THEORIES OF ART MANUAL

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PREFACE

The human heart has always sought to express the ineffable — beauty, truth, suffering, hope, and the divine — through the arts. In every age and culture, art has served not only as ornament or entertainment but also as a window into the soul and a mirror of transcendence. For those preparing for a life of service in the Church, a deeper understanding of art's theoretical foundations becomes not merely academic but pastoral and spiritual.

This manual, Theories of Art, has been carefully compiled with seminarians in mind — particularly those journeying through the rigorous formation in philosophy and theology. It is designed to provide a foundational framework for understanding the key philosophical and theological perspectives that have shaped and continue to influence the world of art. The intent is not simply to inform, but to form: to help future priests and ministers engage art not only as students but as discerning pastors and cultural interpreters.

The chapters herein trace the evolution of aesthetic theory from classical antiquity to modernity, offering concise explanations, critical insights, and reflective questions that invite deeper exploration. The reader will encounter the voices of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, among others, alongside theological reflections that situate

art within the broader context of faith, worship, and human dignity.

May this manual serve not only as a guide to the intellectual tradition concerning art, but also as a companion in your vocation — cultivating within you a sensitivity to beauty, a passion for truth, and a deeper reverence for the Creator who is the source of all artistic inspiration.

With the prayer that your study of art may deepen your appreciation of the Word made flesh — the ultimate masterpiece of divine expression — I commend this work to your thoughtful reading.

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Chapter One: The History and Origin of Theories of Art

1.1. Ancient Greek Foundations

The foundations of the arts can be traced back to ancient Greece (5th–4th century BCE), where philosophers and artists laid the groundwork for Western aesthetics. Plato (427–347 BCE) regarded art as mimesis or imitation, a mere reflection of the ideal forms, while his student Aristotle (384–322 BCE) gave a more positive view, describing art as a means of learning and as a source of catharsis—the purification of emotions, especially in tragedy. The concept of techne, understood as craft or skill, emphasized that art was not only inspiration but also disciplined practice. The Greeks also associated beauty with symmetria (proportion) and harmonia (harmony), principles evident in their sculpture, architecture, and music. Thinkers like Pythagoras (6th century BCE) connected music and mathematics, showing that harmony reflected cosmic order. Later, in the 1st century CE, the writer Longinus introduced the idea of the sublime, art that inspires awe beyond beauty. Throughout, the Greeks believed that art played a vital role in paideia—the education and

moral formation of citizens—making it central not only to personal refinement but also to civic and spiritual life.

1.2. Christian and Medieval Thought

During the Christian and Medieval period (5th–15th century), art was primarily understood as a way to glorify God and instruct the faithful. Unlike the Greeks, who emphasized beauty, harmony, and imitation, Christian thinkers such as St. Augustine (354–430 CE) taught that art's highest purpose was to lift the mind to God and eternal truths. Art was not to be admired merely for its form but valued for its ability to convey spiritual meaning. In the Middle Ages, especially under the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), beauty was seen as a reflection of divine order, characterized by proportion, clarity, and integrity. Churches, stained glass windows, illuminated manuscripts, and iconography served as a "Bible of the poor," visually teaching the illiterate about Scripture and Christian doctrine. Thus, in Christian and medieval thought, art was not autonomous but a servant of faith, deeply tied to worship, morality, and the pursuit of the divine.

Chapter Two: Introduction to Art and Philosophy of Art

2.1. Definition of Art: A Philosophical Approach

The question "What is art?" has been one of the most debated topics in philosophy (the study of fundamental questions regarding existence, knowledge, values, reason, and reality) and aesthetics (the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of beauty, art, and taste) (Plato, 380 BCE; Hume, 1757; Kant, 1790). Art can be approached from several perspectives, such as aesthetic, historical, cultural, and critical viewpoints. The aesthetic perspective focuses on the nature of beauty, form, and taste, exploring how art appeals to our senses and emotions (Kant, 1790). The historical perspective looks at the context in which art was created, considering the time, place, and events that influenced the artist (Danto, 1981). The cultural perspective examines how art reflects and shapes societal values, beliefs, and identity within specific communities or societies (Tolstoy, 1897). Finally, the critical perspective involves analyzing and interpreting art through various lenses, such as theory, politics, or psychology, to understand its deeper meanings and impacts (Dewey, 1934). In the context of this course, we will focus on the philosophical inquiries that define art, including questions such as: What is the nature of

beauty? Is art subjective or objective? What is the relationship between art and emotion? Can art be truly defined, or is it always evolving?

The nature of beauty has been a long-standing debate. Some philosophers, like Plato, see beauty as an objective quality inherent in the world, while others, such as David Hume, argue that beauty is subjective and dependent on individual experience and perception (Plato, 380 BCE; Hume, 1757). Immanuel Kant suggested that beauty lies in the harmonious relationship between form and the mind's faculties of understanding and imagination (Kant, 1790). The question of whether art is subjective or objective also raises significant discussion. Some philosophers, like John Dewey, contend that art is subjective, shaped by the viewer's personal experiences, while others assert that there are objective standards—such as craftsmanship or artistic principles—that allow art to be evaluated beyond individual preference (Dewey, 1934). As for the relationship between art and emotion, many philosophers have offered varying views. Aristotle believed that art serves to elicit catharsis, purging emotions through dramatic experience (Aristotle, 350 BCE), while Susanne Langer argued that art expresses emotions symbolically, providing viewers a way to engage with and reflect on their feelings more profoundly (Langer,

1942). Finally, the definition of art itself is another area of philosophical debate. While thinkers like Leo Tolstoy have tried to define art as a form of communication (Tolstoy, 1897), others, such as Arthur Danto, argue that the concept of art is ever-evolving and shaped by societal and cultural contexts (Danto,1981). This means that what is considered art today may not have been viewed as such in the past.

These philosophical inquiries shape our understanding of what art is and its role in society, encouraging us to think critically about its significance and impact across different contexts (Danto, 1981). Historically, philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle laid the groundwork for discussing art's role and purpose. Plato, in his Republic, considered art as imitation, or mimesis, which he viewed as an inferior copy of the ideal forms or the ultimate reality (Plato, 380 BCE). For Plato, the role of art was problematic because it distanced people from the truth by presenting a distorted view of reality. He argued that art, by imitating the physical world, corrupts the soul and leads individuals away from understanding the true, unchanging forms, which are the essence of knowledge and virtue (Plato, 380 BCE; Gombrich, 2006). In contrast, Aristotle, while agreeing with Plato that art imitates nature, believed that art could serve a more positive role. For Aristotle, art had the purpose of

revealing universal truths, particularly through tragedy and drama. In his Poetics, Aristotle argued that through art, specifically in the form of drama, individuals could experience catharsis, a purging of emotions such as fear and pity, which contributed to personal and moral growth (Aristotle, 350 BCE; Gombrich, 2006). Thus, for Aristotle, the purpose of art was to educate and refine the emotions while also representing universal human experiences.

In more modern terms, the philosopher Arthur Danto (1981) posited that art is not defined by its physical properties (the tangible, material aspects of the work, such as texture, color, and form) or its adherence to aesthetic standards (the established criteria for beauty, proportion, and harmony used to judge art) but by the idea it represents. For Danto, the "artworld" (the network of institutions, individuals, and cultural norms that collectively shape the definition, recognition, and interpretation of art) determines what can be considered art, as it is based on societal recognition and the philosophical context in which the work is created (Danto, 1981, p. 27). This concept reflects the shift from classical definitions of art to contemporary perspectives where the concept of art expands beyond mere visual representation.

The difference between classical and contemporary perspectives on art is essential in understanding Danto's argument. Classical perspectives of art (artistic viewpoints that originated in ancient Greece and the Renaissance, which emphasize universal standards such as symmetry, proportion, and adherence to formal techniques as the key indicators of artistic quality) were grounded in the belief that art could be defined by certain universal, objective standards (criteria considered to be universally valid and not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or cultural contexts, such as symmetry, balance, and representation of beauty). These included the technical mastery of the artist and the aesthetic qualities of the work, such as symmetry (the balanced arrangement of elements within the artwork, where elements on either side of a central axis mirror each other, creating a sense of order and calm—symmetrical balance) and proportion (the harmonious relationship between different parts of the work), and harmony (the pleasing combination of parts in a whole). The balanced arrangement of elements within the artwork refers to how various components like shapes, colors, lines, and textures are organized to create equilibrium or harmony. In symmetrical balance (where elements are mirrored on either side of a central axis, creating a sense of order and formal beauty),

elements are arranged so that both sides of the composition reflect each other. In asymmetrical balance (where elements of different visual weights are arranged unevenly on either side of the composition but still achieve equilibrium), the balance is not achieved through symmetry but through strategic placement of different elements that offset each other. Both types of balance help create a sense of order and guide the viewer's eye through the composition. The classical view also often emphasized the representation of beauty, nature, and moral or religious themes. Art was seen as an idealized reflection of the world, and its value was judged based on how well it adhered to these formal qualities (the inherent aspects of an artwork, such as line, shape, texture, color, and composition, which contribute to its overall aesthetic appeal) (Dickie, 1974). Under this view, something was considered art if it was made by an artist who followed traditional rules of technique and composition (established methods and guidelines for creating art, such as perspective, proportion, and the use of light and shadow) and if it was capable of evoking admiration for its beauty and form.

In contrast, contemporary perspectives of art (modern and postmodern views on art that prioritize conceptual frameworks, intellectual context, and cultural relevance over

traditional formal qualities or objective standards) challenge these classical notions by emphasizing the importance of ideas and context over formal qualities. Danto argues that art is no longer defined by physical properties or aesthetic standards but by the conceptual frameworks within which it is situated. In contemporary art, the intellectual context and the message or idea behind the artwork have become just as important, if not more so, than the object's visual appearance or the artist's technical skill. This shift is especially evident in movements like Dadaism (an avant-garde art (a movement that pushes the boundaries of traditional art, often characterized by innovative, experimental, and radical approaches that challenge conventional ideas and embrace non-traditional forms) movement from the early 20th century that rejected traditional art forms, embracing absurdity and anti-establishment ideas), conceptual art (an art movement where the concept or idea behind the work takes precedence over its visual representation), and minimalism (a movement focusing on simplicity, often using geometric shapes and industrial materials to create impersonal, neutral works that reject emotional expression). For instance, a simple object, like a readymade sculpture by Marcel Duchamp, might be considered art not because of its

physical properties but because it challenges conventional notions (widely accepted or traditional beliefs and ideas about what is considered acceptable or proper within a given context) of what art should be and invites viewers to reconsider their understanding of art itself.

Danto's notion of the "artworld" is crucial to understanding this shift. The "artworld" refers to the network of institutions, individuals, and cultural norms that collectively shape the definition and recognition of art. This includes artists, critics, galleries, museums, collectors, and even philosophers who contributed to the discourse surrounding art. According to Danto (1981), it is not just the physical object or the artist's skill that makes something art, but rather the broader context in which the object is created and appreciated. The "artworld" helps us interpret and recognize certain works as art because of the social, intellectual, and historical frameworks within which they exist. For instance, a painting may not be considered art if it is placed outside of a gallery context, or if its conceptual and philosophical underpinning (the foundational ideas, concepts, or theories that support and give meaning to a work of art, often shaped by the intellectual or philosophical frameworks that influence its creation and interpretation) are not understood as

engaging with the traditions and ideas that the "artworld" recognizes as art.

The term "philosophical underpinning" refers to the foundational ideas, concepts, or theories that support and give meaning to a work of art. These underpinnings often stem from the philosophical or intellectual frameworks that influence the artist's thinking and the interpretation of the work. For example, an artwork's philosophical underpinning might involve existential themes, social critiques, or explorations of identity, all of which shape how the artwork is understood and valued within a broader philosophical context. In Danto's framework, the philosophical underpinning of a work is what allows it to be categorized as art within the "artworld," as it connects the work to a larger dialogue about meaning, culture, and society. Danto's view challenges the traditional belief that art can be universally defined by its inherent qualities, such as visual beauty or technical mastery. Instead, he emphasizes that the recognition of art is a social and intellectual process influenced by the current philosophical debates and cultural standards. The artworld creates a shared understanding that helps determine what qualifies as art, allowing works that might not adhere to conventional aesthetic standards or physical properties to still be acknowledged as art. This idea

fundamentally redefines the boundaries of art, expanding them to include conceptual and context-dependent works, such as those from the Dada or conceptual art movements, which may defy traditional expectations of beauty or form but are nonetheless considered art because they are accepted and interpreted as such within the artworld (Danto, 1981).

Thus, for Danto, the artworld acts as both the context and the authority for determining the legitimacy of an artwork. This means that the idea behind the work, its philosophical and cultural significance, and its recognition by the relevant institutions are what truly define its status as art. As a result, art becomes less about its physical appearance or adherence to aesthetic standards and more about the intellectual and societal conversation in which it participates.

As Danto (1981) states, "Art is not simply about the creation of beautiful objects; it is about the conceptualization of meaning in the form of these objects" (p. 45). In a theological context, art is often seen as a vehicle for conveying religious truths, helping humans access the divine through visual expression.

2.2. The Relationship between Theology, Philosophy, and Art

The relationship between theology, philosophy, and art is deeply intertwined, particularly in the Western tradition

(the cultural, intellectual, and artistic heritage that originated in Europe and has been shaped by Greek, Roman, Christian, and Enlightenment thought, forming the foundation for much of modern Western civilization). Art, especially religious art, has played a significant role in the transmission of theological ideas. For centuries, artists were commissioned by the Church to depict biblical narratives, saints, and spiritual themes, aiming to inspire worship and guide the faithful towards understanding divine truths (fundamental religious principles and insights about the nature of God, spirituality, and morality, often revealed through sacred texts or spiritual experiences). Religious art has often functioned as a means to communicate complex theological concepts to an illiterate populace and to evoke emotional and spiritual responses. Through depictions of biblical stories, such as the Passion of Christ or the lives of saints, art became a vehicle for conveying the teachings of the Church, making divine truths accessible and engaging to a wider audience (Baxandall, 1988).

Theologically, art has been regarded as a means to represent divine beauty. According to Pope John Paul II in his Letter to Artists (1999), "Art is a way of placing oneself in communion with God, of expressing the beauty of God's creation, and the sacred mystery of Christ." This connection

between theology and art is particularly evident in the use of icons in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, where the icon serves as a window to the divine, aiding in prayer and contemplation. In the Western tradition, Catholic religious art, such as the frescoes of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, used visual storytelling to bring scriptural truths into the human experience. Michelangelo's work, particularly his depiction of the Creation of Adam, is a powerful theological statement, reflecting not only the narrative of Genesis but also the relationship between humanity and God. Through the precise use of light, form, and composition, Michelangelo conveyed a deep theological message about divine creation and the potential for human transcendence (Fabbri, 1996).

The frescoes on the ceiling, collectively known as the Sistine Ceiling, were commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508

and were painted by Michelangelo in the years from 1508 to 1512 (Kemp, 2013).

Michelangelo's The Creation of Adam is one of the most iconic sections of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling and one of his most famous paintings. In this article, Singulart discusses the life of this archetypal Renaissance man and one of his many masterpieces, The Creation of Adam (Singulart, 2020).

Philosophically, art challenges the boundaries of perception, as it asks viewers to engage with the world in ways that transcend physical experience and intellectual analysis (go beyond the limitations of sensory perception and logical reasoning, encouraging a deeper, more intuitive understanding of existence and meaning that cannot be fully captured through mere physical sensations or rational thought). This philosophical approach aligns with Immanuel Kant's (1790) idea of aesthetic judgment, where beauty in art

leads to a judgment of taste that goes beyond the purely sensory. Kant argued that aesthetic experiences allow the viewer's mind to engage with a sense of harmony and unity that transcends mere physical pleasure and elicits a higher form of understanding (Heidegger, 1971). For Kant, the experience of beauty in art engages the viewer in a reflection on the sublime, leading them toward a sense of universal order and meaning. Theologically, this suggests that art points beyond itself to a higher truth—the divine. As such, art becomes a conduit for divine revelation, acting as a vehicle for transcendent experiences.

Art's philosophical significance also echoes Martin Heidegger's (1971) thoughts on the role of art in revealing truth. Heidegger argued that art, by its very nature, uncovers the hidden aspects of being, shedding light on things that cannot be articulated through everyday language or thought. For Heidegger, the true essence of art lies in its ability to open up new possibilities for understanding the world. In this sense, art serves not only as a medium for human expression but also as a tool for unveiling deeper metaphysical truths about the human condition, existence, and the divine. Through this lens, art can be seen as an offering to God, a reflection of the human search for transcendence.

Thus, art is not only a product of human creativity but also a reflection of both philosophical and theological quests. It can serve as a medium through which both beauty and truth are experienced, leading the viewer closer to understanding the divine. As Pope John Paul II (1999) suggests, art's power lies in its ability to elevate the soul, offering a path to communion with the divine through the experience of beauty. In this way, art not only provides aesthetic pleasure but also invites the viewer to engage with profound theological and philosophical questions, making the search for transcendence both an intellectual and spiritual pursuit.

2.3. The Significance of Art in the History of Christianity

The history of Christianity is rich with visual representation (the use of images, symbols, or depictions to convey ideas, stories, or beliefs, often through art forms like painting, sculpture, or iconography). From the early Christian catacombs (underground burial sites used by early Christians, often decorated with Christian symbols and scenes, serving as both places of burial and spaces for worship and reflection) to the grand paintings of the Renaissance, art has been a central tool for Christian theology and worship. Early Christian art, which emerged in the context of the Roman Empire, sought to express

theological concepts in a form accessible to the general populace, many of whom were illiterate. As Gombrich (2006) notes, "Christian art emerged as a response to the need for visual expression of spiritual truths, making the divine accessible to human eyes" (p. 112). The use of symbols, such as the fish or the chi-rho (a Christian monogram formed by superimposing the letters "XP"—the first two letters of "Christos" in Greek—symbolizing Jesus Christ), allowed early Christians to communicate their faith in subtle (delicate, indirect, or understated) ways that also avoided direct persecution.

The Christian Catacombs are underground burial sites that date back to the early days of Christianity, from the 2nd to the 5th centuries. They serve as a tangible reminder of the early Christian community and their burial practices (Chadwick, 2017).
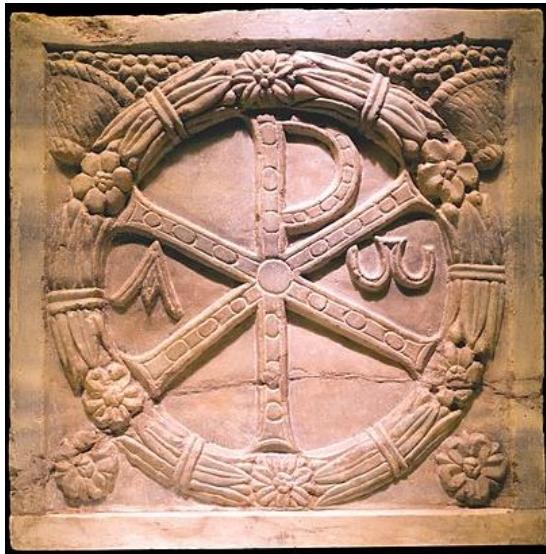
The Chi Rho is one of the earliest forms of Christian monogram, made by superimposing the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ, "Χριστός" (Christos). The letters X (Chi) and P (Rho), together forming a symbol representing Jesus Christ, have been used as a Christian symbol for centuries (Brown, 2012).

