

Eleventh Edition

# PERCEIVING THE

# ARTS

An Introduction to the Humanities



MyArtsLab™



DENNIS J. SPORRE

# Perceiving the Arts

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HUMANITIES

Eleventh Edition

Dennis J. Sporre

**PEARSON**

Boston Columbus Indianapolis New York San Francisco Upper Saddle River  
Amsterdam Cape Town Dubai London Madrid Milan Munich Paris Montréal Toronto  
Delhi Mexico City São Paulo Sydney Hong Kong Seoul Singapore Taipei Tokyo

**Editorial Director:** Craig Campanella  
**Editor in Chief:** Sarah Touborg  
**Senior Publisher:** Roth Wilkofsky  
**Program Manager:** Barbara Cappuccio  
**Editorial Assistant:** Christopher Fegan  
**Director of Marketing:** Kate Stewart  
**Marketing Assistant:** Paige Patunas  
**Team Lead:** Melissa Feimer  
**Project Manager:** Lynne Breitfeller  
**Senior Operations Supervisor:** Mary Fischer  
**Senior Operations Specialist:** Diane Peirano  
**Cover Designer:** Suzanne Duda  
**Image Lead Manager:** Ben Ferrini

**Cover Art:** Dancer: svetara/Shutterstock; other icons  
SolielC/Shutterstock  
**Director of Digital Media:** Brian Hyland  
**Senior Digital Media Editor:** David Alick  
**Media Project Manager:** Rich Barnes  
**Manager, Text Permissions:** Paul Sarkis  
**Associate Project Manager, Text Permissions:** Peggy Davis  
**Full-Service Project Management:** S4Carlisle Publishing  
Services  
**Composition:** S4Carlisle Publishing Services  
**Printer/Binder:** Courier/Kendallville  
**Cover Printer:** Phoenix Color, Corp  
**Text Font:** ITC New Baskerville Std 10/12

Credits and acknowledgments borrowed from other sources and reproduced, with permission, in this textbook appear on the appropriate page within text.

---

Copyright © 2015, 2011, 2009 by Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved. Manufactured in the United States of America. This publication is protected by Copyright, and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise. To obtain permission(s) to use material from this work, please submit a written request to Pearson Education, Inc., Permissions Department, One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458, or you may fax your request to 201-236-3290.

Many of the designations by manufacturers and sellers to distinguish their products are claimed as trademarks. Where those designations appear in this book, and the publisher was aware of a trademark claim, the designations have been printed in initial caps or all caps.

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Sporre, Dennis J.

Perceiving the arts : an introduction to the humanities / Dennis J. Sporre. — 11th edition.  
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-205-99511-0 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-205-99511-X (alk. paper)

1. Arts—Philosophy. 2. Aesthetics. I. Title.

BH39.S66 2013

700.1—dc23

2013032540

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**PEARSON**

ISBN 10: 0-205-99511-X  
ISBN 13: 978-0-205-99511-0

# Contents

---

Preface	<i>v</i>	<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
		Literature	<i>141</i>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>		<b>CHAPTER 7</b>	
Introduction		Theatre	<i>164</i>
<i>What Are the Arts and How Do We Respond to and Evaluate Them?</i>	<i>1</i>	<b>CHAPTER 8</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>		Cinema	<i>186</i>
Pictures		<b>CHAPTER 9</b>	
<i>Drawing, Painting, Printmaking, and Photography</i>	<i>27</i>	Dance	<i>206</i>
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>		Glossary	<i>225</i>
Sculpture	<i>63</i>	Credits	<i>240</i>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>		Index	<i>241</i>
Architecture	<i>84</i>		
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>			
Music	<i>114</i>		

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Preface

---

*Perceiving the Arts* in this, its eleventh edition, testifies to the value of a factual, straightforward approach to introducing the arts. *Perceiving the Arts* teaches, simply, what to look and listen for in works of art and literature. It illustrates the accessibility of the arts and how we can use our perceptual skills to engage them. The consequent confidence (empowerment) opens a lifetime relationship with the arts and culture. In the classroom the text can stimulate enriching discussion and deeper understanding of aesthetic experiences.

From the myriad of approaches to the arts, I have adapted Harry Broudy's formulation of aesthetic response. Specifically, we can ask four questions about an artwork: (1) What is it? (a formal response); (2) How is it put together? (a technical response); (3) How does it appeal to the senses? (an experiential response); and (4) What does it mean? (a contextual and personal response). These questions provide a workable organization to tie together the separate chapters of the book.

