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Margaret Lazzari  
Dona Schlesier

# Exploring Art

A GLOBAL, THEMATIC APPROACH

# EXPLORING ART



# EXPLORING ART

A Global, Thematic Approach

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FIFTH EDITION

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*To Michael and Julia Rose, with heartfelt thanks  
for all the love, fun, and creativity in our lives.*

MARGARET LAZZARI

*For Douglas, Kimberly, Robert, Jackson Calder (Jake),  
and Luca Peter Douglas, with gratitude and love  
for the ongoing joy you give me.*

DONA SCHLESIER

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# PREFACE

From the very beginning when we began writing *Exploring Art*, we envisioned a book that would take a revolutionary approach to teaching art appreciation. All other existing art appreciation texts were devoted almost exclusively to Western art—and covered it in chronological order. We decided instead to examine art in relation to ideas by looking at examples from around the world. We believed our approach would be more meaningful to our readers, who for the most part had not studied art before taking an art appreciation course. Our overall intent for this book is to have the reader become more curious about the art produced by fellow human beings around the world and develop the desire to see and learn more about it. The success of *Exploring Art* proves this.

Today a global approach to art seems as important as a worldview on communication, politics, economics, religion, or trade. It is essential to becoming a responsible world citizen.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

The book's four introductory chapters provide a foundation for understanding and appreciating world art. These chapters (1) define art and discuss artists, (2) present the basic elements of art and architecture, (3) examine the full range of art materials and media, and (4) lay out the fundamental concepts in art criticism.

They are followed by ten thematic chapters, which are world tours featuring art that embodies human dreams, visions, desires, fears, and speculations. Students are enriched and challenged when studying art in the context of themes and ideas that appear in every culture, across the ages. The global approach allows students to see the similarities that connect cultures as well as their differences. The themes (*Survival and Beyond*, *Religion*, *The State*, and *Self and Society*) show art to be a meaningful endeavor that deals with basic human concerns. Rather than dry chronologies, our chapters present topics of deep interest, such as human survival, places of worship, memorial practices, politics, social protest, family structure, sexuality, self-identity, technology, nature, and entertainment.

We are especially pleased to present the new Chapter 15. This last chapter in the book is devoted to helping students integrate art into the very environment in which they live and make it an important part of their life experience. The value of what is learned in the classroom is truly tested when these ideas are actually lived out in the world. Chapter 15 shows students why the study of art appreciation is important to living enriched and informed lives.

## SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE BOOK

In addition to solid explanations of art works and their context, *Exploring Art* has some special features.

*Art Experiences* are a new special feature for the fifth edition. We believe that everyone can understand art on a deeper level when they make it rather than simply reading about it, so we have structured several *Art Experiences* per chapter that link the chapter's theme and students' lives and experiences. Students are then prompted to make art based on those linkages, using accessible materials and processes like found objects, collaged imagery, diagrams, videos, or digital photos. The *Art Experiences* encourage students to share artworks and engage in discussion.

All chapters open with a brief introduction and "Preview," and new to this edition are the *Chapter Opening Videos*, which are available online. These features present overviews and key ideas for each chapter and, in the case of the videos, also answer this question: "Why do these ideas and artworks matter in everyday life?"

The thematic chapters (5–14) have a unique set of features. Each of these chapters opens with a cluster of features that improve students' historical and geographic understanding of the art in this book. The "History Focus" briefly covers world history within a designated time period, and artwork from the chapter is tied to the events discussed there. Each thematic chapter has both a two-page "World Art Map," which geographically locates the works in that chapter, and a more specific detail map. The final component of these historical and geographic features is a two-page "Timeline," so students can chronologically place the chapter's artwork in relation to major world events and cultural achievements. These features make students aware of the larger social, political, and cultural context that serves as a background to the art they are studying.

In addition, most sections of the thematic chapters present a focus figure, which is often a Western example, and use the compare-and-contrast method in relation to the other works in that section. This is helpful for instructors whose art history training was Western based and also encourages class discussion.

## NEW TO THIS EDITION

Here are the key changes in the fifth edition of our book.

