

What comes to mind when the word “art” is spoken? For some, they might think of a physical piece of art such as a painting or a sculpture. Others might think about another art form such as a performance—theatrically or musically. Others still might think of words such as the lyrics to a song or a poem. It seems that there are so many different forms of art out there. So the real question is...what is art really? And the answer is simple. Art is whatever art means to YOU. Joe’s idea of art might be completely different than Erica’s. But does that really matter? The real question to ask is...

What is YOUR art?

### **Trying to Define the Indefinable**

Stanford University claims that the definition of art is an extremely controversial topic. They claim that because art has a sense of relation to each individual who experiences it as well as a strong relationship with the artist who created it, therefore making it is hard to define art in a general sense. This just reaffirms the idea that art can only be individually defined.

In fact, looking at pretty much any credible source, they will say that art is too subjective to be completely defined. Many will claim that it is up to each individual as to what he or she perceives to be considered art. Lists of what is included and considered as art are not only extensive, but they are continuously growing.

Another aspect to art that makes it hard to define is that it is not only seen. Art can also be heard. Or felt. Or tasted. Or even simply thought of. Think about music, or a child’s toy, or a culinary masterpiece, or a philosophical idea. These are all considered art to some people. This proves that sometimes art needs to be taken in through multiple senses in order to truly be considered as the masterpiece it might be. Are these all considered art to you?

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### **The Artist’s Perspective on Art**

Brandon Garn, a graphic design major at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, said, “Art to me is how I express my emotions on any given day. I draw daily, so art means a lot to me. It’s been months since I’ve gone a day without drawing.” But he also mentioned that the definition of art in general is “any one person’s creative expressions.”

Not only is each individual going to *define* art in a different way, but they are also going to *do* art in different ways as well. In Brandon’s definition, he claims that art is an expression by an individual. This would mean that when an artist creates an expression, they would most likely consider that specific work a piece art. So according to this definition of art, all it has to be is a “creative expression,” and an individual can call it art.

In order to really get the full realm of what art means to artists—because who better is there to ask—a variety of other artists in the Fort Wayne community, like Brandon, were interviewed. A theatre major from Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Meredith Lancaster, agrees that art is truly a form of expression. “Theatre is often a form of art that people miss or don’t think of as art,” Lancaster said. “But it is a really cool form of art. Theatre allows you to express yourself in an entertaining way and often express the views of others too. It can also express issues that are going on in society today and tell an interesting story through that.” As stated, art forms cannot only express the ideas of the creators, but also the ideas of others and society as a whole.

Mary Landrigan, a pianist and music major in Fort Wayne, describes her passion for art as well, “I’d say that art isn’t something you can limit to one particular thing, and that’s what makes it so special. Art has certain parameters until they’re broken, and some of the most renowned artists have been the ones who go against that grain yet still manage to create masterpieces that emotionally evoke audiences. I think that art has a tendency to be misunderstood, but I think it’s the field that’s the most successful in pulling feelings from our chests. It inspires us, refreshes us, makes us cry, laugh, worship, fall in love. Art is a tangible, visual, audible way to watch humanity unfold.”

Although art is, as Mary pointed out, widely misunderstood by receivers, it is typically what has the ability to pull these strong emotions from humans. Think about the anger a political comic can provoke. Or the memories a song on the radio brings back. Or the tears a good poem can muster. Or the moral thoughts you are forced to think when you see a photograph of a starving child. These different pieces of art all create feelings, even though they might be different in each person seeing or hearing that piece of art.

Amanda Bassett, another graphic design student, said, “My art is exciting and I’m always passionate about what I do. It’s important because I am able to express myself and I can represent who I am through my art. That’s why I love art.”

Passion is something that every artist thrives on. Having inspiration and passion help ignite the flame that creates truly remarkable pieces of art. The famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma says, “Passion is one great force that unleashes creativity, because if you’re passionate about something, then you’re more willing to take risks.” No matter the type of art or the artists themselves, one thing is for sure. Passion is a must.

Think about the difference in the passionate art produced by Vincent Van Gough and the soothing art that was orchestrated by Beethoven. Nearly anyone would agree that both of these historical figures were, and still are, great artists who at one point in time produced emotion-filled masterpieces. However, their two art forms are drastically different. But hey, that is okay. Because that is THEIR art.

What is YOUR art?

## **Art and Famous Artists**

An artist is simply one who creates art. So this means there are just as many definitions of the word artist as there are for the term art. Great artists, both today and in the past, have even found themselves disagreeing and not fully understanding on what art truly is. However, surely each of them can agree on one thing—that art simply cannot be defined. Here are thoughts on how a few famous artists “attempted” to define art:

The well-known painter Pablo Picasso said that art helps people realize truth. These truths could be truths about life in general, or even simply truths about an individual’s emotions and life. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a famous poet, says that art includes painting, poetry, music, architecture, and philosophy. He also claims that “Art is a jealous mistress” and if a man has interest in any of the above topics, he will fall captive to the love from his mistress. This claim is proof of the captivating draw that art has to its artists. As an artist himself, Emerson would know this personally.

Choreographer Twyla Tharp says that art, to her, is a way to escape without really leaving. Many artists feel this way when they create their art. Federico Fellini, Italian film director, claims that art is tied to the artist. Think about the differences in the movies directed by Tim Burton and the movies based off of Nicholas Sparks’ books. These movies are so drastically different because they are specifically tied to the artist who created the film.

Leonardo da Vinci, the famous mathematician, claims that art is found through the ages. He says it communicates “to all the generations of the world.” This can be seen through the fact that people today still see the works of art completed by Van Gough and hear the music composed by Mozart. Art, as quoted by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, can even defy existence. Who better is there to try and define the indefinable than the masters of art themselves? If art cannot be defined completely, at least these artist’s thoughts can provide a complete idea as to what art is.

The list of quotes above includes quotes from a painter, a poet, a choreographer, a director, a mathematician, and a philosopher. All of these sources are not just famous, credible people, they are also all great artists. In their own ways, each of them created their own form of art and it became something amazing. But that is just one opinion. Art can really only be defined by one word person—you. So this leaves just one question...

What is YOUR art?