

Name: Joshua Anthony Dennis West

Student Number: 19022207

BA Course: Computer Games Design

Lectures name: Rich Morgan, Al kang

EXHIBTION TITLE: What is Art?

Introduction

The exhibition will be looking at the definition of art. Using different theories and philosophers like Tolstoy and David Hume. The definitions will be looked at and then used to look at different pieces of work in the exhibition. The definitions will be questioned to find out the different things wrong with the theory. Tolstoy will discuss how the artist intention (Tolstoy's What is Art? 2020) is important and other philosophers disagree and argue that the audience decide if it is art.

Context

Ludwig Wittgenstein discusses how art defies definition. Trying to define art is going to be hard especially if it is all subjective. He argues that someone would now art when you see it.

Another argument is that it must express emotion to the audience to make it art. Philosopher and art critic Leo Tolstoy argues that “ the most important quality of any work of art is its sincerity. Any true work of art expresses original thoughts and feelings. The "highest" feelings which art may express are related to religious perception” (Tolstoy's What is Art? 2020). Tolstoy is saying that the artist needs to genuinely want to invoke an emotion in their art to be considered art. On the over hand, anyone that creates something can say they are trying to convey emotion. People looking at the artwork may experience different emotions than other people and interpret the work differently, than the artist intended it to be. This raises questions about Tolstoy’s definition of art and emotions behind it.

As multiple different people can get different emotions from the artwork, does the intention of the artwork really matter? The artist intention could be just one interpretation of the artwork. A definition that does not considering the artist intention is called “intention Fallacy”. The two authors Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley discuss this in an essay. It describes “the problem inherent in trying to judge a work of art by assuming the intent or purpose of the artist who created it.” (Intentional fallacy | literary criticism, 2016). Wimsatt and Monroe write about how “A poem can be only through its meaning” (Intentional fallacy | literary criticism, 2016). It talks about how the meaning is in the poem itself not the artist intention.

When looking at a piece of work, what gives you the knowledge to judge the artwork and become an ideal critic. David Hume (1747) discusses how “men of taste” would reach an agreement on what good art is, despite individuals have unique views on the art. Hume talks about a “standard of taste” (1757), and how there are a set of things that an ideal critic must have. The taste would allow the critic to become objective about the art, so we can decide whether it is good art. Hume sets out a set of things to do to become an ideal judge of artwork. He says that you need to have a delicacy of taste, to compare artworks, no prejudice toward the work and a good sense, meaning that you are able to understand your like and dislike of artworks.

We have discussed what can be used to define a piece of art. But not if there are different types of art and how the art can affect us in different ways. A philosophy called R.G. Collingwood argues that we should have two types of art, amusement art and magic art. Amusement art is when art is used as a type of escapism for people and give the audience a good feeling that fades. Magic art is when the piece causes a specific emotion in the audience and has a long-lasting effect. (Collingwood, 1938)

This is interesting because he says there is different types of art and that would mean that the definitions would change. The magic art is the best kind of art but other pieces like someone’s scribbles while they are bored is amusement art. There is the question of who decides the difference and that people get different things from the art.
(Collingwood, 1938)

Artists and Artworks



The first piece I chose for the exhibit is a selfie of a monkey. The pictures are widely disputed of who owns the right to the pictures. That is not the only thing that is interesting about the pictures, the macaques took the camera and took the camera so is he the original artist. Did he have an intention when creating the pictures? This goes against the Tolstoy if it is considered artwork. Or is the artist David Slater because he set up the situation.

The piece was created in 2008 in Indonesia by David Slater.

Piss Jesus



(Serrano, 2020)

The second pieces are called Piss Jesus and was made by Andres Serrano. The artwork is shown as a five-foot picture that shows Jesus in a jar of urine. It will be displayed in the exhibition to make the audience think about emotions around the art piece because it is a controversial piece. Starting a discussion about whether the artist intention is relevant and other people's opinion on it, whether it is religiously based or aesthetically based. Also links to David Hume's standard of taste because he says we should have no prejudice when looking at a piece of artwork. An interesting thought is about the artist just showed a picture and not the real thing, so it the picture just a copy of the original.

The piece was created by Andres Serrano and created in 1987.

