

# THE ART OF SEEING

FOURTH EDITION



PAUL ZELANSKI • MARY PAT FISHER



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# CONTENTS

Preface 9

## PART I LEARNING TO SEE 11

### 1 UNDERSTANDING ART 12

THE CREATIVE IMPULSE 12

CONTENT 14

Political Content 15

Power and Propaganda 18

Narrative 21

Inner Experiences 23

Intellectual Concepts 27

*Vincent van Gogh on Emotion and Intellect* 28

Ideals of Beauty 30

FORMS OF ART 30

Two- and Three-Dimensional Art 30

Degrees of Realism 32

*Georgia O'Keeffe on "Saying What I Want To"* 38

Fine and Applied Arts 40

Public and Private Art 42

ART ISSUES: Censorship 46

CRITICAL OPINION 48

ART ISSUES: Race and Gender Criticism 50

Greatness in Art 51

### 2 VISUAL ELEMENTS 55

LINE 55

Seeing Lines 55

Implied Line 59

Descriptive Line 61

Expressive Qualities of Line 63

Directional Line 65

SHAPE AND FORM 65

Degrees of Three-Dimensionality 67

Characteristics of Three-Dimensional Form 71

*Henry Moore on Form and Space* 74

Two-Dimensional Illusion of Form 77

Shapes 80

*Arshile Gorky on The Intensity of Art* 82

SPACE 88

Three-Dimensional Art in Space 88

Two-Dimensional Space 92

Scale 101

Spatial Illusion 105

TEXTURE 108

Actual Texture 110

Simulated Texture 111

Texture-Like Effects 114

VALUE AND LIGHT 114

Local and Interpretive Values 116

Lighting 118

Reflections 123

Light as a Medium 124

COLOR 127

A Vocabulary of Color 127

Natural and Applied Color 131

Local, Impressionistic, and Interpretive  
Color 134

Emotional Effects of Color 135

Warm and Cool Colors 138

Advancing and Receding Colors 142

Color Combinations 143

Interaction of Color 146

*Josef Albers on The Complexity of Color* 150

Limited and Open Palette 152

TIME 155

Viewing Time 155

*Auguste Rodin on The Illusion of Movement* 157

Actual Movement 158



Illusion of Movement	159
The Captured Moment	163
Time as the Subject	164
Ephemeral Time	168
Change Through Time	169

### 3 ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN 170

REPETITION	171
VARIETY	175
RHYTHM	180
BALANCE	182
COMPOSITIONAL UNITY	187
EMPHASIS	190
ECONOMY	192
PROPORTION	193
<i>Wassily Kandinsky on Underlying Harmony</i>	196
RELATIONSHIP TO THE ENVIRONMENT	198

## PART 2 TWO-DIMENSIONAL MEDIA AND METHODS 201

### 4 DRAWING 202

APPROACHES TO DRAWING	202
DRY MEDIA	205
Graphite Pencil	205
Silverpoint	206
Charcoal	206
Chalk	209
Pastel	211
Crayon	212
LIQUID MEDIA	213
Pen and Ink	213
Brush and Ink	215

### 5 PAINTING 216

APPROACHES TO PAINTING	216
<i>Leonardo da Vinci on Chiaroscuro</i>	220
PAINT MEDIA	222
Encaustic	222
Fresco	224
Tempera	226
Oil	228
ART ISSUES: Cleaning and Restoring	
Paintings	232
Watercolor	234
Gouache	237
Synthetics	238
Collage	240
Mosaic	242
MIXED MEDIA	244

### 6 PRINTMAKING 245

PRINTMAKING PROCESSES	247
Relief	247
<i>Stephen Alcorn on The Challenge of Linocuts</i>	251
Intaglio	253
Planographic	259
Stencil	262
MIXED MEDIA	264

### 7 GRAPHIC DESIGN 267

THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND VISUAL IDEAS	267
<i>Peter Good on The Art of Graphic Design</i>	268
TYPOGRAPHY	270
ILLUSTRATION	272

### 8 PHOTOGRAPHY, PHOTOCOPY, AND FILMMAKING 276

PHOTOGRAPHY	276
<i>Edward Weston on Photography as a Way of</i>	
<i>Seeing</i>	286
PHOTOCOPY AND FAX ART	291
FILM	293
TELEVISION AND VIDEO	298

