



UNDERSTANDING ART

10TH EDITION
LOIS FICHER-RATHUS



UNDERSTANDING ART

10TH EDITION
LOIS FICHNER-RATHUS
THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



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The tenth edition of *Understanding Art* is dedicated to my husband, Spence, and our daughters, Allyn, Jordan, and Taylor.

ABOUT THE COVER

As each edition of your textbook has gotten underway, I've challenged myself to choose a cover image that symbolizes, in a visually compelling way, the concept of *Understanding Art* and the essence of my perspective as an author. Sometimes, the idiom “you can't judge a book by its cover,” just doesn't apply. I believe that the cover of a textbook can communicate a great deal.



ANISH KAPOOR (2009). *Tall Tree and the Eye*. Stainless steel over carbon. Approx. 42'8" x 16'5" x 16'5". Installation view, Royal Academy Courtyard, London, England.

My approach to *Understanding Art* emphasizes equally the visual elements and history of art; it balances the historical and the contemporary; and it represents the diversity of art and culture. The cover of the tenth edition encompasses in a single, dynamic image, all of the things that *Understanding Art* aims to do.

What you see on the cover is a detail of Anish Kapoor's monumental steel sculpture, *Tall Tree and the Eye*, exhibited in the courtyard of the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2009. Seventy-six shiny and seemingly weightless spheres nest and rise to form a tower that reaches more than 40 feet into the air—as tall as the walls of the building that embraces it. Reflected a myriad of times in the highly polished surfaces of this contemporary work—designed by an artist raised in Mumbai and educated in British schools of art and design—is The Royal Academy of Arts, one of the oldest and most venerable art institutions in London. Established by King George III in 1758, it has counted more than a few artists featured in this book among its members: the celebrated eighteenth-century portrait painter Thomas Gainsborough (page 407); the innovative architect Richard Rogers (page 473); David Hockney (page 129), a contemporary English artist whose vast range of mediums include everything from painting to stage design; Tracey Emin (page 545), one of the controversial YBAs (Young British Artists); and Kapoor himself (page 207).

All of its members are practicing artists who, in all of their diversity, have committed to a common goal of the Academy's founders: “to promote the arts of design.”

Regardless of how tenuous the connections may sometimes appear between the art of our times and the art of the past, or the art of one's culture and that of the rest of the world, the frame of art history expands to fit the picture.

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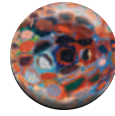
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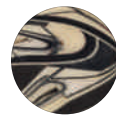
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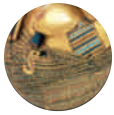
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Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird? Why does one love the night, flowers, everything around one without trying to understand them? But in the case of a painting, people have to understand.

—Pablo Picasso

PREFACE

There is a note of frustration in Picasso's statement, reflecting perhaps the burden of having to explain his paintings to viewers who were trying desperately to understand them. Perhaps he was concerned that some of the "indescribable" in art—that which mesmerizes, enchants, frightens, and delights—would be, quite literally, lost in translation. Maybe he was guarding against affixing meaning to his work that he as the artist never intended. Picasso seems to suggest, in this quote, that mystery enhances experience and that too much knowledge will compromise the authenticity of the relationship between art and the viewer. Do you think Picasso was right?

Here we are, embarking together on the study of art and art history between the covers of a book called *Understanding Art*. Maybe we can declare Picasso's view half right, and it can serve as our cue for how to confront what we are about to see. A textbook on art is not like a textbook in other academic disciplines. Yes, there is a special vocabulary of art. Yes, this vocabulary is woven into a language that, once learned, enables us to better verbalize the visual. But the most important aspect of an art book is its images, because a student's journey toward understanding art ought always to begin with looking.

Think of this art appreciation textbook as your "*i*-book"—it begins with looking at images. Having said that, *learning to look* is equally important for art appreciation, and that's where some other "*i*-words" play an important role: *information*, *insight*, and *interpretation*. We gather information about how a work of art is conceived and constructed using elements, design principles, composition, content, style, and symbolism. We explore the motives of artists and the historical, social, political, and even personal contexts in which a work of art came into existence. These investigations will lend insight into the complex factors contributing to the creation of works of art. And as we gather confidence in our knowledge and

insights, we will turn more comfortably to the dimension of interpretation—your dimension. It is here where the “I” really counts, for we all bring the weight of our own experience to our interpretations, our unique perceptions to our likes or dislikes of a work of art.