In the medieval period, the Church commissioned elaborate works of art to decorate churches, cathedrals, and manuscripts, aiming to guide the faithful towards spiritual enlightenment. The Gothic cathedral, with its soaring arches and stained glass windows, was designed to inspire awe and contemplation, directing attention towards God. Art was seen not just as decorative but as an essential tool for mediating the presence of the divine in the world.

The Milan Cathedral, also known as the Duomo di Milano, is a prime example of Gothic architecture. This cathedral features pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and flying buttresses, all characteristic of the Gothic style. The construction of the cathedral began in 1386 and took several centuries to complete, reflecting the evolution of architectural styles and techniques over time. The Duomo di Milano is known for its intricate facade, towering spires, and expansive stained-glass windows, which showcase the artistic and architectural advancements of the Gothic period (Kornbluth, 2014).

The Renaissance brought about a profound change in the depiction of religious themes. Artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael sought to depict biblical figures with human emotions and realistic portrayals, breaking away from the more symbolic and stylized depictions of earlier periods. According to Gombrich (2006), "Renaissance artists combined the ideals of classical beauty with the themes of

Christian theology, aiming to reconcile humanism with faith"
(p. 168).
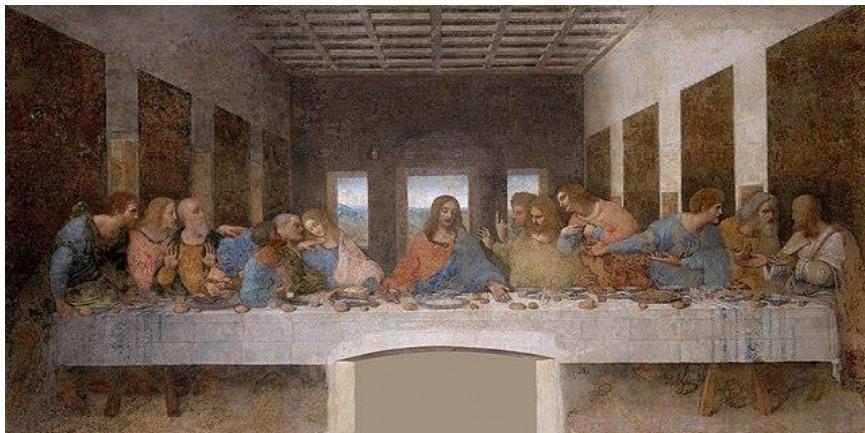
Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper, a masterful
depiction of Christ's final meal with his disciples, painted
between 1495 and 1498, showcases the artist's skill in
capturing emotional depth and narrative composition"
(Kemp, 2013).

The Disputation was commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508 as part of Raphael's project to decorate the Stanza della Segnatura. It illustrates divine truth and the relationship between heaven and earth, with figures such as Jesus, the clergy, and Dante" (Hussey, 2019).

In the modern era, the relationship between art and theology became more complex, especially with the rise of secularism (the belief in the separation of religion from public life and the emphasis on non-religious values), and new artistic movements like modernism (an intellectual and cultural movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, emphasizing innovation, experimentation, and a break from traditional forms of art and thought [established, conventional approaches to artistic creation and intellectual reasoning, often grounded in classical techniques, religious themes, and adherence to established cultural or philosophical norms]) and postmodernism (a late-20th-century reaction against the ideas and values of modernism, characterized by skepticism [doubt or disbelief in the validity of universal truths or grand narratives], relativism [the idea that knowledge, truth, and morality are not absolute but are shaped by context, culture, or perspective], and an embrace of irony [the use of humor, sarcasm, or contradiction to convey meaning in a way that is opposite or unexpected] and eclecticism [the practice of

drawing ideas, style, or taste from a broad range of sources or traditions, rather than adhering to a single doctrine or style]). Nonetheless, art continues to hold a place within the Christian tradition, particularly in religious communities where visual art remains a means of expressing the inexpressible—the divine presence in the world.

Activity 1:

Task: Draw an abstract representation of art and describe the philosophical underpinnings that guide your drawing.

Objective: This activity encourages students to explore the philosophical ideas about art discussed during the session. Students will create an abstract drawing that reflects the essence of their understanding of art, considering theories of beauty, imitation, and expression. They will also explain how their artwork reflects these philosophical principles.

Guidelines: Use abstract forms, colors, and shapes to express your interpretation of the question "What is art?" Is it an imitation of reality, an emotional expression, or a conceptual idea? Reflect on the ideas of Plato's mimesis, Kant's aesthetics, or Danto's conceptual art and incorporate those thoughts into your creation.

1st Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 01/28/25

1st Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 01/30/25

Reading Assignment:

Gombrich, E. H. (2006). The Story of Art (16th ed.). Phaidon Press.

Gombrich's The Story of Art offers an accessible yet in-depth overview of art history, making it an ideal text for understanding the historical and philosophical foundations of art. The introduction explores the origins of art, the evolution of different styles, and the way art has been used to communicate ideas about beauty, truth, and spirituality. It also touches on the role of art in religious contexts, which will be further explored in subsequent weeks.

Summary:

In Week 1, students are introduced to the foundational philosophical questions surrounding art. The exploration of art's definition—both as imitation (mimesis) and as a conceptual act—will shape how students understand art's role in conveying truth. The relationship between theology, philosophy, and art will also be highlighted, with particular attention to how religious art serves as a medium for theological reflection. Students will engage with these concepts practically by creating abstract representations of art, allowing them to apply philosophical theories of art to their own artistic expressions.

Chapter Three: Classical Theories of Art: Mimesis and Idealism

3.1. Plato's and Aristotle's Theories of Mimesis

The concept of mimesis—meaning "imitation" or "representation"—plays a pivotal role in classical theories of art, particularly in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. For Plato, art is fundamentally an imitation of nature, but it is an imitation of an imitation. In The Republic, Plato posits that the world we experience is merely a shadow of the ideal, which exists in a transcendent realm of forms. Consequently, all art, being a reproduction of the visible world, is twice removed from the true reality (Plato, 1992). Plato is highly critical of art because he believes it appeals to the senses, which are deceptive, rather than to reason or intellect, which he associates with truth.

Plato argues that art can distort reality, leading people away from the contemplation of the higher, immutable truths. He asserts, "The painter who makes a likeness of the body is not a creator of things, but an imitator of things that are themselves imitations" (Plato, 1992, p. 196). This perspective positions art as inferior in comparison to philosophy, which directly engages with the ideal forms and reveals the truths of existence. For Plato, the primary

function of art should not be to entertain or imitate reality, but to elevate the soul and encourage a pursuit of higher truths.

In contrast, Aristotle, while acknowledging art's imitative nature, viewed it in a more positive light. In his Poetics, Aristotle argues that art, particularly tragedy, is a way of revealing universal truths through imitation of action. Unlike Plato, who viewed art as a mere copy of the physical world, Aristotle believed that art could reveal deeper, moral lessons by representing actions that convey human experience and provoke catharsis (Aristotle, 1996). For Aristotle, the function of art is not to reproduce the world exactly, but to represent the underlying causes and principles of life.

Aristotle's view of mimesis is less about direct imitation of nature and more about the creation of a work that embodies universal human experiences. Aristotle writes, "Art is the imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" (Aristotle, 1996, p. 32). This idea underscores his belief that art should elevate and educate the viewer, moving beyond mere superficial mimicry to explore profound human truths.

3.2. The Idea of Beauty in Classical Thought

Beauty in classical philosophy is intrinsically linked to the notion of harmony (the pleasing arrangement of parts in

a whole) and proportion (the relationship of parts to one another and to the whole). Plato viewed beauty as something that emanates from the forms, particularly the form of the good and the beautiful. He suggests that beauty in art and nature is a reflection of a higher, immutable reality. For Plato, beauty is not just an aesthetic experience but also an intellectual one. The philosopher's role is to contemplate beauty and, through this, access the forms that define true beauty (Plato, 1992).

In Aristotle's view, beauty is also linked to harmony and balance, but with a more empirical approach. He saw beauty as a quality that can be found in well-proportioned and balanced forms, whether in nature, music, or human-made creations. Aristotle's concept of beauty, therefore, emphasizes the relationship between parts and the whole, the balance that produces a sense of order and symmetry. He argues that "the beautiful is that which is appropriate and proportionate" (Aristotle, 1996, p. 40). By appropriate, Aristotle means that beauty is closely tied to the suitability or fittingness of an object or composition within its context or purpose, while proportionate refers to the harmonious balance and symmetry between the parts of an object, where each part complements the others in a way that creates a sense of wholeness and order (Aristotle, 1996).

Both Plato and Aristotle saw beauty as something that transcends the mere physical appearance of objects and instead exists in their idealized forms—whether as geometric proportion (the harmonious arrangement and relationship between parts of an object based on mathematical ratios, such as symmetry or balance in classical architecture and art), moral harmony (the alignment of the character or soul with virtue and righteousness, where beauty reflects a moral order in the individual or society), or the reflection of divine ideas (the manifestation of higher, spiritual truths or ideals, where beauty is a glimpse of the divine and eternal truths that exist beyond the physical world).

3.3. The Connection between Idealism and Religious Iconography in Art

The classical ideals of beauty, symmetry, and proportion directly influenced religious iconography, especially in the context of Christian art. Beauty (the harmonious arrangement of elements that evokes a sense of visual pleasure and idealized form) was incorporated into Christian depictions of sacred figures, emphasizing their divine perfection and moral purity. This concept of beauty drew from classical principles where the human figure was depicted in its most flawless form, a reflection of both physical and spiritual ideals. Symmetry (the balanced and

proportional distribution of elements within a composition, creating visual harmony) became a critical aspect of Christian iconography, ensuring that sacred images conveyed order, unity, and a sense of divine balance. For example, in many religious paintings and sculptures, figures like Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints were often positioned symmetrically to create a sense of equilibrium and divine harmony. Additionally, proportion (the relative size and scale of elements in relation to each other, based on idealized mathematical ratios) was used to achieve balance and perfection in the depiction of human figures and architectural elements in religious art. Artists adhered to these classical principles to represent holy figures as physically and spiritually perfect, aligning them with divine and eternal truths, further elevating their sacred status. As Christianity spread, early Christian artists sought to depict divine subjects—Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints—through the lens of classical ideals. These works, though deeply spiritual in content, employed classical ideals of beauty and harmony to communicate divine truths in a way that would resonate with human understanding.

The idealized forms seen in classical Greek and Roman art were preserved and transformed in religious iconography. For example, the icon in Byzantine Christianity

is an embodiment of the divine, created not merely for aesthetic purposes but to serve as a means of spiritual connection. Icons, while adhering to idealized forms, are also deeply theological objects, meant to convey the divine presence to the worshipper.
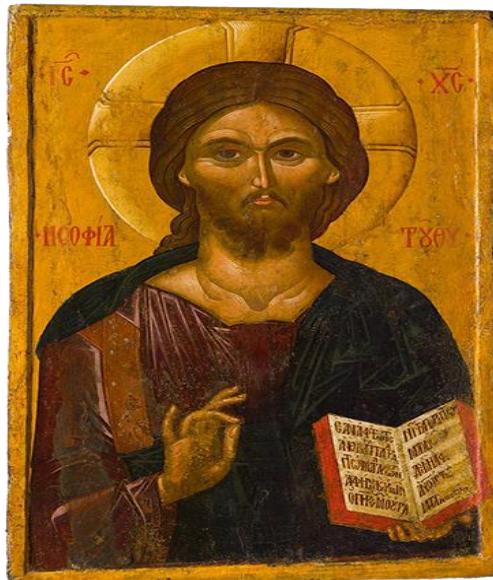
Icon of Christ, late 14th century, Thessaloniki, egg tempera on wood, 157 x 105 x 5 cm (Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki). When art historians talk about icons today, they often mean portraits of holy figures painted on wood panels with encaustic or egg tempera, like this tempera icon of Christ from fourteenth-century Thessaloniki (Kitzinger, 1990).

In The Orthodox Church, the icon is a sacred window into the spiritual world, and its idealized forms are central to its power and meaning.

Raphael's The School of Athens serves as an exemplary intersection of classical idealism and religious thought, a fusion of the humanistic ideals of the Renaissance with the spiritual goals of Christian art. In The School of Athens, Raphael depicts philosophers and thinkers from the classical world in an idealized space, drawing from classical proportions and ideals to depict intellectual and spiritual harmony. This work, though focused on philosophy, subtly reinforces the idea that intellectual pursuit, much like religious devotion, is a path toward truth and enlightenment.

School of Athens, painted by Raphael between 1509 and 1511, depicts a gathering of ancient philosophers, with

Plato and Aristotle at the center. The identities of many figures are subtle or alluded to, including representations of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo (Hussey, 2015).

3.4. Key Theory: Mimesis and Idealism

The theories of mimesis (imitation) and idealism are central to the study of classical art. Mimesis asserts that art is a reflection of the world, either a mere copy or an idealized version of it. Idealism, on the other hand, proposes that art should represent not the world as it is, but the world as it ought to be—perfect, harmonious, and transcendent. Both theories underscore the relationship between art, philosophy, and human understanding, where art functions not merely to replicate reality, but to present an ideal vision of the world or of human existence.

These classical theories set the stage for later art movements, including the Renaissance, where the ideals of proportion, balance, and beauty were seen as pathways to understanding the divine.

To create art based on mimesis (imitation), artists should focus on accurately reflecting the natural world. This involves observing and capturing the details of nature, human figures, and objects, with an emphasis on proportions, perspective, and lifelike representation. The goal is not just to copy reality, but to interpret it thoughtfully,

showcasing the essence of the subject in a clear and truthful manner. In contrast, idealism in art aims to depict an elevated, perfected version of reality. Here, artists should enhance the beauty, strength, or virtue of their subjects, often representing human figures with flawless proportions and noble expressions. The focus is on creating harmonious and balanced forms that transcend the imperfections of everyday life, presenting an idealized version of beauty. Both mimesis and idealism emphasize the importance of proportion, symmetry, and balance, yet while mimesis strives for realism, idealism elevates the subject to an idealized state, embodying the highest ideals of beauty and virtue (Gombrich, 2006).

3.5. Techniques for creating art based on mimesis (imitation) and idealism (perfection)

To create mimesis art, focus on realistic observation, accurate proportions, and perspective, using techniques like chiaroscuro for depth (Gombrich, 2006). For idealism art, emphasize harmonious proportions, stylization, and beauty, depicting subjects in a perfected, often symmetrical state (Gombrich, 2006).

Techniques for Mimesis Art (Imitation):

Observation of Nature: The key to mimesis is closely observing and accurately replicating natural forms. Artists

should study human anatomy, landscapes, and objects from life, aiming for precise details.

Accurate Proportions and Perspective: Use linear perspective to create the illusion of depth and space, and adhere to correct proportions to ensure that the relationship between different parts of the artwork is believable and true to life.

Light and Shadow (Chiaroscuro): Employ techniques like chiaroscuro to add depth, volume, and realism to the figures and objects, mimicking the way light falls on real-world forms.

Texture and Detail: Focus on textures and minute details—such as skin, fabric, and environmental elements—making sure they look lifelike and convey tactile sensations.

Techniques for Idealism Art (Perfection):

Enhancing Natural Forms: Idealism often involves depicting the human form or nature in an enhanced or perfected state. Use geometric proportions and proportions based on the classical "Golden Ratio" to create harmony and beauty.

Simplification and Stylization: While mimesis focuses on realism, idealism may simplify or stylize certain elements to highlight beauty, elegance, and ideal forms. Excessive detail

might be omitted to emphasize the perfect aspects of the subject.

Harmonious Composition: Ensure the artwork has a balanced, symmetrical composition, reflecting order, stability, and beauty. This is often seen in classical representations of gods, heroes, and other noble figures.

Exaggerating Beauty: In idealism, figures are often depicted with exaggerated beauty—perfect facial features, an idealized body type, and enhanced proportions—aiming to represent an ideal of both physical and moral perfection.

3.6. Art Sample: Raphael's The School of Athens (Idealism and Mimesis)

Raphael's The School of Athens is a quintessential example of idealism in art. Painted in the early 16th century, this fresco depicts some of the greatest philosophers of ancient Greece in an idealized, harmonious space. Raphael uses perspective, proportion, and symmetry to create a balanced composition that reflects the intellectual ideals of the time. Raphael uses perspective (the technique of creating the illusion of depth and space on a flat surface, making objects appear three-dimensional) to draw the viewer's eye into the composition, leading them toward the central figures of Plato and Aristotle. Proportion (the relationship in size between different elements in the

artwork, ensuring that the figures and architectural features are in balanced scale with one another) is carefully maintained, enhancing the naturalistic appearance of the scene. Symmetry (the arrangement of elements in a way that creates a sense of balance, where one side mirrors the other) is also employed to create harmony in the composition, reinforcing the intellectual ideals of the time, such as order, balance, and rationality.

The figures in the painting, including Plato and Aristotle, are not merely portrayed as they were in real life, but as idealized representations of human thought. Their gestures, clothing, and even the architectural setting reflect the harmony and order that classical thinkers prized. Raphael's use of light, proportion, and perspective exemplifies the Renaissance belief in the power of human intellect to understand and represent higher truths. The idealized forms present in the painting invite the viewer to contemplate the unity of truth and beauty—central themes in both classical philosophy and Christian theology.

Activity:

   Task: Create a drawing of a classical scene, focusing on idealized forms (figures that embody the perfect, harmonious proportions and features, often seen in classical

Greek and Roman art, where physical beauty is depicted as an expression of moral or intellectual perfection) and human proportions (the accurate and proportional relationship between the parts of the human body, such as the ratio of the head to the body, which artists like Leonardo da Vinci studied to achieve a natural yet idealized representation of the human figure).

Objective: This activity allows students to apply the classical theories of mimesis and idealism. Students will create a drawing that reflects the principles of idealized beauty, symmetry, and proportion, which were central to classical art. The focus will be on capturing idealized human forms, similar to those found in classical depictions of the human body, and using proportion to create harmony in the composition.

Guidelines: Students are encouraged to research classical sculptures and paintings (e.g., The Discus Thrower by Myron or Raphael's The School of Athens) to understand the use of proportions and idealized forms. Their drawings should attempt to balance realism with idealism, emphasizing the pursuit of divine or moral perfection through the depiction of the human figure.

