



## Course Learning Outcomes for Unit I

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Justify visual arts in relation to history and culture.
  - 1.1 Explain public art's functions.
  - 1.2 Examine human creativity as an inherent trait that inspires the production of art.
  
3. Interpret artworks using the elements of design.
  - 3.1 Define art as means of visual expression using different media and forms.
  - 3.2 Contrast the ritual, social, and public functions of art.
  - 3.3 Distinguish form and meaning in visual analysis.
  
5. Recognize an artwork or artist by style and time period.
  - 5.1 Recall the type of art used in individual works.

## Reading Assignment

### Chapter 1:

The Nature of Art and Creativity

### Chapter 2:

The Purposes and Functions of Art

Click [here](#) to access the Unit I Video.

Click [here](#) to access the transcript of the Unit I Video.

The below link contains an interactive audio that will explain the purpose of art:

Pearson (n.d.). The effects of good government [Audiovisual webpage]. Retrieved from <http://closerlook.pearsoncmg.com/view.php?type=closerlook&id=469>

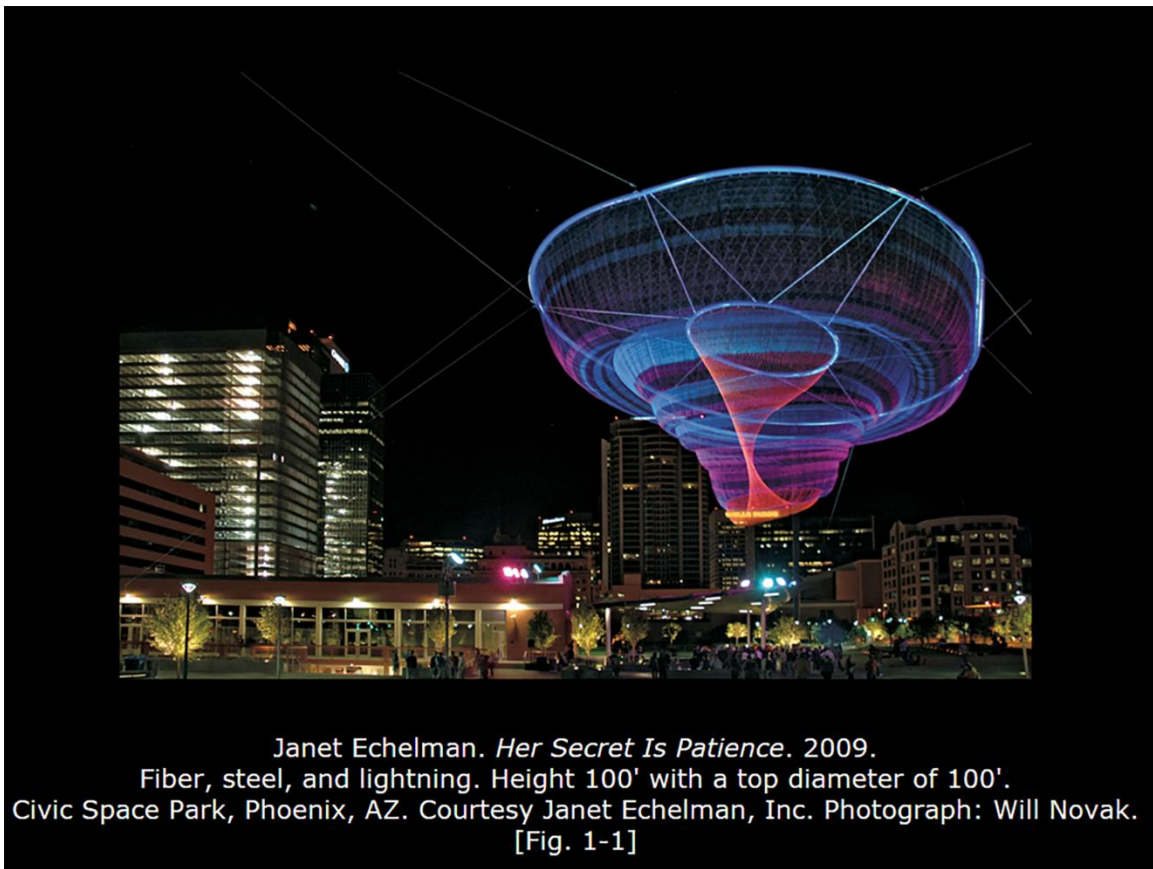
Click [here](#) to access the *Closer Look* video titled "The Effects of Good Government."

