

What is Art? What is Beauty?

My initial reaction is while beauty can exist in art not all art is considered beautiful. This rudimentary statement explores Kant's 'judgment of taste.' In Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, an aesthetic judgment (judgment of taste) is presented as having universal validity while based in an individual's subjective feelings. Kant holds that 'judgment of taste' specifically presented as the judgment 'what is beauty' must have four distinguishing features: disinterested, universal, necessary and purposive without purpose.

While in agreement with the universal validity of subjectivity I challenge this aesthetic judgment. When the **form** of an object connects with **a feeling** —Kant considers this a disinterested pleasure - it is independent of an intentional concept, directly a sensation of uninhibited, unreservedly impartial pleasure. I contest Kant's confining view – a beautiful painting (in form) can elicit a desire to possess it. This is indicative to having **an interest** in the painting. Further, a subjectively beautiful painting eliciting both sensuous and possessive feelings may also serve a purpose wherein the artist's intention preceded the painting perhaps a social commentary on corporate greed, a dissection of political distrust in a social media driven society. This disputes the notion that beautiful is separate from purpose (purposive without purpose - final without end) in other words, unable to have premeditated conceptual meaning. Separately, the intention of the artist could be fundamentally different from the experience of the viewer. The viewer's response may carry the complexity of eliciting "this is conceptually beautiful for its representation of the misrepresented."

Herein lies the beauty of art.

Art maintains a duality in its capacity to provoke both cognitive thought/dissection AND emotion perhaps even through causation – an initial emotional response leads us to a profound desire to pontificate, cognitively reason, translate, digest both individually and with others. Art historically depicts and details the tone and tenor of the age. It attempts to capture the emotion of an era. It often rejects rules of previous periods or was born out of fatigue or contrarian reactionism – neoclassical artists exhausted by rococo flair. This illustrates - art is never static. In its inherent fluidity and heterogeneity art asks us to question, challenge, doubt, converse, and often leads to distinctive positions.

Whether with easel and brush, on the stage or in the street, pen to page, with body, voice and mind, as we, the practitioners, the listeners, the admirers, are ever evolving we can say art is beautifully unfinished accordingly inconclusive.