

The Big Questions: What's the Purpose of Art?

Some time, at some point in their lives or their artistic careers (or both), everyone asks themselves, "What's the point of art?" Whether it's in a moment of frustration at a creative block or a depression after an unfortunate gallery turnout or just an idle moment of procrastination in the studio, the question has probably crossed your mind. Art critics tend to be willing to comment about individual pieces and individual artists, but it's a much more complicated topic to look at art as whole.

Largely, this is because art doesn't have a single, unifying purpose, unless that purpose is simply to communicate. Every piece has something to say, even if its entire purpose is to deliberately avoid saying something. But that's a fairly simple surface answer, which can be picked apart to reveal a whole range of reasons and rationalisations.

It's one of the most important questions for you to be able to answer, as an artist. The next time you find yourself with a creative block, take a step back from your work and re-examine what you're hoping to achieve with your work. It can be a scary question, especially if you're just starting out and you haven't really given it much thought before, but it's incredibly helpful in many ways. Not only does it give you a direction for future pieces, it also allows you to talk about your completed individual pieces and your entire body of work in a way that appeals to buyers and collectors alike. It helps give your work character and history.

If you're trying to answer this question for the first time, there are a few things to think about that might help you figure out what the purpose of your art is. It might simply be that you love to try new things and new techniques, but once you begin to become comfortable with them, you'll find yourself beginning to more closely examine the emotional weight behind your art. For some artists, creation is a catharsis, an emotional tool that gives vent to feelings that are difficult or impossible to express with words. For some artists, the simple act of creation is enough. For some artists, adding a bit of beauty to the world is all they require. But no matter what your reasons are, it's important that you understand them, as they will allow you to better understand yourself and your relationship with the art world.