

# **ART APPRECIATION**

## **UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO ART**

### **Definition of Art**

What do you think is the definition of art? There is no exact definition as such since artists have their own definitions of art and varied definitions of art. Even the dictionary has varied definitions of art, the Oxford dictionary explains art to be; "The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power." Defining art, how I would personally define art as to express my emotional feelings be it in a 2d or 3d or any kind of presentation that is how I see art, my feelings mixed with emotion involving my creative skills.

Let us see how Encyclopaedia Britannica defines art to be; "The use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments or experiences that can be shared with others. Art is the product or process of deliberately arranging items (often with a symbolic significance) in a way that influences and affects one or more of the senses, emotions and intellect. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations, and modes of expression, including music, literature, film, photography, sculpture and paintings.

Coming to the need and search for art, what do you think is the need and search for art?

### **THE NEED AND SEARCH FOR ART:**

The study of the past proves that human beings have always been in search and in need for art.

From cave paintings ranging from the lexes to Avant - Garde works of the 20th Century, human beings have always been in a need and search for art. Regardless of time and space, art has always been produced because artists have always wanted to say something to the society and chose a particular way of saying it. As I

said, let it be the expression of emotions, conveying a social message or portraying something to the public, they choose art. Let us see an example of it;

This is a cave painting from the Lascaux and the study of bull by Picasso. It is noticeable that the artists have always wanted to learn something; there has always been a need and search for something.

### **ART, INTELLECT AND EMOTION:**

What is the rule of Art?

> Art can make you think.

> Art can make you feel.

> Art can trigger associations.

### **ART STIMULATES INTELLECT:**

In what way does Art stimulate intellect?

This is a Polyhedron drawing by Leonardo Da Vinci and the one on the right side of the image is a Geodesic dome by Buckminster Fuller. The Polyhedron has been an inspiration for Buckminster to create the Geodesic dome.

### **ART CREATES ORDER AND HARMONY**

All of you must be familiar with the golden proportion incorporated in the Parthenon, Athens. This is the shell of a snail and this is the derivation of the Golden proportion from it and this is the incorporation of it, on the elevation of the Parthenon. This is the application of the Golden section, thus, it is evident of how nature's ways and creations are incorporated into buildings as well, thereby, creating order and harmony.

### **ART REFLECTS THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

This image is an example of Edward Hopper from the Nighthawks; this picture is a live scene of the city of New York and a real life cafe. However, artists have tried their best to locate this cafe and have failed to do so.

This cafe is located on an abandoned street and there are four people inside, including the waiter. Taking a closer look at the people, none of them have direct eye contact with each other, portraying that every individual in this world is alone. Taking a closer look at the waiter, he depicts anger; the artist would be the only one who knows the reason behind this. Thus, Art reflects the Social and Cultural context.

## **ART MEETS THE NEED OF THE ARTIST**

In what way do you think the art meets the need of the artist? Let us take a look at an example. This is a drawing for The Gates by Christo and on the right, you have the image of the executed work by Christo and Jeanne - Claude 30 years later. It might seem simple, but the idea behind this, was to add more colour to the landscape. The steel structure erected, ran for about 23 miles and there are about, 750 in numbers, each of them reaching a height of about 16 feet. For any construction to take place, the artist first needs to visualize this place in terms of proportion, balance, harmony and colour as well. In that way, art meets the need of the artist. This is the basis for the creation of this kind of structure.

This is a vast example; let us take a look into a closer example. This is a sketch by the famous artist "Thota Tharani", for the movie Shivaji for a song. He has created these structures, this is his visual idea, he has produced it, using his own medium and this is his executed part of his views. So we need art for many things.

Let us have a short exercise now; **EXERCISE 1:**

> **What** is art, Give your own definition of Art. You might have a different opinion of art, your friend might have a different opinion of art. So, give your own definition of art.

> In what way do you think, 'Art' has stimulated your intellect ? Like we saw an example of the Geodesic dome with the Polyhedron structure of Da Vinci.

> Have you come across the instance where art served your need? it might be in your design or conceptual stage, wherever you think, art has served your need, do explain it and prepare a summary of it.

Let us take a closer look of the medium and Techniques of art.

