important. Emotion, narrative, functionality are irrelevant.
    - Abstract art context
- D
  - Postmodernism (1968)
    - Art and aesthetics cannot be separated from the social, ethical and political world.
    - Pluralism. No theory is absolute; context is essential.

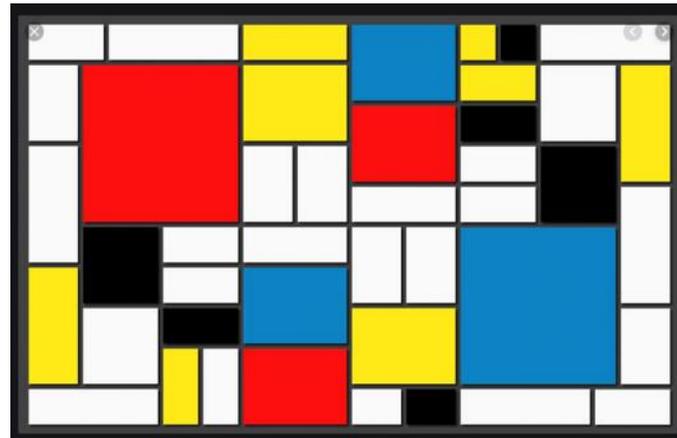
Barrett, Terry. *Why Is That Art?: Aesthetics and Criticism of Contemporary Art*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.

### 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



Starry Night by Van Gogh



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

Kitsch



Jeff Koons  
Three Ball Total Equilibrium Tank (Two Dr. 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

The range of artifacts that are designed, and could be considered art, 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.
  - a. Student-centered teaching
  - b. Patient-centered health care
  - c. An energetic garbage man. Has a vision of what a great garbage man does, and does it.
  - d. Athletics? Sports?

## Definitions of Aesthetics

- A** ▪ Study of beauty
- B** ▪ 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?
- C** ▪ 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!"*
- D** ▪ 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.

### In groups

List an aesthetic. What are the characteristics that a work needs to satisfy?

Examples from last year:

- 1) Tropical: natural shapes, bright colors, high contrast
- 2) Academia, earth tones, books, wood paneling, old with intricate patterns
- 3) Glow wave: geometric, lights, black background, neon
- 4) Minimalism. Light colors, simple shapes, focused on functionality
- 5) Cereal boxes. Crazy mascot, large image of the grains, bright colors

This year:

1. Modern architecture: simplicity, monotone, sleek, blocky (large scale) Engineering Center - Brutalist
2. Modern gothic style: dark, ornate, intricate, stone, metal, wood, made into creatures
3. Workwear aesthetic; paint splatters, earth tones, dirty, worn, Carhart. Overalls,
4. Steampunk: open mechanisms, brass, steel, complexity, 1890s- 1920 styles
5. Industrial: gray metal tones, sleek, shiny, bare, utilitarian, unrefined. Exposed ductwork, polished concrete floors

## Summary

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'.