## 9 COMPUTER GRAPHICS 301

THE COMPUTER AS A DRAWING MEDIUM 301

THE COMPUTER AS A PAINTING MEDIUM 303

VIDEO GRAPHICS 305

VIRTUAL REALITY 306

THE COMPUTER AS A UNIQUE ART MEDIUM 307

ART IN CYBERSPACE 309

### PART 3

## THREE-DIMENSIONAL MEDIA AND METHODS 311

## 10 SCULPTURE 312

CARVING 312

*Michelangelo Buonarroti on Marble-Quarrying* 313

*Linda Howard on Computer-Aided Sculpture Design* 316

MODELING 320

CASTING 323

*Benvenuto Cellini on A Near-Disastrous Casting* 326

ASSEMBLING 328

EARTHWORKS 331

## 11 CRAFTS 333

CLAY 333

*Paula Winokur on Working in Clay* 336

METAL 338

WOOD 340

*George Nakashima on A Feeling for Wood* 342

GLASS 344

FIBERS 347

*Norma Minkowitz on The Interface Between Art and Craft* 350

## 12 PRODUCT AND CLOTHING DESIGN 354

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN 354

CLOTHING DESIGN 356

## 13 ARCHITECTURE 364

FUNCTION 367

STRUCTURE 374

*Hassan Fathy on Indigenous Architectural*

*Ingenuity* 380

*Alvar Aalto on Humanizing Architecture* 392

## 14 DESIGNED SETTINGS 395

INTERIOR DESIGN 395

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN 401

*John Lyle on Sustainable Environmental Design* 406

VISUAL ASPECTS OF THE PERFORMING ARTS 408

### PART 4

## ART IN TIME 413

## 15 HISTORICAL STYLES IN WESTERN ART 414

THE BEGINNINGS OF WESTERN ART 418

Prehistoric 418

Aegean 419

Near Eastern 420

Egyptian 420

ART OF ANCIENT CULTURES 422

Greek 422

Roman 425

Early Christian and Byzantine 425

MEDIEVAL ART 429

Early Medieval 429

Romanesque 429

Gothic 429

Late Gothic 431

RENAISSANCE ART 433

Early Renaissance in Italy 433

High Renaissance in Italy 436

ART ISSUES: Protecting Famous Artworks 438

Mannerism 442

Northern Renaissance 442

BAROQUE ART 444

Southern Baroque 444

Northern Baroque 448

Rococo 448



EIGHTEENTH- AND EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART	450
Neoclassicism	450
Romanticism	451
LATER NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART	453
Realism	453
Impressionism	453
Post-Impressionism	455
Paul Gauguin on Cross-Cultural Borrowings	456
Expressionism	458
TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART	458
Fauvism	460
Cubism	461
Futurism	463
Abstract and Nonobjective Art	464
Dada	465
Surrealism	466
Traditional Realism	467
Abstract Expressionism	467
Post-Painterly Abstraction	468
Pop Art	470
New Realism	471
Technological Art	472
Installations, Performance Art, Earthworks, and Conceptual Art	475
Neoexpressionism	475
The Craft Object	477
Recognition of Women's Art	479
Recognition of Multi-Cultural Art	480
Deborah Muirhead on Art as Ancestral Exploration	482
Recognition of Outsider Art	484
Jon Serl Inside an Outsider's Mind	485
ART ISSUES: Art as Investment	486

# 16 UNDERSTANDING ART ON ALL LEVELS 488

PICASSO'S GUERNICA	489
RODIN'S GATES OF HELL	495
MICHELANGELO'S SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING	500
MOSHE SAFDIE'S VANCOUVER LIBRARY SQUARE	507

NOTES	512
GLOSSARY/ PRONUNCIATION GUIDE	516
ARTISTS' PRONUNCIATION GUIDE	528
CREDITS	530
INDEX	532

## TIMELINE

30,000 BC–2000 AD	416-17
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## TABLES