Picasso said, in the same interview, “People who try to explain pictures are usually barking up the wrong tree.” The words *explain* and *understand*, though, have very different meanings. One can argue that only artists can *explain* their work, can make intelligible something that is not known or not understood. But *understanding* is defined as full awareness or knowledge that is achieved through an intellectual or emotional process—including the ability to extract meaning or to interpret. The ability to *appreciate*, or to perceive the value or worth of something from a discriminating perspective, then, is the consummate reward of understanding.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION

In the spirit of the conviction that “understanding art ought always to begin with looking,” the tenth edition features more than 100 new works and a new design that has allowed for the enlarging of key works and monuments that comprise the core of the text’s art program. Two examples: half of the works in the chapter on drawing are new; the last chapter—**Art in the Twenty-First Century: A Global Perspective**—reflects the fluid nature of the contemporary art scene with 24 new works. In many instances, superior photographs of key monuments have been acquired and we have been as diligent as possible regarding color accuracy.

In this new edition, Chapter 15, now **The Age of Faith**, has been revised to integrate discussions of the world’s Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Many topics and art historical periods include new sections: Chapter 11, **Architecture**, features a timely discussion of “Green Buildings”; Chapter 13, **Art of the Ancients**, now includes the “Art of Ancient China and India”; Chapter 21, **The Twentieth Century: Post-War to Postmodern**, has a new section on “Conceptual Art.”

We are all aware that slides in the classroom are poor substitutes for real-life encounters with paintings and sculpture, or for the perception of form and space that comes with physically standing in a building. There are new Art Tours on Los Angeles and Chicago, which, along with the text’s already familiar tours, will encourage students to visit cities and their

art collections in the United States and abroad, and to be aware of the ubiquity of art and design in their lives.

THE APPROACH OF UNDERSTANDING ART

The tenth edition of *Understanding Art*, as earlier editions, is intended to work for both students and professors. *Understanding Art* continues to serve as a tool to help organize and enlighten this demanding, often whirlwind-like course. My goal has been to write a book that would do it all: edify and inform students and, at the same time, keep them engaged, animated, and inspired—while at the same time meeting instructors’ desire for comprehensive exposition. All in all, *Understanding Art* contains a fully balanced approach to appreciating art. The understanding and appreciation of art are enhanced by familiarity with three areas of art: the language of art (visual elements, principles of design, and style), the nature of the mediums used in art, and the history of art.

FEATURES

The tenth edition of *Understanding Art* contains unique features that stimulate student interest, emphasize key points in art fundamentals and art history, highlight contemporary events in art, and reflect the ways in which professors teach.

Compare + Contrast These features show two or more works of art side by side and phrase questions that help students focus on stylistic and technical similarities and differences. They parallel the time-honored pedagogical technique of presenting works in class for comparison and contrast. For example, “Compare and Contrast Wood’s *American Gothic* with Rosenthal’s *He Said . . . She Said*” in Chapter 4 shows how artists may use different styles to illustrate themes about similar subjects.

CourseMate includes interactive quizzes directly linked to all the Compare + Contrast features.

A Closer Look These features offer insights into artists’ personalities and delve into various topics in greater depth. In Chapter 5, “Life, Death, and Dwelling in the Deep South” highlights an African American artist’s portrayal of the organic relationship between a woman and her home in South Carolina. Chapter 19’s “Why Did van Gogh Cut Off His Ear?” offers a number of possible explanations, including

psychodynamic hypotheses, for why the Postimpressionist mutilated himself. In Chapter 9, visit the Storm King Art Center, a 500-acre sculpture garden in New York State.

A Closer Look features are expanded upon through the use of related web links on CourseMate.

ArtTour The tenth edition includes ArtTours on the cities of New York, Washington D.C., Jerusalem, Rome, Dallas/Fort Worth, Florence, London, Chicago, Paris, and Los Angeles. Each ArtTour is rich in photographs and works of art. The ArtTours are no mere lists of works and sites and museums in these cities. Instead, the tours literally walk students through the cities, providing them with routes they can take to benefit from the cultural riches that are available. The ArtTours in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, and Los Angeles will help many students appreciate the art and architecture that are situated close to home.

The companion CourseMate expands on the ArtTours with helpful “travel-guide” information, such as additional photos, maps, restaurant guides, and links to useful web pages. The tours are meant to encourage students to travel as well as to guide them once they have reached their destinations.

Quotations Quotations at the top of pages by artists, critics, and others allow students to “get into the minds” of those people closest to the art world. For example, Chapter 22, **Art in the Twenty-First Century**, includes quotations by Damien Hirst, Shelly Silver, Wangechi Mutu, and Kara Walker.

Glossary Key terms are boldfaced in the text and defined in a glossary at the end of the textbook. An “Audio Glossary” also appears in CourseMate.