*Perceiving the Arts* introduces basic definitions and concepts, recognizing that these often are arguable, complex, and/or steeped in historical contexts. Further, most artists do not paint, sculpt, compose, or write to neatly fixed formulas. However, approaching aesthetic experiences by asking response-oriented questions and focusing

on terminology allows us to identify what we see and hear and effectively communicate our responses to others. Learning in any discipline, whether art, biology, foreign language, sociology, etc., begins with vocabulary. Words are important.

This edition seeks to make the book more approachable for and appealing to students, while maintaining its current size, moderate cost, and familiarity to instructors who have used the previous edition. The changes herein manifest themselves in six ways:

- 1) A new "Critical Thinking" segment opens each chapter in order to focus students' attention and enhance their comprehension of the material to follow.
- 2) Expanded and improved visual content, including twenty-six new illustrations and more works in color.
- 3) The inclusion of more artists from non-Western cultures and underrepresented minorities.
- 4) A variety of content changes and additions, including changes in some text and headings to lend a more active and embracing voice; a new timeline on major world artistic styles to begin the book; new

sections on style to the Introduction (Chapter 1); new profiles on Rosa Bonheur (Chapter 2); Hildegard of Bingen (Chapter 5); and Martha Graham (Chapter 9); and new sections on production and the director in cinema (Chapter 8).

- 5) A refined glossary that accommodates additions elsewhere in the text. The glossary now becomes, primarily, a repository of definitions of major artistic styles, many of which are not discussed in the main chapters. In that sense, then, the glossary has become an additional chapter with additional content. What have been sacrificed are terms fully defined and discussed earlier in the book.
- 6) The introduction of MyArtsLab for the text, which includes new technological tools to assist both students and instructors.

As always, I am indebted to the reviewers whose observations and suggestions formed the core of this revision. And as has been the case through the years, I am deeply grateful for the love, support, and keen editorial eye of my wife, Hilda.

D. J. S

## MYARTSLAB

*MyArtsLab* offers a wealth of resources designed to save time for instructors and improve results for students! Now with enhanced features developed specifically to support the eleventh edition of *Perceiving the Arts*, *MyArtsLab* will enhance students' ability to understand, analyze, and appreciate the humanities as never before. Here's how *MyArtsLab* can help students learn:

- **Study Plan Assessments** provide instructors with integrated exam questions that are aligned with the text's new learning objectives, helping students focus on critical thinking elements from each chapter.
- **Writing Space** offers tailored essay prompts to help students write about the humanities and features built-in grading tools for efficient instructor review.
- **Interactive Closer Look Features** offer students in-depth analyses of relevant art works, architecture, artistic techniques, and more.
- **Additional Multimedia Features**, including architectural simulations, videos, and review flashcards, provide students with an immersive online experience that complements the main text.

## ALTERNATE FORMATS

*Perceiving the Arts* is available in a variety of electronic and alternate print versions. Select the appropriate version for your class, or provide your students with information about all their options. **For additional information about any of these alternate formats, contact your local Pearson representative.\***

Alternate Format	What Does It Offer?	Where Do I Get It?	Price
<b>MyArtsLab Instant Access with Pearson eText</b>	The full eText of <i>Perceiving the Arts</i> and access to Pearson's MyLab.	Available for direct purchase by students at <a href="http://www.pearsonhighered.com">www.pearsonhighered.com</a> ISBN: 0205997821.	Substantial savings compared to the print textbook's suggested list price.
<b>MyArtsLab Standalone Access with Pearson eText</b>	The full eText of <i>Perceiving the Arts</i> and access to Pearson's MyLab.	Order this printed card to be stocked in your university bookstore. ISBN: 0205997848.	Substantial savings compared to the print textbook's suggested list price.
<b>Books a la Carte</b>	The complete print textbook packaged in an unbound, hole punched, loose-leaf format.	Order this version to be stocked in your university bookstore. ISBN: 0205980473.	Substantial savings compared to the print textbook's suggested list price.
<b>Pearson Custom Publishing / Custom Library</b>	A custom textbook tailored to meet your instructional needs. Select the individual works that you want to include in your course, or add your own original material.	<b>Talk to your local Pearson representative.*</b>	Price depends on length. Substantial savings are possible.
<b>CourseSmart</b>	An eText that students can read online via <a href="http://www.coursesmart.com">www.coursesmart.com</a> . Not downloadable.	Students subscribe to CourseSmart by visiting <a href="http://www.coursesmart.com">www.coursesmart.com</a> .	Substantial savings compared to the print textbook's suggested list price.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- **Valuepack Card**

Offer your students access to the extensive resources of MyArtsLab and a complete eText by ordering the Valuepack Access Code Card packaged with print copies of the text. Package ISBN 0205991610.