Click [here](#) to access the video transcript.

## Unit Lesson

### Chapter 1: The Nature of Art and Creativity

**What is art?** Art is all around us. You might have a favorite painting hanging on a wall or even a favorite cup that you use. The cup may seem like a bit of a stretch, but it is a form of art. It may be mass-produced, but someone designed that cup. Everyday objects are designed with usability in mind; paintings on the wall are meant to be visually appealing, and sometimes art is created just to make you think.



(Frank, 2014a, slide 4)

For example, Janet Echelman's *Her Secret Is Patience* (page 3 of your course textbook and in the above image) is a mixed media work of art created from fiber, steel, and light. Commissioned for the city of Phoenix, Arizona, this public work evokes the color and light of the surrounding desert landscape. Can you imagine the planning, safety trials, paperwork, and handiwork that went into making this piece? Hearing the public responses to the work reveals multiple interpretations depending on the viewer's experience. How do you view this work?

Individual likes and dislikes of art are similar to preferences and choices in everyday life such as those for vegetables, soft drinks, or brands of clothing (McGuire & Mason, 2014). In this class, we will be viewing an abundance of art; some of the art may not be to your liking, and some of it you will love. As long as you can understand how and why the artist made the art, you can learn to appreciate it. Feel free to expand your preferences in art. Curiosity is in our human nature and should be ever-present in a scholar's role. Allow your minds to explore and evaluate new ideas and the unknown (McGuire & Mason, 2014).

**Is everyone creative?** What makes creativity? As your textbook states, "many people believe they have no artistic talent. Yet we all have the potential to be creative" (Frank, 2014c, p. 7). Why do we feel this way? Have mass-produced items encouraged us to purchase solutions rather than develop creative solutions of our own? Embracing the traits of creativity can promote solutions for problems in all aspects of life.

As children, the art-making process seemed easy. Most of us thought that we were the best at any kind of art. Somehow along the way, we forgot that it is okay for our work not to look perfect. Does an artist have to go to art school to become an artist? Does formal training make one's art more creative or valuable than one who is untrained? Many believe that all art is important and should be shared. Artists do not have to go to school or be trained; the more a discipline is practiced, the better it will be. An untrained artist's work can still show his or her personal expression.

**Looking vs. seeing:** Talking about visual arts with words is always an act of translation one step removed from experiencing art. Our eyes have a direct connection with our minds and emotions, so ordinary objects become extraordinary when we take time to see them deeply. There is a difference between looking at and seeing art. "By isolating a particular part of an object and taking effort to really look at it, we become much

more aware of its visual characteristics, thus enhancing our appreciation of commonplace objects” (McGuire & Mason, 2014, p.5). When we really look at an artwork or object and think about how it was made and what it means, we are truly seeing it.

**Art and reality:** A good bit of art represents other objects. Describing how an artwork relates to the physical world can be done using the terms representational, abstract, and nonrepresentational. Representational art represents objects that are recognizable (Frank, 2014c). A painting of a person and a painting of a unicorn both show an object that is recognizable; therefore, they are both representational art.

Abstract art tends to either distort an object or not reference an object at all. If the subject matter is unrecognizable, sometimes the artist will leave clues in the title to help the viewer (us) figure out what the image is. It is always interesting to see how an artist will change something we see constantly or create something we have never seen before.