Four identical paintings



(Hansford, 2019)

This is a thought experiment that involves four identical red painting with each having a meaning behind them. All of them where hang up in a gallery. One of the painting however was hang up by mistake as it was not intended to be a finished piece of work and was just painted red as a primer for the real art piece. People viewing the art did not know this and judged the artwork on the appearance and the meaning behind it.

The thought experiment will be used to make people think about the meaning behind the art and whether we can judge the work using it. It also makes us thing about the things about art that we cannot see.

(Hansford, 2019)

Helena



The fourth piece is called Helena, the piece was displayed in the Trapholt art museum. The artwork was created by Marco Evaristti and shows 10 blenders that are plugin with goldfish inside. The artist invites people to come and push the button if they desired. This artwork was created to separate people into different groups to see how they would react to the artwork; this was the artists intention with the piece. There was a big outburst because of the piece and people saying the artwork was cruel. The exhibition will use the piece to challenge people's views and see if the ethics of the piece affect the view of if the work can be considered art. (Evaristti, 2000)

The Chained cat

The final piece that will be another thought experiment created by Arthur Danto. It describes a bronze cat which is chained to a railing to prevent student from stealing it. The artists intention for the cat did not want a chain on the cat. After years the student became to now the piece by the chained cat. This raises questions about if you can add to artwork and where the piece ends. Does the gallery or frame effect the artwork? (Magnus, 2017)