THE CONTENTS OF THE TENTH EDITION OF UNDERSTANDING ART

The book is organized into the following parts:

I. Introduction The first chapter of the text, **What Is Art?**, helps the student arrive at a definition of art by discussing the things that art does, from enhancing our environment to protesting injustice and raising social consciousness.

II. The Language of Art Chapters 2–4 provide comprehensive discussion of the visual elements of art, principles of design, and style, form, and content. The language of art is then applied throughout the remainder of the text in

discussions of mediums and surveys of art through the ages and throughout the world.

III. Two-Dimensional Mediums Chapters 5–8, on drawing, painting, printmaking, and imaging, explain how artists combine the visual elements of art to create two-dimensional compositions. The mediums discussed are as traditional as drawing a pencil across a sheet of paper and as innovative as spray painting color fields and clicking a mouse to access a menu of electronic techniques and design elements.

IV. Three-Dimensional Mediums Chapters 9–12 discuss the opportunities and issues provided by three-dimensional art forms, including sculpture, site-specific art, architecture, and craft and design.

V. Art through the Ages Chapters 13–18 contain a solid core of art history on the development of art from ancient times to the dawn of the modern era. Chapter 15, **The Age of Faith**, includes new material on Islamic Art. Chapter 18, **Non-Western Perspectives**, introduces students to art forms beyond the Western tradition, including the art of Africa, the South Pacific, and the Americas; the Islamic art of the Near, Middle, and Far East; Indian art; and the art of China and Japan. The chapter offers a broadening experience, as students learn that much of this art cannot be appreciated by means of the same concepts and standards that are applied to Western Art.

VI. Art in Modern and Postmodern Times Chapters 19–21 examine the great changes that have occurred in the world of art since the late eighteenth century. These chapters attempt to answer the question, “Just what is modern about modern art?” Whereas some artists have rejected the flatness of the canvas and moved art into innumerable new directions, others have maintained traditional paths. Controversy and conflict are part of the modern history of art. But movements such as Postmodern art and Deconstructivist architecture also make it possible to speak of the “modern world and beyond.” Although nobody can say exactly where art is going, these chapters discuss the movements and works that appear to be vital at the current moment.

VII. Art in the Twenty-First Century: A Global Perspective Chapter 22 shows how the phenomenon of globalization has created a new art world in which cultures are no longer distant from one another and people and places

are no longer as separate as they once were. As a result, we have trends such as hybridity, appropriation, high art and low culture, and post-colonialism in the arts. We see how these trends are expressed today within—and without—various cultural traditions around the world.

STUDENT RESOURCES

CourseMate with eBook provides an ebook for interactive and portable reading, as well as many study aids to help make studying more efficient. Zoomable image flashcards provide the easiest way to study for exams, and to learn more about each work through links to quizzing, downloadable student guides to studying, related video, audio, websites, interactive tutorials and exercises, and ArtTours. Videos include demonstrations of various studio art techniques, YouTube clips, topical video podcasts, and three-dimensional panoramic views of architecture.

Thinking and Writing about Art *Thinking and Writing about Art*, also written by Lois Fichner-Rathus, enhances students' critical thinking and interpretive skills.

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

PowerLecture with Digital Image Library Bring digital images into the classroom with this class presentation tool that makes it easy to assemble, edit, and present customized lectures for your course using Microsoft® PowerPoint® or your preferred presentation software. Available on a flash drive, PowerLecture with Digital 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. A zoom feature allows you to magnify selected portions of an image for more detailed display in class or you can display images side by side for comparison and contrast. You can easily customize your classroom presentation by adding your own images to those from the text.

The PowerLecture also includes an electronic Instructor's Manual, and a Test Bank with multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay questions in ExamView® computerized format.

WebTutor™ on Blackboard and WebCT With the WebTutor text-specific, preformatted content and total flexibility, you can easily create and manage your own custom course website. Instructors can provide virtual office hours, post syllabi, set up threaded discussions, track student progress with the quizzing material, and much more.

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LOIS FICHER-RATHUS

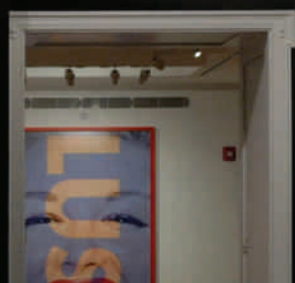


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**YOU WANT IT
YOU NEED IT
YOU BUY IT
YOU FORGET IT**

MAN'S JOKE'S ARE





Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird? Why does one love the night, flowers, everything around one without trying to understand them? But in the case of a painting, people have to understand.

—Pablo Picasso

WHAT IS ART?