### **TRADITIONAL PAINTING MEDIA EXPLAINED:**

Off late there has been an overflow of new media and techniques. There have been extensions of traditional approach. There has also been others without precedent. All have been absorbed into the artist's armoury. There are a wide medium involved in the production of art, it ranges from;

- > Roplex
- > Acrylics
- > Lithograph
- > Ceramic
- > Enamels
- > Pre Liquefied watercolours
- > Charcoal
- > Dry brushing
- > Presco
- > Lacquers
- > Oil paint
- > Distemper

Artists continue to explore the various mediums through which art can be created. Now let us have a closer look at the various mediums used to produce art with examples of each;

### **ACRYLIC:**

This is an example of acrylic painting by Piet Mondrian, his Acrylic work on canvas. Acrylic medium is generally thicker and stronger than tempera or watercolour paint. Such type of paints, dry quickly and hence we must also be very careful while mixing acrylic paints. Acrylic is water based "plastic" paint.

### **CERAMIC:**

This form of art is used to describe the shaping, finishing and firing of clay. These are examples of Ceramic works.

### **CHARCOAL AND CONTE CRAYON:**

This is an example of Charcoal work and this is an example of Conte Crayon work. The charcoal and Conte Crayon, both are in a stick form and they easily smudge. Though both these qualities are said to a disadvantage the advantages of it are the same. They could be smudged easily and creating various shades and hues and these are available in stick form.

If you take a closer look at both these works, you can see the darker shades and the lighter tones which thereby create a very realistic image. The one on the left is an example of charcoal work while the one on the right is a Conte crayon work. Since it tends to smudge very easily, we can produce all these kinds of effects, various tones and shades. This is a major advantage of Charcoal and Conte Crayon work.

### **DISTEMPER:**

This painting technique involves the use of powdered colours that are mixed with glue size, or egg yolk and is applied onto a sheet/ canvas. Taking a closer look at the painting below, the coloured powder is mixed with either glue or egg yolk and the colours are applied. You can even see the bold brush strokes at the varied use of colours, shades and textures. The distemper work even produces even distinct textures which is quite interesting as well.

### **DRY BRUSH:**

Dry brush is a technique and art where the paint is used more rather than the water. So in this example you can actually feel the dryness in the painting, layers have been applied over and over to create this kind of a piece.

## **FRESCO:**

We all must be very familiar with this work, we have this sort of a painting since ancient times. Here, the pigment is applied over the damp plaster, which makes it more permanent and more realistic and the most existing works of all till date.

This is a Fresco painting on the ceiling of a chapel. Where the pigment has been directly applied over the damp plaster. This was done centuries ago and continue to exist. That is the long lasting quality of Fresco paintings.

## **LITHOGRAPH:**

This is a printing process in which A small stone or metal sheet is used. The printer, usually with the artist supervision covers the plate with a sheet of paper which are then run through the printer. Thus, Lithography work is produced. This is an example of Lithographic work.

## **OIL PAINT:**

Oil paints are one the great classic media, and have dominated painting for five decades. They remain popular for many reasons; their great versatility, offering the possibility of transparency and opacity in the same painting, the lack of colour change when the painting dries and ease of manipulation.

The mixing of colours are very interesting with regard to Oil painting when compared to acrylics, it is easier to mix colours here since acrylics dry really quickly. But in oil painting, the mixing of paints can be done at ease; we can keep applying on and on to get the desired realistic effect of the painting. These are the famous examples done with oil paintings. You would notice the darker shades, the opaqueness, and the transparency producing a very realistic image of the scenes.

## **TERRA COTTA:**

This is commonly used for ceramic sculpture; it is brownish - orange earthenware clay. Terracotta Murals are famous even till date. They are widely and popularly used as mural installations. What they do is, the mural or the sculpture is created on a plane on pieces and then they are made to dry and install on the wall and the gaps between the pieces are sealed with cement or any other firm material. They are then coated and painted. This is not just an ancient method of art but a famous method use widely till date, even as mural sculptures

## **EXERCISES**

Let's have a look into the exercise.

> Collect examples for each medium of art explained above, done by various artists and analyse them and the procedure of creating the work like acrylic, ceramic, oil painting etc., and analyse each of them and procedure of creating the work.

> A clear understanding of these various mediums would guide you to your comfortable working medium. Find it out your comfortable medium, whether you are comfortable with acrylics, charcoal work or a pencil work, etc. and then try creating a work of your own, either with a pencil/ charcoal or anything

> Then create a report of your process. Like how you started and your procedure of doing it and come up with the pros and cons of your medium. Just the theoretical notes of any media, wouldn't be sufficient, you have to work out the medias to experience them. That is the main task of this exercise.