- **Instructor's Manual and Test Item File**

The Instructor's Manual provides you with additional information and resources to supplement *Perceiving the Arts*, including suggestions for using the text and a detailed overview of artistic styles. The Test Item File allows you to build your own exams and

quizzes using a downloadable set of questions, including multiple choice and discussion questions. Available as a free download at [www.MyArtsLab.com](http://www.MyArtsLab.com) and [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com).

- **MyTest**

Create customized tests quickly and easily using this flexible, online test-generating software that includes all questions found in the Test Item File. Available at [www.pearson-mytest.com](http://www.pearson-mytest.com).

**For further information on Teaching and Learning Resources, please contact your local Pearson sales representative.\***

\* **To find the name of your Pearson representative, go to** <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/replocator/>.



# A Simplified Timeline of Selected World Artistic Styles

(Beginning dates where only one date appears)

## The Ancient World (c. 30,000–c. 480 B.C.E.)

**Europe**—The Stone Age (c. 30,000–10,000 B.C.E.); Archaic Greece (c. 600 B.C.E.)

**Asia**—India: Indus Valley (2600 B.C.E.); China: Hang Dynasty (c. 1400 B.C.E.)

**The Middle East**—Sumerian (c. 3500 B.C.E.); Egyptian (c. 3000 B.C.E.); Babylonian (c. 1800 B.C.E.); Assyrian (c. 1000 B.C.E.); Hebrew (c. 1000 B.C.E.)

**America**—Mexico: Olmec (1200 B.C.E.)

## The Pre-Modern World (c. 480 B.C.E.–c. 1400 C.E.)

**Europe**—Greek Classicism (c. 480 B.C.E.); Hellenism (c. 300 B.C.E.); Roman Classicism (27 B.C.E.); Early Christian (100 C.E.); Romanesque (1000 C.E.); Gothic (1100 C.E.)

**Asia**—China: Qin Dynasty (220 B.C.E.), Han Dynasty (200 B.C.E.), Tang Dynasty (580 C.E.), Song Dynasty (960 C.E.); India: Buddhism (c. 300 B.C.E.), Hindu (c. 500 C.E.); Japan: Early Heian (794 C.E.), Kamakura (1185 C.E.)

**America**—Mexico: Teotihuacan (200 C.E.)

**The Middle East**—Byzantine (c. 400 C.E.); Islamic (622 C.E.)

**Africa**—Nok (c. 400 B.C.E.); Ife (1100 C.E.); Djenné (1300 C.E.)

## The Emerging Modern World (c. 1400–1800)

**Europe**—Renaissance (1400); High Renaissance (1475); Mannerism (1520); Reformation (1500); Baroque (1600); Rococo (1700); Neo-Classical (1750); Classical (Music—1750)

**Africa**—Benin (1400); Mali (1400)

**Asia**—China: Ming Dynasty (1368); India: Rajput (c. 1600), Punjab Hills (c. 1650); Japan: Imari (c. 1650)

**America**—Aztec (1400); Incan (1400)

## The Age of Industry (1800–1900)

**Europe**—Romanticism; Impressionism; Post-Impressionism; Aestheticism; Art Nouveau

**Africa**—Kota; Cameroon

**Asia**—Japanese Printmaking

**America**—Kakiutl; Inuit; Tlingit

## The Modern and Post-Modern World (1900–Present)

**Modern** (1900–c. 1960)—Cubism; Expressionism; Fauvism; Futurism; Art Deco; Mechanism; Dada; Abstraction; Surrealism; Minimalism; Absurdism; Realism; Abstract expressionism; Pop art; Op art; Hard edge; Environmental and Ephemeral

**Post-Modern** (c. 1960–) Neoabstraction; Installations; Digital art—Interactivity; Pluralism

# Introduction

## WHAT ARE THE ARTS AND HOW DO WE RESPOND TO AND EVALUATE THEM?

If we, citizens, do not support our artists, then we sacrifice our imagination on the altar of crude reality and we end up believing in nothing and having worthless dreams.

YANN MARTEL, *Life of Pi*

### Thinking Critically

1. Define the term “humanities” and compare it to the “sciences.”
2. Describe the fundamental concerns of art.
3. Outline the basic purposes and functions of art.
4. Compare and contrast formal and contextual criticism.
5. Characterize how to identify and compare artistic styles.

A colleague came into my office and placed on my desk a very expensive book about architecture. “From an appreciative student,” he said.