- *New Chapter Opening Videos*

Each chapter has an online *Chapter Opening Video* that takes a closer look at a key idea in that chapter. It also asks questions that encourage students to connect the chapter topics to their everyday lives.

- *New Art Experiences*

Each chapter has three boxed *Art Experiences* assignments. These give students an opportunity to make their own art and share it with their classmates, while making the art explored in the chapter relevant in students' lives.

- Redesigned "Timelines"

The layout of the "Timelines" at the beginning of each thematic chapter is now horizontal so that the chronology can be seen more clearly. More images have been added to help students draw chronological connections.

- Enhanced “World Art Maps”

The “World Art Maps” at the beginning of each thematic chapter have more geographically placed images than in previous editions.

- Revised Chapters 1 and 15

Chapter 1, “Art and Art Making,” thoroughly explores definitions of art, how it is described and classified, and how it fits into our overall culture. It also looks at artists. Chapter 15, “Art in Your Life,” is an exciting addition to the book. It illustrates how students can put into action all that they have learned from their text and art appreciation course.

- New and Updated Images

We have added several exciting images from contemporary non-Western artists. We have also updated many of the existing images throughout the text.

- An Emphasis on Art Outside the Traditional Museum

We explore different kinds of museums and how they are evolving. We look at works that are beyond the walls of an art museum. They include street art, political graffiti, public art, temporary public installations, and design.

Following is a chapter-by-chapter summary of changes in the fifth edition:

*Chapter 1:* This chapter has been heavily rewritten and compressed from what was presented in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 in the fourth edition. Figure 1.7 is a new diagram with side-by-side comparisons of art styles. The evolution of art museums is tracked across several new images (Figures 1.12, 1.13, and 1.15), and art seen outside of conventional museums is represented by new Figures 1.14 and 1.17.

*Chapter 2:* Five new images, including works by Paul Klee, Dan Flavin, Giorgio de Chirico, and Marcel Duchamp, update the discussion of elements and principles.

*Chapter 3:* Five new images give increased breadth to the discussion of media and materials, including a silverpoint drawing by Hans Holbein, an etching by James McNeill Whistler, an example of street art from the Arab Spring (in particular, Egypt in 2011), a new Alexander Calder mobile, and a surrealist exquisite corpse collage/drawing with Jean Arp and others. The *Art Experiences* encourage experimentation with media and grounds.

*Chapter 4:* The *Art Experiences* shift the focus of this chapter. The “Critique Guide” at the end of the chapter asks students to go beyond repeating what they have learned about art and, instead, use their own analytical skills to evaluate it. Also, the discussion of symbols in this chapter is extended beyond art into contemporary information design and includes a new image of directional airport signage. Other images new to this chapter include *Black Iris* by Georgia O’Keeffe and *Tomorrow Is Never* by Kay Sage.

*Chapter 5:* This chapter discusses the theme of food and shelter. It includes a new and very contemporary example of architecture by Zaha Hadid to further the discussion of late-twentieth-century public architecture. The new *Art Experiences* tie students’ art making to their perceptions of food and shelter.

*Chapter 8:* The chapter’s theme is mortality and immortality. The topic of memorials has been updated with a new image of the World Trade Center. The idea of memorials and divinity becomes personal through art making in the *Art Experiences*.

*Chapter 10:* Two new works, one by Tomatsu Shomei and the other by Doris Salcedo, lend further force to the chapter’s theme of social protest and

affirmation. The *Art Experiences* pick up on these hot topics, which are very meaningful to students.

*Chapter 13:* This revised chapter contains exciting new images from both the distant past and very contemporary times. New works by Julie Mehretu, Ai Weiwei, George Rickey, Claude Monet, and Qian Xuan illustrate artistic responses to the chapter's theme—nature, knowledge, and technology—and students are invited to do the same in *Art Experiences*.

*Chapter 15:* More than half of this chapter is new material, including thirteen new images. Also new is the focus of the chapter: specifically, getting art into students' lives and having them apply their new analytical and aesthetic skills to the study of everyday images and design objects. In addition to art in museums, students are encouraged to find public art and street art and to understand the role of temporary installations versus permanent work. Contemporary artworks by Anish Kapoor, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Do Ho Suh, Banksy, and Korczak Ziolkowski appear for the first time in this edition. As with other chapters, three new *Art Experiences* are included.