Nonrepresentational art is not meant to represent anything. Think, for example, about patterns on clothing, carvings, or any design that is made of lines, shapes, and colors.

**Cultural iconographic symbols:** In what way can a visual symbol communicate messages to an audience? To figure this out, consider making a list of cultural symbols and their meanings (McGuire & Mason, 2014). Use the following as an example: “a heart symbolizes love, the apple symbolizes knowledge, and the donkey and the elephant, respectively, symbolize the Democratic and Republican political parties” (McGuire & Mason, 2014, p. 5). If we lived 100 years ago, there would be other symbols that we would know the meaning to, and if someone from the past saw the icons or symbols on our phones, they would be terribly confused. Artwork may contain symbols and icons that are recognizable, but sometimes we will have to research the symbols since they are not used very often today. In northern Renaissance art, it was very popular to cram as many symbols into an artwork as possible, creating a *Where’s Waldo?* effect in the paintings of that time.

## Chapter 2: Purposes and Functions of Art

**Functions of art in non-western civilizations:** An artwork may serve multiple functions or purposes in different societies. Each society has its own uses for art—whether it is for worship or for visual delight. Understanding what an artform is used for helps the viewer form a connection. We start to appreciate art when we learn the story behind it. Recognizing how art is used in different time periods and civilizations shows us how basic human needs have remained relatively constant from ancient times to the present.

In many societies, art is an integral part of everyday life—not just because it is visually appealing but because the art is used. Objects made within certain cultures are not, as Western art historians classify them, defined as art (McGuire & Mason, 2014, p. 11). The art objects used for rituals, religious purposes, or for everyday living are known as artifacts (Frank, 2014c).

### Advocating for art:

- How is art important in the world?
- Do you feel art is not an important aspect of everyday life?
- How does art function differently in different environments?
- How does artwork function in different social structures and classes?
- Does contemporary art represent our culture appropriately?
- What purpose does contemporary art serve? (McGuire & Mason, 2014).

### Purposes and Functions of Art

**Art for delight:** Having art be visually appealing is usually pretty high up on the list when thinking of purposes or functions of art. Most people think art should not be “ugly” or “weird.” Art that is meant for decoration is visually delightful. Its purpose is to be pleasing to the eye, and its function is how it is useful. Is the artwork a plate, cup, or a piece of jewelry? Delight may not sound like an important purpose, but it is. As humans, we want to be content and happy, and being surrounded by things we like is one way to achieve contentment.

**Art as commentary:** What is the first object that catches your eye and makes you want to investigate something closer? Is it an image on a newspaper, or is it the graphic art on a webpage? Art is a very important form of communication. Would you rather read a 30-page article on a very important event or look

at a number of photos documenting the event? Photography sparked change in society and how information was shown, but even before photography, artists were informing people about changes happening in their culture. Francisco Goya is known for prints about the horrors of Spain's war against Napoleon's invading army (Frank, 2014c). He showed the gruesome aspect to warn others about what was happening. Art that is informative may also be biased because it will contain the personal view of the artist.

**Art in worship and ritual:** Think about your place of worship, or think about some form of art that has a very deep meaning because of what it represents. Do you feel different about this form of art compared to a painting in a store window? When art is used in worship and ritual, it takes on a new meaning. It has a presence it did not have before. The candleholders at your place of worship may look similar to some in your home, but the meaning for each set is completely different. Art created for worship or ritual is treated with reverence; it is precious and serves a divine purpose.

**Art for commemoration:** How do we usually honor our loved ones or heroes? Visual art plays an important role in reminding us of an event or loved one. Memorials can be displayed for the public, which can help aid in the healing process, or may be displayed in private for personal use. A memorial also serves as a gathering place for individuals wishing to pay their respects. Commemoration art is always personal because we each hold memories of loved ones; art is one of the many ways to honor those memories.