The Discobolus ("discus thrower") by Myron, completed around 460–450 BC, depicts a Greek athlete throwing a discus. The original bronze sculpture is lost, but Roman copies in bronze and marble, like the Palombara Discobolus, preserve its image (Pollitt, 1990).

Sample Artworks of Students:
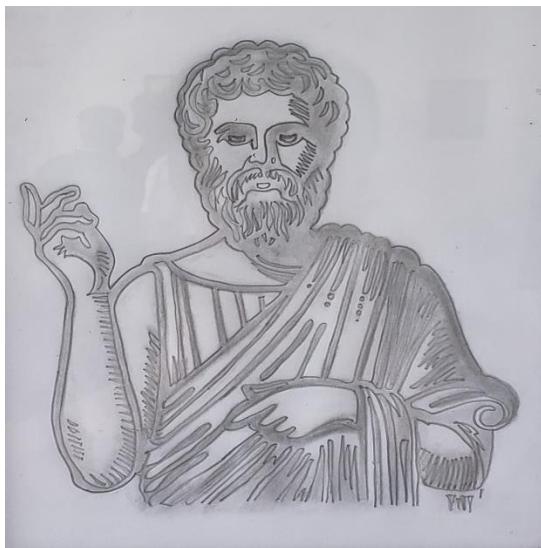
2nd Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 02/03/25

2nd Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 02/05/25

Reading Assignment:

Danto, A. C. (1981). The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art. Harvard University Press.

Danto's The Transfiguration of the Commonplace will help students explore the evolution of artistic thought from the classical period to the present. In Chapter 1, Danto discusses how the role of art has shifted, focusing on the movement from classical ideals toward contemporary, conceptual art. This reading will offer a philosophical framework for understanding how classical theories of mimesis and idealism continue to influence art, even in **modern times.**

Summary:

Week 2 delves deeper into classical theories of art, particularly mimesis and idealism. By examining the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, students will gain an understanding of how ancient thinkers conceptualized the role of art in representing reality, human experience, and the divine. The relationship between idealism and religious iconography will also be explored, with an emphasis on how classical ideals have shaped Christian art. Through the art sample of Raphael's The School of Athens, students will see

how these concepts manifest in visual form. The activity will help them practice these principles by creating their own idealized artwork, guided by classical standards of proportion and harmony.

Chapter Four: Aesthetic Theories: The Role of Beauty and Emotion

4.1. Aestheticism: The Experience of Beauty and Emotional Response

Aestheticism is a philosophical movement that asserts that the primary function of art is to provide an aesthetic experience, emphasizing beauty, pleasure, and the emotional responses art can provoke in the viewer. Art, in this view, is appreciated for its formal qualities—such as composition (the arrangement of *elements in an artwork*[1] to

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[1] The "**elements in an artwork**" refer to the basic visual components that artists use to create their work. These elements are the building blocks of an artwork and help convey meaning, emotion, and visual appeal. Some of the key elements in art include:

Line: The path created by a moving point. Lines can be straight, curved, thick, thin, or even implied, and they can be used to define shapes, create textures, and guide the viewer's eye.

Shape: A two-dimensional, enclosed area created by lines, colors, or textures. Shapes can be geometric (like squares and circles) or organic (more freeform, natural shapes).

Color: The use of hues, shades, and tones to evoke emotions, create emphasis, and establish mood. Color is often one of the most impactful elements in an artwork.

Texture: The surface quality of an artwork, which can be actual (physical texture you can feel) or visual (the illusion of texture seen through paint, drawing, etc.).

Space: The area around, between, and within objects in an artwork. Space can be used to create a sense of depth or distance, and can be either positive (occupied by objects) or negative (empty space).

create a cohesive and visually appealing whole), color (the use of *hues*[2], *shades*[3], and *tones*[4] to evoke emotions, create depth, and enhance visual impact), harmony (the pleasing combination of elements that creates a sense of unity and coherence), and balance (the distribution of visual weight in

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Form: The three-dimensional aspect of an artwork, encompassing volume and structure. Form is the shape and structure of objects in three-dimensional art, like sculptures.

Value: The lightness or darkness of a color or tone. Value helps to create contrast, depth, and highlights in an artwork.

Point: Sometimes referred to as a "dot," it is the most basic element of visual art. It can be used to create patterns, texture, or to highlight a specific area.

[2] In an artwork, **hues** refer to the different colors that are present, such as red, blue, yellow, and their variations. Essentially, "hue" is another word for color itself and is what distinguishes one color from another. For example, the hue of a red apple is "red," and the hue of the sky on a sunny day could be "blue." Hues are typically described based on their position in the color spectrum, and they are fundamental in creating mood, contrast, and emphasis in an artwork. Different combinations and uses of hues can have various psychological effects or represent specific themes in the artwork.

[3] In art, **shades** refer to variations of a color that are made by adding black to a hue. This darkens the color, creating a deeper, more muted tone. For example, adding black to the color red creates a shade of red, such as maroon or burgundy. Shades are often used to create depth, contrast, and drama in artwork. By adjusting the shade of colors, artists can evoke different moods and visual effects, making certain elements of a piece stand out or appear more subdued.

[4] In art, **tones** refer to the variations of a color that are created by adding gray (a mixture of black and white) to a hue. This results in a color that is less saturated or vibrant than the original hue, making it appear more neutral or muted. Tones are important for creating subtle contrasts, depth, and mood in artwork. By adjusting the tone of colors, artists can achieve a wide range of effects, such as softening a composition, enhancing shadows, or adding complexity to the visual experience.

an artwork to establish stability, whether *symmetrical*[5], *asymmetrical*[6], or *radial*[7])—rather than for its moral, social, or political messages. Aestheticism emphasizes the *intrinsic*

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[5] In art, **symmetrical** refers to a balance or arrangement where elements on one side of an artwork mirror or are identical to those on the other side. This type of balance creates a sense of harmony and stability, as the two halves are evenly distributed, either through repetition or exact reflection. Symmetry can be:

Formal or Bilateral Symmetry: Where one side is a mirror image of the other, often creating a sense of order and formality (e.g., a perfectly balanced landscape or architectural design).

Radial Symmetry: Where elements are arranged around a central point, like the petals of a flower or the spokes of a wheel.

[6] In art, **asymmetrical** refers to a type of balance where elements on either side of a composition are not identical or mirrored, but are arranged in such a way that the artwork still feels balanced and visually stable. This kind of balance is achieved through careful placement of different visual elements, such as color, size, shape, and texture, to create a sense of equilibrium without relying on perfect symmetry. Asymmetry is often used to add variety, interest, and dynamic energy to a piece. It can create a more organic or dynamic feel, as opposed to the calm and ordered feel of symmetry. For example, in an asymmetrical design, a large object on one side may be balanced by a grouping of smaller objects on the other, creating a sense of visual weight and balance without mirroring each side exactly.

[7] In art, **radial** refers to a type of symmetry or composition where elements are arranged around a central point, radiating outward in a circular or spiral pattern. This type of arrangement creates a sense of movement and focus, with the viewer's eye naturally drawn to the center and then moving outward along the lines or shapes. Radial symmetry can be seen in many natural and man-made designs, such as flowers, wheels, and certain architectural elements. It often symbolizes unity, harmony, or balance and can evoke a feeling of wholeness or continuity in the artwork. Radial compositions are commonly used to create emphasis on the center and give the artwork a dynamic, yet organized, structure.

value of beauty[8], asserting that art should be seen and appreciated primarily as an experience in itself, independent of its *utilitarian or didactic purposes*[9].

Oscar Wilde, one of the most famous proponents of aestheticism, famously declared, "Art is the most *intense mode of individualism*[10] that the world has known" (Wilde,

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[8] **The intrinsic value of beauty** in art refers to the idea that beauty has inherent worth or significance within the artwork itself, independent of any external or practical factors. In this context, beauty is valued for its own sake, rather than for any symbolic, moral, or functional purposes it might serve. When people discuss the intrinsic value of beauty in art, they are often focusing on the aesthetic qualities of the piece — such as form, color, composition, and harmony — that evoke a sense of pleasure, admiration, or emotional response. The belief is that beauty, in its purest form, can have a profound impact on viewers, enriching their experience and providing a deeper understanding or appreciation of the artwork, regardless of its context or message.

[9] **Utilitarian or didactic purposes** in art refer to the functional or educational roles that art can serve beyond its aesthetic qualities.

Utilitarian purposes: When art is created with a practical function in mind, such as serving a specific, useful purpose. For example, design elements in architecture, decorative objects, or pottery that are made not only to be visually appealing but also to serve a functional role in daily life (like a beautifully crafted vase or a chair). Art with utilitarian purposes has an emphasis on practicality alongside beauty.

Didactic purposes: Art created with the intention of teaching or instructing the viewer, often with a moral, educational, or informative message. Didactic art aims to communicate ideas, raise awareness, or provoke thought on particular topics such as history, religion, social issues, or morality. For example, a painting or sculpture that depicts a historical event or conveys a moral lesson could be considered didactic.

In both cases, the focus is not just on the aesthetic enjoyment of the art but also on its role in society, either as something useful or as a tool for teaching and conveying knowledge.

[10] The **intense mode of individualism** in art refers to an artistic approach where the artist emphasizes personal expression, uniqueness, and

1905). Wilde and other aesthetic theorists argued that beauty is not a universal or fixed concept but a subjective experience. It is through the emotional and sensory engagement with art that beauty comes to life. The aesthetic experience involves a heightened sensitivity to form, color, and texture, as well as an emotional engagement with the work of art. Art is not merely an object to be analyzed but an experience to be felt, understood, and reflected upon.

The emotional response to art can range from joy, awe, and admiration to *melancholy*[11], fear, and even terror. Aestheticism focuses on how these emotional reactions to beauty form the core of the artistic experience. The emphasis is on what the viewer feels—an emotional response to the work, regardless of its subject matter or social function.

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individual perspective. This mode often involves breaking away from conventional norms or collective ideologies, focusing instead on the artist's personal experiences, emotions, and worldview.

[11] In literature and art, **melancholy** is often portrayed as a complex emotion that combines sadness with contemplation or pensiveness. It can be experienced as a quiet, introspective mood rather than a loud or overt expression of grief. In some contexts, melancholy can also suggest a kind of bittersweet beauty—where the sadness is linked to a sense of profound understanding or even a certain aesthetic appeal.

4.2. Kant's Theory of Beauty and the *Sublime*[12]

Immanuel Kant's theories on aesthetics, particularly his ideas about beauty and the sublime, offer a deeper philosophical understanding of how we engage with art and nature. In his Critique of Judgment (1790), Kant proposed that beauty is not merely subjective; rather, it involves a universal aesthetic judgment, grounded in the *faculties of the human mind*[13]. He distinguished between the beautiful and the sublime, two categories of aesthetic experience.

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[12] The **sublime** refers to a quality in art, nature, or experience that inspires awe, wonder, or reverence, often through something vast, powerful, or overwhelming. It evokes a sense of transcendence, where the beauty, scale, or intensity of the object or scene can evoke both admiration and a feeling of insignificance or humility in the viewer. The sublime is often associated with feelings of grandeur, mystery, and sometimes terror, especially when faced with something far beyond human comprehension, like the vastness of nature or the power of a storm. In the context of art and literature, the sublime can describe works that stir deep, emotional reactions through their grandeur or intensity. Think of dramatic landscapes, powerful music, or monumental architecture—things that leave an impression of magnificence or awe. Philosophers and artists, particularly during the Romantic period, explored the concept of the sublime as a way of experiencing beauty that goes beyond pleasure into something spiritually or emotionally elevating.

[13] The **faculties of the human mind** refer to the different mental abilities or functions that humans possess, which enable us to think, perceive, reason, and interact with the world. These faculties are generally divided into distinct categories based on their specific roles in cognition, emotion, and behavior.

Some of the key faculties of the human mind include:

Perception: The ability to sense and interpret information from the environment through our senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell).

Memory: The ability to store, retain, and recall past experiences, knowledge, and learned information.

For Kant, beauty is associated with harmony, *order*[14], and *proportion*[15], which stimulate a feeling of pleasure in the

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Reasoning: The ability to think logically, make decisions, and solve problems through deduction, induction, or analysis.

Imagination: The ability to form mental images, concepts, and ideas that are not immediately present to the senses, often used for creativity or problem-solving.

Emotion: The ability to experience feelings and affective responses, such as joy, sadness, anger, and empathy.

Will: The ability to make choices, exercise self-control, and act on decisions, often in pursuit of goals or desires.

Intuition: The ability to understand or know something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning.

These faculties work together to enable complex mental processes, from simple tasks to abstract thinking and deep emotional experiences.

[14] In art, **order** refers to the arrangement or organization of visual elements within a composition to create harmony, balance, and a sense of structure. It helps guide the viewer's eye and ensures that the elements of the artwork are perceived as cohesive and intentional rather than chaotic or disorganized.

Order in art can be achieved through various principles and techniques, including:

Composition: The placement of objects, figures, and elements within the artwork to create a unified, well-balanced whole.

Balance: Distributing visual weight across a composition to create a sense of stability, either through symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial arrangements.

Rhythm: The repetition of elements in a way that leads the viewer's eye through the artwork in a purposeful manner, creating a flow or sense of movement.

Proportion: The relationship between the sizes of different elements in an artwork, ensuring they feel in harmony with one another.

Pattern: Repeating elements in a way that brings a sense of order, either formally or informally, in the composition.

In general, order helps to bring clarity, direction, and aesthetic appeal to an artwork, creating a pleasing and organized experience for the viewer.

[15] In art, **proportion** refers to the relationship in size, scale, and quantity between different elements within a composition. It determines how

observer. Beauty is often seen in objects that are well-formed, harmonious, and pleasing to the senses. Kant writes, "The beautiful is that which, apart from any concept, gives pleasure in the mere contemplation of it"[16] (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 55). This judgment of beauty is, for Kant, universal and grounded in the shared capacities of human cognition. The experience of beauty transcends individual tastes, appealing to a collective human sensibility:This means that the experience of beauty goes beyond personal

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the elements of the artwork relate to each other in terms of their relative sizes and how they fit together within the overall design.

Proportion is important for achieving balance and harmony in an artwork. When the proportions are correct, the elements of the artwork appear in a natural or aesthetically pleasing way. If the proportions are exaggerated or distorted, they can evoke a sense of tension, emphasize certain aspects, or communicate specific meanings.

Some key aspects of proportion in art include:

Human Proportions: The study of how different parts of the human body relate to each other in size, such as the classical proportions of the human figure that artists like Leonardo da Vinci studied and used.

The Golden Ratio: A mathematical proportion often found in nature and used in art and architecture. It is considered aesthetically pleasing, with a ratio of approximately 1:1.618.

Relative Proportion: How elements within a composition compare to each other in terms of size. For example, in a landscape painting, trees may be drawn larger in the foreground to create a sense of depth.

By using proportion effectively, artists can create a sense of harmony, direct the viewer's focus, and evoke certain emotions or messages.

[16] Kant's quote means that beauty is something that gives pleasure simply by being observed, without needing any deeper understanding or conceptual analysis. It is an aesthetic experience that is felt directly, just through the perception of the object.

preferences and can resonate with all people, tapping into a shared, universal sense of what is beautiful.

The sublime, however, is a more complex aesthetic category for Kant. The sublime refers to experiences of vastness, power, and grandeur that overwhelm the senses and evoke feelings of awe, terror, or even transcendence. Kant defines the sublime as something that "excites a feeling of astonishment" and challenges human understanding. In contrast to beauty, which elicits pleasure, the sublime can provoke a sense of discomfort or fear, yet it can also lead to feelings of spiritual elevation. Kant describes the sublime as "the feeling of the grandeur of nature, which goes beyond all possible concepts"[17] (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 134).

The sublime experience often occurs in the presence of nature—such as a towering mountain, a raging sea, or a vast desert—where human beings feel small and insignificant in comparison to the overwhelming scale and power of the natural world. However, the sublime also has the potential to reveal something profound about human nature: our capacity to contemplate and appreciate the infinite and the sublime is what elevates us above our

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[17]Kant defines the sublime as the feeling we get from experiencing the vastness or greatness of nature, which is too large or powerful to fully grasp with our minds, inspiring awe.

immediate, physical experience and connects us to something greater than ourselves.

4.3. The Role of Beauty and Emotion in Art

Beauty and emotion are central to aesthetic theories and art criticism. The emotional response to beauty can vary greatly, but it is often what gives art its transformative power. Art evokes emotion by presenting the viewer with a visual, auditory, or tactile experience that resonates on a deep, often subconscious level. The emotional impact of a work of art can be immediate or evolve over time, influenced by the viewer's personal experiences, memories, and even cultural background.

As art historian Arnold Hauser (1951) argues, the emotional experience of beauty in art is not solely based on the artist's intent but also on the viewer's capacity to respond emotionally. Hauser writes, "Art is the mirror of the emotional life of the individual and society, reflecting both the artist's feelings and those of the audience"[18] (p. 142). Therefore, beauty in art becomes a medium through which emotional states—whether joy, melancholy, longing, or despair—are communicated and experienced.

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[18] Hauser suggests that art reflects the emotions of both the artist and the audience, acting as a mirror of individual and societal feelings.

Kant's division of beauty and the sublime continues to be a useful framework for understanding how art elicits different emotional responses. Beauty, in its classical sense, is emotionally uplifting, while the sublime evokes a more complex mix of awe, fear, and *reverence*[19]. This distinction helps clarify the different *emotional terrains*[20] art can explore, from the tranquil beauty of a landscape to the overwhelming vastness of nature's grandeur.

4.4. Key Theory: Aestheticism, Beauty, Sublime

Theories of aestheticism, beauty, and the sublime have become cornerstones of understanding the emotional impact of art. **Aestheticism** focuses on the intrinsic value of beauty, suggesting that the emotional and sensory experience of art is central to its purpose. Theories of **beauty**, particularly as developed by Kant, emphasize harmony and order, creating a shared, universal emotional

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[19] In art, **reverence** refers to a deep respect, awe, or admiration for something depicted in the artwork. It often involves an emotional response that conveys honor or veneration toward the subject, such as a religious figure, nature, or an important cultural symbol. Artists may use reverence to highlight the significance or sacredness of a subject, creating a sense of solemnity or profound respect within the piece.

[20] "**Emotional terrains**" refers to the complex and varied landscape of emotions that a person or group experiences. In a metaphorical sense, it represents the different emotional states or experiences, which can be vast, shifting, and often difficult to navigate. In art, literature, or psychology, the term is used to describe the inner emotional journey or struggles individuals face, acknowledging the diversity and depth of human emotions.

experience. In contrast, the **sublime** challenges our capacity to comprehend the vastness or power of nature, evoking awe and terror, yet also a profound sense of transcendence.

Both aestheticism and the sublime offer rich avenues for engaging with art and understanding how art affects the viewer emotionally. Whether through the tranquil beauty of a well-composed landscape or the overwhelming awe of a vast and chaotic scene, art has the capacity to move us in ways that go beyond the intellectual or conceptual, connecting us to something deeply emotional and even spiritual.