“Before or after grades?” I replied, jokingly, of course.

He gave me a withering look of displeasure, and after a dramatic pause for effect, he told me “Sam’s” story.

Sam, a construction worker, took my colleague’s course “Introduction to the Arts” as a night student. After the semester ended (and after grades were posted!) Sam brought the book to my colleague. At the time, the book probably cost perhaps as much as a fourth of Sam’s weekly paycheck.

“Why?” my colleague asked Sam.

“Because you changed my life,” Sam replied. “Before this course, I poured concrete day in and day out. It was concrete—you know, cement, sand, and gravel—just concrete. After taking this course, I can’t see just bland concrete anymore. Whenever I walk onto a job site, I see patterns, colors, lines, and forms. Whenever I look at a building, I see history. I go to places I’d never dreamed of going before, and I can’t believe how dull my life really was without all the things I now see and hear. I just never knew there was so much out there.”

My colleague said to me, “You know, this construction worker, a real tough guy—a man’s man—had tears in his eyes; he was so taken by what he’d found out about life through art.”

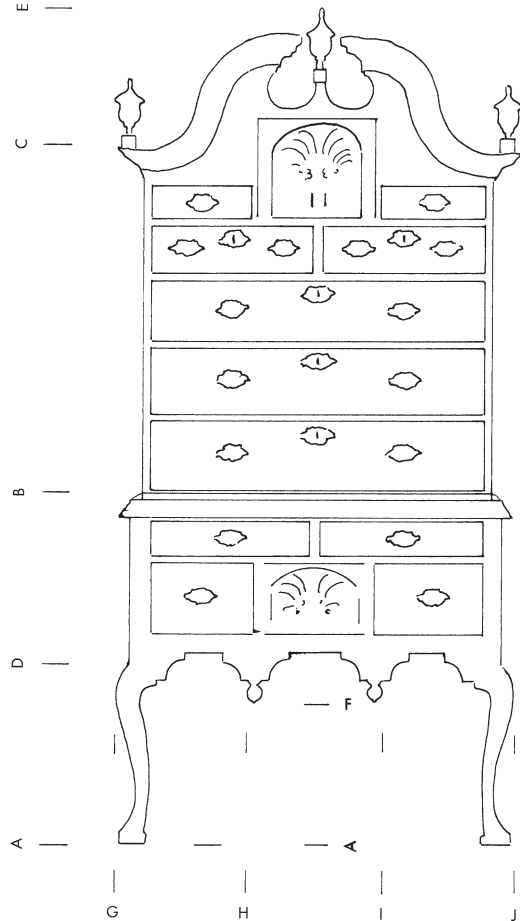
## 2 Chapter 1: Introduction

Sam's discoveries have happened to other people—countless people—in the past and will happen again and again in the future to people *who choose to let it happen to them*.

Artworks make some people uncomfortable, probably because dealing with an artwork represents stepping into unfamiliar territory. Unfortunately, some artists and a few sophisticates try to keep the arts confusing and hidden to all but a select few. Nonetheless, this book seeks to empower its readers—to access works of art comfortably and with the understanding that art and life intertwine irrevocably. Knowledgeable interaction with works of art makes life better: We see more of what can be seen, and we hear more of what can be heard. Our entire existence grows richer and deeper.

Recognizing the artistic principles and influences all around us makes our world more interesting and habitable. The arts are elements of life with which we can and must deal and to which we must respond every day. We live with the arts because their principles permeate our existence. Specifically, the aesthetic experience provides a way of knowing and communicating in and of itself, separate from other ways of knowing and communicating.

The arts play important roles in making the world around us a more interesting and habitable place. Artistic ideas join with *conventions* to make everyday objects attractive and pleasurable to use. The term *convention* appears repeatedly in this text. A convention is a set of rules or mutually accepted conditions such as the keyboard and tuning of a piano. In addition, Figure 1.1, a scale drawing of an eighteenth-century highboy, illustrates how art and convention combine in everyday items. The maker of the high chest conceived it to fulfill a practical purpose—to provide for storage of household objects in an easily accessible, yet hidden, place. However, while designing an object to accommodate that practical need, the cabinetmakers felt the additional need to provide an interesting and attractive object. If we perceive with discrimination and imagination,



**Figure 1.1** Scale drawing of an eighteenth-century highboy.

we enter an enlightening and challenging experience with this piece of furniture.