Not to leave out Photography as a medium of Art - Study, the evolution of the photographic as a medium of art and the various techniques involved in photography. This would be your task and exercise for this session.

## **SCULPTURES:**

These are 3 dimensional forms made using different materials, including;

- > Ceramic
- > Plastic
- > Welding
- > Composition board
- > Aluminium
- > Stainless steel
- > and Other materials

Let us have a closer look into the examples, this is a Welded bronze sculpture by Antoine Pevsner, known as 'Elan' and these are the plastic sculptures created by the Japanese born artist Sayaka Ganz. I guess you must be very familiar with these images by Sayaka Ganz, they have been viral online and across newspapers. Look at the interesting composition made by her from the objects picked up from trash, discarded plastics found in thrift stores. She has simply created them by picking plastic from trash. It would be interesting if you try creating something like this or something from your own idea that is how art evolves isn't it? This is an example for the cast, aluminium based sculpture, which is 100 ft tall which was created for the sculpture exhibition and conference.

This is a Sculpture by the Indian born British artist Anish Kapoor, that is the centerpiece of AT and T Plaza at Millenium park. It is made up of 168 stainless steel plates that have been welded together; its highly polished exterior has no visible seams of the welded plates. It measures, 33 by 66 by 42 feet. These are Multi-channel aluminium animation installations in these days.

This is a File - based exhibition, encouraging artists to create site- specific installations for the internet. Here, the space is given to the artist online and the topic is given as well, what the artist has to do is, the artist has to create the sculpture according to the theme, and upload it online and once the architectural space is finished, the sculpture will be incorporated in it. Isn't it interesting? This shows the development of technology in the ways of sculpture and artistic perception, everything.



## **Another Exercise**

- > Study the sculpture forms of various mediums; we had a look into the plastic ceramic, welding, and aluminium sculptures, isn't it? So, collect examples, to study the sculpture form of these various mediums.
- > Propose sculpture designs ( on worksheets) for various mediums and mixed media. Take a sheet of paper and create your own sculpture with various mediums.
- > Justify your sculpture form and once you have designed your sculpture and designated the mediums to each part/ the technique which you are going to use. Justify the sculpture form, why have you created the particular form, what was the concept and context behind creating it. It is not just a sculpture but, there is much more behind it. Your idea, thought process, everything matters a lot in this. Justify the form and the various mediums, you have assigned for it.

## **APPRECIATING ART: ART ANALYSIS**

Analyzing through the Form, Content and Context

Let us take the example of the famous, The Arnolfini Portrait (1434) of the renaissance period by Jan Van Eyck.

Taking a closer look, notice the following;

- > Subject
- > Colour
- > Texture
- > Space
- > Balance
- > Symbolism - the touching of hands represents an agreement to wed.

This is a very famous portrait of Arnolfini and his bride and every single object in this picture has been detailed so perfectly and there is a meaning for everything. It will be even more interesting when you come to know the meaning and sequence behind these artworks and the images in this picture. The touching hand between

Arnolfini and his bride represents an agreement to the wed. This picture is very well composed and it is so proportional and it creates a sense of feeling of the exact of the image to the artist. Every object portrayed in this picture conveys a message. Looking at a closer look into the image, behind them, the curtains have been opened and the bride is made to stand near the bed. It portrays that the female is in charge of the domestic needs of the house and she takes care of the children and bears a child. The man is made to stand near the window, portraying that he is a social person. The Bedposts finial (crowning ornament) is a tiny statue of Saint Margaret, patron saint of childbirth and from the finial hands a whisk broom, symbolic of domestic care. The cast-aside clogs indicate this event is taking place on holy ground.

The oranges on the table, below the window, conveys that they refer to fertility, and the richness of the place. The richness cause oranges and lemons, the citrus fruits are said to be very costly during that period, they had to be imported from Spain and the all-seeing eye of God that seems to be referred to twice in this image. It is symbolized once by the single candle burning in the left rear holder of the ornate chandelier and again by the mirror, where viewers see the entire room reflected. Having a closer look into the mirror, the small medallions set into the mirror's frame show tiny scenes from the Passion of Christ and represents God's ever-present promise of salvation for the figure reflected on the mirror's convex surface. Who are the people reflected in the mirror? Arnolfini and his bride, having a closer into the mirror you could see two more people in the mirror, Arnolfini and the bride and two more, who are they? One could be the artist himself, who is having a direct look at the scene and painting and the other person could represent a person from the society who is witnessing the wedding. The writing from the top of the mirror, even states that the artist was present there.

