

A.R.T., An Acronym for Itself

By
Robert E. Bear

The word art elicits an enigma, a transient expression of an ethereal ethos. It means diverse things to various people. Perhaps the world would benefit from a non-discursive definition of art.

Since the age of twelve I wanted to be an artist. Over the years I had become involved with numerous artistic endeavors: drawing, sculpturing, painting in various media, architectural design, photography, writing, and ceramics. I've even been fortunate to have art jobs: art and photography teacher, freelance artist, supervisor of a graphic art department, museum exhibits designer and builder, and art director. In all those experiences, and even through educational training beyond the master's degree, I could not find a comprehensive definition of...art. After all, I was an artist; but, how could I make claim to this curious congregation without confidently discerning and articulating its meaning?

In the early 1990's, I participated in the Improving Visual Art Education Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, which was sponsored by the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Getty Center for the Arts. The conference basically centered on the concept of "Discipline Based Art Education". In this realm arts education is believed to have four basic tenants that should be covered in pedagogy and help give credence to spending constrained budgets on arts programs in the public school curricula. These four areas are: history, theory/criticism, aesthetics, and production. It was from this conference that I came up with the design for the MIA PATCH Lesson Plan for the Arts, since there was no lesson plan format I could locate that appropriately fit the arena of arts education. One of the speakers at the conference, Marcia Eaton, an aesthetics professor from the University of Minnesota, came the closest to a definition of art that I could agree with; except, for her, art had to have a concrete artifact, an art object, something tangible to be reviewed through time. But, as many artists know, sometimes an artistic creation is designed to be fugitive, non-tangible through time, it must disappear to fulfill its aesthetic intent.

While out jogging one afternoon at the week's symposium it came to me, an epiphany; "There is a simple, succinct, definition of art, it's an acronym for itself".

The Aesthetic Rendering of Thought.

In order for Art to exist, the following three (3) criteria must be met. First of all, there must be some sensory manifestation (Rendering), fugitive or permanent, that is based upon a creative, intellectual process (Thought) with the intention of a beautiful or pleasurable (Aesthetic or Anti-aesthetic) action, or reaction, in one or more of the senses and/or psyche.

Encapsulated within this definition are more than the traditional concepts of art: painting, sculpture, ceramics, writing, architecture, drama, music, dance, and photography. It's now easier to understand how other endeavors, such as cooking, can be included as an art and more than just a craft. Please do not confuse craft with art. Art objects are original creations, one of a kind. Craft, on the other hand, is the fastidious copying or reproduction of an art object.

About the Author:

Robert E. Bear has been a professional educator for over thirty years. He is a Viet Nam Era Veteran, honor graduate of two military training programs, and has published several internet articles, as well as won national awards as a wildlife artist. Mr. Bear created the Star Poster Program, Star's Art Intervention Lessons and the international team sport of Bearball®. As a professional educator, he has been recognized in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in American Education, and National Honor Society Outstanding American Teacher's.