First of all, a convention that dictates a consistent height for tables and desks controls the design. So the lower portion of the chest, from point A to point B, designs space within a height that harmonizes with other furniture in the room. If we look carefully, we can also see that the parts of the chest contain a sophisticated and interesting series of proportional and progressive relationships. The distance from A to B is twice the distance from A to D and is equal to the distance from B to C. The distances from A to F and C to E bear no recognizable relationship to the previous

dimensions but are, however, equal to each other and to the distances from G to H, H to I, and I to J. In addition, the size of the drawers in the upper chest decreases at an even and proportional rate from bottom to top.

Another example of how art infiltrates life appears in the Volkswagen shown in Figure 1.2. Here repetition of form reflects a concern for unity, one of the fundamental characteristics of art. The design of the Volkswagen used strong repetition of the oval. The latest reincarnation of the VW Beetle also has repetition of circular form. We need only to look at the rear of the Bug to see variation on this theme as applied in the window, motor-compartment hood, taillights, fenders, and bumper. Later models of the Volkswagen differed from this version and reflect the intrusion of conventions, again, into the world of design. As safety standards called for larger bumpers, the oval design of the motor-compartment hood flattened so a larger bumper could clear it. The rear window was enlarged and squared to accommodate the need for increased rear vision. The intrusion of these conventions changed

the design of the Beetle by breaking down the strong unity of the original composition.

Edwin J. Delattre gives us another view of the relationship of the arts and life when he compares the purpose for studying technical subjects to the purpose for studying the humanities or the arts. “When a person studies the mechanics of internal combustion engines, the intended result is that he should be better able to understand, design, build, or repair such engines, and sometimes he should be better able to find employment because of his skills, and thus better his life. . . . When a person studies the humanities [the arts], the intended result is that he should be better able to understand, design, build, or repair a life—for living is a vocation we have in common despite our differences.

“The humanities provide us with opportunities to become more capable in thought, judgment, communication, appreciation, and action.” Delattre goes on to say that these provisions enable us to think more rigorously and to imagine more abundantly. “These activities free us to possibilities that are new, at least to us, and they unbind us from portions



**Figure 1.2** Volkswagen Beetle (1953).

Source: Paul Debois/Alamy Images.

## 4 Chapter 1: Introduction

of our ignorance about living well. . . . Without exposure to the cultural . . . traditions that are our heritage, we are excluded from a common world that crosses generations.”\* The poet Archibald MacLeish is more succinct: “Without the Arts, how can the university teach the Truth?”

The information in this text helps us understand the elements that comprise works of art, which we can respond to and which make our experiences and our lives more rewarding.

### USING THIS TEXT

Before engaging in discussions about art, however, let’s note two issues about this text: (1) finding art examples on the Internet and (2) using the pronunciation prompts.

### WORLD WIDE WEB

Throughout the body of this text you will find URLs to connect with the World Wide Web. These serve as springboards for further investigation. On one hand, they lead to actual artworks, and these can further illustrate the principles discussed and illustrated in the text. On the other hand, many of the Web sites yield more detailed information about artists, styles, periods, general history, and so on.

In addition to the specific Web addresses listed in the text, some general sites can provide a wealth of additional information. A vast reference for visual art and architecture resides at Artcyclopedia at <http://www.artcyclopedia.com/index.html>. An excellent source for architecture is Great Buildings Online at <http://www.greatbuildings.com/>. Music tends to be problematic because difficulties in securing production rights to performances have not, as yet, been solved by Web providers of classical music.

Classical Music Archives at <http://www.classicalarchives.com/> contains a vast instrumental, digitally synthesized music library. A good source for literature and drama texts resides at Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org>. Again, the problem of rights leaves the site vacant with regard to contemporary works. Finally, Pearson Education, the publishers of this book, has a wealth of materials and cyber links available through their Web site (<http://www.pearson.com>), and users of this text should explore the avenues this resource provides.

### PRONUNCIATION

The study of art brings us face to face with many challenging terms (many of them in a foreign language) and names. To assist acquaintanceship, a pronunciation guide follows each term or name not pronounced exactly as it appears. This guide has two features. First, it uses familiar English consonant and vowel representations rather than International Phonetics. The system used in this book sometimes looks awkward. For example, the long I sound (which comprises a diphthong of ah and ee), such as in *die*, *eye*, and *by*, is indicated by the letter Y when the syllable stands alone or precedes a consonant. The letter Y prior to a vowel maintains its yuh sound, as in *young* (yuhng). The letter G, when sounded “hard” as in *go* or *guard*, is presented as GH. Again, it appears odd in some cases, such as ghoh-GHAN (Gauguin). Nonetheless, when one remembers that GH equals a hard G sound, the appearance yields to successful pronunciation.