1

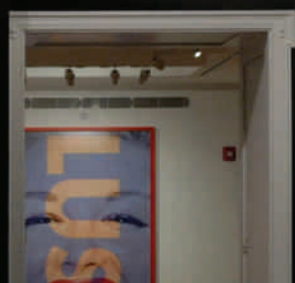
Beauty, truth, immortality, order, harmony—these concepts and ideals have occupied us since the dawn of history. They enrich our lives and encourage us to extend ourselves beyond the limits of flesh and blood. Without them, life would be but a mean struggle for survival, and the value of survival would be unclear.

In the sciences and the arts, we strive to weave our experiences into coherent bodies of knowledge and to communicate them. Many of us are more comfortable with the sciences than with the arts. Science teaches us that the universe is not ruled purely by chance. The sciences provide ways of observing the world and experimenting so that we can learn what forces determine the courses of atoms and galaxies. Even those of us who do not consider ourselves “scientific” recognize that the scientific method permits us to predict and control many important events on a grand scale.

The arts are more elusive to define, more difficult to gather into a conceptual net. We would probably all agree that the arts enhance daily experience; some of us would contend that they are linked to the very quality of life. Art has touched everyone, and art is all around us. Crayon drawings, paper cutouts, and the like are part of the daily lives of our children—an integral function of both magnet and refrigerator door. We all look for art to brighten our dormitory rooms, enhance our interior decor, beautify our cities, and embellish our places of worship. We are certain that we do not want to be without the arts, yet we are hard-pressed to define them and sometimes even to understand them.

**YOU WANT IT
YOU NEED IT
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YOU FORGET IT**

MAN'S JOKES ARE



argument also holds true for the arts; there is more to art history than memorizing dates! Examining a work in its historical, social, and political context will enable you to have a more meaningful dialogue with that work. You will be amazed and entertained by the ways in which the creative process has been intertwined with world events and individual personalities. We shall follow the journey of art, therefore, from the wall paintings of our Stone Age ancestors through the graffiti art of today's subway station. The mediums, the forms, the styles, and the subjects may evolve and change from millennium to millennium, from day to day,

but uniting threads lie in the persistent quest for beauty, or for truth, or for self-expression.

Many philosophers have argued that art serves no function, that it exists for its own sake. Some have asserted that the essence of art transcends the human occupation with usefulness. Others have held that in trying to analyze art too closely, one loses sight of its beauty and wonderment.

These may be valid points of view. Nevertheless, our understanding and appreciation of art often can be enhanced by asking the questions “Why was this created?” and “What is its purpose?” In this section, we shall see that works of art come into existence for a host of reasons that are as varied as the human condition. Perhaps we will not arrive at a single definition of art, but we can come to understand art by considering our relationship to it.



1-2 Kenyan woman, Masai tribe.
Standards for beauty can differ from culture to culture.

ART AND BEAUTY

Art and beauty have been long intertwined. At times, the artist has looked to nature as the standard of beauty and has thus imitated it. At other times, the artist has thought to improve upon nature, developing an alternative standard—an idealized form. Standards of beauty in and of themselves are by no means universal. The Classical Greeks were obsessed with their idea of beauty and fashioned mathematical formulas for rendering the human body in sculpture so that it would achieve a majesty and perfection unknown in nature. The sixteenth-century artist Leonardo da Vinci, in what is perhaps the most famous painting in the history of Western art, enchants generations of viewers with the eternal beauty and mysteriousness of the smiling *Mona Lisa* (Fig. 1-1). But appreciation of the stately repose and refined features of this Italian woman is tied to a Western concept of beauty. Elsewhere in the world, these features may seem alien, unattractive, or undesirable. On the other hand, the standard of beauty in some non-Western societies that hold scarification, body painting, tattooing, and adornment (Fig. 1-2) both beautiful and sacred may seem odd and unattractive to someone from the Western world. One art form need not be seen as intrinsically superior to the other; in these works, quite simply, beauty is in the eye of the society's beholder.

ART AND UGLINESS

The images of the Mona Lisa and the Masai woman challenge our fixed notions of classical beauty, but they nonetheless reflect someone's, some era's, some culture's standard of beauty. But need art be equated with beauty? Since the nineteenth century, grotesque images have been an inextricable part of art. They reflect the dark or comical side of human experience, provide a vehicle for artistic expression that is not limited to replicating visual reality, and challenge preconceived notions and standards of beauty.