4.5. Art Sample: Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog (Sublime)
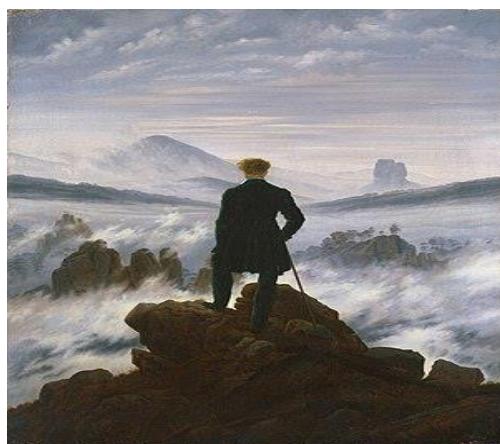
Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog is a quintessential example of the sublime in Romantic landscape painting. The painting features a lone figure standing atop a rocky precipice, gazing out over a vast and

fog-covered landscape. The figure, though prominent, appears dwarfed by the immense scale of nature surrounding him. The fog, swirling and dense, creates an atmosphere of mystery and uncertainty, while the rugged landscape evokes a sense of awe and sublime beauty.

The emotional impact of the painting arises from the tension between the viewer's sense of human insignificance in the face of nature's grandeur and the intellectual recognition of the beauty and power inherent in that vastness. The figure stands as both a part of the landscape and as a symbol of humanity's struggle to understand and find meaning within the sublime forces of nature. Friedrich's work encapsulates the Romantic fascination with nature's overwhelming power and beauty, presenting a scene that is both beautiful and awe-inspiring, but also potentially terrifying in its vastness.

Activity:

Task: Draw a *landscape[21]* that evokes a sense of the sublime, using *emotional tone[22]* and *color contrast[23]*.

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[21] The **landscape** of art refers to the broad and evolving field or environment of artistic expression. It includes various styles, movements, mediums, and themes that have developed over time, as well as the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which art is created. In a metaphorical sense, the "landscape" can describe the diverse range of artistic practices, from traditional to contemporary, and how they interact with and influence each other within the art world.

Objective: This activity encourages students to engage with the concepts of the sublime by creating a visual representation of a natural scene that emphasizes awe, fear, or transcendence. Students will use color contrast and emotional tone to evoke the grandeur and mystery of the sublime in nature.

Guidelines: Students should consider elements such as vastness, contrast between light and dark, and the inclusion of figures or objects that evoke feelings of smallness in the face of nature. The choice of colors—dark, moody hues or bright, luminous contrasts—will help convey the emotional intensity associated with the sublime.

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[22] **Emotional tone** in art refers to the mood or emotional atmosphere conveyed through an artwork. It is the feeling or emotion that the artist aims to evoke in the viewer, which can range from joy, sadness, and anger to calmness or tension. The emotional tone is created through elements like color, composition, subject matter, lighting, and brushwork, all of which contribute to how the artwork feels on an emotional level. For example, dark, muted colors might create a somber tone, while bright, vibrant colors might evoke feelings of happiness or excitement.

[23] **Color contrast** in art refers to the use of different colors that stand out against each other to create visual interest, emphasis, and depth. It involves placing colors with distinct differences, such as light versus dark or complementary colors (like red and green), next to each other in a composition. This contrast draws attention, highlights particular elements, and can evoke specific emotions or moods. For example, high contrast between light and dark colors can create drama, while contrasting warm and cool colors can create a sense of balance and harmony.

Sample Artworks of Students:

3rd Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 02/27/25

3rd Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/02/25

Reading Assignment:

Heidegger, M. (1971). Poetry, Language, Thought (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). Harper & Row.

In Poetry, Language, Thought, Heidegger explores the ways in which language and poetry reveal the depths of human experience and connect us to the world in its fullness. Selected chapters will help students understand how poetry and art have the potential to engage the sublime, evoking emotional responses that transcend ordinary experience. Heidegger's emphasis on the power of language and art to reveal hidden truths will offer students a philosophical foundation for understanding the emotional impact of art.

Summary:

In Week 3, students explore aesthetic theories, focusing on beauty and the sublime. Theories of aestheticism, as well as Kant's ideas of beauty and the sublime, form the foundation for understanding how art evokes emotional responses. Art's power to stir emotions—whether through beauty, awe, or terror—will be illustrated through works such as Caspar David Friedrich's Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, which encapsulates the emotional and intellectual dimensions of the sublime. The activity

encourages students to create a visual representation of the sublime, engaging with the emotional and aesthetic components of the artistic experience.

Chapter Five: Formalism in Art

5.1. The Idea that Art Should Be Evaluated Purely on Formal Properties (Line, Shape, Color, Texture)

Formalism is a theory of art that asserts that the value and meaning of a work of art are determined primarily by its formal properties—such as *line*[24], *shape*[25], *color*[26], *texture*[27],

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[24] In art, a **line** is one of the basic elements of visual composition. It is a mark made by a pointed tool, such as a pencil, pen, or brush, and it can vary in width, length, direction, and texture. Lines are fundamental to drawing and can serve various purposes in art, including the following:

Defining shapes and forms: Lines can be used to outline or define the contours of objects, helping to establish their shape and structure.

Creating movement and direction: Lines can guide the viewer's eye through the artwork, creating a sense of movement, rhythm, or direction. For example, diagonal lines can convey energy and dynamism, while horizontal lines may evoke calmness or stability.

Expressing emotion: The quality of a line (smooth, jagged, thick, or thin) can evoke different emotional responses. For example, jagged, erratic lines may suggest chaos or tension, while smooth, flowing lines can imply tranquility or grace.

Creating texture: Lines can be used to suggest texture or patterns within an artwork. For example, hatching or cross-hatching (parallel or intersecting lines) can create shading and depth.

Suggesting depth and perspective: Lines are often used to create the illusion of space in a two-dimensional artwork, such as converging lines in perspective drawing that make objects appear to recede into the distance.

Overall, lines are versatile and powerful tools in art that help define structure, convey meaning, and influence how an artwork is perceived.

[25] In art, **shape** refers to a two-dimensional, enclosed area created by lines, colors, or textures. It is one of the fundamental elements of art, alongside line, color, texture, and form. Shapes can be geometric or organic and are crucial in defining the composition and visual structure of an artwork.

There are two main types of shapes in art:

Geometric Shapes: These are precise, regular shapes that can be described using mathematical terms, such as circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, and polygons. They often convey a sense of order, structure, and clarity.

Organic Shapes: These are irregular, free-form shapes that resemble objects found in nature. They are often more fluid and less predictable than geometric shapes, evoking a sense of spontaneity or naturalness.

Shapes in art serve various purposes:

Defining objects and forms: Shapes are used to create the structure of objects, such as a person, a tree, or a building, and to form the composition of an artwork.

Creating balance and harmony: The way shapes are arranged can influence the overall balance and harmony of the composition. Symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangements of shapes contribute to the visual impact of an artwork.

Evoking emotions: Different shapes can evoke different emotional responses. For example, sharp, angular shapes might feel harsh or aggressive, while soft, rounded shapes may feel comforting or peaceful.

Creating depth and perspective: Shapes, especially when combined with size and position, can create the illusion of depth and three-dimensional space on a flat surface.

Overall, shape is a key visual element in art that helps define space, structure, and meaning, and is essential in shaping the viewer's perception of the artwork.

[26] In art, **color** refers to the visual perception created when light interacts with a surface, and it is one of the most powerful elements of art. Color can affect mood, highlight certain areas, and convey symbolism, making it an essential tool for artists in creating meaning and depth in their works.

There are a few key aspects of color in art:

1. **Hue** refers to the name of a color, such as red, blue, yellow, green, etc. It is the most basic and recognizable characteristic of color.

2. **Value** refers to how light or dark a color is. Adding white to a color lightens it (creating a tint), while adding black darkens it (creating a shade). This allows artists to create contrast, depth, and the illusion of light and shadow.

3. **Saturation or intensity** refers to the vividness or dullness of a color. A highly saturated color appears pure and bright, while a less saturated color appears muted or grayish.

4. **Temperature:** Colors are often categorized as warm (reds, oranges, yellows) or cool (blues, greens, purples). Warm colors tend to evoke feelings of

energy, warmth, and passion, while cool colors tend to evoke calmness, tranquility, and sometimes sadness.

Functions of Color in Art:

Creating Mood or Atmosphere: Colors can greatly affect the emotional tone of an artwork. For example, warm colors like red and orange might evoke excitement or passion, while cooler colors like blue and green might evoke calm or sadness.

Drawing Attention: Artists often use color to draw attention to certain elements of their artwork. A bright color in a specific part of the composition can act as a focal point, while muted or neutral colors in the background help emphasize the main subject.

Symbolism and Meaning: Colors can carry symbolic meanings. For instance, red may symbolize love, danger, or power, while white can symbolize purity or peace. These meanings can vary across different cultures and contexts.

Creating Depth and Contrast: Color can be used to create the illusion of space and depth in an artwork. For example, cooler colors are often used in the background to create a sense of distance, while warmer colors are used in the foreground to bring objects forward.

Expressing Movement and Rhythm: Artists can also use color in combination with shapes and lines to create a sense of rhythm or movement, as color can flow through an artwork in a way that guides the viewer's eye.

In summary, color is a vital element in art, influencing the emotional impact, aesthetic quality, and conceptual depth of a work. It enhances how an artwork is experienced and interpreted by the viewer.

[27] In art, **texture** refers to the surface quality or feel of an object, either real or implied. It describes how something might look or feel to the touch, and it is a fundamental element used to add depth, interest, and a sensory dimension to an artwork.

There are two types of texture in art:

1. Actual Texture: This refers to the physical texture that can be felt when touching the surface of an artwork. For example, a painting with thick, impasto strokes of paint will have a rough, raised texture that can be felt with the fingers. Sculpture often uses actual texture because the material itself (like wood, stone, or metal) has a tactile quality that can be physically experienced.

2. Implied (or Visual) Texture: This refers to the illusion of texture created by the artist, which can only be perceived visually but not touched. Through techniques like shading, patterning, and the use of different brushstrokes, artists create the appearance of texture. For example, a painting

and *composition*[28]—rather than by its *content or context*[29].
Formalism emphasizes the aesthetic experience generated

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may depict the texture of a rough rock surface or soft fabric, even though the surface of the painting is smooth.

Functions of Texture in Art:

    Adding Depth and Dimension: Texture can give a painting or sculpture a sense of three-dimensionality, making it feel more lifelike or dynamic.

    Creating Interest and Contrast: Texture can make an artwork more engaging by adding variety. Smooth areas can contrast with rough or textured sections, creating a visual dialogue that enhances the composition.

    Expressing Emotion or Mood: The choice of texture can influence the emotional tone of an artwork. For example, rough, jagged textures might convey tension or chaos, while soft, smooth textures could evoke calm or serenity.

    Imitating Reality: Artists often use texture to imitate real-world surfaces. For example, the texture of a tree bark, human skin, or fabric can be realistically portrayed to make the artwork more relatable or convincing.

    Symbolism: Texture can also carry symbolic meanings. For example, a rough, distressed texture may symbolize decay or age, while smooth, polished surfaces may symbolize perfection or cleanliness.

    In summary, texture in art is a crucial tool for creating realism, enhancing visual appeal, and conveying deeper meanings. Whether actual or implied, texture plays an essential role in how an artwork is perceived and interpreted.

    [28] In art, **composition** refers to the arrangement or organization of visual elements within a work of art. It is the way an artist arranges shapes, lines, colors, textures, and forms within a given space to create a harmonious, balanced, and visually engaging artwork. Composition plays a key role in guiding the viewer's eye and helping to convey the intended message or emotion.

Key Aspects of Composition in Art:

    Balance: Balance refers to how elements are distributed across the artwork. There **are three main types of balance**:

        Symmetrical balance: Elements are evenly arranged on either side of a central axis, creating a sense of harmony and stability.

        Asymmetrical balance: Elements are unevenly distributed, but the composition still feels balanced due to the careful use of contrast, color, or texture.

Radial balance: Elements are arranged around a central point, creating a circular or spiral pattern.

Contrast: Contrast refers to the use of opposing elements such as light and dark, rough and smooth, or large and small to create visual interest and emphasis in the artwork.

Unity: Unity is the sense of harmony or cohesion in the artwork, where all the elements work together to create a unified whole. Unity helps the composition feel complete and not disjointed.

Emphasis: Emphasis is the focal point or area of interest in the artwork that draws the viewer's eye. Artists often use contrast, size, color, or placement to create emphasis and highlight certain parts of the composition.

Rhythm: Rhythm refers to the repetition or movement of visual elements in the artwork. It can create a sense of flow and movement, guiding the viewer's eye across the composition.

Proportion: Proportion refers to the relative size and scale of elements in the artwork. Artists may alter proportions for symbolic or aesthetic reasons, or to create a sense of depth or perspective.

Space: Space refers to the area around and between objects in an artwork. Artists may use positive space (the space occupied by objects) and negative space (the empty or unoccupied space) to create balance and depth. The effective use of space can make a composition feel open, crowded, or dynamic.

Importance of Composition:

Guides the Viewer's Eye: A well-composed artwork leads the viewer's eye through the piece in a controlled way, making the experience of looking at the artwork more engaging.

Conveys Meaning: Composition helps convey the meaning, mood, and intention of the artist. For example, a chaotic or disordered composition might express confusion or turmoil, while a balanced and harmonious composition might evoke peace or serenity.

Aesthetic Appeal: A well-composed artwork is typically more visually appealing and balanced, creating a pleasing and satisfying experience for the viewer.

In summary, composition in art is the thoughtful arrangement of visual elements in a work of art. It influences how the artwork is perceived, guiding the viewer's experience and helping to communicate deeper meanings and emotions.

In art, **content and context** are both crucial elements that help to deepen our understanding and interpretation of an artwork. While they are related, they refer to **different aspects of art**:

Content in Art: Content refers to the subject matter, themes, and ideas conveyed by an artwork. It includes the literal and symbolic meanings embedded within the piece. Essentially, content answers the question, "What is the artwork about?"

The content of an artwork can encompass various elements, such as:

Subject matter: What is depicted? For example, a portrait of a person, a landscape, or a historical event.

Symbolism: The deeper meanings or metaphors behind objects, colors, or scenes. For example, a dove may symbolize peace, or a skull might represent mortality.

Emotions and messages: The feelings or ideas the artist is attempting to express. For instance, a painting might convey feelings of despair, joy, or hope.

Narrative: If the artwork tells a story or conveys a sequence of events, such as in historical paintings or illustrations.

Context in Art: Context refers to the circumstances surrounding the creation, reception, and interpretation of an artwork. It involves the broader social, cultural, historical, political, or personal environment in which the artwork exists. Context answers the question, "What influenced the creation of this artwork?"

Several factors contribute to an artwork's context, such as:

Historical context: The time period in which the artwork was created. For example, an artwork created during the Renaissance reflects different themes and styles compared to one created during the modernist era.

Cultural context: The cultural environment and traditions that shape an artist's perspective and approach to their work. For example, an artwork from African art might be influenced by traditional rituals and symbolism specific to that culture.

Artist's personal context: The life experiences, beliefs, or personal circumstances of the artist that influence their work. For instance, the personal struggles of an artist might shape the emotional tone of their pieces.

Social and political context: The broader societal conditions that affect or inspire the work. For example, works created during

by these visual elements and argues that art should be appreciated and evaluated for its *intrinsic qualities*[30].

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times of war may be influenced by political unrest or a desire for social change.

Medium and technique: The materials or methods used by the artist can also be part of the context. For instance, the use of oil paint versus watercolors or digital media can influence how the content is conveyed and interpreted.

How Content and Context Interact:

Content and context work together to shape the meaning and interpretation of an artwork. Understanding the content gives insight into what the artist is portraying, while understanding the context helps explain why the artist chose to express those particular ideas or themes in that specific way.

For example, a painting might depict a specific historical event (content), but understanding the political climate or social conditions at the time of its creation (context) can reveal why the artist chose to represent the event in a particular way or why the work was so significant.

Summary: **Content** is the what of the artwork: the subject, themes, and symbolism present.

Context is the why and how of the artwork: the environment, circumstances, and influences that shaped its creation and interpretation.

Both content and context are essential for a full understanding of an artwork, providing layers of meaning that allow for deeper insight into the artist's intent and the cultural or historical importance of the piece.

[30] In art, **intrinsic qualities** refer to the inherent characteristics or attributes that are fundamental to the artwork itself. These qualities are the aspects that define the work independently of external factors such as cultural context, personal background of the artist, or historical significance. Intrinsic qualities are those elements that are integral to the piece and can be observed and analyzed without necessarily considering the surrounding circumstances.

Key Intrinsic Qualities in Art:

Form: The shape, structure, and overall arrangement of the artwork. For visual art, this can refer to the composition of lines, shapes, and space within the work, as well as its three-dimensional form in sculpture.

Color: The use of hues, tones, and contrasts within the artwork. Artists may choose specific colors to create harmony, contrast, mood, or emphasis, and the color palette itself is an intrinsic part of the work.

According to formalist theory, the emotional or intellectual engagement with art should stem from the way its formal

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Texture: The surface quality of the artwork. This can be tactile (in the case of sculptures or paintings with thick brushstrokes) or implied (in two-dimensional art where texture is suggested through technique or shading).

Line: The use of lines, both in terms of their direction and the way they define shapes and forms. Lines in art can create movement, structure, and boundaries, and are a key intrinsic quality of most artworks.

Space: The use of space refers to how the artist arranges the visual elements within the artwork. This includes the positive space (the space occupied by objects) and negative space (the empty or surrounding space), as well as the illusion of depth or perspective.

Value: The lightness or darkness of colors, or the contrast between light and shadow. The interplay of value creates depth, dimension, and focus within the artwork.

Composition: The arrangement of elements within the artwork. The way different visual elements are organized, balanced, and placed on the canvas (or in the case of sculpture, within a space) can significantly influence how the artwork is experienced.

Why Intrinsic Qualities Matter:

Aesthetic Impact: The intrinsic qualities are central to the immediate visual and emotional impact an artwork has on its viewers. These qualities shape the viewer's perception and interpretation of the piece.

Technical Skill: The artist's manipulation of these intrinsic qualities demonstrates their technical skill and artistic decisions. How well an artist handles line, form, color, and texture contributes to the overall success of the work.

Timelessness: Intrinsic qualities often allow artworks to stand the test of time. For instance, a painting's use of color, form, or texture may remain visually striking even without knowledge of its historical context or the artist's intentions.

Summary: **Intrinsic qualities** in art are the fundamental, internal aspects of an artwork that define its visual form and emotional expression. These qualities, including line, shape, color, texture, space, and composition, are essential for understanding and appreciating the artwork on a sensory and aesthetic level.

components are arranged and experienced, rather than any representational or symbolic content.