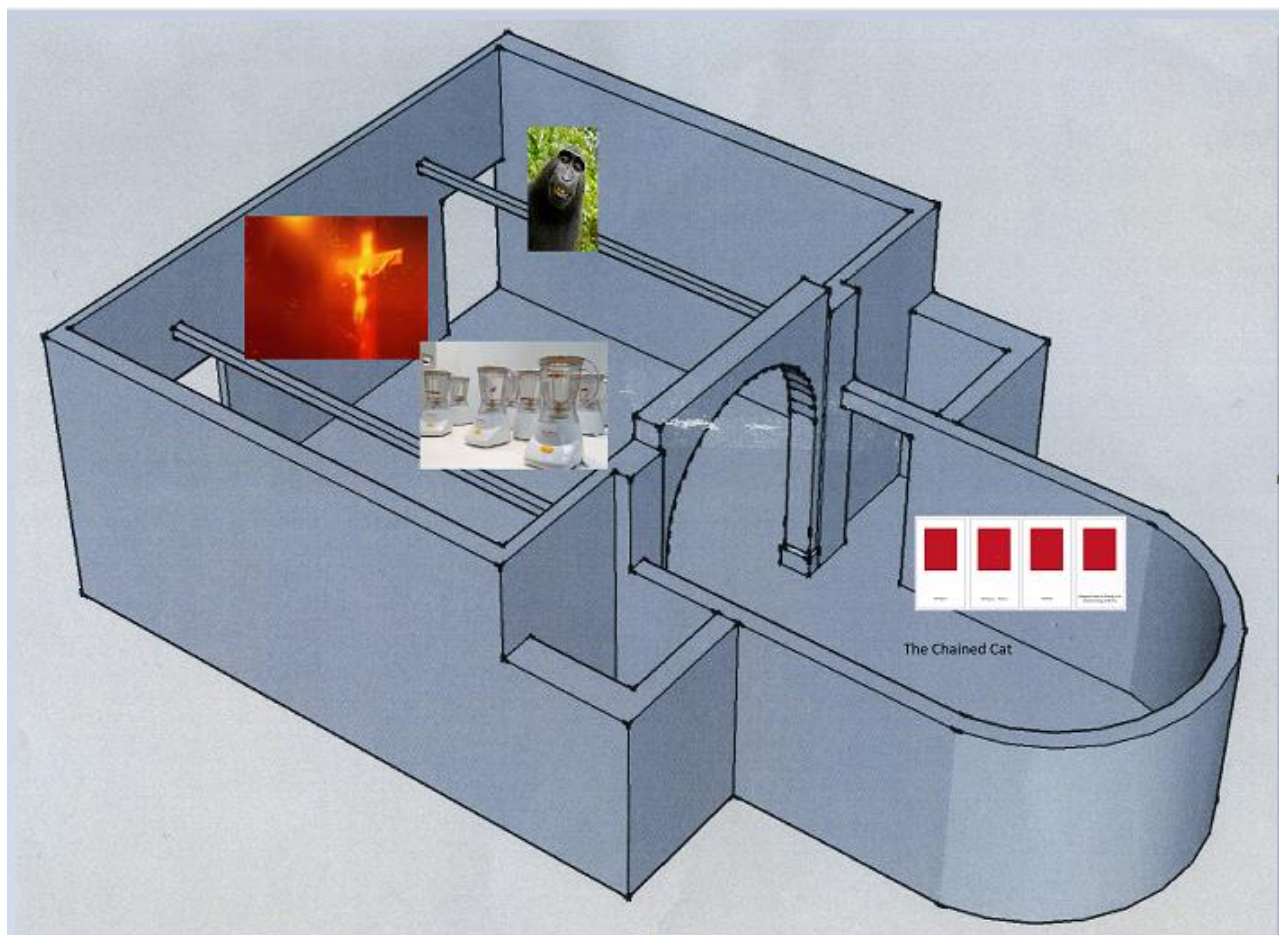
Conclusion

There is a lot of definitions of what art could be and how to judge it. I believe that people should always try to change their ideals of what they think art is because it allows them to open their mind to different things. Hume guidelines of how to judge art is especially useful as it can show you how to look at art. Like he says to practice the art and look at different pieces to train your taste of art.

Tolstoy definition is good but the audience's interpretation raises a lot of questions as a part of art is the different ways people see your art.

You should create a set of rules that you can use to define what art is and use that to learn about pieces of work and yourself. Artwork is immensely powerful and done right it could teach you lessons on life and yourself. It is not just escapism for people.

Exhibition: What is art?



References

- Angelfire.com. 2016. *Tolstoy's What Is Art?*. [online] Available at: <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/tolstoy.html> [Accessed 7 March 2020].
- Book Club Forum. 2016. *Amusement Art Vs Magic Art*. [online] Available at: <http://www.bookclubforum.co.uk/community/index.php?/topic/14394-amusement-art-vs-magic-art/> [Accessed 7 May 2020].
- Collingwood, R., 1938. *The Principles Of Art*. [online] Libarch.nmu.org.ua. Available at: <http://libarch.nmu.org.ua/bitstream/handle/GenofondUA/17701/a54ea63e643cdb3e96d9371a08c31cad.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [Accessed 9 April 2020].
- En.wikipedia.org. n.d. *Monkey Selfie Copyright Dispute*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monkey_selfie_copyright_dispute [Accessed 12 May 2020].
- Encyclopedia Britannica. 2016. *Intentional Fallacy | Literary Criticism*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/intentional-fallacy> [Accessed 1 May 2020].
- Evaristti, M., 2000. *Goldfish In A Blender*. [image] Available at: <https://medium.com/amandapc/ethics-in-art-analyzing-helena-by-marco-evaristti-7e51564d880c> [Accessed 8 March 2020].
- Hagberg, G., 2007. *Wittgenstein's Aesthetics (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy)*. [online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein-aesthetics/> [Accessed 8 May 2020].
- Hansford, A., 2019. *A Piece Of Free And Exploratory Writing!*. [online] Arron Hansford. Available at: <https://arronhansford.wordpress.com/2019/11/11/a-piece-of-free-and-exploratory-writing/> [Accessed 1 May 2020].
- Hume, D., 1757. *Of The Standard Of Taste*.
- Magnus, P., 2017. *The Puzzle Of Virtual Art*. [online] News For Wombats. Available at: <https://www.fecundity.com/nfw/2017/06/12/the-puzzle-of-virtual-art/> [Accessed 12 May 2020].
- Public.wsu.edu. n.d. *Good Art: Taste Or Instinct?*. [online] Available at: <https://public.wsu.edu/~kimander/goodart.htm> [Accessed 12 March 2020].

Serrano, A., 2020. *Piss Christ*. [image] Available at:

<<https://blog.artsper.com/en/a-closer-look/3-religious-artworks-caused-scandal/>> [Accessed 10 March 2020].

Wimsatt, W. and Beardsley, M., 1946. *The Intentional Fallacy*. [ebook] The Johns Hopkins University Press. Available at:

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27537676>> [Accessed 10 May 2020].