Much in the modern era provided impetus for the development of the grotesque in art—world wars with their mass destruction and genocide, theories of human psychology, uses and misuses of technology, the birth of science fiction, and more. Characteristics of the grotesque in art are, like imagination, almost limitless. Grotesque art has in common, however, a deviation from and distortion of what is considered by most to be ideal form. Artists typically combine a variety of components in unpredictable ways to create deformities that signify their individual styles. Their images can be, on balance, humorous, as in *The Apparition* by George Condo (Fig. 1-3), or nightmarish, as in Otto Dix's *The Skat Players* (Fig. 1-4). The result is typically defined as ugly—a subversion of the long-standing association of art with beauty and a challenge to conventional theories of aesthetics.



1-4 OTTO DIX. *The Skat Players* (1920). Oil and collage on canvas. 43 $\frac{5}{16}$ " \times 34 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany.

ART AND TRUTH

What does it mean for art to “speak a truth”? The concept of truth in art is subjective; it can mean many and different things to each viewer. Does it mean true to nature, true to human experience, true to materials? The answer is yes to all of these and more. Art can be used to replicate nature, or reality, in the finest detail. Renaissance painters came up with techniques and devices to create a convincing illusion of three-dimensionality on two-dimensional surfaces. Artists throughout history have used their rendering skills to trick the eye into perceiving truth in imitation. Sometimes the tales of their virtuosic exploits survive the work, as in anecdotes recorded on the subject of the ancient Greek painter Apelles. In one such story, we are told that the artist, fearful that other painters might be judged more superior at realistic representation, demanded that real horses be brought before paintings of horses that were entered into a competition. When the horses began to neigh in front of Apelles' work, he received the recognition he deserved.

Artists have sought to extract universal truths by expressing their own experiences. Sometimes their pursuit has led them to beauty, at other times to shame and outrage. The



1-3 GEORGE CONDO. *The Apparition* (2009). Oil on canvas. 40" \times 36". The Living and the Dead, Gavin Brown's enterprise, NY.



A CLOSER LOOK A PORTRAIT IN THE FLESH

FOR CENTURIES, ARTISTS have devoted their full resources, their lives, to their work. Orlan has also offered her pound of flesh—to the surgeon’s scalpel. Orlan (Fig. 1-5) is a French multimedia performance artist who has been undergoing a series of cosmetic operations to create, in herself, a composite sketch of what Western art has long set forth as the pinnacle of human beauty: the facial features that we find in classic works such as Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* (Fig. 1-6), Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa* (Fig. 1-1), and Boucher’s *Europa*, or, more specifically, Venus’s chin, the *Mona Lisa*’s forehead, and *Europa*’s mouth.

Most people undergo cosmetic surgery in private, but not Orlan. Several of her operations have been performances or media events. Her first series of operations were carried out in France and Belgium. The operating rooms were filled with symbols of flowering womanhood in a form compatible with medicine: sterilized plastic fruit. There were huge photos of Orlan, and the surgeons and their assistants were decked out not in surgical greens but in costumes created by celebrated couturiers. A recent operation was performed in the New York office of a cosmetic surgeon and transmitted via satellite to the Sandra Gering Gallery in the city’s famed SoHo district. Orlan did not lie unconscious in a hospital gown. Rather, she lay awake in a long, black dress and read from a work on psychoanalysis while the surgeon implanted silicone in her face to imitate the protruding forehead of *Mona Lisa*.

When will it all end? Orlan says that “I will stop my work when it is as close as possible to the computer composite,”* as the lips of *Europa* split into a smile. ●

* Margalit Fox, “A Portrait in Skin and Bone,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1993, V8.



1-5 French performance artist Orlan, who has dedicated herself to embodying Western classic beauty as found in the works of Leonardo, Botticelli, and Boucher through multiple plastic surgeries. Here Orlan is being “prepped” for one in a series of operations. © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ADAGP, Paris.



1-6 SANDRO BOTTICELLI. *The Birth of Venus* (1486). Detail. Tempera on canvas. 5' 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " × 9' 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.

*It is the glory and good of Art,
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truths, to mouths like mine at least.*
—Robert Browning