Principal stress in a word or name is indicated by capitalization. For example, the pronunciation of *fable* would be indicated as FAY-buhl. Typically, words comprising three or more syllables also have at least one syllable of secondary stress. These are not indicated in this text. More often than not, if the primary stress is identified, the secondary stresses fall almost automatically into place.

---

\*Edwin J. Delattre, “The Humanities Can Irrigate Deserts,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 11, 1977, p. 32.

Here is a guide to the system used in this book:

A	cat	Ih	bit
Ah	cot	Ihng	sing
Aw	awe	Oh	foe
Air	air, pair	Oo	food
Awr	core	Ow	wow
Ay	bay	Oy	boy
Eh	bet	Uh	bug
Ee	see	U	wood
Gh	go	Zh	pleasure
Ye	ye	Z	zip

We should note that pronunciations, like definitions, can be complicated and arguable issues. I have used standard encyclopedia and dictionary pronunciations as my guides, but this does not guarantee universal agreement. Some names may be commonly Anglicized, whereas I provide a pronunciation agreeable to the native tongue—and vice versa.

## OVERVIEW

For centuries, scholars, philosophers, and aestheticians have debated without general resolution a definition of “art.” The challenging range of arguments encompasses, among other considerations, opposing points of view that insist on one hand that “art” must meet a criterion of functionality—that is, be of some societal use—and, on the other hand, that “art” exists for its own sake. In this text, we survey rather than dispute. Thus, in these pages, we will not solve the dilemma of art’s definition. For example, we might define “art” as *one person’s interpretation of reality manifested in a particular medium and shared with others*. Such a definition, while agreeable to some, finds objection from others for various reasons, among which is the fact that it is completely open-ended and does not speak to quality. It allows anything to qualify as “art” from the simplest expression of *art brut*, naïve art, or “outsider art” such as drawings by children or psychotics to the most profound masterpiece. Such are

the tantalizing possibilities for disagreement when we actually try to define art. We can, however, examine some characteristics of the arts that enhance our understanding.

Art has, and has had, a profound effect on the quality of human life, as the pages of this text will assist us to understand. Its study requires seriousness of purpose. Having said that, however, we must not confuse seriousness of purpose in the study of art with a sweeping sanctification of works of art. Some art is serious, some art is profound, and some art is highly sacred. On the other hand, some art is light, some humorous, and some downright silly, superficial, and self-serving for its artists. Which is which may be debatable, but eventually we will desire to make judgments, and once again this text will help sort out the details.

## THE ARTS AND WAYS OF KNOWING

Humans are a creative species. Whether in science, politics, business, technology, or the arts, we depend on our creativity almost as much as anything else to meet the demands of daily life. Any book about the arts comprises a story about us: our perceptions of the world as we have come to see and respond to it and the ways we have communicated our understandings to each other since the Ice Age, more than 15,000 years ago (Fig. 1.3, cave chamber at Lascaux).

Our study in this text focuses on vocabulary and perception. First, however, we need to have an overview of where the arts fall within the general scope of human endeavor.

We live in buildings and listen to music constantly. We hang pictures on our walls and react like personal friends to characters in television, film, and live dramas. We escape to parks, engross ourselves in novels, wonder about a statue in front of a public building, and dance through the night. All these situations involve forms called “art” in which we engage



View the **Closer Look** of Lascaux on [myartslab.com](http://myartslab.com)



**Figure 1.3** General view of cave chamber at Lascaux, France, from the early Stone Age (c. 15,000 B.C.E.).

Source: Sisse Brimberg/National Geographic Stock.

daily. Curiously, as close to us as these “art” activities are, in many ways they remain mysteries. How do they, in fact, fit into the larger picture of the human reality that we experience?

We have learned a great deal about our world and how it functions since the human species began, and we have changed our patterns of existence. However, the fundamental characteristics that make us human—that is, our ability to intuit and to symbolize—have not changed. Art, the major remaining evidence we have of our earliest times, reflects these unchanged human characteristics in inescapable terms and helps us to understand the beliefs of cultures, including our own, and to express the universal qualities of humans.

