

## **Art: Meaning and Definition**

Art is a subject of study primarily concerned with human creativity and social life, such as languages, literature, and history etc.

Art is a diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artworks, expressing the author's imaginative or technical skill which is intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power. In their most general form these activities include the production of works of art, the criticism of art, the study of the history of art, and the aesthetic dissemination of art.

The oldest documented forms of art are visual arts, which include creation of images or objects in fields including painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, and other visual media. But throughout the centuries in Western culture from the 11th century on through the end of the 17th century, the definition of art was anything done with skill as the result of knowledge and practice.

Music, theatre, film, dance, and other performing arts, as well as literature and other media such as interactive media, are included in a broader definition of art or the arts. Until the 17th century, *art* was referred to any skill or mastery and was not differentiated from crafts or sciences.

In modern usage after the 17th century, where aesthetic considerations are paramount, the fine arts are separated and distinguished from acquired skills in general, such as the decorative or applied arts and the nature of art and related concepts, such as creativity and interpretation, are explored in a branch of philosophy known as **aesthetics**.

Etymologically 'Art' is originated with the Latin word 'ars' which means, skill or craft. The first known use of the word *art* comes from 13th-century manuscripts. However, the word *art* and its many variants (*artem*, *earth*, etc) have probably existed since the founding of Rome.

The question of what is art has been debated for centuries among philosophers. What is art? is the most basic question in the philosophy of aesthetics, which really means, how do we determine what is defined as art? It implies the essential nature of art and its social importance.

The philosophical usefulness of a definition of art has also been debated and the definition of what constitutes art is disputed and has changed over time, general descriptions mention an idea of imaginative or technical skill stemming

from human agency and creation. The nature of art and related concepts, such as creativity and interpretation, are explored in a branch of philosophy known as aesthetics.

Over the time, philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and Kant, among others also questioned the meaning of art.

The word art may refer to several things: (i) It is a study of a creative skill, (ii) it is a process of using the creative skill, (iii) it is a product of the creative skill and (iv) it is the audience's experience with the creative skill.

The creative arts (art as discipline) are a collection of disciplines which produce artworks (art as objects) that are compelled by a personal drive (art as activity) and convey a message, mood, or symbolism for the perceiver to interpret (art as experience). Art is something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, or ideas through the senses. Works of art can be explicitly made for this purpose or interpreted on the basis of images or objects.

The definition of art has generally fallen into three categories: representation, expression, and form.

**Plato** first developed the idea of art as 'mimesis,' which means in Greek, copying or imitation, thus making representation or replication of something that is beautiful or meaningful is the primary definition of art.

**Immanuel Kant** was one of the most influential of the early theorists toward the end of the 18th century. He was considered a formalist in terms of his philosophy, which meant that he believed that art should not have a concept but should be judged alone on its formal qualities, that the content of a work of art is not of aesthetic interest.

**Hegel's** account of art incorporates his view of beauty. Hegel defines beauty as the sensuous appearance or expression of absolute truth. The best artworks convey, by perceptual means, the deepest metaphysical truth. According to Hegel, the deepest metaphysical truth is that the universe is the concrete realization of what is conceptual or rational. It means that what is conceptual or rational is real, and is the imminent force that animates and propels the self-consciously developing universe. The universe is the concrete realization of what is conceptual or rational, and the rational or conceptual is superior to the sensory. In this sense, as the mind and its products alone are capable of truth. According to him artistic beauty is metaphysically superior to natural beauty.

**Henry James** says, "We work in the dark we do what we can. We give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion are our task. The rest is the madness of art".

**Leo Tolstoy** says, “Art is not, as the metaphysicians say, the manifestation of some mysterious idea of beauty or God; it is not, as the aesthetical physiologists say, a game in which man lets off his excess of stored-up energy; it is not the expression of man’s emotions by external signs; it is not the production of pleasing objects; and, above all, it is not pleasure; but it is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress toward well-being of individuals and of humanity”.

Formal qualities became particularly important when art became more abstract in the 20th century, and the principles of art and design terms such as balance, rhythm, harmony, unity were used to define and assess art.