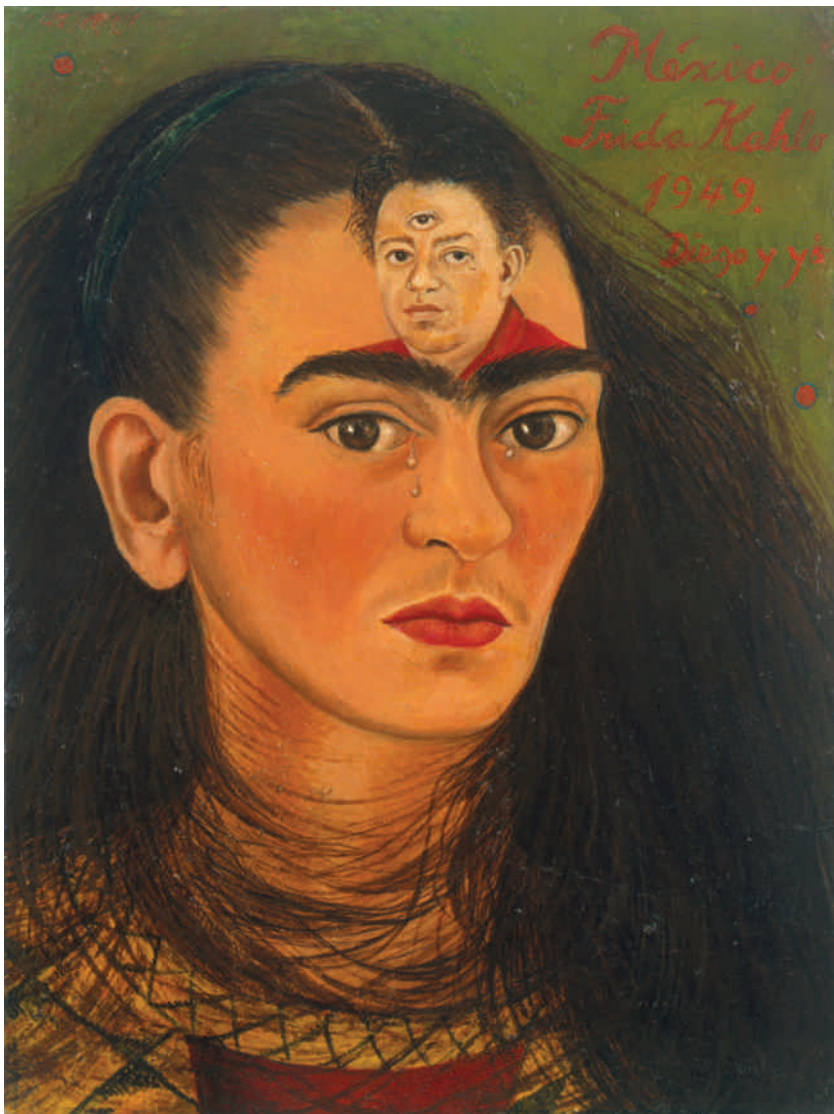
“ugly truth,” just like the beautiful truth, provides a valid commentary on the human condition.

In her self-portraits, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo used her tragic life as an emblem for human suffering. At age 18, she was injured when a streetcar slammed into a bus on which she was a passenger. The accident left her with many serious wounds, including a fractured pelvis and vertebrae, and chronic pain. Kahlo’s marriage to the painter Diego Rivera was also painful. She once told a friend, “I have

suffered two serious accidents in my life, one in which a streetcar ran over me. . . . The other accident was Diego.”² As in *Diego in My Thoughts* (Fig. 1-7), her face is always painted with extreme realism and set within a compressed space, requiring the viewer to confront the “true” Frida. When asked why she painted herself so often, she replied, “*Porque estoy muy sola*” (“Because I am all alone”). Those who knew Kahlo conjecture that she painted self-portraits in order to “survive, to endure, to conquer death.”

Zhang Xiaogang’s (b. 1958) *Big Family* (Fig. 1-8) features a passage of bright red in a sea of monotonous beige and gray tones. For this Chinese artist, the uniformity of a drab palette reflects the appearance—indeed the lives—of what he calls a typical revolutionary family: “asexual, dressed in Mao suits, their gaze glassy and dismal. . . . They could be clones.”³ Red as a signifier of Chinese Communist culture creates points of narrative and visual emphasis, but there is more to the print than its design elements. The work addresses a truth of contemporary Chinese life: this “big” family is as big as a family is permitted to get in this overpopulated country, given its one-child policy. And because of sexism, abortion is not uncommon when an early sonogram reveals that the fetus is female. Chinese social critics worry that the country seems to be headed toward a surplus of males and a resultant era of social instability.

Modern artists who discarded the practice of manipulating materials and techniques to create illusionistic surfaces built their compositions instead on the principle of “truth to materials.” Paint retained its identity as paint, rather than pretending that it was cloth or glass or leaves. Modern architects also championed truth to materials by making visible the raw, structural elements of a building and arguing their aesthetic validity.



1-7 FRIDA KAHLO. *Diego in My Thoughts (Diego y yo)* (1949). Oil on canvas, mounted on Masonite. 24" × 36". Collection of Mary-Anne Martin/Fine Arts, NY. © 2011 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F./Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

² Martha Zamora, *Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990), 37.

³ M. Nuridsany, *China Art Now* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 114.