30,000 BC–500 AD Prehistoric to Roman	415
500–1500 AD Early Christian to Gothic	427
1425–1640 Early Renaissance to Southern Baroque	440
1500–1800 Northern Renaissance to Rococo	446
1750–1950 Neoclassicism to Surrealism	452
1945–2000 At the Turn of the Twenty-First Century	473

## MAPS

The Prehistoric and Ancient World	415
Europe in the Early Twelfth Century	427
Renaissance Italy	440
Northern Europe in the mid-Seventeenth Century	446
Europe in the mid-Nineteenth Century	452
The World in the Late Twentieth Century	473



# PREFACE

For this fourth edition of *The Art of Seeing*, we have strengthened those features that have already made the book very popular and incorporated new ways of bringing the reader closer to an informed understanding of the art, and related media, of all cultures.

In keeping with today's interests, a major new theme in this edition is the controversial aspects of arts. At relevant points in the text, we have created new art issues boxes: censorship, race and gender criticism, cleaning and restoration of paintings, protection of famous artworks, and art as investment. They are discussed not only as sources of contemporary controversy but also as problematic issues in the past. Issues such as the changing opinions of art critics, public reaction to public art, and the dubious nature of art attributions also appear throughout the text.

The final chapter of the book examines four major works of art in depth. We have enlivened and updated this chapter by adding a controversial new piece of public architecture: Moshie Safdie's Vancouver Library Square. To integrate and set the stage for that final chapter, we have now introduced four masterworks—Vancouver Library Square, Picasso's *Guernica*, Rodin's *Gates of Hell*, and Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling—in the first chapter. These threads are picked up again as the book proceeds, weaving them into discussions of particular aspects of art.

Chapter 1 has been thoroughly reworked to provide a clear and provocative introduction to the understanding of art. We have also given computer graphics a chapter of its own. It covers the historical development of the medium and current computer graphics applications, including virtual reality and art in cyberspace.

As before, we try to give insights into art from the artist's point of view. Artists' own words about their work are a treasure trove for the student of art appreciation. We have therefore added more such statements by artists. In addition, we have created twenty-three feature boxes in which artists speak at length about some facet of their work that is related to

the subject under discussion. Some of these are developed from our personal interviews with these artists, some from historical documents. New artists' boxes for this edition include Stephen Alcorn speaking about printmaking and John Lyle discussing ecologically oriented landscape design. To further enhance understanding of why artists have worked as they have, we have increased discussion of the relationship between the formal means artists use and the content they wish to convey.

## THE NATURE OF THIS BOOK

As before, we have taken considerable effort in *The Art of Seeing* to make art come to life. The language we use is vigorous and down-to-earth, with numerous quotations from the artists themselves to help explain, in their own words, what they were trying to do. Unfamiliar words are carefully defined when they are first used and also in an extensive illustrated glossary at the end of the book. In this edition, pronunciation aids have been added to words in the glossary which may be unfamiliar to students. There is also a new guide in the back of the book to artists' names that are difficult to pronounce.

Perhaps even more important than the writing in *The Art of Seeing* is the art. The illustrations for each concept are clearly related to the text and carefully described. There are some 607 illustrations, 275 of them in color, and many of these are reproduced at full-page size. They are taken from all the visual arts, from painting and sculpture to clothing and industrial design. Many cultures are represented, as is the work of many women artists, for their "discovery" has been a belated new area of excitement in the art world. A sampling of the new artworks introduced in this edition indicates the variety in the illustration program, which has been hailed as one of the great strengths of this book. New works include: Czech postage stamps;



a Japanese doll; Damien Hirst's animal parts in formaldehyde; stone inlay work in the Taj Mahal; a virtual reality journey; a delicate painting by Agnes Martin; Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* with and without loin-cloths and drapes that were added because of sixteenth-century censorship; special computer effects from the movie *Independence Day*; a contemporary kimono master at work; and Maria Martínez pinching a pot with her gnarled and ancient hands. Use of such a global variety of illustrations from both fine and applied arts, old and new, allows us to broaden tastes in art and to demonstrate the underlying principles, elements, and issues in art, no matter what form it takes. As well as being good references for the explanations in the text, the large illustrations provide a stimulating, exciting visual gallery.