In his essay The Critique of Judgment, Immanuel Kant suggested that aesthetic judgment could be universal if it focused on the form of the artwork, rather than its representational meaning or moral message. He argued that aesthetic pleasure is not about the object itself, but about the experience of harmony and balance in the way the object is presented. For Kant, the formal properties of an artwork—such as symmetry, proportion, and composition—are central to the aesthetic judgment. This idea laid the groundwork for the formalist perspective, which seeks to analyze art in terms of its visual elements, and not its socio-political context or subject matter (Kant, 1790/2000).

Formalism became a dominant approach in the 20th century, particularly in the modernist movements, as artists and critics began to reject traditional representational art in favor of abstraction and experimentation with pure form. One of the most significant proponents of formalism was the American philosopher and art critic Clive Bell, who argued that the "significant form" of a painting—the interplay of colors, shapes, and lines—was what gave a work of art its aesthetic value. Bell famously stated, "The quality of 'significant form' is the one thing that differentiates a work of

art from any other object" (Bell, 1914, p. 12). For Bell, a work of art's value lies in its ability to evoke a specific aesthetic response through its formal elements alone, regardless of its subject matter or narrative.

Similarly, the Russian formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky argued that art should be understood in terms of its "defamiliarization"—the process of making the ordinary appear strange by focusing on the formal properties of an object or image. This defamiliarization process enables the viewer to perceive the artwork with fresh eyes, disconnected from any preconceived associations, allowing the formal elements to take center stage (Shklovsky, 1917).

5.2. Key Theory: Formalism

Formalism, as a theory, posits that art is a visual language in which the formal elements—line, shape, color, texture, and composition—communicate meaning and aesthetic experience. This approach is concerned with the structure of the work rather than its content or the artist's intentions. Formalist critics argue that a painting or sculpture can be appreciated purely for the way its elements are arranged and the effect this arrangement has on the viewer. A work of art, from this perspective, does not need to represent the world or tell a story; its value lies in its form.

In contrast to other art theories, such as *representationalism or symbolism*[31], formalism seeks to isolate the artwork from any external factors. The meaning of the work is derived not from its connection to reality or society but from the formal relationships between the elements within the artwork itself. This approach aligns with the idea that an artwork's aesthetic value is a function of its visual organization. For example, a line can evoke movement, a color can create mood, and a shape can establish balance. These elements, when arranged skillfully, can elicit a strong aesthetic response, regardless of what the artwork depicts.

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[31] **Representationalism or symbolism** in art refers to two different, but related, concepts:

Representationalism in art: This refers to the artistic practice of depicting objects, figures, or scenes from the real world in a way that is recognizable or realistic. The goal is for the artwork to represent or imitate the physical world or real life. For example, a painting of a landscape, a portrait, or a still life would be considered representational art because it directly represents recognizable objects or scenes.

Symbolism in art: Symbolism refers to the use of symbols to convey deeper meanings, emotions, or ideas beyond the literal representation. In symbolic art, objects, colors, or figures often stand for something abstract or spiritual. For example, a red rose might symbolize love, or a skull might symbolize mortality. Symbolism is often more abstract and focuses on conveying a message or concept rather than simply depicting reality.

While **representational art** is concerned with "how things look," **symbolism** is concerned with the meaning behind those things, often using objects or visual elements to convey themes, emotions, or messages that go beyond their physical appearance.

Formalism is often associated with modernist art movements such as abstraction, which rejected the depiction of the natural world in favor of exploring form for its own sake. This is evident in works like Piet Mondrian's Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue, which emphasizes balance, harmony, and the interplay of geometric forms over any representational subject matter.
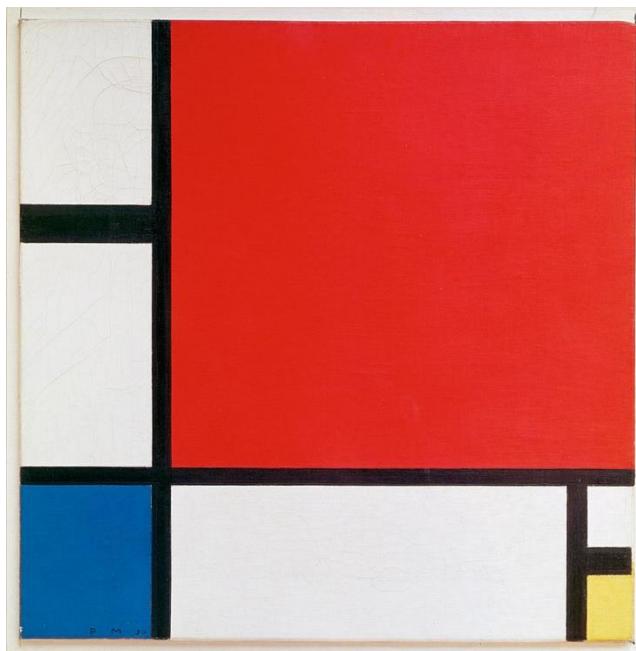
Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow is a 1930 painting by Piet Mondrian, a Dutch artist who was a leading figure in the *Neo-Plasticism movement[32]*. It consists of thick,

black brushwork, defining the borders of colored rectangles. As the title suggests, the only colors used in it besides black and white are red, blue, and yellow. The piece is very similar to Mondrian's 1930 Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow (Mondrian, 1930).

Formalist theory also became important in the development of art criticism and the formal analysis of works in art history, which focus on examining the visual properties of a work to determine its artistic quality and impact.

5.3. Art Sample: Piet Mondrian's Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue (Formalism)

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artists like Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg. The term "Neo-Plasticism" was coined by Mondrian himself and refers to the "new plastic art" that he developed as part of this movement.

In essence, Neo-Plasticism focuses on reducing art to its most fundamental elements, emphasizing abstraction, simplicity, and geometric shapes. The **key characteristics of Neo-Plasticism** include:

Use of basic geometric forms: Artists employed straight lines, rectangles, and squares.

Primary colors: The primary colors red, blue, and yellow were used alongside black, white, and gray. The movement deliberately avoided the use of secondary colors.

Non-representational style: Art no longer aimed to represent or imitate the real world but instead focused on universal aesthetic principles.

Balance and harmony: The idea of achieving harmony through the use of geometric form and a limited color palette was central to the movement.

The goal of Neo-Plasticism was to create an art that transcended personal expression and represented universal truths, aiming to achieve a pure, harmonious, and objective form of art. The movement greatly influenced modern design, architecture, and other artistic fields.

Piet Mondrian's Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue is a quintessential example of formalism in art. Completed in 1930, this painting is part of Mondrian's mature period, during which he developed a style known as "neoplasticism" or "De Stijl." In this work, Mondrian eliminates any representation of the natural world and focuses entirely on the formal elements of line, color, and shape. The painting consists of a grid of horizontal and vertical black lines that divide the canvas into rectangular sections, with the primary colors red, yellow, and blue filling certain spaces, along with areas of white.

From a formalist perspective, Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue can be appreciated for its harmonious balance and the precision with which the colors and shapes are arranged. Mondrian's use of primary colors and geometric shapes emphasizes the relationships between these formal elements, creating a sense of order, stability, and equilibrium. The colors themselves are not symbolic or representational; rather, they function as formal properties that engage the viewer's eye in a dynamic yet controlled manner. The balance of space and form invites the viewer to experience the artwork as an interplay of pure visual elements, without the need for narrative or representation. This approach to art reflects the formalist belief that art's

value lies in its formal structure rather than in its ability to represent the external world.

By focusing on the formal properties of art, Mondrian's work demonstrates how abstraction can create meaning and emotional resonance without relying on figurative representation. The geometric forms and the carefully considered use of color in Mondrian's compositions are designed to engage the viewer aesthetically through their balance and simplicity, rather than through any external reference to the world.

Activity:

Task: Create a geometric drawing that emphasizes form and balance without representing external reality.

Objective: This activity encourages students to engage with the formalist perspective by creating an abstract artwork that focuses purely on formal elements such as line, shape, color, and texture. Students will experiment with the arrangement of these elements to create a harmonious composition that emphasizes balance and structure.

Guidelines: Students should create a geometric composition that makes use of straight lines, basic shapes, and primary or secondary colors. The artwork should not represent any real-world objects or scenes but should instead focus on the formal relationships between the

elements on the canvas. Students are encouraged to explore symmetry, asymmetry, contrast, and repetition to achieve a balanced and aesthetically engaging composition.

Sample Artworks of Students:
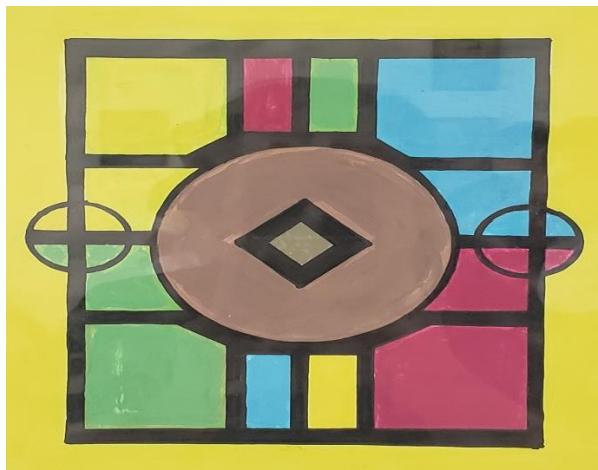
4th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/07/25

4th Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/10/25

Reading Assignment:

Dickie, G. (1997). Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

In Chapter 2, Dickie discusses the formalist approach to art and its historical development, focusing on key concepts such as the emphasis on formal properties and the role of structure in art evaluation. The reading provides an accessible introduction to formalism and the theoretical underpinnings of the approach, giving students a deeper understanding of how art can be assessed based on its formal qualities rather than its external meanings or references.

Summary:

In Week 4, students will engage with formalism as a theory of art, which argues that the value of a work of art lies in its formal properties—line, shape, color, and texture. Through the analysis of Piet Mondrian's Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue, students will understand how formalism prioritizes the aesthetic experience created by the arrangement of visual elements, free from any external or representational meaning. The activity invites students to apply this theory by creating an abstract geometric drawing that emphasizes form and balance, reinforcing the importance of formal elements in art appreciation and analysis.

Chapter Six: Expressionism and Theories of Emotion

6.1. The Role of Emotions and Personal Expression in Art

Expressionism is an art movement that emphasizes the *depiction of raw*[33], often intense emotional experiences, particularly those linked to inner turmoil, anxiety, and spiritual unrest. Unlike other artistic movements that might focus on idealized or realistic representations of the external world, expressionism seeks to convey the artist's personal emotional response to the world around them. This genre is particularly concerned with the portrayal of human emotion

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[33] **The depiction of "raw"** in art typically refers to a representation that is unrefined, unpolished, or emotionally intense. It might evoke a sense of vulnerability, honesty, or primal energy. The term "raw" in art can encompass:
Emotional rawness: Art that displays intense, unfiltered emotions or experiences, often portraying pain, anguish, or joy in a direct and unrestrained way. This might be evident in abstract art, expressionism, or portraiture.

Physical rawness: A depiction that captures the raw, unedited aspects of the human body, nature, or materials. This might include unembellished or gritty imagery, such as figures with visible flaws or imperfections.

Material rawness: Sometimes, "raw" refers to the choice of materials that are in their natural, unprocessed state, like unpolished stone, untreated wood, or rough canvases.

Conceptual rawness: The artwork may focus on basic, essential themes of life, stripping away social or aesthetic conventions to reveal something more fundamental or primal.

In general, **"raw" art** is often seen as honest, unfiltered, and unrefined, creating a direct connection with the viewer through its intensity or simplicity.

and inner psychological states, often through exaggerated forms, vivid color schemes, and distorted representations.

Expressionism challenges traditional notions of art as simply a mimetic representation of reality. Instead, it emphasizes the emotional experience and subjective reality of the artist. In this regard, expressionist art functions not as a mirror of the world but as a window into the artist's inner landscape, revealing their personal psychological state. Artists in the expressionist tradition often depicted feelings of alienation, despair, and isolation, drawing on their own emotional experiences to create works that resonate deeply with the viewer's own emotional responses.

The emotional expression in art can be understood as a direct conduit for the artist's personal experience. This form of self-expression through art is a way of externalizing what might otherwise be private and internal emotions. As art theorist and philosopher Morris Weitz (1956) suggests, "Art is not merely the expression of an inner life but a means of communication, one that facilitates understanding of the artist's unique emotional world" (p. 233). In this way, expressionism connects both artist and viewer through a shared recognition of emotion and experience.

6.2. Expressionism and Its Use in Conveying Deep Emotional and Spiritual States

Expressionism as a style is particularly attuned to the portrayal of intense emotional and spiritual states. Artists of the expressionist movement often conveyed deep feelings of alienation, anxiety, despair, and even transcendence through their works. The use of vivid, sometimes *garish colors*[34], along with distorted forms and exaggerated perspectives, helped to amplify the emotional intensity of the artwork. Expressionism, then, becomes a vehicle for personal and spiritual expression—one that goes beyond the superficial to explore the depths of human consciousness.

One of the key aspects of expressionism is its departure from the emphasis on *representational accuracy*[35],

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[34] **"Garish colors"** refer to bright, flashy, and often overly intense colors that are considered too vibrant or clashing. These colors are typically seen as gaudy or unattractive because they draw too much attention in a way that can be overwhelming or unpleasant to the eye.
For example, neon pinks, yellows, or greens can be described as garish if they're used in a way that feels excessive or jarring, especially when paired together in a way that doesn't complement each other well. Essentially, garish colors are often seen as lacking subtlety or elegance.

[35] **Representational accuracy** in art refers to how faithfully an artwork depicts the subject or reality, with a focus on capturing its true form, proportions, and details. It means the artist strives to accurately represent what is seen or imagined, whether it's a person, object, landscape, or scene, with attention to visual precision.
For example:

In realism or classical art, representational accuracy is key, and artists aim to create lifelike depictions.

In portraiture, the artist would focus on capturing the exact likeness of the subject, down to facial features and expressions.

as seen in earlier art movements like realism and naturalism. Rather than focusing on the external world, expressionist artists sought to depict internal realities—those that are often too complex or intense to be captured by conventional methods of representation. The distorted and exaggerated figures, along with the unconventional use of color, served as a way to portray emotional truth rather than visual reality.

In art history, expressionism is often associated with the early 20th century and is closely tied to the rise of modernist movements. This era saw a shift away from the representation of the "ideal" in art and instead embraced more subjective, emotional, and individualistic expressions. One of the most iconic works of expressionism is **Edvard Munch's The Scream (1893)**, which conveys a profound sense of existential terror and inner turmoil, using swirling colors and distorted figures to evoke the deep emotional and psychological state of the artist.

In landscape painting, it involves accurately reflecting the colors, lighting, and textures of nature.

Representational accuracy is often contrasted with abstract or non-representational art, where the artist may intentionally distort or simplify forms to convey ideas or emotions rather than focusing on realistic depiction.

Munch's The Scream is an icon of modern art, the Mona Lisa for our time. As Leonardo da Vinci evoked a Renaissance ideal of serenity and self-control, Munch defined how we see our own age - wracked with anxiety and uncertainty.

Essentially, The Scream is autobiographical, an expressionistic construction based on Munch's actual experience of a scream piercing through nature while on a walk, after his two companions, seen in the background, had left him. Fitting the fact that the sound must have been heard at a time when his mind was in an abnormal state, Munch renders it in a style which, if pushed to extremes, can destroy human integrity. As previously noted, the flowing

curves of art nouveau represent a subjective linear fusion imposed upon nature, whereby the multiplicity of particulars is unified into a totality of organic suggestion with feminine overtones. But man is part of nature, and absorption into such a totality liquidates the individual. Beginning at this time, Munch included art nouveau elements in many pictures but usually only in a limited or modified way. Here, however, in depicting his own morbid experience, he has let go, and allowed the foreground figure to become distorted by the subjectivized flow of nature; the scream could be interpreted as expressing the agony of the obliteration of human personality by this unifying force. Significantly, although it was Munch himself who underwent the experience depicted, the protagonist bears no resemblance to him or anyone else. The creature in the foreground has been depersonalized and crushed into sexlessness or, if anything, stamped with a trace of the femininity of the world that has come close to assimilating it (Edvard Munch, n.d.).

6.3. Key Theory: Expressionism

The theory of expressionism posits that art should be a direct manifestation of the artist's inner emotional experience, unfiltered by traditional ideals of beauty or realism. Expressionism is less concerned with the accurate depiction of the world around the artist and more focused on

the raw portrayal of emotional and psychological states. This approach to art has roots in earlier philosophical concepts of aesthetics, particularly the Romantic movement, which emphasized individual experience and emotion as key components of art.

In his work, art theorist Clive Bell argues that significant works of art are those that have the power to evoke intense emotional responses through their formal qualities. In line with expressionism, Bell asserts that art should provoke an emotional response by tapping into deep-seated human experiences and feelings. He states, "The work of art that moves us most profoundly is not the one that imitates life, but the one that expresses the feelings of the artist" (Bell, 1914, p. 15). In this sense, expressionism becomes a powerful tool for evoking emotions not just in the artist, but in the audience as well.

Expressionist art is not limited to visual representations; it is a broader philosophical approach to art that can also apply to literature, theater, music, and other creative forms. The expressionist artist, by exaggerating or distorting their subject matter, aims to reveal the emotional essence of human existence. As such, expressionism has a profound connection to spirituality, especially in its

exploration of existential themes and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing, often chaotic world.

6.4. Art Sample: Edvard Munch's The Scream (Expressionism)

One of the most iconic and universally recognized expressionist paintings is Edvard Munch's The Scream (1893). This painting portrays a figure standing on a bridge with a swirling, almost *surreal background*[36], and a *face contorted*[37] in what seems to be an agonizing scream or

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[36]A **surreal background** refers to a setting or backdrop in an artwork that appears dreamlike, bizarre, or irrational, often defying the laws of nature or reality. Surrealism, an art movement that began in the early 20th century, focused on exploring the unconscious mind, dreams, and the blending of fantasy with reality.
In the context of a surreal background, the imagery might be:
      Unexpected or impossible combinations: Objects or scenes that wouldn't normally appear together in the real world.
      Distorted or altered landscapes: Landscapes that appear warped, floating, or exaggerated in unusual ways.
      Dreamlike or otherworldly qualities: A background that evokes a sense of being in a dream or alternate reality, often with strange lighting or abstract shapes.
The use of surreal backgrounds aims to create a sense of mystery or evoke emotions that are not tied to logical or tangible experiences. This type of background invites the viewer to interpret the meaning or symbolism behind the bizarre or fantastical elements.
      [37] The phrase **"face contorted"** refers to a twisting or distorted expression on someone's face, often due to strong emotions like pain, anger, fear, or disgust. When someone's face is contorted, their features—such as their mouth, eyes, and forehead—are pulled into unusual or exaggerated positions that show intense feelings or discomfort.
For example, someone might have a contorted face if they are grimacing in pain or scowling in anger, as their facial muscles react strongly to the emotion

expression of terror. The distorted figure and the dynamic, flowing forms of the background convey a sense of intense emotional distress, fear, and alienation.

