

What Is Not Art

A Guide to Museum Curators

by Tallys Yunes, Ph.D.

Created: November 19, 2013. Last revision: February 20, 2021.

Abstract

Unfortunately, many museums around the world today are plagued by the proliferation of works of “art” that are not actual art. Although it is very difficult to define what art is, it is often easy to define what is not art. We introduce an easy-to-use test for such purpose.

Definition 1. *Let W be a human-made piece of work (e.g. painting, sculpture, drawing, photo, mosaic, collage, etc.) whose creation required a set of materials M (e.g. paint, canvas, paper, wood, clay, marble, etc.), a set of tools U (e.g. brush, scissors, hammer, chisel, wrench, camera, etc.), and an amount of time T . We say that W passes the Yunes test if, when provided with M and U , Tallys Yunes¹ can, with no specialized training, re-create W in an amount of time t such that $T < t < \infty$. The Yunes test does not apply to musical compositions and literary works, such as novels and poems.*

Theorem 1. *A human-made piece of work that passes the Yunes test is not art.*

Proof. The proof is obvious and, hence, omitted. □

Despite the apparent positive connotation that the expression “to pass the Yunes test” carries to the uninformed individual, Definition 1 shows that it indicates a lack of quality. This choice of words was made on purpose so that outraged people around the world can say it out loud inside museums without overtly offending anyone.

¹Tallys Yunes is an art-loving person with no formal training in the creation of art. His last name is pronounced as “Eunice.”