In Chapter 15, which traces the development of Western art, the discussion is enhanced by maps and timelines. The six maps show the regions where major trends in Western art developed and indicate key artistic centers, with insets of important buildings and monuments. Each map is accompanied by a timeline giving a global historical context to the evolution of Western art, up to the turn of the twenty-first century.

## ITS ORGANIZATION

Part 1 of *The Art of Seeing* lays the foundation for understanding the aesthetic aspects of a work of art. In Chapter 1, we develop an initial vocabulary and an intellectual framework for considering artworks: the creative impulse, the varying forms and content of its manifestation, critical opinion of the results, and, with time, recognition of the greatness of some works. Chapter 2 is devoted to extensive analysis of the visual elements with which the artist works: line, shapes, form, space, texture, light, color, and time. Chapter 3 covers the subtle organizing principles by which these elements are used in a work of art.

The next two parts of the book approach art through the materials and techniques used by the artists. By revealing the difficulties of each method, we hope to enhance appreciation of the artists' accomplishments in the face of the intractabilities of their media. Part 2 covers two-dimensional techniques and media: drawing, painting, printmaking, graphic design, photography, photocopy, fax, film, television, video, and computer graphics. Part 3 covers three-

dimensional media: sculpture, crafts, industrial design, clothing design, architecture, interior design, environmental design, and the performing arts.

Part 4 approaches art as it exists in time. We first offer a concise approach to historical styles in Western art. Some forty-five major movements, from prehistoric to contemporary, are covered, with an illustrated timeline on pages 416 and 417 as an aid to understanding how the distinctly different aesthetic movements are related in time. In addition, six maps show close-ups of particular periods so that one can see where the major artists of the time were working, in the context of major world events of the time.

The final chapter is a unique, in-depth examination of specific works of art, including their evolution in time. It approximates the actual experience of encountering a work of art, drawing on all levels of appreciation developed in the book, in order to analyze and respond to four masterworks.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have helped us to revise and update *The Art of Seeing*, especially Heidi N. Abbey, Heather Gross, Thomas Jacoby, and Erin Valentino. Each edition has been extensively reviewed, but our reviewers for this fourth edition have been particularly helpful with specific and general comments which guided our revisions. We would like to express our special gratitude to Eugene Hood, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; Dr. Susan Benforado Bakewell, Kennesaw State College; Pamela Awana Lee, Washington State University; Larry Griffin, Miami-Dade Community College, Kendall Campus; and Lily Mazurek. As always, Bud Therien of Prentice Hall has been enthusiastic and supportive, and the dedicated people at Calmann and King—Melanie White, Richard Mason, Callie Kendall, and Karen Osborne—have handled the myriad editorial and production details with intelligence and sensitivity. Annette Zelanski has again been generous with her help and her loving support.

We feel that these improvements will be very helpful to all those who seek an educated, sharpened sense of art appreciation. Our own appreciation grows each time we approach this book.

Paul Zelanski  
Mary Pat Fisher



# PART 1

## LEARNING TO SEE



An encounter with a work of art can be deeply satisfying, provocative, or disturbing. With training, we can begin to recognize the ideas, feelings, and historical context of works of art, and the elements and principles of design that are the artist's aesthetic tools.

Vincent van Gogh,  
*The Starry Night*  
(detail of fig. 1.21)



# 1 UNDERSTANDING ART

In one of the world's most famous images, a grand old man on a cloud surrounded by angels reaches from heaven to earth and imparts life into the first human. The excitement of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (1.1) is centered on the moment when God's finger sends the spark of life into previously inert matter. Similarly, artists of all times and places have set their hands to the raw material of the planet and produced from it new and dynamic works of art.