Munch's use of color is central to the emotional impact of the painting. The reds and oranges of the sky suggest an overwhelming sense of anxiety and unease, while the swirling patterns in the background intensify the figure's psychological distress. The figure itself, with its wide-open mouth and hands pressed to the face, symbolizes a raw and uncontrollable outburst of emotion. In this way, The Scream is quintessentially expressionist—its emotional power lies not in its representation of a specific scene or event, but in its depiction of a universal emotional experience: terror, despair, and the fragility of the human condition.

Munch's work exemplifies how expressionism seeks to reveal the underlying emotional and psychological states of individuals, rather than merely representing the external world. Through its distortion of form, intense color palette, and focus on inner emotional turmoil, The Scream captures the depth of human anxiety and existential fear, becoming a symbol of universal emotional experience.

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they are experiencing. The term often conveys an image of extreme emotion or physical discomfort.

Activity:

Task: Create a drawing based on a personal emotional experience, focusing on expressive use of color and line.

Objective: This activity encourages students to explore the emotional dimensions of their personal experiences through art. By emphasizing expressive use of color and line, students will engage with the key principles of expressionism—conveying emotion through visual elements rather than representation. The goal is to create an artwork that reflects the student's emotional state, drawing on the emotional intensity and expressive qualities inherent in the expressionist tradition.

Guidelines: Students should reflect on a recent emotional experience (e.g., joy, sadness, anger, or fear) and attempt to represent this emotion through their use of line, color, and composition. The drawing should not aim to represent an external scene but should focus on capturing the emotional essence of the experience. Students are encouraged to use color contrasts, exaggerated or distorted lines, and dynamic shapes to convey the intensity of their emotions.

Sample Artworks of Students:

5th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/13/25

5th Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/14/25

Reading Assignment:

Weitz, M. (1956). The Role of Theory in Aesthetics. Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 15(1), 27-35.

In this article, Morris Weitz discusses the evolving role of theoretical frameworks in understanding aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Weitz emphasizes the importance of theory in shaping our understanding of art, particularly in the context of modernist movements like expressionism. This reading provides a broader philosophical context for understanding the ways in which art can be a vehicle for personal and emotional expression.

Summary:

In Week 5, students will engage with expressionism, focusing on the role of emotions and personal expression in art. The theory of expressionism highlights the importance of conveying deep emotional and spiritual states through distorted forms, vivid color, and intense emotional content. By analyzing Edvard Munch's The Scream, students will explore how expressionism communicates personal and universal emotional experiences. The activity encourages students to create their own emotionally expressive artwork, drawing on their personal experiences and emphasizing the use of color and line to convey emotion.

Chapter Seven: Iconoclasm, Religious Art, and Theological Aesthetics

7.1. The Role of Religious Art in History, Iconoclasm, and Theological Reflection in Visual Art

Religious art has played a crucial role throughout history, shaping the spiritual and cultural identity of many societies. Art has served not only as a means of aesthetic expression but also as a vehicle for theological reflection. Throughout the history of Christianity, religious art has sought to communicate the sacred through visual forms, whether through depictions of biblical events, saints, the divine, or theological symbols. In this context, art is not merely a medium for beauty but also for transmitting religious truths, doctrine, and spiritual experience.

However, the role of religious art has not always been uncontested. One of the most significant debates in the history of religious art is the controversy over iconoclasm—the rejection or destruction of religious images. The iconoclastic controversy, which was particularly prominent during the Byzantine Empire (8th-9th centuries), involved intense theological disputes over the legitimacy of using icons (religious images) in worship. Iconoclasts argued that the veneration of icons violated the commandment against

idolatry, while iconophiles (those in favor of icons) believed that religious images could help convey theological truths and bring believers closer to the divine.

The theological significance of religious art is often rooted in the belief that images can act as a "window" to the sacred, mediating divine truths to the faithful. In Christian tradition, religious icons and images are not seen as idols but as representations of higher realities, a means by which the ineffable divine can be made present and visible to human beings. Theological aesthetics, therefore, deals with the relationship between visual art and divine revelation. The beauty and sacredness of religious art lie not in the art itself but in its ability to point toward a greater divine reality.

As art historian E.H. Gombrich (2002) explains, "In a religious context, the purpose of the image is to bring us into direct communion with the divine, to make the invisible visible" (p. 245). In this sense, religious art functions as a mediator of spiritual knowledge, offering the viewer a glimpse into the sacred and eternal.

7.2. Iconoclasm and Theological Aesthetics

Iconoclasm—the destruction or banning of religious images—has had a significant impact on the development of religious art. During the Byzantine iconoclast period (726–843), the Eastern Orthodox Church saw a fierce debate

regarding the legitimacy of religious images in Christian worship. Iconoclasts, such as Emperor Leo III and Patriarch Germanus I, believed that the use of icons was a form of idolatry that violated the second commandment, which forbade the making of graven images (Exodus 20:4). They argued that since God is invisible and transcendent, no human image could adequately represent the divine.

In contrast, the iconophiles (those who supported the use of icons), including influential theologians like John of Damascus, believed that religious images could serve as theological tools that help to convey the nature of God. John of Damascus argued that the Incarnation of Christ—the belief that the divine Word became flesh—had opened up the possibility of representing the divine in visual form. He wrote, "We do not worship the image in place of the original, but through the image we venerate the prototype" (John of Damascus, 8th century, as cited in Pelikan, 1977, p. 66). This theological justification helped to solidify the role of icons in Christian worship and visual culture.

The iconoclastic controversy raised important questions about the nature of religious representation and its relationship to theological truth. It challenged the role of art in mediating the divine and forced theologians to clarify the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, the divine

and the human. Ultimately, the defeat of iconoclasm in the 9th century led to a deeper theological understanding of religious art, one that emphasized its role in pointing to the spiritual truths of Christianity rather than being seen as an object of worship itself.

Theological aesthetics, as a discipline, addresses the intersection of art, beauty, and religious meaning. It reflects on how religious art can communicate the presence of the divine through aesthetic forms. The purpose of theological aesthetics is not to elevate the art itself but to recognize the divine realities that the art points to. According to theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Beauty is the radiance of the truth" (von Balthasar, 1982, p. 51). Art, in this view, functions as a revelation of God's truth, and its beauty directs the viewer's attention to the deeper spiritual realities it represents.

7.3. Key Theory: Iconoclasm, Theological Aesthetics

Iconoclasm challenges the legitimacy of religious images, often on the grounds that they divert worship away from the true, invisible God and toward human-made objects. However, the theological theory that underpins the acceptance of religious images in Christianity is rooted in the belief that the divine has been made accessible through the person of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation—God becoming human in the form of Christ—opened the possibility for God

to be represented in material, visual forms. This theological foundation allows for religious images to be understood as tools that mediate the divine, rather than as idols.

Theological aesthetics, as discussed earlier, is a framework for understanding how beauty and art can communicate theological truths. According to this perspective, art can act as a mediator of divine reality, reflecting the glory of God and helping believers to contemplate the sacred. In this view, art is not a mere decorative object, but a means of theological reflection that brings the believer closer to God by revealing deeper spiritual meanings.

7.4. Art Sample: The Icon of Christ Pantocrator (Byzantine Iconography)

A prime example of theological aesthetics in action is the Icon of Christ Pantocrator, one of the most iconic images in Eastern Christian art. The Christ Pantocrator (meaning "Christ the Almighty" or "Christ the Ruler of All") is a depiction of Christ that emphasizes his divine authority and universal kingship. In this icon, Christ is typically shown holding the Gospel in one hand, while the other hand is raised in a gesture of blessing.
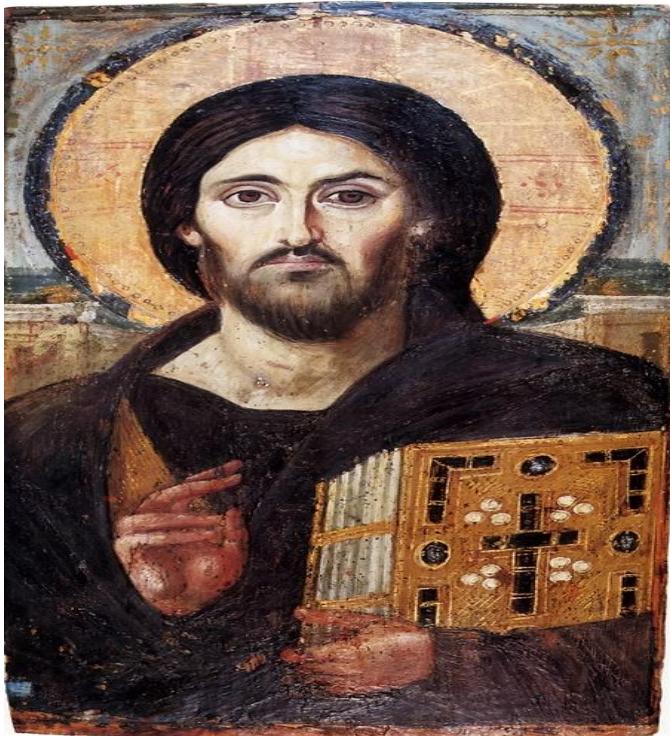
This image is deeply rooted in theological and doctrinal symbolism. The serene and dignified portrayal of Christ reflects his divine nature, while the slight asymmetry of his facial expression—one side of his face typically showing a more severe expression, and the other side a more compassionate one—symbolizes the dual nature of Christ as both fully divine and fully human. The icon serves not only as a representation of Christ but also as a theological statement about the nature of the Incarnation.

As an icon, the Christ Pantocrator is not meant to be an idol or object of worship in itself, but rather a tool that helps the faithful to contemplate the divine mystery. As the Orthodox Church teaches, icons are a "window" into the divine, offering believers a glimpse of the heavenly reality. The icon's purpose is to assist in prayer and meditation, directing the viewer's attention away from the material world and toward the eternal truths of God.

Activity:

Task: Draw a theological icon that reflects a significant religious truth from Scripture.

Objective: This activity encourages students to engage deeply with theological aesthetics by creating an icon that visually represents a key theological concept or truth from Scripture. Students are encouraged to focus on the symbolic use of color, form, and composition, drawing from the rich tradition of Christian iconography to express a particular doctrine, such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, or the Resurrection.

Guidelines: Students should choose a theological truth from Scripture that resonates with them, such as the creation of humanity, the Nativity, or the Passion of Christ. They should then design an icon that uses the visual language of traditional Christian iconography, such as

specific gestures, facial expressions, colors, and symbols, to communicate that truth. Students should explain the theological meaning behind the icon, demonstrating their understanding of how visual art can convey deep theological insights.

Sample Artworks of Students:

6th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/28/25
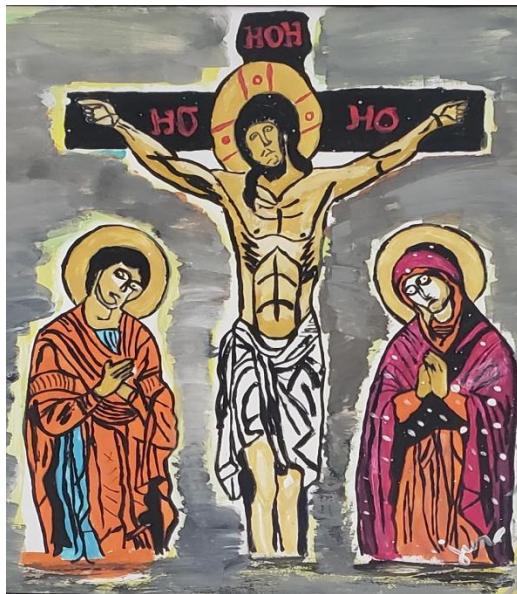
6th   Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 03/29/25

Reading Assignment:

Gombrich, E. H. (2002). The Story of Art (16th ed.). Phaidon Press.

In Chapter 10, Gombrich discusses the development of Christian art and its role in theological reflection, particularly during the Byzantine period. He explores the use of religious imagery and the iconoclastic controversy, offering insights into how religious art functions as both an aesthetic and theological medium. This chapter is essential for understanding the connection between art and theology, particularly in the context of early Christian iconography.

Summary:

In Week 6, students will explore the theological significance of religious art, focusing on the role of iconoclasm and theological aesthetics. They will examine the historical and theological debates surrounding the use of religious images, particularly the iconoclastic controversy in Byzantine Christianity. Through the analysis of the Icon of Christ Pantocrator, students will learn how art functions as a means of theological reflection, offering a window into divine truths. The activity encourages students to create their own theological icons, deepening their understanding of how visual art can communicate religious doctrine and spiritual truths.

Chapter Eight: Modernism and the Break with Tradition

8.1. Modernist Movements and the Rejection of Classical Forms

Modernism represents a profound break with past artistic traditions, especially the classical forms that dominated Western art for centuries. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, artists began to challenge the conventions of realism, perspective, and representation that had defined Western art since the Renaissance. The Modernist movement is characterized by its embrace of abstraction, subjectivity, and the exploration of new materials and forms. Rather than continuing the pursuit of idealized, realistic depictions of the world, Modernist artists sought to represent the internal, subjective experiences of individuals, reflecting the rapidly changing social, technological, and cultural landscapes of the time.

One of the core tenets of Modernism is the rejection of classical ideals such as balance, harmony, and proportion. Classical art had, for centuries, aimed to represent the world as it appeared to the human eye, adhering to strict rules of perspective and proportion that created an illusion of depth and realism. Modernists, in contrast, sought to challenge this emphasis on visual

realism. They abandoned these classical techniques in favor of exploring new methods of representation—methods that often involved distortion, abstraction, and fragmentation of form.

This rejection of tradition can be understood as a reaction to the industrial revolution, which brought about sweeping changes in society. The rapid urbanization, technological innovation, and the horrors of war all influenced artists to question the old ways of thinking and representing the world. The Modernist movement was born out of a desire to break free from past constraints and to express the complexity and fragmentation of the modern world.

8.2. The Evolution of Art in the 19th and 20th Centuries

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of a number of revolutionary art movements, each of which contributed to the break from traditional forms. These movements—including Impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism—each explored new ways of engaging with reality, presenting a fresh perspective on human experience.

The shift toward Modernism began with movements like Impressionism, which rejected the classical emphasis on fine detail and focused instead on capturing fleeting

moments and sensory experiences through the innovative use of light and color. Figures like Claude Monet and Edgar Degas used loose brushwork and a lighter color palette to evoke the effects of light and movement, rather than presenting a finely detailed, realistic image.
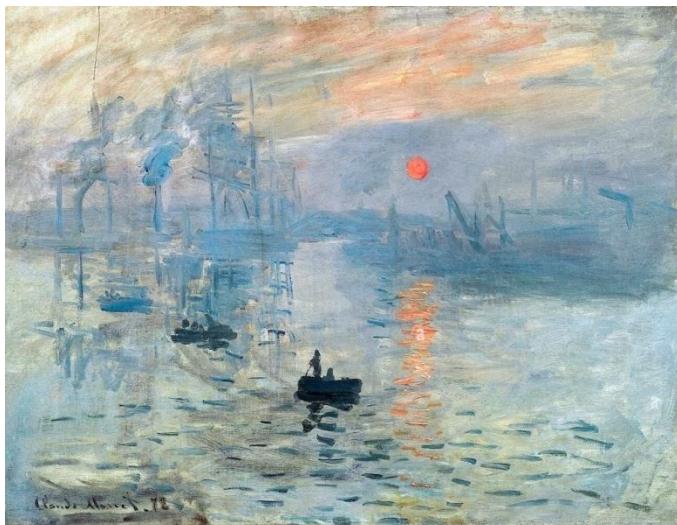
Monet's Impression, Sunrise is credited with coining the term "Impressionism," as it focuses on capturing a fleeting moment of light and atmosphere rather than fine details (Monet, 1872).
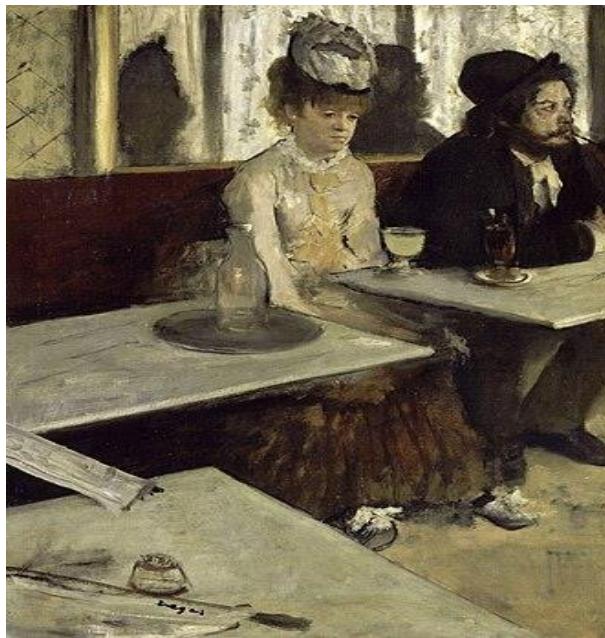
In The Absinthe Drinker, Degas portrays the mood of a woman in a café, emphasizing the atmosphere and light rather than realistic detail (Degas, 1876).

Following Impressionism, Cubism, spearheaded by artists like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, pushed the boundaries of representation even further. Cubism rejected the traditional idea of perspective, opting instead to depict multiple viewpoints of an object or scene simultaneously. This approach fractured the subject matter into geometric shapes, challenging viewers to reconsider how they perceived space and form.

Although not purely Cubist, Picasso's Guernica incorporates many elements of Cubism. The fragmented and abstracted figures convey the chaos and violence of the Spanish Civil War, pushing the boundaries of space and form (Picasso, 1937).

Houses at L'Estaque is one of Braque's early works in Cubism, where he reduces the landscape to geometric shapes, focusing on the structure and form of the houses

and trees rather than their realistic representation (Braque, 1908).