As we begin this text, learning more about our humanness through art, let us start where we are. That means two things. First, it means relying on the perceptive capabilities we already have. Applying our current abilities to perceive develops confidence in approaching works of art. Second, starting

where we are means learning how art fits into the general scheme of the way people examine, communicate, and respond to the world around them. A course in the arts, designed to fulfill a requirement for a specified curriculum, means that the arts fit into an academic context that separates the way people acquire knowledge. Consequently, our first step in this exploration of the arts places them in some kind of relationship with other categories of knowledge. Visual art, architecture, music, theatre, dance, literature, and cinema belong in a broad category of pursuit called the “humanities.” The terms *arts* and *humanities* fit together as a piece to a whole. The humanities constitutes a larger whole into which the arts fit as one piece. So, when we use the term *humanities*, we automatically include the arts. When we use the term *arts*, we restrict our focus. The arts disciplines—visual art (drawing, painting, printmaking, photography), performing art (music, theatre, dance, cinema), and architecture

(including landscape architecture)—typically arrange sound, color, form, movement, and/or other elements in a manner that affects our sense of beauty in a graphic or plastic (capable of being shaped) medium. The humanities include the arts but also include disciplines such as philosophy, literature, and, sometimes, history, which comprise branches of knowledge that share a concern with humans and their cultures. We begin our discussion with a look at the humanities.

The humanities—as opposed to the sciences, for example—can very broadly be defined as those aspects of culture that look into what it means to be human. The sciences seek essentially to describe reality whereas the humanities seek to express humankind’s subjective experiences of reality, to interpret reality, to transform our interior experience into tangible forms, and to comment upon reality, to judge and evaluate. But despite our desire to categorize, few clear boundaries exist between the humanities and the sciences. The basic difference lies in the approach that separates investigation of the natural universe, technology, and social science from the search for truth about the universe undertaken by artists.

Within the educational system, the humanities traditionally have included the fine arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, music, theatre, dance, and cinema), literature, philosophy, and, sometimes, history. These subjects orient toward exploring humanness, what human beings think and feel, what motivates their actions and shapes their thoughts. Many answers lie in the millions of artworks all around the globe, from the earliest sculpted fertility figures to the video and cyber art of today. These artifacts and images comprise expressions of the humanities, not merely illustrations of past or present ways of life.

In addition, change in the arts differs from change in the sciences, for example, in one significant way: New scientific discovery and technology usually displaces the old; but new art does not invalidate earlier human expression. Obviously, not all artistic

approaches survive, but the art of Picasso cannot make the art of Rembrandt a curiosity of history the way that the theories of Einstein did the views of William Paley. Nonetheless, much about art has changed over the centuries. Using a spectrum developed by Susan Lacy in *Mapping the Terrian: New Genre Public Art* (1994), we learn that at one time an artist may be an *experiencer*; at another, a *reporter*; at another, an *analyst*; and at still another time, an *activist*. Further, the nature of how art historians see art has changed over the centuries—for example, today we do not credit an artist’s biography with all of the motivations for his or her work, and we now include works of art from previously marginalized groups such as women and minorities. These shifts in the disciplines of arts’ history itself suggest important considerations as we begin to understand the nature of art.

In addition, we can approach works of art with the same subtleties we normally apply to human relationships. We know that we cannot simply categorize people as “good” or “bad,” as “friends,” “acquaintances,” or “enemies.” We relate to other people in complex ways. Some friendships remain pleasant but superficial, some people are easy to work with, and others (but few) become lifelong companions. Similarly, when we have gone beyond textbook categories and learned how to approach art with this sort of sensitivity, we find that art, like friendship, has a major place in the growth and quality of life.

## THE CONCERNS OF ART

Among other concerns, art has typically concerned creativity, aesthetic communication, symbols, and the fine and applied arts. Let’s look briefly at each of these.

### CREATIVITY

Art has always evidenced a concern for creativity—that is, the act of bringing forth new forces and forms. We do not know for sure



## 8 Chapter 1: Introduction

how creativity functions. Nonetheless, something happens in which humankind takes chaos, formlessness, vagueness, and the unknown and crystallizes them into form, design, inventions, and ideas. Creativity underlies our existence. It allows scientists to intuit a possible path to a cure for cancer, for example, or to invent a computer. The same process allows artists to find new ways to express ideas through processes in which creative action, thought, material, and technique combine in a medium to create something new, and that “new thing,” often without words, triggers human experience—that is, our response to the artwork.

### AESTHETIC COMMUNICATION

Art usually involves communication. Arguably, artists need other people with whom they can share their perceptions. When artworks and humans interact, many possibilities exist. Interaction may be casual and fleeting, as in the first meeting of two people, when neither wishes a relationship. Similarly, an artist may not have much to say, or may not say it very well. For example, a poorly written or produced play will probably not excite an audience. Similarly, if an audience member’s preoccupations render it impossible to perceive what the play offers, then at least that part of the artistic experience fizzles. On the other hand, all conditions may be optimum, and a profoundly exciting and meaningful experience may occur: The play may treat a significant subject in a unique manner; the production artists’ skills in manipulating the medium may be excellent, and the audience may be receptive. Or the interaction may fall somewhere between these two extremes.