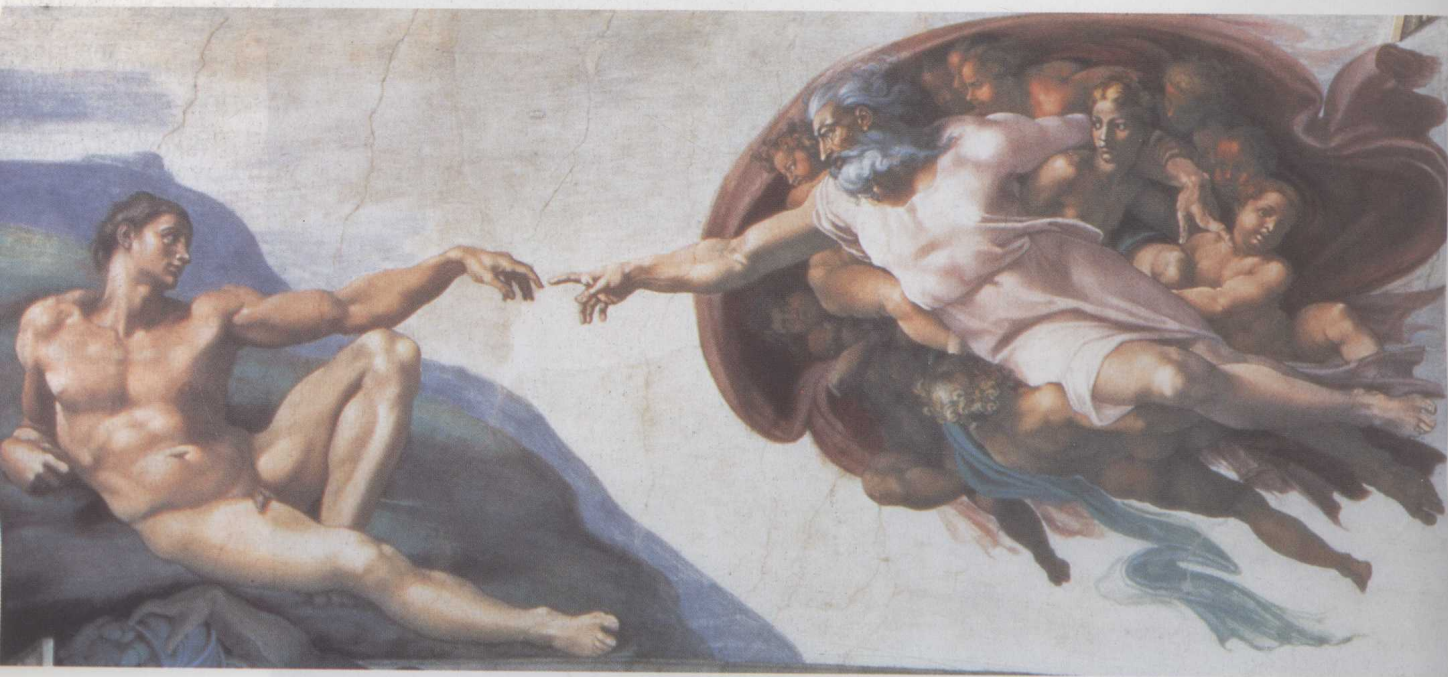
This chapter takes an overview of artistic creation. First we will explore the impulses and intentions from which art arises. Then we will survey the general forms of art and at the end of the chapter we will consider how the artist's creations are received by others. These topics provide an initial framework for understanding art.

1.1 Michelangelo Buonarroti, Sistine Chapel ceiling (detail, post-restoration), *Creation of Adam*, 1510. Fresco. Vatican Museums and Galleries, Rome.

## THE CREATIVE IMPULSE

The impulse to create art is so strong that artworks have appeared in all cultures, from the earliest days of our species. Perhaps as early as 70,000 years ago, our Paleolithic ancestors were apparently painting with red ocher, shaping ritual objects, and fashioning simple necklaces out of animal bones and teeth. Even weapons and sewing needles had decorations scratched onto them.

A tiny bust of a woman (1.2) carved perhaps 24,000 years ago illustrates the care with which artists have worked throughout history. This piece is only 1¼ inches (3 cm) high, and yet the ivory has been carefully sculpted into a woman's likeness, including details of her hairstyle. Why did someone lavish such attention on a very small piece of bone? It was sculpted long before recorded history, so we can only speculate.







1.2 Woman from Brassempouy, Grotte du Pape, Brassempouy, Landes, France, c. 22,000 bc. Ivory, height 1¼ ins (3 cm). Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St. Germain-en-Laye, France.