1-8 ZHANG XIAOGANG. *Big Family* (2003). Lithograph in an edition of 199. 27½" × 32½". Michael Berger Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA.

1 in.

1-9 ANDY WARHOL. *Four Marilyns* (1962). Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas. 30" × 23⅞". © 2011 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

ART, IMMORTALITY, AND GLORY

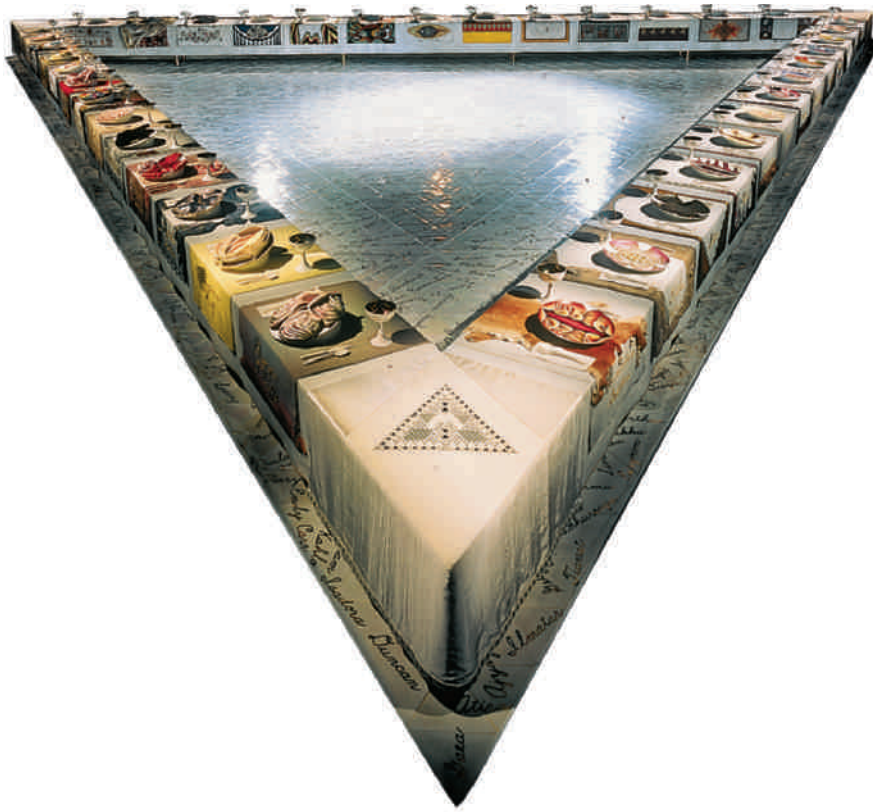
In the face of certain death, an artist such as Robert Mapplethorpe can defy mortality by creating a work that will keep his talents and his tragedy in the public's consciousness for decades. Human beings are the only species conscious of death, and for millennia they have used art to overleap the limits of this life.

In *Four Marilyns* (Fig. 1-9), Pop artist Andy Warhol participated in the cultural immortalization of a film icon of the 1960s by reproducing a well-known photograph of Monroe on canvas. Proclaimed a “sex symbol” of the silver screen, she rapidly rose to fame and shocked her fans by taking her own life at an early age. In the decades since Monroe’s death, her image is still found on posters and calendars, books and songs are still written about her, and the public’s appetite for information about her early years and romances remains insatiable. In other renderings, Warhol arranged multiple images of the star as if lined up on supermarket shelves, commenting, perhaps, on the ways in which contemporary flesh peddlers have packaged and sold her—in death as well as in life.

The lines between life and death, between place and time, are temporarily dissolved in the renowned