*Chapters 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 14:* These chapters have all been edited for easier reading and better flow of ideas, with new *Art Experiences* features that connect student art making to chapter concepts. New figures in these chapters include a photo of the Great Stupa in Sanchi, India, in Chapter 7; a film still of Cindy Sherman, a work by Manuel Álvarez Bravo, and a photo of a 2010 performance art piece by Marina Abramovic in Chapter 11; a new image of Bisj poles in Chapter 12; and, in Chapter 14, both an image of an Iatmul drum and images of children interacting with contemporary technology and handheld devices.

## CONTEMPORARY FOCUS

We are proud of the large number of contemporary artworks in the fifth edition of *Exploring Art* as well as the balance between Western and non-Western works and in the representation of gender, as can be seen in this impressive list of contemporary artists:

Marian Abramovic	Jenny Holzer	Tony Oursler
El Anatsui	Arata Isozaki	Gerhard Richter
Kutlug Ataman	Anish Kapoor	George Rickey
Judith Baca	William Kentridge	Faith Ringgold
Banksy	Barbara Kruger	Pipilotti Rist
Joseph Beuys	Maya Lin	Kay Sage
Manuel Álvarez Bravo	Rafael Lozano-Hemmer	Doris Salcedo
Dale Chihuly	Roberto Matta-Echaurren	Richard Serra
Christo and Jeanne- Claude	Julie Mehretu	Cindy Sherman
Olafur Eliasson	Mariko Mori	Yinka Shonibare
Lucien Freud	Takashi Murakami	Jaune Quick-to-See Smith
Frank Gehry	Wangechi Mutu	Kiki Smith
Robert Gober	Yoshitomo Nara	Frank Stella
Andy Goldsworthy	Bruce Nauman	Do Ho Suh
Leon Golub	Shirin Neshat	Rirkrit Tiravanija
Zaha Hadid	Louise Nevelson	Bill Viola
Tim Hawkinson	Chris Ofili	Kara Walker
Damien Hirst	Juan O'Gorman	Andy Warhol
David Hockney	Claes Oldenburg	Ai Weiwei
	Catherine Opie	Korczak Ziolkowski



## TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES THAT ACCOMPANY THE TEXT

### **MindTap for *Exploring Art: A Global, Thematic Approach*, Fifth Edition**

This textbook is now available on Cengage Learning's MindTap platform. MindTap is an interactive, adaptable, and personalized online learning experience. More than just an eBook and different from a learning management system, the MindTap for *Exploring Art* presents a customizable learning path, combining readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments to engage students and take their learning further, faster.

With MindTap for *Exploring Art*, instructors can:

- Customize the course by adding their own images, videos, links, articles, projects, quizzes, and more and embedding them within the learning path;
- Integrate MindTap into their institution's LMS;
- Track time-on-task and monitor student progress;
- Set assignment due-dates; and
- Determine which tasks are assigned for practice and which are graded.

With MindTap for *Exploring Art*, students can:

- Access additional course materials all in one convenient location;
- Interact with the eBook by highlighting, taking notes, finding definitions right from the page, and viewing embedded media;
- Test comprehension by viewing image and glossary term flash cards, taking chapter quizzes, and answering critical thinking questions;
- Increase knowledge of various media by watching videos of studio art demonstrations in ceramics, painting, sculpture, encaustic, and more;
- Examine themes chronologically through interactive timelines;
- Expand their understanding of the most essential visual elements and of principles of design, style, form, and content through interactive foundations modules;
- Listen to podcasts to learn about various art movements and styles; and
- Find resources for research, including food-for-thought questions and links to reputable sites and journals.

The *Exploring Art* MindTap can be purchased as a stand-alone learning solution or in a bundle along with the print text. Purchase options can be found at [www.cengagebrain.com](http://www.cengagebrain.com).