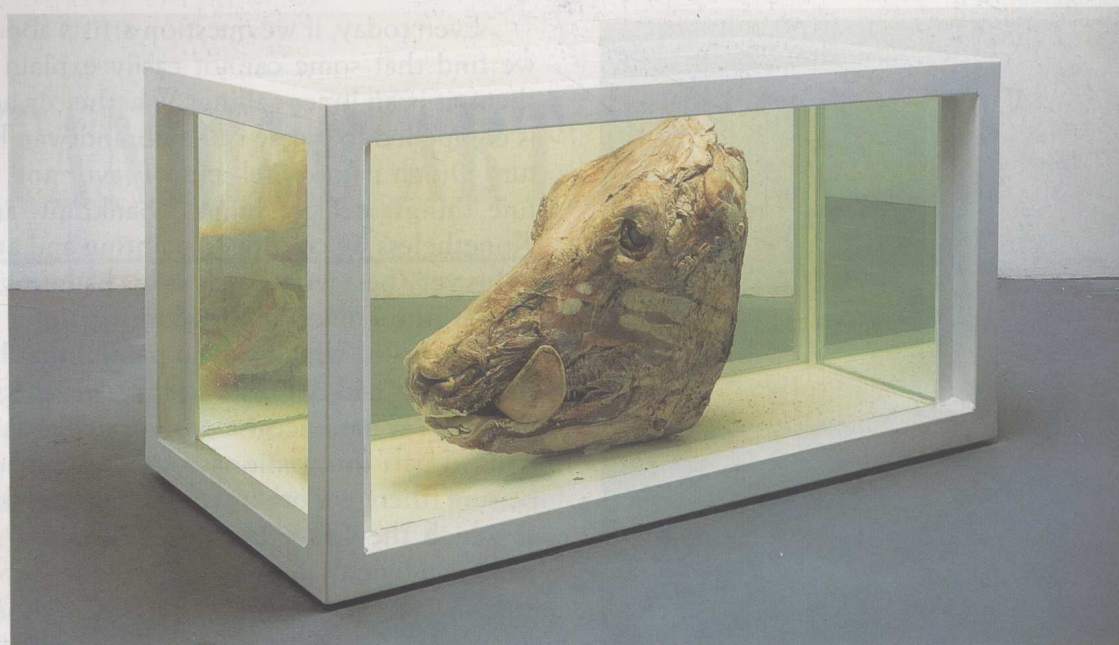
Even today, if we question artists about their feelings and ideas, we find that some cannot easily explain why they create art. For them, it is an inner calling. Whether or not the work sells, an artist is compelled to create it. Rembrandt van Rijn, the seventeenth-century Dutch painter, fell out of favor and was forced to give up his fine things, declare himself bankrupt, and live a life of poverty. Nonetheless he continued painting and at that time produced some of his very best work, such as his haunting *Self-Portrait* (1.3). Auguste Renoir, the French Impressionist painter (see pages 188-9), developed arthritis, which was so painful that he could not hold a brush. Instead he had a brush strapped to his hand, and he continued painting. What unconsciously touches us in the artist's work is perhaps in part the passionate commitment from which it is born. To be sure, there are others for whom artmaking is a profession, a craft at which they have become skillful and which provides a way of making a living.



1.3 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1660. Oil on canvas, 33 × 26 ins (84 × 66 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Andrew W. Mellon Collection.



1.4 Damien Hirst, *James* (*The Twelve Disciples*), 1994. Steel, glass, and bull's head in formaldehyde solution, 18 × 36 × 18 ins (45.7 × 91.4 × 45.7 cm). Courtesy Jay Jopling.



The question is not so much why people make art but why some people don't. From a very early age, we begin trying to shape materials in our environment into artistic creations. This effort usually continues unless it is stifled by those who try to teach us the "right" way to make art or those who insist that we color within the lines of somebody else's drawing. We may compare our creations unfavorably with more skillful works and give up our attempts at making art.