In the painting, the artist, Van Eyck has enhanced the documentary nature of this painting by exquisitely painting each object and the detailing for them. He carefully distinguished textures and depicted the light from the window on the left reflecting off various surfaces. The artist augmented the scene's credibility by including the convex mirror, because viewers can see not only through the principals, Arnolfini and his wife, but also two people who look into the room through the door. One of these must be the artist himself, as the florid inscription

above the mirror states, "Johannes de ... ", announces he was present. The picture's purpose, then seems to have been to record and sanctify this marriage. Let us have a look into the exercise for the art appreciation of the form, content and context.

### **EXERCISE 5:**

> Study and analyze these art forms (below) with respect to their form, content and context and prepare a report for the same.

> How would you analyze a building with similar formulae? This is a decoration at a Cathedral and this is a famous portrait Mona Lisa by Da Vinci, for example looking into this decoration detail of the Cathedral, it is not just a means of beauty but to educate, the illiterates who come into the church. Taking a closer look into it, it explains, the various stories and disciples of christianity. Explain and analyze them, in reference to the example of Arnolfini portrait and do try to analyze a building with the same concepts; the context of form, content and context - the Parthenon, Greece.

### **AN EXPLORATION INTO ART REALITY, PERCEPTION, REPRESENTATION**

Let us have a look into the example by Dorothea Lange photographer, of the Migrant mother. This is a famous photography by Lange which has served as an icon for many years. What is the reality in this picture?

#### **Reality:**

As the United States sank into the Great depression, a photographer named Dorothea Lange turned her attention away from studio and portrait work to take pictures of the poor and needy around her.

#### **Perception:**

It can be interpreted in many ways that it is a symbol of beauty, motherhood, the culture of the depression, a symbol of suffering or simply a piece of artwork. No

matter what someone may see as the most important aspect of Migrant mother, it is undeniable that it is truly an incredible icon from the era of the Depression, and still is an icon to this day.

However, Dorothea Lange perceives this picture to be a woman, Mrs. Thompson, mother of seven kids. Looking at the picture even further, only three kids were captured, the standing beside her and the other on her lap, nobody knows what happened to the rest of them, her husband died because of tuberculosis and she was the only breadwinner of her family, taking care of her children and taking up any work that comes along her way. One could see the suffering and pain she has undergone all these years, to take care of her children and for the betterment of her life.

It can be interpreted in many ways that it is a symbol of beauty, motherhood, the culture of the depression, a symbol of suffering or simply a piece of artwork. No matter what someone may see as the most important aspect of Migrant mother, it is undeniable that it is truly an incredible icon from the era of the Depression, and still is an icon to this day. Till date this image is being used in books, magazines, etc, to depict poverty and depression. It has created such a great impact on the society,

### **Representation:**

The image of a worn, weather-beaten woman, a look of desperation on her face, two children leaning on her shoulders, an infant in her lap, has become a photographic icon of the Great depression in America. It seems to be a simple photograph of a woman and her children, yet it tells the story and the struggle of a generation. When Dorothea Lange came across Thompson, in the peepaker scam, she neared her and asked if she could take a photograph of her and her children. She never spoke a word with Dorothea and she just said she was 32 at that time, she immediately took 6 snaps of her and Thompson eventually cooperated with Lange for thinking of a better life for her, like how these photographs would bring. Within a week of taking these photographs, the photograph went viral and they

were published in so many magazines and this photograph also reached the government within a week and what the government did was.

They rushed a shipment of 20,000 lbs. of food to the camp. The photos' wider impact included influencing John Steinbeck in the writing of his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. So you can see the power of photography or an art, the way the reality is captured by the perception of the artist and the representation of it, all these three play a vital role in portraying a piece of art.

The human and aesthetic elements merge, and a photograph initially used to remedy social injustice in the 1930s survives today as a work of art and as an icon as well. Let us have a look at the exercise for this piece of content;

### **EXERCISE 6:**

> Select a piece of art - photograph/ painting, you could select the *Third of May*, a painting by Goya and analyze it with respect to reality, perception and representation. Have a look into what the reality behind this picture could be and how the artists have perceived this and in what way has he represented it. Just analyze this picture and submit a report.