### **Resources for Teaching Art Globally and Thematically**

The Instructor Companion Website houses multiple resources to help you successfully teach your course. The Integrated Transition Guide and Instructor's Manual provides suggestions for teaching each chapter's content thematically and globally, supplying sample lecture organization methods along with numerous topics for discussion, food-for-thought questions, activities, and internet and video resources. Also located on the Instructor Companion Website are the Test Bank with multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay questions in Cognero® format; critical thinking question sets; and a Microsoft PowerPoint® deck for each chapter that provides talking points for chapter artworks.

## Digital Image Library Flashdrive

This presentation tool makes it easy to assemble, edit, and present customized lectures for your course using Microsoft PowerPoint®. The flashdrive image library provides high-resolution images (maps, diagrams, and the fine art images from the text) for lecture presentations, either in an easy-to-use PowerPoint® presentation format or in individual file formats compatible with other image-viewing software. The zoom feature allows you to magnify selected portions of an image for more detailed display in class. Further customize your classroom presentation by adding your own images to those from the text.

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May there be peace and tolerance in our world.

May the appreciation of world art help to get us there.

*Margaret Lazzari*

*Dona Schlesier*



# I

## INTRODUCTION TO ART

Art enriches our lives. The more we know about art, the more our existence is enhanced by it. The chapters in Part I lay a foundation for both understanding and enjoying art.



### **CHAPTER 1** ART AND ART MAKING

*The definition of art, the ways we describe and categorize it, and the artists making it*

### **CHAPTER 2** THE LANGUAGE OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

*Art's formal elements and the principles for organizing them*

### **CHAPTER 3** MEDIA

*A survey of art media and how they are used*

### **CHAPTER 4** DERIVING MEANING

*The ways that we come to understand meaning in art and architecture*

Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.

—*Edgar Degas*

I never paint dreams or nightmares. I paint my own reality.

—*Frida Kahlo*

Art is the Queen of all sciences communicating knowledge to all the generations of the world.

—*Leonardo da Vinci*

I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—things I had no words for.

—*Georgia O'Keeffe*

I am for an art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.

—*Claes Oldenburg*

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.

—*Pablo Picasso*

From around the age of six, I had the habit of sketching from life. I became an artist, and from fifty on began producing works that won some reputation, but nothing I did before the age of seventy was worthy of attention.

—*Katsushika Hokusai*

A work of art reflects its origins but at the same time it should be able to reach out to people.

—*El Anatsui*

When the subject is strong, simplicity is the only way to treat it.

—*Jacob Lawrence*

Art should reveal the unknown, to those who lack the experience of seeing it.

—*Jaune Quick-to-See Smith*

. . . it's easy for us to depict things of this physical world, of the way we live now, but it's very difficult to depict things that are not seen but have a profound effect on us.

—*Cao Guo Qiang*

Art is everywhere, except it has to pass through a creative mind.

—*Louise Nevelson*

For me nature is not landscape, but the dynamism of visual forces. . . . These forces can only be tackled by treating color and form as ultimate identities, freeing them from all descriptive or functional roles.

—*Bridget Riley*

Whether I'm painting or not, I have this overweening interest in humanity. Even if I'm not working, I'm still analyzing people.

—*Alice Neel*



**1.1** *Porch of the Caryatids, Erechtheum, Acropolis, Athens, c. 421–405 BCE.*

# 1

## ART AND ART MAKING

Humans make art to understand life, to communicate emotions and ideas to others, or to simply create something beautiful. Here are ways to understand and appreciate art.

### PREVIEW

*What is art? No single definition holds for all times and places, but this chapter gives a few working definitions. It also covers the ways that we describe, classify, and study art and the way that art fits into our overall visual culture. At the end, we look at artists, creativity, and the making of art.*

*Look also for Art Experience boxes, which encourage you to photograph art, make art, or analyze images or objects around you.*

## TOWARD A DEFINITION OF ART

To answer the question “What is art?” we need to know *for whom* and *when*. For example, the ancient Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE believed that art should both glorify man and express intelligence, clearness, balance, and harmony, as exemplified by the *Porch of the Caryatids* (Fig. 1.1). If we look at ancient Chinese culture, we find sculpture and porcelain works that express the power of the emperor. For the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we define art like this: *Art is a primarily visual medium that is used to express ideas about our human experience and the world around us.*


Basically, the definition of art is not universal and fixed. It fluctuates and changes because cultures are alive and changing, and we will see more examples of this in the middle of this chapter. However, for now, you can begin to analyze and understand art from any time and place by focusing on four major areas: **function**, **visual form**, **content**, and **aesthetics**. We will discuss them one by one, but in fact they are all interrelated.