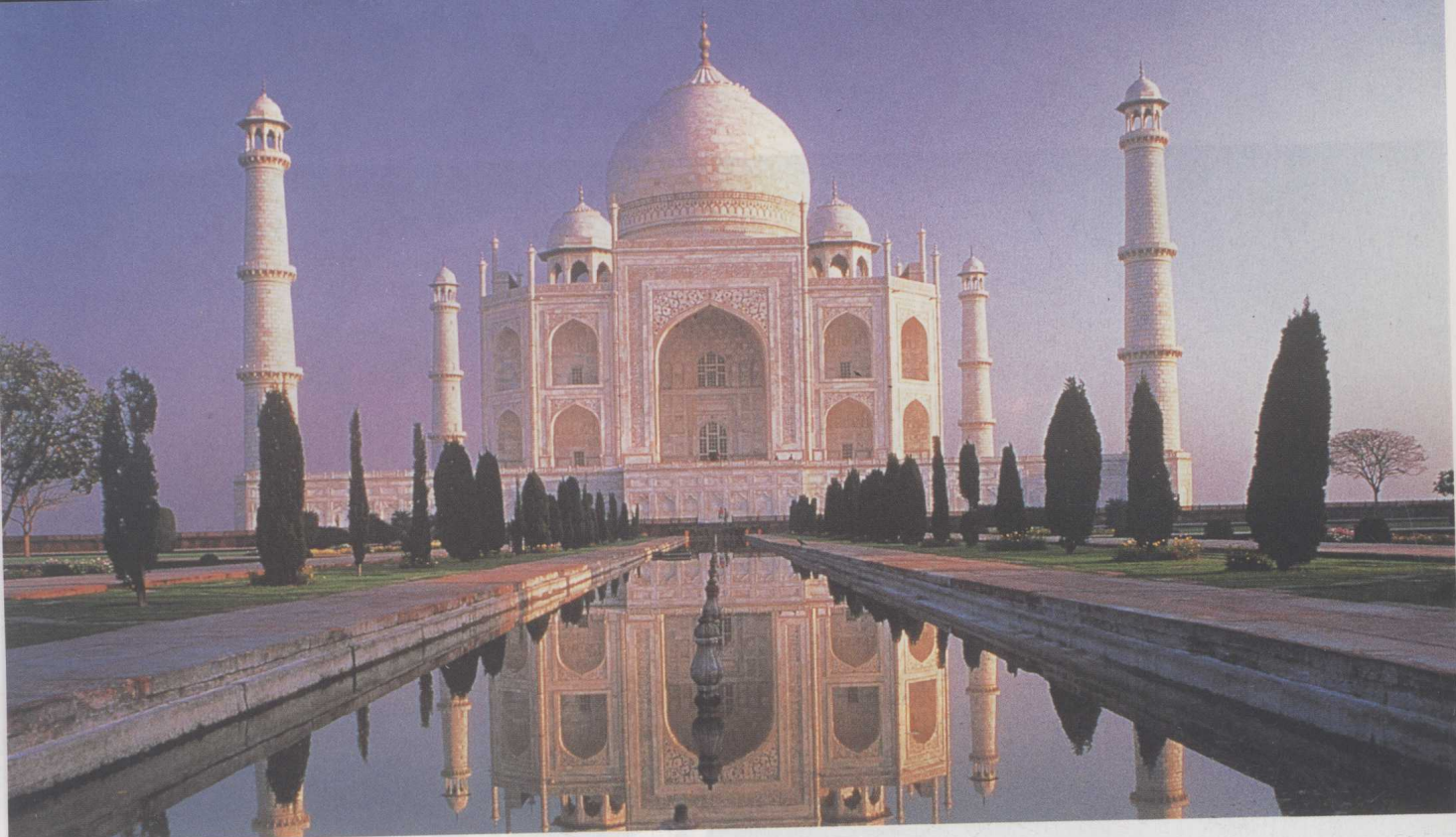
Training and practice are usually necessary to make the hands create what the mind can imagine. In many cases, the creation of a work of art is meticulously planned and executed. But there may also be an element of spontaneity and serendipity in some kinds of artistic expression. Creating something new requires a certain originality of thought. To create is to develop something from one's own imagination, bringing something into being which would not evolve in the natural course of things. This imagination has deep wellsprings which may lie beneath conscious thought. When some artists are working they may enter a state of intense concentration in which they may fail to notice the passage of time or the stiffness of their bodies. In this meditation-like altered state of consciousness, visual ideas may evolve without intellectual struggle, once a foundation of skills and design sensitivities has been developed. The chance to experience this direct communion with a deeper level of reality is at least part of the urge to create—and it invites others to share in the experience.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the creative urge persists, sometimes taking unprecedented forms, such as Damien Hirst's animal parts displayed in formaldehyde (1.4). The bull's head shown here is labeled "James." It is part of a series representing the disciples of Jesus, who faced persecution and death because they were attempting to spread their master's mission. Even given this explanation, some people are puzzled and shocked to see the disciples represented by severed bulls' heads. Hirst's use of preserved parts of dead animals as a medium for sculpture is new and unfamiliar, stretching the boundaries of what is considered art. Even Michelangelo's art was controversial in his own time, as we shall see; we are still finding new ways in which to understand it, and even new ways to criticize it.