Surrealism, with artists like Salvador Dalí and René Magritte, embraced the unconscious mind, dreams, and the irrational, abandoning the rationality that had guided classical art. The Surrealists sought to express the deeper, hidden realities of the human psyche, often through bizarre, dreamlike imagery.
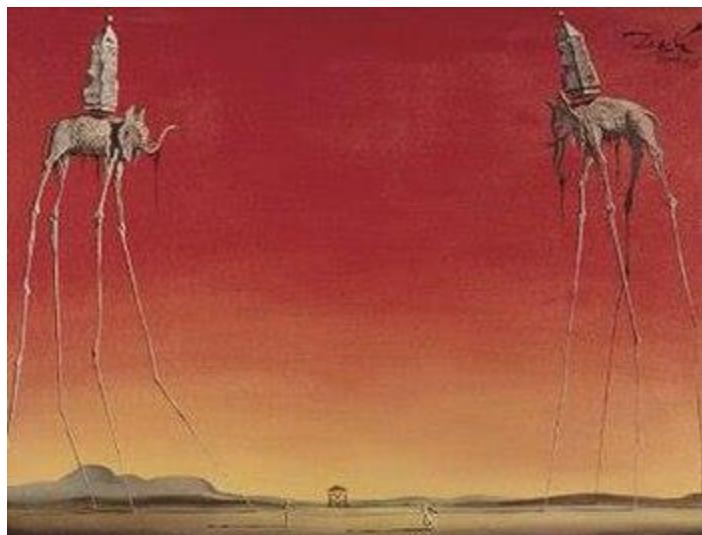
In The Elephants, Dalí depicts elephants with long, spindly legs carrying heavy obelisks, creating a bizarre, dreamlike vision that explores themes of weight, memory, and the subconscious (Dalí, 1948).

In this iconic painting, Magritte challenges perception by showing an image of a pipe with the phrase "This is not a pipe" beneath it. This work questions reality and representation, emphasizing the gap between appearance and meaning (Magritte, 1928-1929).

In the early 20th century, Abstract Expressionism further removed itself from representational art. Artists like Jackson Pollock and Wassily Kandinsky moved away from figuration entirely, creating art that focused on color, shape, and form as a means of expression, rather than any attempt to represent the visible world. Modernism thus evolved from a break with tradition into a full exploration of the artist's inner world, with abstraction as a dominant method of expression.

Convergence is another dynamic painting by Pollock that employs his drip technique to create a chaotic yet harmonious composition of lines, shapes, and colors. This artwork exemplifies the freedom of expression in Abstract Expressionism, focusing purely on the visceral impact of color and form (Pollock, 1952).

Kandinsky's Yellow-Red-Blue exemplifies his use of geometric shapes and bold colors, creating a non-representational composition that evokes a sense of harmony and balance. His work is rooted in the belief that colors and shapes could convey emotions and ideas without depicting the physical world (Kandinsky, 1925).

8.3. Key Theory: Modernism, Avant-garde

Modernism is often linked with the concept of the avant-garde, a term that refers to artists and movements that are considered ahead of their time, pushing the boundaries of artistic norms and conventions. The avant-garde artists sought to challenge the status quo, defy traditional aesthetic norms, and introduce new ways of thinking about art. They viewed their work not just as an aesthetic pursuit, but as a revolutionary act that could influence and reshape society.

The avant-garde sought to question the very nature of art and its role in society. They rejected the notion that art should merely imitate nature or adhere to established forms. Instead, they believed that art should express the modern condition, reflecting the complexities of the individual and the rapidly changing world. This break from tradition led to a variety of new styles and movements, all of which sought to reinvent how art could be experienced.

The term "Modernism" encompasses a wide range of experimental approaches, but its common thread is the desire to break from tradition and innovate. For Modernists, art was not about the accurate representation of the external world, but about the expression of the subjective, emotional, and psychological experiences of the individual artist.

8.4. Art Sample: Georges Braque's Houses at L'Estaque (Modernism)

Georges Braque's Houses at L'Estaque (1908) is a seminal work in the development of Cubism, a major Modernist movement that rejected traditional perspectives and realistic representations. In this painting, Braque simplifies the forms of houses and landscapes into geometric shapes, creating a fragmented view of the scene. The use of muted colors and flattened planes pushes the viewer to reconsider spatial relationships and perspectives.

Houses at L'Estaque challenges the traditional approach to painting by presenting a fragmented yet harmonious composition that explores the interaction of shapes and forms rather than focusing on detailed representation. Braque's reduction of the landscape to abstracted blocks and planes reflects the Modernist desire to move beyond realism, aiming to represent the underlying

structure and essence of the subject, rather than its appearance.

As a pivotal work in the early stages of Cubism, Houses at L'Estaque exemplifies Modernism's embrace of abstraction, form, and a break from classical artistic conventions. The piece represents a radical shift in how the visual world is interpreted and expressed, marking a significant moment in the evolution of Modernist art.

Art Sample: Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (Avant-Garde)

A quintessential example of the avant-garde movement, Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (1917) represents a radical break from traditional artistic norms. In this piece, Duchamp took a mass-produced porcelain urinal, signed it with the pseudonym "R. Mutt," and presented it as art in a

gallery. This act of presenting an everyday object as art challenged the established definitions of art and creativity, pushing the boundaries of what could be considered an artistic object.

Duchamp's Fountain embodies the avant-garde spirit by rejecting the conventions of artistic craftsmanship, representation, and aesthetics. The work's very concept of a "ready-made" artwork, in which the artist's selection of an object and the context in which it is placed becomes the focus, directly confronts the traditional role of the artist as a creator of beautiful or technically skilled works. By doing so, Duchamp urged viewers to rethink their understanding of art and its purpose, making a statement about the power of intellectual engagement with art over traditional notions of visual beauty.

The work is emblematic of the avant-garde's commitment to breaking away from tradition and challenging social and cultural norms. Fountain is not just a physical object, but a critique of the art world's conventions, an exploration of the nature of artistic creation, and an invitation to viewers to question the very essence of art (Duchamp, 1917).

Activity:

Task: Create a non-representational artwork using fragmented forms.

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Objective: This activity encourages students to engage with the Modernist emphasis on abstraction and fragmentation. The goal is for students to experiment with breaking down an object or scene into geometric or fragmented forms, rather than aiming to represent it realistically. The exercise is intended to help students explore how abstraction can convey meaning and emotion.

Guidelines: Students should choose an object or subject matter and deconstruct it into fragmented or geometric shapes. The work should not aim to depict the object realistically but instead focus on form, color, and texture to convey emotion, movement, or atmosphere. Students are encouraged to use bold contrasts and asymmetry to express the disjointed, dynamic nature of the modern world.

Sample Artworks of Students:

7th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/03/25

7th Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/04/25

Reading Assignment:

Danto, A. C. (1981). The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art. Harvard University Press.

In Chapter 5, Danto explores the evolution of art from the classical to the Modernist era. He addresses the shift from representational art to abstraction, focusing on the significance of this change in terms of art theory and the cultural context in which these changes occurred. Danto's work provides a philosophical perspective on how Modernism redefined what art could be and how it could be understood.

Summary:

In Week 7, students will explore the radical transformation of art through Modernism, focusing on the rejection of traditional forms and the embrace of abstraction. The Modernist movement and its avant-garde artists, like Picasso, challenged the conventions of classical art and explored new ways of expressing the complexities of modern life. The activity encourages students to engage with these themes by creating a non-representational artwork that explores fragmentation and abstraction. Through the analysis of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and a reading of Danto's The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, students

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will deepen their understanding of how Modernism revolutionized the practice and theory of art.

Chapter Nine: Postmodernism and Theories of Art in the 21st Century

9.1. The Concept of Postmodernism in Art and Its Rejection of Singular Narratives

Postmodernism in art represents a fundamental shift from the ideals of Modernism, characterized by its rejection of grand narratives, universal truths, and the idea of a single, dominant style or meaning. Where Modernism embraced abstraction and innovation as means of expressing universal human experiences, Postmodernism questions the very idea of a universal "truth" or "reality." In the Postmodernist view, all narratives and interpretations are fragmented, subjective, and culturally constructed, and no single perspective holds more legitimacy than another.

Jean-François Lyotard's famous definition of Postmodernism in The Postmodern Condition (1979) highlights the rejection of overarching grand narratives. Lyotard argued, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1979, p. xxiv). This means that, in Postmodern art, the artist often critiques or subverts traditional expectations of beauty, representation, and meaning. Instead of producing works that seek to represent a universal truth, Postmodern art

emphasizes the multiplicity of perspectives, cultures, and meanings that can coexist within a single artistic creation.

Postmodern artists play with *irony*[38], *parody*[39], and *pastiche*[40]—combining, reinterpreting, and reassembling

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[38] In art, **irony** is when there's a contrast between what is expected and what is actually presented—often used to provoke thought, highlight contradictions, or add humor or critique.

Different Types of Irony in Art:

Visual Irony: The artwork shows something that contradicts its context or the viewer's expectations.

Example: A painting of a luxury car made entirely out of trash might comment on consumerism or waste.

Situational Irony: The subject matter of the art defies logical expectations.

Example: A statue of a peace dove made from weapons.

Conceptual Irony: The idea behind the piece contains a contradiction or unexpected twist.

Example: Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (a urinal presented as art) is ironic because it challenges traditional definitions of art.

Satirical Irony: Used to mock or criticize, often through exaggeration or parody.

Example: Political cartoons that depict leaders in ridiculous situations to expose flaws in their actions or policies.

Why Artists Use Irony:

To challenge norms or traditions

To critique society, politics, or culture

To make viewers think more deeply

To add humor or provoke reactions

Irony in art isn't always obvious—it can be subtle, layered, or even open to interpretation.

[39] **Parody** is when an artwork imitates the style, subject, or tone of another work (or genre, artist, or cultural element), usually in a way that is exaggerated or humorous. It's often meant to mock, critique, or pay homage to the original.

Key Traits of Parody in Art:

Imitation – It closely resembles the original work or style.

Exaggeration or distortion – Certain features are amplified to highlight absurdities or inconsistencies.

Commentary – It often has a message, whether critical, humorous, or reflective.

Examples:

Banksy's works often parody classic art or pop culture to critique modern society.

Example: His version of Monet's lily pond painting with shopping carts and debris floating in the water.

Yasumasa Morimura, a Japanese artist, recreates iconic Western paintings and photographs by inserting himself into them—parodying Western art history and ideas of identity and beauty.

Jeff Koons uses parody in his shiny balloon dog sculptures, which mimic cheap party decorations but are made of expensive materials, poking fun at art-world elitism and consumer culture.

Parody vs. Irony:

Irony is broader—it includes contradiction, surprise, and subversion.

Parody is a specific technique that uses imitation for effect, often involving irony, but not always.

Parody can be playful or biting, affectionate or critical—it all depends on the artist's intent.

[40] **Pastiche** is an artwork that imitates the style or character of another artist, period, or movement—but without mockery or critique. It's usually a form of celebration, homage, or playful blending of styles.

Key Traits of Pastiche:

Respectful imitation – Unlike parody, pastiche isn't meant to mock.

Stylistic borrowing – It often borrows techniques, motifs, or aesthetics from specific historical or cultural sources.

Mix-and-match vibe – Sometimes it blends several influences into one cohesive or eclectic piece.

Examples of Pastiche in Art:

Postmodern art and design is full of pastiche—mixing high and low culture, classical and contemporary styles.

Andy Warhol and others in Pop Art often referenced commercial art and earlier styles in a pastiche-like way, though sometimes with ironic edges.

Architectural pastiche is common in postmodern buildings—think of a modern skyscraper with classical columns or Renaissance-inspired ornamentation.

earlier styles and ideas to create something new that resists clear interpretation. In this way, Postmodern art challenges the viewer to question the assumptions that underlie both the artwork and their own interpretation of it. There is a rejection of the idea that art must serve a particular, predetermined purpose, such as moral instruction, beauty, or representation of truth. Instead, Postmodern art emphasizes plurality, ambiguity, and the destabilization of meaning.

9.2. Conceptual Art and the Critique of Aesthetic Beauty

In Postmodernism, Conceptual Art becomes an important movement that challenges traditional notions of aesthetic beauty. Conceptual artists argue that the idea behind the work—the concept—should be more important than the finished aesthetic product itself. The essence of Conceptual Art lies in its focus on the intellectual engagement that an artwork provokes, rather than simply its visual appeal or technical skill.

Cindy Sherman's photography often channels old film stills, art history, and media tropes—somewhere between parody and pastiche depending on the tone.

Why Use Pastiche?

To celebrate artistic histor

To create layers of meaning

To experiment with identity or visual language

To engage in cultural remixing, especially in digital or postmodern contexts

One of the primary critiques of beauty in Conceptual Art is its rejection of the notion that art must be beautiful to be meaningful. This challenge to aesthetic beauty aligns with the broader Postmodern skepticism toward grand narratives. Instead of focusing on beauty as an intrinsic quality of the artwork, Conceptual Art stresses that art can be about questioning, deconstructing, or subverting social, cultural, or political issues.

Art critic Robert Hughes (1991) argued that art should challenge the viewer's assumptions, "Art is not about the mere creation of beautiful objects, but about making the viewer aware of the often unconscious assumptions that govern the way we look at the world" (p. 221). Conceptual Art removes the boundaries between art and life by blurring the distinction between the idea and its physical manifestation.

9.3. Key Theory: Postmodernism, Conceptual Art

Postmodernism, with its emphasis on skepticism, relativism, and the rejection of universal truths, has a natural affinity with Conceptual Art, which prioritizes ideas and concepts over traditional forms and aesthetics. Postmodern art challenges the value of formalism—the belief that art should be evaluated based on its formal qualities—and

instead encourages the audience to engage with the ideas, processes, and contexts that inform the work.

Postmodernism's embrace of pastiche, irony, and intertextuality is echoed in Conceptual Art's desire to dismantle traditional definitions of art. The works of Postmodern and Conceptual artists reject the boundaries of what constitutes "art" and often challenge the viewer to reconsider the very nature of artistic production. Art becomes not just an object to be observed, but a vehicle for intellectual exploration and critique. This shift toward idea-based art marks a departure from earlier traditions, where the artist's skill and mastery of technique were often the primary criteria for judging the value of the work.

9.4. Art Sample: Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (Conceptual Art)

A quintessential example of Conceptual Art is Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (1917), a ready-made sculpture consisting of a porcelain urinal signed with the pseudonym "R. Mutt." Duchamp's work is often seen as one of the most radical challenges to traditional notions of art. By choosing an ordinary object from daily life and presenting it as art, Duchamp subverted the very definition of what art could be.

Fountain is not about the physical form of the urinal itself, but about the concept of art and the idea of artistic authorship. Duchamp's question was simple yet revolutionary: if an object is presented in an art context by an artist, does it then become art? In doing so, Duchamp raised essential questions about the nature of art, authorship, and the role of the viewer. By rejecting traditional aesthetic beauty, Duchamp's work focused on the process of selection and the intellectual intervention of the artist rather than the beauty or skill involved in its creation. Duchamp's piece was not concerned with creating a beautiful object, but with provoking thought and reflection on the nature of art itself.

Duchamp's Fountain exemplifies the Postmodern notion that art is no longer about replicating reality or embodying beauty but about questioning the very assumptions and conventions that define art. The piece became a symbol of the shift toward Conceptual Art and

Postmodernism, highlighting the move from the object itself to the idea behind it. As art critic Lucy Lippard (1997) explains, Fountain exemplifies "a shift from art as a beautiful object to art as an idea or a concept" (p. 41).

Activity:

Task: Create a conceptual artwork that communicates a deep theological or philosophical idea.

Objective: This activity invites students to engage with Postmodernism and Conceptual Art by creating a piece that communicates a complex theological or philosophical idea. The goal is for students to move beyond traditional notions of visual beauty and focus on expressing an intellectual concept through art.

Guidelines: Students are encouraged to choose a theological or philosophical concept—such as faith, redemption, free will, the nature of the divine, or the problem of evil—and to create a work that focuses on communicating this idea rather than producing a visually beautiful or realistic representation. Students may use everyday objects, text, or abstract forms to provoke thought or challenge assumptions about the chosen concept. The focus should be on the concept and the process behind the artwork, rather than the final aesthetic product.

Sample Artworks of Students:

8th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/25/25

8th Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/26/25

Reading Assignment:

Levinson, J. (1990). Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics. Cornell University Press. In Chapter 3, Levinson examines the changing nature of art in the 20th and 21st centuries, exploring how Postmodernism and Conceptual Art challenge traditional notions of aesthetic beauty and the purpose of art. He delves into the philosophical implications of Conceptual Art, particularly its focus on the idea over the object, and its critique of traditional art's reliance on beauty. Levinson's analysis provides insight into the intellectual movements that have shaped contemporary art and aesthetics.

Summary:

In Week 8, students will explore the revolutionary shift in art theory and practice brought about by Postmodernism, particularly focusing on its rejection of singular narratives and its embrace of Conceptual Art. By analyzing Duchamp's Fountain, students will understand how art can challenge our perceptions of meaning and authorship. The activity encourages students to create their own conceptual works that communicate profound theological or philosophical ideas, reflecting the Postmodern belief that art is not about beauty, but about ideas and intellectual engagement.

Through Levinson's Music, Art, and Metaphysics, students will deepen their understanding of how Postmodernism and Conceptual Art have reshaped the landscape of contemporary art.

Chapter Ten: Art and Theology: The Sacred, the Profane, and the Divine

10.1. Art as a Tool for Expressing Sacred Themes and Divine Beauty

Throughout history, art has been a powerful tool for expressing the sacred and the divine. In both religious and secular contexts, artists have sought to convey the transcendence of spiritual truths, the divine beauty of creation, and the profound mysteries of faith. Art provides a unique language through which the ineffable—God, the sacred, and spiritual experiences—can be made accessible to human comprehension. For the faithful, art becomes a means of connecting with the divine, acting as a visual mediator that invites contemplation, worship, and reverence.

The expression of sacred themes through art is not limited to religious iconography or representations of divine events but extends to the broader notion of beauty in the world. Theological reflections on art often involve the idea that the artist participates in the divine act of creation. By drawing inspiration from Scripture, tradition, and mystical experiences, the artist mirrors God's creative work and shares in the act of bringing beauty and truth into the world. This relationship between beauty and the sacred is deeply

embedded in Christian theology, as well as in other religious traditions that emphasize the presence of the divine in the world.

In Christian theology, art has been used to represent biblical stories, the lives of saints, and key moments in salvation history. Sacred art is understood not simply as an aesthetic pursuit, but as a means of worship and an avenue for experiencing divine presence. Through the creation and contemplation of sacred art, believers can deepen their relationship with the divine. The visual representation of divine beauty encourages worshippers to lift their hearts and minds toward God, fostering a deeper spiritual connection.

10.2 Theological Interpretations of Art Throughout History

The relationship between art and theology has evolved over the centuries, as different theological perspectives have shaped the ways in which art is created and understood. In the early Christian Church, religious art was largely focused on iconography—images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, and key biblical figures. Icons were not just decorative but served as windows into the divine, offering the viewer a means of accessing the sacred. In this tradition, images were considered sacramental, representing the presence of the holy through visual means.

The theological interpretation of art evolved during the medieval period, especially within the context of the Catholic Church, where art was used to communicate religious truths to the largely illiterate populace. Religious paintings, sculptures, and stained-glass windows told stories from Scripture, helping to teach the faithful about biblical events and the nature of God. During the Renaissance, artists like Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo further explored the theme of divine beauty, seeking to harmonize human beauty with divine inspiration. The Renaissance saw the resurgence of the idea that the artist could capture divine perfection in the human form, drawing on both classical and Christian traditions.