### Function

When you look at any work of art, one first question is “For what purpose was this originally made?” At the time it is created, a work of art is intended to do a job within a culture. Here are some of its many functions:

- Art reflects customs and concerns related to food, shelter, and human reproduction (Chapters 5 and 6).
- Art gives us pictures of deities or helps us conceive of what divinity might be. It is also used to create a place of worship (Chapter 7).
- Art serves and/or commemorates the dead (Chapter 8).
- Art glorifies the power of the state and its rulers. It celebrates war and conquest—and sometimes peace (Chapter 9).
- Art reveals political and social justice and injustices (Chapter 10).
- Art records the likenesses of individuals and aids us in understanding ourselves, our bodies, and our minds, thoughts, and emotions (Chapter 11).
- Art promotes cohesion within a social group and helps to define classes and clans (Chapter 12).
- Art educates us about who we are within the world around us (Chapter 13).
- Art entertains us (Chapter 14).

Finally, the art of the past serves to educate us about earlier cultures, while contemporary art is a mirror held up to show us our current condition.

 **ART EXPERIENCE** Be an art photographer. Use your camera or phone to photograph five or more objects you think function as art, and explain why you chose them. Choose objects that are familiar to you in your daily routine.

### Visual Form

Another primary question to ask about a work of art is “What elements compose it, and how are they arranged?” Almost all artwork has physical attributes, so it can be seen or touched and so ideas can be communicated. For any work of art, its materials have been carefully selected and organized, as have its line, shape, color, texture, volume, and so on. Chapters 2 and 3 are all about visual form, but we will compare two artworks here to introduce the basic ideas.

Figure 1.2 is the *Veranda Post: Female Caryatid and Equestrian Figure*, carved before 1938 by Olowe of Ise in Nigeria. Its function was to symbolize and strengthen the power of a Yoruban ruler. Compare it to Figure 1.3, another sculpture intended to assert the authority of a ruler, the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius*, from the Roman Empire around 175 CE. In two very different cultures, a ruler on horseback functions as an image of power.

But the visual form of each is different—and in ways that are meaningful to each culture. In the wooden *Veranda Post*, horizontal elements are minimized, while verticality emphasizes the authority of the king on top. For the Yoruban culture, inventive forms and rich details were important, so we see a pistol, spear, dramatic headdress, textures, small female figures (caryatids), and so on. The visual form of this sculpture is suitable for a Yoruban king.

In contrast, the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius* has a roundness and a volume that are different from the visual form of the *Veranda Post*. Extraneous items and details, including armor, are stripped away, referring to the fact that Marcus Aurelius was a philosopher as well as an emperor. Also significant is the material, hollow-cast bronze, which is durable, expensive, and difficult to work. Bronze distinguishes this piece as a costly and important royal Roman portrait.

Scholars, art historians, and museum curators study art from the past, like these two sculptures, and educate us about the ways in which visual form and function are intertwined in works of art. By studying art, they (and we) glean considerable information about the historical moments from which they come. These scholars also study content, which we will see next.





**1.2** OLOWE OF ISE. *Veranda Post: Female Caryatid and Equestrian Figure*, Yoruba, before 1938. Wood, pigment, 71" high. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In Nigeria, this sculpture was meant to reinforce the power of the local king.



**1.3** *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius*, Rome, c. 175 CE. Bronze, approx. 11' 6" high. Musei Capitolini, Rome.

This sculpture was also meant to reinforce the ruler's power but in this case in ancient Rome.

**ART EXPERIENCE** Be your own artist. Choose one of the many functions of art described in this chapter, and create an artwork that serves this purpose. What decisions did you make about visual form?

## Content

Art has content, which is the mass of ideas associated with each artwork. Asking about content is critical to understanding any artwork. If you consider the entirety of art production, you will see that it reflects humans' perceptions of and responses to all aspects of spiritual life and earthly life, from birth to death and the hereafter, and of everything in between. It brings everything from the mundane to the cosmic into sharp, concentrated focus.

