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What is your definition of art? Choose a painting that you think could challenge some viewers and develop an argument for why it is, indeed, art!

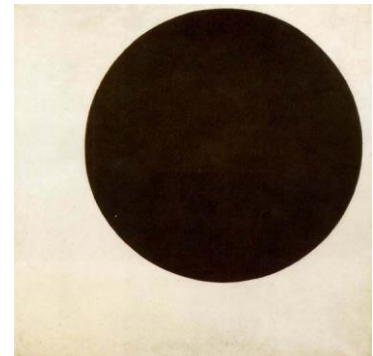
What is Art?

‘What is art?’ and ‘What counts as music/what is good music?’ are questions that can come up when people try to objectively classify the ‘best’ or ‘worst’ of something. Not only is this nearly impossible, as the concepts of ‘best’ and ‘worst’ are entirely subjective, but with the advent of new visual mediums, the definition of what art is has become more ambiguous. Several artistic movements such as Suprematism and Avant-Garde have challenged public views on what art is.

Merriam-Webster defines art as “something created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings” (“Art”). While this *is* the readily-accepted definition, and not a bad one, the problem is that beauty itself is still a subjective idea. Can we call buildings or cars art? The Lamborghini Aventador can certainly be seen as ‘beautiful’ by some, and it takes some serious skill to create a sports car, so can these examples not be considered art?

Traditionally art has been realistic paintings or sculptures used to depict and preserve scenes. Before the advent of photography, portraits and landscapes were used to capture things that were. The art of Arcimboldo and van Gogh are a stark contrast to the photorealism of Vermeer or Degas. Movements such as Impressionism and Suprematism have cropped up throughout history, but it wasn’t until the advent of cameras (especially film and digital cameras) that the definition of art has really broadened. Nowadays, anybody can take a picture of anything instantly, instead of taking months of time and work to do so. It has become easier and easier to produce these visual representations of things.

The painting to the right is *Black Circle* by Kazimir Malevich. Malevich intended for the painting (along with *Black Square* & *Black Cross* – guess what they look like!) to be free of objectivity and to allow viewers to interpret what they see in it (“Kasimir”). He wanted it to be a religious experience for people, allowing for a spiritual-like experience in Soviet Russia where traditional religion was outlawed. While not providing the same sense of awe that a cathedral or belief in the holy can, if studied it can provide a similar sense of introspection and self-reflection.



When I look at this painting, I see several things. I see a hole, a stain, a dot. What you feel when you look at such a painting depends on your current mental state. For example, sometimes when I look at this painting, I feel despair. Other times, it can be a symbol of perfection; a perfectly round circle. When you look at a traditional Realism painting all you can see is what the artist has depicted; nothing more. That is not to say Realistic paintings aren’t art. Obviously there are many different styles of art, and with new technologies, the number of styles is only increasing.

In the end, art is whatever you decide it is. With current technology making it easier and easier to produce reproductions of scenes, anybody can make works of art. Whether or not art is “beautiful” is widely subjective; like many subjects, what one might consider art another might

consider trash. As long as people continue to create visual content, this debate will persevere on unsolved.

Works Cited

- “Art - Definition and More from the Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary” *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster Inc, n.d. Web. 20 Apr. 2014.
- “Kasimir Severinovich Malevich | Black Circle (1923) | Artsy” *Artsy*. N.p, n.d. Web. 20 Apr. 2014.
- Malevich, Kazimir. *Black Circle*. 1915. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. *Wikimedia Commons*. Web. 20 Apr. 2014.