**Art for persuasion:** It is hard to go anywhere without being bombarded by advertisements. Companies, people, and places are constantly vying for your attention and trying to convince you that they are the best. Many artforms have a persuasive function, and you may not even realize that the object is trying to convince you of an idea. Historically, art has been used to convince and inspire societies of how well the government is or to remind the public of shared ideals.

Graphic designers can certainly use art in terms of persuasion. They do this through using visual images for advertisement and social purposes (McGuire & Mason, 2014). Consider the example as seen in *Global Warning* below and on page 33 of your course textbook. In this image, Chaz Maviyane-Davies created an image to bring awareness to the critical issue in our society. Graphic designers are not always selling a product; sometimes their intent is to make audiences think about the world around them (McGuire & Mason, 2014). Can you think of a piece of art you have seen in your environment that was used to bring awareness to a controversial issue?



(Frank, 2014b, slide 46)

**Art as self-expression:** Self-expression has become the primary function of contemporary art (Frank, 2014c). As an artist, many enjoy sharing how they feel through art and having the viewer understand how they are feeling or even moving the viewer to feel the same way—this is magical. Many times, we convince ourselves that we are the only ones feeling a certain way, but this simply is not true. There are many people who can relate to how the artist feels, and when this happens, the art becomes a meeting place for individuals. Art takes on an expressive purpose or function when an artist conveys information about his or her personality, feelings, or worldview.

**Contemplating aesthetics and self-expression:** Art has the ability to show beauty on multiple levels—not just one. Yong Soon Min’s *Dwelling* (page 34 of your textbook) provides visual appeal through its dynamic design and familiarity with the objects while prompting the viewer to contemplate the artist’s feelings about place and her Korean heritage (Frank, 2014c). When she created *Dwelling* in 1993, Min assembled artistic media such as a traditional Korean dress, books, maps, and other personal objects to communicate her own personal struggle with her Korean and American identities. Why did Min create *Dwelling* with actual objects? Do you believe a work of art can produce meaning through its materials and methods? Consider what other materials an artist might use to evoke issues concerning identity and place.

## References

- Frank, P. (2014a). *Chapter 1: The nature of art and creativity* [PowerPoint slides]. Boston, MA: Pearson
- Frank, P. (2014b). *Chapter 2: The purposes and functions of art* [PowerPoint slides]. Boston, MA: Pearson
- Frank, P. (2014c). *Prebles' artforms: An introduction to the visual arts* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson
- McGuire, J. & Mason, T. (2014). *Prebles' artforms: An introduction to the visual arts* (11th ed., Instructor's manual). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

## Suggested Reading

If you would like to study the content from the required reading further, consider reviewing the below PowerPoint presentations. The presentations include images of the artwork discussed in the chapter and explanations:

Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 1 PowerPoint Presentation. Click [here](#) for a PDF version of the presentation.

Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 2 PowerPoint Presentation. Click [here](#) for a PDF version of the presentation.

## Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

### Janet Echelman and Maviyane-Davies

For more information on Janet Echelman's *Her Secret Is Patience*, please visit her site:

Echelman, J. (n.d.). Her secret is patience, Phoenix, AZ, 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.echelman.com/project/her-secret-is-patience/>

You can also visit Maviyane-Davies's website, *Creative Defiance*, to view his graphic activism:

Maviyane-Davies, C. (2014). Portal of truth. Retrieved from <http://www.maviyane.com/index.php?id=human-rights-portal-of-truth>

### Traits of Creativity

Throughout this unit, we have discussed the human traits of creativity and creative modes of expression. Now you will explore this for yourself.

For a 24-hour period, keep a journal or record of your activities, and write about where you see art within your daily activities. Remember that art is not limited to painting and drawing. Are there any solutions you find to life's difficulties that can be considered creative? Can your traits and abilities be compared to those of a folk artist? Trained artist? Child?

Once your 24-hour period has ended, write a minimum of a 200-word essay explaining where you find art in your daily life.

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.