The Reformation and subsequent Counter-Reformation brought theological debates about the use of images in worship. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin challenged the veneration of images and icons, arguing that they could lead to idolatry. In contrast, the Catholic Church reaffirmed the importance of sacred art in conveying the mysteries of faith and preserving the connection between the faithful and the divine. The debates surrounding the use of sacred images, known as iconoclasm, led to varying interpretations of the role of art in religious practice.

In modern and contemporary theology, art has continued to play an important role in expressing the sacred. The rise of abstract art, for example, has led to new theological reflections on how non-representational forms can evoke divine presence. The exploration of light, color, and form in contemporary sacred art reflects an ongoing search for ways to communicate transcendent truths in a secular world.

10.3 Key Theory: Sacred Art, Divine Beauty

Sacred Art is a category of art that is created to express and represent spiritual or religious themes. The central idea of sacred art is its purpose to engage the viewer's heart and mind in the contemplation of divine mysteries. Unlike secular art, which is often concerned with portraying the material world, sacred art is specifically oriented toward expressing truths about God, salvation, the soul, and the eternal.

In Christian theology, the concept of Divine Beauty is deeply intertwined with the idea of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful as central aspects of God's nature. Divine beauty is not merely an aesthetic quality but a reflection of God's perfect nature. Theologians such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas have argued that beauty in art is a reflection of the divine order and harmony that exists in

creation. Aquinas, in particular, connected the beauty of the material world with the perfection of God. He argued that beauty is an attribute of God, expressed in creation, and that art can lead the viewer to contemplate this divine perfection. According to Aquinas, beauty is one of the ways in which the divine is made known to the world. He wrote, "The beautiful is what pleases when seen" (Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, Q. 39, Art. 8).

Divine beauty, as portrayed in sacred art, is meant to inspire the viewer toward a deeper connection with God. Sacred images, whether figurative or abstract, invite contemplation of the divine presence in the world. In this way, sacred art functions as a bridge between the physical and the spiritual, between the temporal and the eternal.

10.4 Art Sample: Michelangelo's Creation of Adam (Sacred Art)

Michelangelo's Creation of Adam (1512), painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, is a powerful representation of sacred art and divine beauty. The fresco depicts the moment when God reaches out to touch the hand of Adam, imparting the gift of life. This image has been interpreted as a profound statement about humanity's relationship to the divine, highlighting the connection between the Creator and His creation.
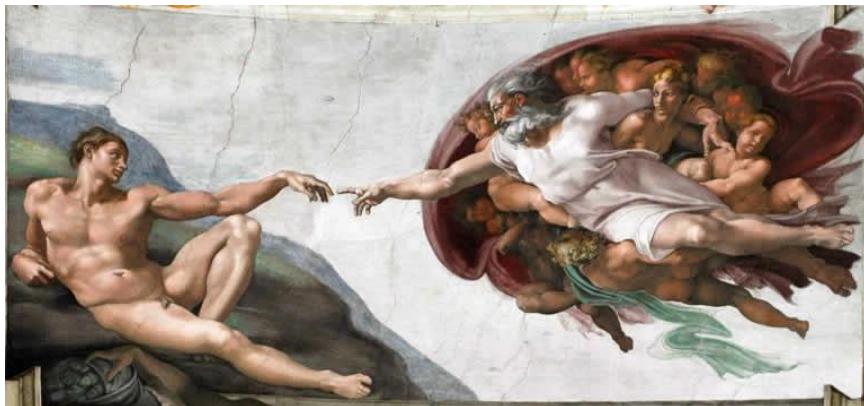
In this masterpiece, Michelangelo captures the divine beauty of God's creative act and the grace of Adam's reception of life. The outstretched hands of both God and Adam form a delicate moment of interaction, symbolizing the transmission of divine life. The figure of God is majestic and dynamic, surrounded by a host of angels, while Adam's form is peaceful and receptive, symbolizing the harmony between humanity and the divine.

The image of the Creation of Adam has been widely interpreted as a representation of God's divine beauty—both the physical beauty of the human form and the metaphysical beauty of divine grace. Michelangelo uses the human body to express theological concepts about the soul, creation, and the divine, aligning with the theological belief that beauty reflects the nature of God. The fresco not only captures a pivotal biblical moment but also invites viewers to

contemplate the nature of life, creation, and divine beauty itself.

Activity:

Task: Create a drawing that incorporates sacred symbols or moments of divine revelation.

Objective: This activity encourages students to engage with the theme of sacred art by creating a visual representation that draws on theological concepts or biblical stories. The focus is on using symbols, moments of divine revelation, or sacred imagery to communicate spiritual truths.

Guidelines: Students are encouraged to incorporate sacred symbols, such as the cross, the dove (symbolizing the Holy Spirit), or light (as a symbol of divine revelation), or to depict a moment of divine revelation, such as the creation of humanity, a biblical event like the Transfiguration, or a personal encounter with the divine. Students should use their artwork to express theological themes or ideas about the nature of God, salvation, or divine beauty. The focus should be on the symbolic and spiritual significance of the image rather than on creating a realistic representation.

Sample Artworks of Students:
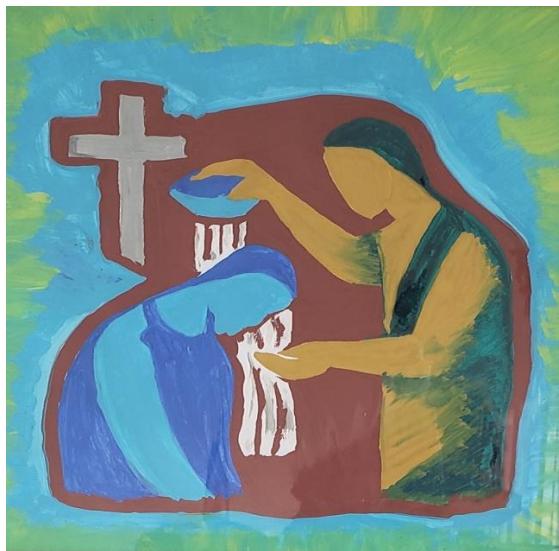
9th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/30/25
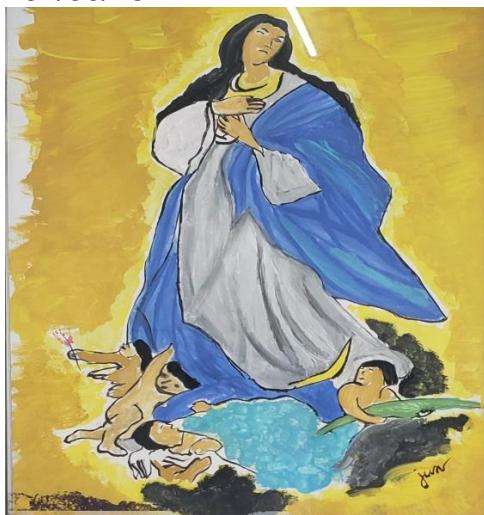
9th Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/29/25

Reading Assignment:

Review all previous materials for preparation.

Students are encouraged to revisit the key readings and lectures from previous weeks to synthesize their understanding of the relationship between art, theology, and divine beauty. This review will help prepare them for deeper theological reflection on sacred art and its role in expressing religious truths.

Summary:

In Week 9, students will explore the intersection of art and theology, focusing on the role of art as a means of expressing sacred themes, divine beauty, and theological truths. Through the analysis of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam, students will gain an understanding of how sacred art reflects the divine order and invites contemplation of spiritual truths. The activity encourages students to create their own sacred artwork, engaging with theological ideas and biblical moments. By reviewing previous materials, students will be equipped to reflect on the role of art in communicating the sacred and divine beauty in their own spiritual lives.

Chapter Eleven: Final Project: Depicting the Founder of the Congregation

11.1. A Study on Iconography and Sacred Portraiture

Iconography and sacred portraiture are significant traditions in religious art that focus on the portrayal of holy figures in ways that reflect theological beliefs, cultural contexts, and sacred symbolism. Unlike typical portraiture, where the goal is often to capture physical likeness or personal characteristics, sacred portraiture, especially in Christian iconography, is concerned with more than just the appearance of the individual. It aims to represent the person in a way that reflects their spiritual significance and connection to the divine.

In Christian iconography, figures are often depicted in ways that emphasize their role in salvation history or their spiritual virtues, rather than simply their earthly attributes. This approach reflects a theological understanding that the artist's task is to create an image that invites the viewer into contemplation of divine truths and realities. A key principle in sacred art is that the image must be both a true reflection of the person's spiritual essence and a tool for drawing the viewer's attention to God. The image becomes a vehicle

through which divine grace and spiritual power are conveyed.

The use of specific symbols in iconography, such as halos, gestures, and attributes, also plays a vital role in sacred portraiture. These symbols help to communicate theological meanings that go beyond what is visible to the eye. For example, halos around the heads of saints or holy figures are used to indicate their sanctity and divine connection, while specific gestures or poses may indicate a person's particular relationship to God (e.g., hands raised in prayer or holding religious symbols).

Sacred portraiture also draws heavily from tradition, and artists often adhere to certain canonical forms that are meant to honor the theological truths the portrait is intended to convey. This can include specific ways of rendering the face, hands, and other features to create a timeless image that transcends the individual and speaks to universal spiritual truths.

11.2. Application of Learned Art Theories to the Final Drawing of Msgr. Fred

As students prepare for their final project, they are encouraged to apply the various art theories learned throughout the course, including concepts such as mimesis, idealism, aestheticism, formalism, and expressionism, to the

task of depicting the founder of their congregation, Msgr. Fred.

Mimesis: Mimesis, the theory of imitation (as seen in Plato and Aristotle's writings), emphasizes the idea of representing a subject in a way that imitates nature or human behavior. In the case of sacred portraiture, this could mean focusing on the likeness of Msgr. Fred but also reflecting his divine calling or spiritual mission in the representation. The artist might choose to emphasize certain features that align with the spiritual significance of the figure, such as using specific gestures, symbols, or facial expressions that convey the founder's sanctity and devotion.

Idealism: The theory of idealism in art suggests that the artist should present an idealized version of the subject, highlighting the virtues and spiritual essence rather than focusing on flaws or imperfections. In depicting Msgr. Fred, students may choose to portray him in a way that reflects his divine mission or calling, using idealized proportions, calm and serene facial expressions, and elevated symbols that convey his holiness or leadership within the religious community.

Aestheticism: Aestheticism, particularly the idea that art should be appreciated for its beauty and emotional effect, can be applied in the final drawing by considering the

emotional tone conveyed through the depiction of Msgr. Fred. Students may focus on creating a portrait that not only captures his physical likeness but also evokes an emotional response, such as reverence, peace, or inspiration, that aligns with the sacred nature of his role as a spiritual leader.

Formalism: Formalism, which focuses on the formal elements of art, can guide students in paying careful attention to the visual composition of their artwork. This includes considering elements like balance, color, shape, line, and texture to create a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing image. The use of these elements can be especially important in sacred portraiture, where the formal properties of the artwork work together to elevate the subject and emphasize the divine beauty of the figure.

Expressionism: Expressionism, as seen in artists like Edvard Munch, emphasizes the conveyance of deep emotional and psychological states through art. In the final project, students might consider how to incorporate expressive elements that convey not only the physical appearance of Msgr. Fred but also his spiritual devotion and commitment to religious life. This could involve the use of dramatic contrasts, bold colors, or exaggerated forms to communicate the emotional depth of his vocation and impact.

11.3. Integration of Theological and Philosophical Reflections into Art

The final project challenges students to integrate both theological and philosophical reflections into their artistic practice. Theologically, students are asked to reflect on the spiritual significance of the figure of Msgr. Fred as the founder of their congregation. What virtues or qualities best represent his spiritual calling? What symbols or gestures can be used to convey his holiness, dedication, and relationship to God?

Philosophically, students should also consider how the theories of art they have studied throughout the course can inform their artistic choices. For example, how does the idea of sacred beauty (as discussed in theological aesthetics) influence the way they approach their final portrait? How does the application of mimesis or idealism contribute to an understanding of Msgr. Fred's role within the religious community and the broader theological framework?

This project is an opportunity for students to synthesize their learning, drawing upon theological insights, philosophical perspectives, and artistic techniques to create a meaningful representation of a significant figure in their religious community. By integrating both theological and artistic elements, students will create a portrait that reflects

not only Msgr. Fred's physical likeness but also his spiritual and theological importance.

Activity:

Task: Create a drawing of Msgr. Fred, your congregation's founder, incorporating theological and artistic symbolism.

Objective: The final project challenges students to combine their artistic skills with theological reflections to create a meaningful representation of Msgr. Fred, the founder of their congregation. The drawing should incorporate specific symbols, gestures, and visual elements that communicate both the holiness of the individual and the theological significance of his role within the religious community.

Guidelines: Students are encouraged to depict Msgr. Fred using the theories of art discussed throughout the course. The portrait should reflect his spiritual calling, leadership, and sanctity, incorporating theological symbols (e.g., a cross, a halo, religious texts) and artistic elements that enhance the sacred nature of the image. Students should consider the emotional tone and the philosophical implications of their artistic choices, ensuring that the portrait conveys both theological and philosophical insights.

Sample Artworks of Students:

10th Artwork by Brando G. Ty, Theories of Art | Completed on 05/06/25
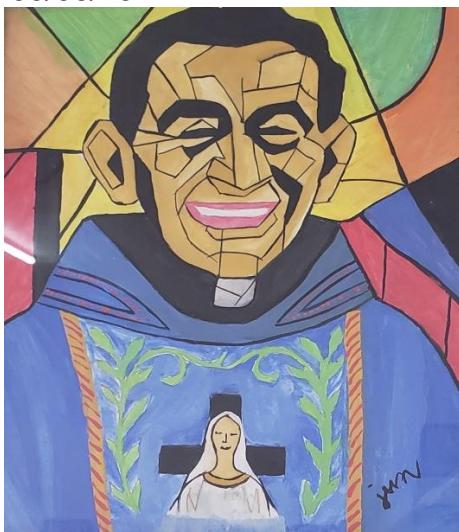
10th Artwork by Marjun Espina Marquez, Theories of Art | Completed on 04/05/25

Reading Assignment:

Task: Final preparation for the final exam.

Students are encouraged to review all previous materials in preparation for the final project and exam. This includes revisiting the key theories of art, theological reflections on sacred art, and philosophical insights on the relationship between art and theology. Students should reflect on how these theories can be applied to their final portrait of Msgr. Fred and be ready to discuss the philosophical and theological foundations of their artistic choices in the final project.

Summary:

In Week 10, students are given the opportunity to apply the artistic theories and theological reflections learned throughout the course to create a final project that depicts Msgr. Fred, the founder of their congregation. By studying iconography and sacred portraiture, students will learn how to incorporate theological and artistic symbolism to create a meaningful and sacred image. The project encourages students to synthesize their learning and reflect on the intersection of art, theology, and philosophy, resulting in a portrait that is not only a visual likeness but also a theological and spiritual reflection of their founder's role in the congregation.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for bringing us together today as we begin this journey into the world of art. We are grateful for the beauty You have created in the world and for the gift of creativity that reflects Your divine image in us.

As we explore the theories of art, we ask for Your guidance and wisdom. Open our hearts and minds to see the deeper meanings in the works we study, and help us understand how art can be a pathway to recognizing Your presence in the world.

Grant us the inspiration to create, the humility to learn, and the courage to express the truths of our faith through the works of our hands. May our reflections on art help us grow closer to You and to one another as we seek to understand Your beauty and truth in new and profound ways.

We offer this time to You, Lord, and we pray that everything we do here will be a reflection of Your glory.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Appendix II: Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus,

We thank You for the time we've spent together today, for the insights we've gained, and for the opportunity to explore the beauty and creativity that reflect Your divine nature. We are grateful for the wisdom You have granted us through our studies, and for the ways You've inspired our hearts and minds to see the world through the lens of art.

As we leave this classroom, we ask that You continue to guide our thoughts and our creative work. May the theories we've discussed help us to reflect on Your truth, beauty, and goodness in all that we create and encounter. Help us to recognize Your presence in the world and to use the gifts of art and expression to glorify You.

We entrust all that we have learned to Your care, and we pray for the grace to continue growing in knowledge and creativity in the days ahead.

Bless us, Lord, as we depart, and keep us ever mindful of Your loving presence in our work and our lives.

We ask all of this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Fr. Wilson A. Jerusalem, DBA, MAEd, was born on October 20, 1985, in Brgy. Candamiang, Santander, Cebu, to Eugenio C. Jerusalem and Felicisima A. Jerusalem. He grew up in a large family with nine siblings, ten in all. Now 39 years old, he has dedicated his life to Catholic education, pastoral service, and faith formation.

He holds a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) from the Atlanta College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, USA (2023–2025) and a Master of Arts in Education, Major in Administration and Supervision (MAEd) from Cebu Technological University – Carmen Campus (2022–2025). He also earned a Bachelor of Arts in Theology (STB) from the Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, España (2015–2019) and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy with a Minor in English from San Carlos Seminary College, Cebu City (2010–2015).

His early formation began at Candamiang Elementary School, Santander (1992–1998) and The Sisters of Mary School Boystown, Minglanilla (1998–2001). Before entering full-time ministry, he worked at Karikawa Cebu Corporation (2001–2005), served as an Assistant Instructor at Sisters of

Mary School Boystown (2005–2006), and as a Telemarketer at Cocoplans Cebu (2009–2010).

Fr. Wilson has been active in both pastoral and professional development, having participated in the CEAP National Convention (Davao City, 2024), the Archdiocesan Catholic Schools In-Service Seminar (Talamban, Cebu, 2024), and the DepEd Virtual In-Service Training for Teachers (2022).

At present, he serves as:

Parochial Vicar of the Archdiocesan Shrine of Santa Ana, Barili, Cebu (since August 5, 2025)

Resident School Administrator and School Treasurer of Academia de Santa Ana y San Joaquin, Barili, Cebu (2025–Present)

Professor of Theories of Art at Mary's Children Formation College Foundation Inc., Minglanilla, Cebu (2024–Present)

Spiritual Director of the Spes Missio Community, Santander, Cebu (2019–Present)

Former School Treasurer and Resident Administrator at Academia de San Agustín Doctor de la Gracia, Inc., Carmen, Cebu (2021–August 5, 2025)

Priest Associate at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Old Bridge, New Jersey, USA (2023)

Priest Associate at St. Philip and St. James Parish, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, USA (2023–2024)

In 2024, he published two books on Amazon: *Sacred and Secular: Exploring the Evolution of Love through Catholic*

Teachings and its Spanish edition, *Sagrado y Secular: Explorando la Evolución del Amor a través de las Enseñanzas Católicas.*

Fr. Wilson continues to bring together his academic expertise in business administration, education, philosophy, and theology with his pastoral commitment to evangelization. Through teaching, writing, and spiritual leadership, he strives to form hearts and minds in the Catholic faith. He is also the author of *Theories of Art Manual*.