## CONTENT

One way of beginning to understand what is going on in a work of art is to try to grasp its **content**—its meaning, including the subject-matter (what it is or represents), and the emotions, ideas, symbols, stories, or spiritual connotations it suggests. As analyzed in the sections that follow, the content may be considered in terms of politics, propaganda, narrative, inner experiences, intellectual ideas, or sheer celebration of aesthetic form.





1.5 Taj Mahal, front view with pool in foreground.

The content of a work of art is not a fixed entity captured within a frame. It is shifting, evanescent, personal. It changes depending on who is looking at the artwork, and what emotions and experiences they bring to the act of viewing.

Content is also influenced by the context of the artist's life and historical setting. Visitors to the beautiful Taj Mahal (1.5) find it especially poignant when they learn that it was built by the emperor Shah Jahan to immortalize his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, and that she had been his constant companion, even in battle, until she died while giving birth to their fourteenth child. One's appreciation of the intention behind this lovely monument to his life partner is tragically heightened when one learns that the emperor was later imprisoned by his son and could thereafter see the Taj Mahal only from his prison window, from which he gazed at it for the rest of his life.

Some works are so powerful that we can respond to them directly, without knowing anything of the artist's personal life or of the historical context. We don't think of Rembrandt as a period artist; we know him as one of the greatest artists of all time. Hundreds of years after his self-portrait was painted in 1660 (1.3), that face, executed with such compelling truth, such strength in design, and such technical skill, looks out at us from the darkness with an appeal that is timeless.

## Political Content

One outlet for the creative impulse is the creation of works intended to record something in the political or social rather than the physical environment, to inform the public, or to preserve an event for history. Some art historians look at all art from a sociopolitical point of view. They see it as providing information about the cultural and social background of its time. They also attach importance to the fact that the individual viewer's response to a work of art is culturally influenced.

Some art is created as social criticism. Sometimes the message is blatant, immediately apparent; sometimes it is subtle and complex. W. Eugene Smith's photograph *Tomoko in a Bath* (1.6) is part of a series illustrating industrial pollution in Minamata, Japan. Tomoko is a victim of mercury poisoning; her mother is giving her a bath. The scene—dramatized by composition and lighting—is one of the most powerful photographs ever taken. It may evoke a strange mixture of feelings, from horror at the effects of pollution to compassion for the tenderness with which Tomoko's mother is holding and looking at her. The pose and expression of great love in the midst of tragedy may remind some of Michelangelo's *Pietà* (15.22).

Art may be used intentionally to provoke a reaction to political or cultural situations, not just to





1.6 W. Eugene Smith, *Tomoko in a Bath*, 1972. Photograph. © 1972 Aileen & W. Eugene Smith.

inform the viewer or record events for posterity. One cannot be unaffected by Pat Ward Williams's *Accused/Blowtorch/Padlock* (1.7). Any photograph carries a sense of immediacy and truth. Williams goes beyond that: by taking apart this photograph, presenting it in broken close-ups, she brings us face to face with its horror. She says, "Come in closer; notice this!" Hand-

written text surrounding the construction adds the agony of an observer's voice to engage our emotions more fully. As the handwriting makes us notice, this man seems still to be alive. How could anyone take his picture and not do something to stop his torture? Then, by implication, how can anyone be indifferent to racial violence? Williams comments:

1.7 Pat Ward Williams, *Accused/Blowtorch/Padlock*, 1986. Mixed media and photograph, 5 ft × 8 ft 4 ins (1.52 × 2.54 m). Collection of the artist. Courtesy Williams College Museum of Art.

