

The Power of Context Manifesto

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All artworks are made within the context of each artist's contemporary life. Each piece is in response to the artistic styles around them and has meaning in one way or another. Because of this, any piece of art cannot be universally good or bad because it is a reflection of the artist's perspective and of the time they are living in. Especially with categorizing art as bad, we are simply lacking understanding between us and their time/perspective, and our view of their art is only our personal opinion. With works we don't understand, context can sometimes make a difference. We still may not agree with it but we can still try to see it through their eyes.

Context of the artist's works and knowledge of art history in general is not always necessary, but before we judge a piece, it can help us have a better understanding. For example, I personally do not connect so much with abstract work. This is because I tend to gravitate more towards representational pieces in my personal style. Though once I am able to read about the intended meaning of an abstract piece, it helps me to better appreciate and comprehend it. I am also able to better appreciate it because my mind doesn't function in that way, and that in itself makes it unique because it is exhibiting a skill that not everyone can fully accomplish.

Looking at the history of abstract art, the first fully objective piece was the *Black Square* by Kazimir Malevich. This piece was created because Malevich disagreed with the artists around him that art had to represent something. In response to this, he created an image of a black square framed in white-- a piece depicting art in its purest form. For me, this illustrates that even though something may look like someone slapped some shapes on a blank canvas, there is almost always a greater meaning behind each and every piece that can bring us a new perspective.

Art is almost always in response to the past and present artistic styles around the artist. Another example of many is from the 16th century, a piece called the *Deposition from the Cross* that was created by Pontormo in reaction to the works of the High Renaissance. Pontormo and others felt that perfection had already been achieved by those of the renaissance, so why bother. Pontormo's piece is busy, lacks a focal point, has exaggerated body proportions, and an

array of pastel colors. To me, it sort of lacks contrast and is a bit too busy, but at the same time, it was groundbreaking because it showed people that it was okay to not have an ideally perfect image. Another example of looking at art within its context is with the artist Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp took mass produced items such as bicycle wheels, urinals, and other things and isolated them to create a new perspective. Looking at his piece *Fountain* without any knowledge of where it came from, it doesn't look like anything special-- just a urinal laying flat on the table. But within the Dada time period, it was all about challenging the norm. Duchamp's pieces challenged art especially because it pushed at the seams of art's true definition. Because Duchamp did not personally make the pieces himself, it brings up the question of whether art needs to be created by the artist or if art can just be a concept. Without knowing all of this, we lack an art piece's original intent from the artist themselves and the environment around them.

Looking at my first piece, I tried to incorporate different interpretations of a still life: including some abstract images and older realistic ones to show the different styles based on different time periods. For the second one, I am showing the *Creation of Adam* and its different interpretations. On the bottom portion, I include images of where it came from in its time period, representing its context. Though with the top part, I am trying to represent how there are newer interpretations of it, adding an abstracted spin to it. Also, before I knew the history of the *Creation of Adam*, I just saw it as two hands, so within the upper section I tried to make it all revolve around that instead of its context. With the last one, I took an abstract work from Mondrian and tried to portray its intended meaning to show that there is more to abstract work if we look. Mondrian's work revolves around opposites, primary colors, and nature to represent the world around him so that's what I tried to incorporate.

Overall, art means something different to each person, and while some artists love work that is fully representational, others see art as a way to express themselves through objectivity. Just because I am more into representational work, doesn't mean that I can say that it is of more meaning, better quality, or superior in any way. Art is a way for each individual to express their interpretation of the current art trends around them, making it impossible for there to be a formal decision on whether a piece is universally good or bad. Though in informing our

personal opinions through context, it can make a world of difference through understanding and acknowledgement of the past and present.