Content is communicated through the following:

- The art's imagery
- Its symbolic meaning



**1.4 SANDRO BOTTICELLI.** *The Birth of Venus*, Italy, c. 1482. Tempera on canvas, approx. 5' 8" × 9' 1". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

The content of a work of art includes its imagery and its cultural references. Some content is obvious, but other content is hidden.

- Its surroundings where it is used or displayed
- The customs, beliefs, and values of the culture that uses it
- Writings that help explain the work

Content can both be immediately apparent and require considerable study. For an example, just by looking at Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (Fig. 1.4), from 1482, and Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Fig. 1.5), from 1907, you immediately see the imagery. Both are paintings with multiple figures in the composition, and female nudity is at least part of the subject matter. *Venus* is painted in a more realistic, traditional style. The blocky, simplified *Demoiselles* appears to be more modern and less interested in popular ideas of beauty. In visual form, both paintings seem balanced side to side, with a figure in the middle.

However, much of the content is not readily apparent and requires deeper study. *The Birth of Venus* celebrates an ancient Greek myth and glorifies the beauty of the female body. When it was painted in 1482, it reflected the ideals of the early Italian **Renaissance**, which elevated the importance of man, emphasized learning, and held the

ancient Greeks and Romans in high esteem. But the period was marked by conflicting currents because the Catholic Church was a major force at that time and it disapproved of the depiction of pagan deities.

Likewise, the content of *Les Femmes d'Alger* is revealed only upon study. Originally, Picasso intended to paint a brothel scene of prostitutes with their male customers. But he made radical changes as the work progressed, ending with an image of intertwined figures and space that began an art movement known as **Cubism**. He was influenced by African masks, like the *Ceremonial Mask Known as a Mboom or Bwoom*, from the Kuba or Bushongo culture of Central Africa, circa nineteenth–twentieth centuries (Fig. 1.6). At that time, African artworks like the *Mask* were being brought to Europe through colonial trade, and they dramatically influenced Western art. Also, Picasso's blending of figure and space echoed the theories of scientists like Albert Einstein on the mutability of matter, energy, and space. Clearly, the content contains complex ideas related to European ideas of sexuality, to colonialism, and to modern scientific theory, all of which may require study to learn and understand.



**1.5** PABLO PICASSO. *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*, Spain/France, 1907. Oil on canvas, 8' × 7' 8". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Artwork reflects the cultural moment when it was made—in this case, the modern era at the beginning of the twentieth century.

**1.6, right** *Ceremonial Mask Known as a Mboom or Bboom*, Kuba, Central Africa, c. nineteenth–twentieth centuries. Wood, beads, shells, and cloth, head-sized. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium.

Influences can cross cultures. The works of modern artists such as Pablo Picasso were influenced by African masks.

In the same way, the *Ceremonial Mask Known as a Mboom or Bboom* has its own obvious and hidden content. Visibly, it is a decorated helmet mask, made of wood, beads, shells, and pieces of cloth. Less apparent is the fact that it was originally used in African **masquerades**, which are traditional celebrations that blend dance, art, song, and ritual. Many African peoples stage masquerades to reenact important creation events, spirit works, and ancestor stories. This mask represented the people over whom a king asserted his authority.

Thus, all three works (Figs. 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6) have a mass of meaning, or content, explained by scholarly research and critical writings. We will delve more deeply into how meaning is embodied in art in Chapter 4, *Deriving Meaning*.



## Aesthetics

The last basic question regarding any artwork is “What are its aesthetic qualities?” Aesthetics involve the look and feel of an artwork and the attributes that elevate it above other objects. These change from age to age and from place to place. While some cultures may value the look and feel of a well-executed oil painting, others may value the intricacy and pattern of finely woven natural materials.

