

Frank Lu

Composition 1

Jean Pierre

20 September 2019

Art As Language

Art is what we make it be, it is ever so formless yet form itself. People have different definitions for what they think art is, but at the same time, they are all essentially the same, having to relate to conveying a message. In a blog, Arthur P. Shimamura wrote: “Art is meant to instill a myriad of emotions in the beholder, “ (Shimamura) and in the study of Art as a form of language, this is a critical quote to take note of. Through the four sources that this paper will talk about, art and language will be defined and broken down into simple components: form, use, content, intention, and experience. Each author, having different purposes, tone, and media, all connect in a way that can be used to prove that art is a form of language.

In an attempt to define what makes art what it is, Arthur P. Shimamura, a photographer, wrote a blog on his thoughts and formal components that make art what it is. Through the use of an informative narrative, his purpose was to inform art students or people interested in art, of his studies and findings. Shimamura says “I explored the psychological processes involved when we invite an aesthetic experience and offered the I-SKE model” (Shimamura). The I-SKE model is a chart that he created through his experience as a photographer. His tone was sincere and he wants to inform people of this model. The model shows how artwork is created and called art. Before artwork is created, there is the intention of the artist that is then converted to a piece of art in some form of medium. Then when this art piece reaches the eyes of the beholders, they are

able to take away knowledge, sensation, and emotion. His stance is neutral as he is just using a personal and relaxed tone to try and give his own definition to art for people who might not know what art really is beyond the fact that it is an aesthetically pleasing piece of work. So as long as there was intention before a piece of work was created, and is then converted to some sort of experience for the beholder, it means that it is art. From Shimamura's use of social media, he is able to post his experience and purpose in the form of a blog which allowed him to convey his message.

In Paula K Eubank's scholarly article "Art is a Visual Language," we are able to tell from the title her stance and purpose which is to persuade the readers, who consist of those interested in art or people in general, of how art is a form of language. She uses a quote from another source and writes "The three overlapping components of language: form, content, and use" (Lahey, 1988). From that quote, she broke down what is needed for something to be a language. Form refers to how it was delivered in the form of written language, orally speaking, or types of languages. Content is the meaning behind the use of this language or intent of the speaker, and then the use component is why was it used and what was the purpose behind what was spoken or written. Then using a formal tone, she defines what art is as well, "a code whereby ideas about the world are expressed through a conventional system of arbitrary signals for communication" (Lahey 1988 p.2). From these two quotes, we get a clearer understanding of how the Eubanks aims to achieve the purpose of her scholarly article. By defining the two terms which she is trying to relate, she lets the reader understand the similarities of both terms in their most simple forms. First is form, art itself is the form yet it isn't, in a sense the form of art is what we see it as. Next is content, the intention and meaning behind every artwork are usually defined by the

intent or by art critics who give meaning to certain art pieces at times. Finally, there is the use, art is used as a form of expression, for it to be made, there is always a purpose to it whether it is to tell people about the artists or something relative to their region and culture.

As art has been defined in various ways, they all have one thing in common, which is the fact that it conveys some form of a message or is expressing something. In a National Geographic Magazine, Sarah Gibbens wrote, “cave art was made in acoustic "hot spots" because early humans were converting acoustic sounds into drawings” (Gibbens). The purpose of this magazine is to give us a detailed theory, using an excited yet passive tone, to inform people of all ages about how early art could have been used in a way to converse and convey intentions. “Lesure says, the cognitive functions needed to transfer acoustic sounds to pictures are the same cognitive functions needed in language” (Gibbens). From this quote, we get that although Gibbens is just trying to inform us, in a way she is taking a stance and sticking with her theory. She sticks with her initial purpose to inform us as well as trying to prove how early humans, being able to make cave drawings, is equivalent to being able to use some form of language. What was said to be early human’s intention in the article, was how they as the beholders interpreted their artwork and gave meaning to it. Like in Eubank’s article, “Art is a Visual Language,” as long as it follows the three components that make up a language, then it is considered one. In this case, Gibbens’s theory, based on Eubank’s definition of language, is proved to be correct, that the early human’s drawings on caves were indeed a form of language used to express something.

The last source from Huffington Post a newspaper article *Art is a Universal Language* by John M. Eger tries to persuade us, by taking a stance in the fact that art is the future universal

language. In a formal and definitive tone, he says that “In creating art, consciously or not, artists are attempting to communicate at a powerful emotional level to those within their own culture” (Eger). At the start of this quote, he refers to art as cultural and regional, that it is only used to represent something within a small plot of an area or a whole region perhaps. In this quote, from the formal tone he uses, he takes assumes a natural stance and just defines art. Then Eger says “the best work transcends its cultural matrix and speaks directly to our common humanity” (Eger). He is expanding his initial definition of how art is used to convey messages across a small region to the whole world and humanity. In this attempt to make art a universal language he uses the media to convey his purpose to people on the web and says “we can use the new technologies, with their powerful capacity for shaping and delivering human interchange, as virtual bridges across the vast distances separating cultures” (Eger). He uses an optimistic and hopeful tone here to talk about how through the web and databases, art can be inputted and used as a language to connect us all. And as art is all about visual aids it is possible to express different ideas through a variety of different groups with different backgrounds and understandings, because only through what we can see and interpret, can we begin to understand those we cannot understand verbally.

In conclusion, art as a form of language is used without us being aware of it. Through the use of purpose, tone, and media, we were able to define what art is, and what language is. The components of language which are followed by the definition of art prove what the articles speak of, that art is a form of language.

Citation

Eger, John M. "Art Is a Universal Language." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 25 Feb. 2015, www.huffpost.com/entry/if-art-is-a-universal-lan_b_806787?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAKYsWI3sUJuSIUrG8sEDJybyGWoYNeyyq__jdh0T9Vmk5Vv-wtYlQuvvpv-hQd4odLGjDkt9sVvNgGgyvVPfhpfbh2tdCh-g0Mw-VdM1RiWtCyJbCYxXh1hm5901x4xHDj9gyHKBpdunJ9M-j7FTuvDWQHKFIAjBCte86pOEYVB.

Eubanks, Paula K. "Art Is a Visual Language." *Visual Arts Research*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1997, pp. 31–35. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20715892.

Gibbens, Sarah. "Ancient Cave Drawings and Early Human Language Linked in New Study." *Study Links Ancient Cave Drawings and Language Origins*, 21 Feb. 2018, www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2018/02/acoustic-caves-rock-art-language-origin-spd/.

Lahey, M. (1988). *Language disorders and language development*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Shimamura, Arthur P. "Creativity and Art Expression." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 23 Feb. 2014, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-brain-the-beholder/201402/creativity-and-art-expression?fbclid=IwAR2kdSdYq5pDwHTnddtPUuZuMO8aIBETCe6oCEhfji7tiHomuTIidCijzYo.