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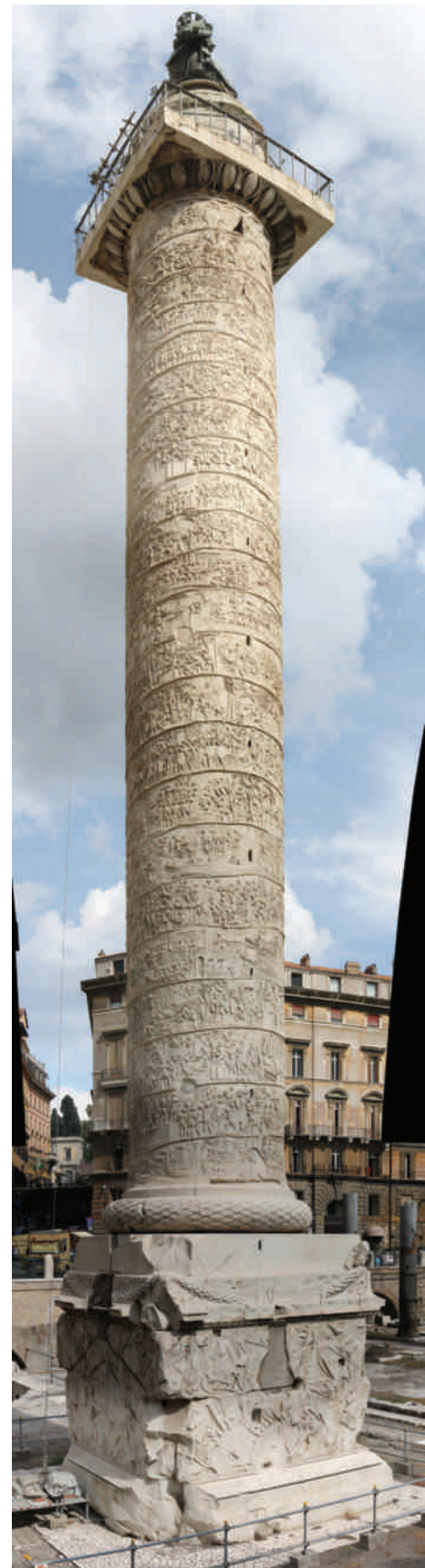


1-10 JUDY CHICAGO. *The Dinner Party* (1974–1979). Painted porcelain and needlework. 48' × 48' × 48' × 3'. Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY. © 2011 Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

installation *The Dinner Party* (Fig. 1-10) by feminist artist Judy Chicago. The idea for this multimedia work, which was constructed to honor and immortalize history's notable women, revolves around a fantastic dinner party, where the guests of honor meet before place settings designed to reflect their personalities and accomplishments. Chicago and numerous other women artists have invested much energy in alerting the public to the significant role of women in the arts and society.

The desire to immortalize often goes hand in hand with the desire to glorify. Some of art history's wealthiest patrons, from the Caesars of ancient Rome and the Vatican's popes to emperors around the world, commissioned artists to create works that glorified their reigns and accomplishments. The Roman emperor Trajan's tomb (Fig. 1-11), 128 feet high, is covered with a continuous spiral relief that recounts his victories in military campaigns in great detail. Centuries later, the French would adapt this design for a column erected to glorify the victories of the emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

In China during the early third century BCE, the first emperor of Qin prepared a tomb (Fig. 1-12) for himself that was filled not only with treasure, but also with facsimiles of more than 6,000 soldiers and horses, along with bronze chariots. The site, which is still being excavated, was probably



1-11 Column of Trajan, Forum of Trajan, dedicated 112 CE. 128' high. Rome, Italy.



1-12 Terra-cotta warriors. Pit No. 1 (Han Dynasty c. 210 BCE). Museum of the First Emperor Qin, Shaanxi Province, China.

intended to recreate the emperor's lavish palace. The sheer manpower that was necessary to create the imperial funerary monument—literally thousands of workers and artists—is a testament to the emperor's wealth, power, and ambition.

ART AND RELIGION

The quest for immortality is the bedrock of organized religion. From the cradle of civilization to the contemporary era, from Asia to the Americas, and from the Crimea to the Cameroon, human beings across time and cultures have sought answers to the unanswerable and have salved their souls with belief in life after death. In the absence of physical embodiments for the deities they fashioned, humans developed art forms to visually render the unseen. Often the physical attributes granted to their

gods were a reflection of humans. It has been said, for example, that the Greeks made their men into gods and their gods into men. In other societies, deities were often represented as powerful and mysterious animals, or composite men-beasts. Ritual and ceremony grew alongside the establishment of religions and the representation of deities, in actual or symbolic form. Until modern times, one could probably study the history of art in terms of works expressing religious values alone.

The *North Wind Mask (Negakfok)* (Fig. 1-13), is one of a series of masks from the Yup'ik speaking Inuit of western Alaska, worn during rituals designed to mediate the spirit world—in this case the spirits of the north, east, and south winds—and the human and animal worlds. Dancers, adorned with such masks and elaborate costumes, were believed to be transformed into spirits. The spirit of the north wind is associated with snowstorms and frigid cold temperatures. White spots painted on the mask may allude to snowflakes; the sound created by the clanking of the wood pieces that hang from the mask suggests the whooshing of cold winds.

Another artist of color, Aaron Douglas, translated a biblical story into a work that speaks to the African American



1-13 *North Wind Mask (Negakfok)* (early 20th century). Wood, paint, and feathers. 45¼" × 21¾" × 17⅞". The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Purchase, Nelson A. Rockefeller Gift, 1961 (1978.412.76a, b). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.