Aesthetics is also a body of written texts that deal with art, taste, and culture or that examine the definition and appreciation of art. Ancient Greeks wrote about aesthetics as they understood it. Thinkers from India, Japan, and China wrote about their cultures’ aesthetic systems. In several African, Oceanic, and Native American cultures, the practice of art demonstrated a clear aesthetic long before there was written material about it. You are thinking aesthetically when you reflect critically while reading a book like this one. Aesthetics as a body of knowledge goes beyond individual tastes, since it reflects the preferences of a large segment of the culture’s population.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the West, aesthetics focused on the idea of beauty, and the standard for beauty was ancient Greek sculpture, such as the *Porch of the Caryatids* on the Erechtheum (Fig. 1.1). This approach led to the notion that aesthetics was essentially

about beauty and that beauty could be universally defined for all times and places. That universalist position is discredited now because there is no worldwide agreement about what constitutes beauty and because philosophers today consider many qualities other than beauty as significant attributes of art. What do you think is the role of beauty in relation to art today?

**ART EXPERIENCE** Talk about art. Choose two cultures outside of your own, and select one artwork from each of them. Compare and contrast the artworks and discuss them with fellow students.

## Art and Style Vocabulary

We pause for a moment in our discussion to learn some basic terms to describe art and art styles. These will be helpful for the rest of this chapter and throughout the book.

Art is **representational** when it contains entities from the world in recognizable form. Another related term is **naturalistic**, which is recognizable imagery that is depicted very much as seen in nature (Fig. 1.7).

In **idealized** art, natural imagery is modified in a way that strives for perfection within the bounds of the values



**1.7** An illustration of, from left to right by row, naturalistic, idealized, expressive, surreal, abstract, and nonobjective drawings.

and aesthetics of a particular culture. The *Veranda Post* (Fig. 1.2) and the *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius* (Fig. 1.3) are both rendered in idealized styles, yet they are quite different because each culture had its own definition of what is ideal. Idealized art is often orderly and balanced vertically and horizontally.

In addition to naturalistic or idealized, representational art can be expressive or surreal. **Expressionism** or **expressionist** art communicates heightened emotions and often a sense of urgency or spontaneity. Expressive styles frequently appear bold and immediate rather than carefully considered or refined. They often feature distorted imagery and may appear asymmetrical or off balance. **Surrealism** or **surreal** refers to art with a bizarre or fantastic arrangement of images or materials, as if tapping into the workings of the unconscious mind (Fig. 1.7).

In contrast to representational art is **nonobjective** (nonrepresentational) art, which contains forms that are completely generated by the artist. Another term, *abstract art*, is often used to mean the same thing as nonobjective, but there is an important distinction. **Abstracted** imagery has been derived from reality by distorting, enlarging, and/or dissecting objects or figures from nature (Fig. 1.7). Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (Fig. 1.5) is abstract, but the manipulated imagery is still recognizable. Therefore, Picasso's work cannot be called nonobjective.

All of these terms can be used to describe **style**, either of the art output of a whole culture or of that of an

individual artist. A **cultural style** consists of recurring and distinctive features that we see in many works of art emanating from a particular place and era. For example, the cultural style of ancient Egyptian art (with strong outlines and flattened figures in flattened space) helps us to group its paintings across hundreds of years. Stylistic differences make the art of ancient Egypt readily distinguishable from other cultural styles. (To further define, **culture** is the totality of ideas, customs, skills, and arts that belong to a group of people. In contrast, a **civilization** is a highly structured society, with a written language or a very developed system of communication, organized government, and advances in the arts and sciences.)

Cultural styles are recognizable across a broad spectrum of art objects created by a people. For example, during the seventeenth-century reign of King Louis XIV of France, the court style, which was ornate and lavish, could be seen in everything from architecture to painting, furniture design, and clothing (see the background in Fig. 1.17). Even hairstyles were affected, with big elaborate wigs. What qualities do you see shared by contemporary art, popular music, and the latest ads for clothing?

Differences in cultural styles become apparent when studying a particular art form that appears across the globe. For example, Islamic mosques are built around the world to provide a place for Muslims to congregate and pray together. But local styles differ from each other, as we can see with the *Grand Mosque* in Djenne, Mali (Fig. 1.8),



**1.8** *Grand Mosque, Djenne, Mali, 1906–1907.*

All mosques have certain necessary features, but here they are translated into architectural styles that are favored by North Africans and that use readily available materials.