Throughout history, artistic communication has involved *aesthetics* (ehs-THEH-tihks). Aesthetics is the study of the nature of beauty and of art and comprises one of the five classical fields of philosophical inquiry—along with epistemology (the nature and origin of knowledge), ethics (the

general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by the individual in relationship with others), logic (the principles of reasoning), and metaphysics (the nature of first principles and problems of ultimate reality). The term *aesthetics* (from the Greek for “sense perception”) was coined by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) in the mid-eighteenth century, but interest in what constitutes the beautiful and in the relationship between art and nature goes back at least to the ancient Greeks. Plato saw art as *imitation* and beauty as the expression of a universal quality. For the Greeks, the concept of “art” embraced all handcrafts, and the rules of symmetry, proportion, and unity applied equally to weaving, pottery, poetry, and sculpture. In the late eighteenth century, the philosopher Immanuel Kant (kahnt; 1724–1804) revolutionized aesthetics in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790) by viewing aesthetic appreciation not simply as the perception of intrinsic beauty, but as involving a judgment—subjective, but informed. Since Kant, the primary focus of aesthetics has shifted from the consideration of beauty per se to the nature of the artist, the role of art, and the relationship between the viewer and the work of art.

### SYMBOLS

Art also concerns symbols. Symbols usually involve tangible emblems of something abstract: a mundane object evoking a higher realm. Symbols differ from signs, which suggest a fact or condition. Signs are what they indicate. Symbols carry deeper, wider, and richer meanings. Look at Figure 1.4 (Greek cross?). Some people might identify this figure as a plus sign in arithmetic. But the figure might also be a Greek cross, in which case it becomes a symbol because it suggests many images, meanings, and implications. Artworks use a variety of symbols, and symbols make artworks into doorways leading to enriched meaning.



**Figure 1.4** Greek cross?

Symbols occur in literature, art, and ritual. Symbols can involve conventional relationships such as a rose standing for courtly love in a medieval romance. A symbol can suggest physical or other similarities between the symbol and its reference (the red rose as a symbol for blood) or personal associations—for example, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats’s use of the rose to symbolize death, ideal perfection, Ireland, and so on. Symbols also occur in linguistics as arbitrary symbols and in psychoanalysis where symbols, particularly images in dreams, suggest repressed, subconscious desires and fears. In Judaism, the contents of the feast table and the ceremony performed at the Jewish Passover seder (a feast celebrating the exodus from slavery in Egypt) symbolize events surrounding the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt. In Christian art, the lamb, for example, symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ.

## FINE AND APPLIED ART

One last consideration in understanding art’s concerns involves the difference between *fine art* and *applied art*. The “fine arts”—generally meaning painting, sculpture, architecture, music, theatre, dance, and in the twentieth century, cinema—are prized for their purely aesthetic qualities. During the Renaissance (roughly the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries), these arts rose to superior status because Renaissance values lauded individual

expression and unique aesthetic interpretations of ideas. The term *applied art* sometimes includes architecture and the “decorative arts” and refers to art forms that have a primarily decorative rather than expressive or emotional purpose. The decorative arts include handcrafts by skilled artisans, such as ornamental work in metal, stone, wood, and glass, as well as textiles, pottery, and bookbinding. The term may also encompass aspects of interior design. In addition, personal objects such as jewelry, weaponry, tools, and costumes represent the decorative arts. The term may expand, as well, to mechanical appliances and other products of industrial design. Nonetheless, even the most common of objects can have artistic flair and provide pleasure and interest. The lowly juice extractor (see Fig. 1.5), an example of industrial design, brings a sense of pleasantry to a rather mundane chore. Its two-part body sits on colored rubber feet and reminds us, perhaps, of a robot. Its cream and brown colors are soft and warm, comfortable rather than cold and utilitarian. Its plumpness holds a friendly humor, and we could imagine talking to this little device as an amicable companion rather than regarding it as a mere machine. The term *decorative art* first appeared in 1791. Many decorative arts, such as weaving, basketry, or pottery, are also commonly considered “crafts,” but the definitions of the terms remain somewhat arbitrary and without sharp distinction.

## THE PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS OF ART

### PURPOSES

Another way we can expand our understanding of art involves examining some of its purposes and functions. In terms of the former—that is, art’s purposes—we ask, *What does art do?* In terms of the latter—that is, art’s functions—we ask, *How does it do it?* Among a plethora of purposes, art can: (1) provide a record; (2) give visible or other form