

97 Questions About Art

Michael Szpakowski

1. What is art?
2. What isn't art?
3. Can something be art and then stop being?
4. Does good art always make us feel good?
5. Is all art beautiful?
6. If every human being vanished suddenly from the world would art still be art?
7. Why do people disagree about whether something is good art?
8. Why do people disagree about whether something is art?
9. What does it mean to say that something is kitsch?
10. Can a (real) landscape be art?
11. To what extent does some human being have to be involved in a work of art for it to be art?
12. When we talk about 'the arts' what do visual art, music, literature and dance (...add your own) have in common that enables us to speak in this way?
13. Does all art have a meaning?
14. Does any art have a meaning?
15. If art does have a meaning what kind of thing is this?
16. Is art about communication and if so how?
17. Can we be in any way objective about art?
18. Can one make art without knowing that is what one is doing?
19. If I make a marvelous work of art but hide it away and it is never seen by anyone else, is it still art?
20. Why do our tastes in art—as individuals or as societies—change?
21. Can we be wrong in judging something to be good art?
22. Can we be wrong in judging something to be art?
23. Why do some people resist the idea that photography can be art?
24. Why do some people resist the idea that popular music can be art?
25. Does the artist know exactly what she is going to make before she makes it?
26. If a large proportion of a work of art comes about because of accidents – spillages, slips of the brush, fracturing our 'good' hand, forgetting to do things we originally intended &c. does this affect how we should respond to what has been made?
27. What will art be like in a year?
28. What will art be like in 10 years?
29. What is art like now?
30. For whom does the artist make art?
31. Can there be general rules for how to make good art?

32. Can there be rules for ensuring that specific elements of artworks are as good as they possibly can be?
33. When an artist offers us a strict interpretation of her work does this place us under any obligation to take this into account as we engage with it?
34. If it is a fact that particular interpretative codes were employed by artists in particular periods does a full appreciation or engagement with a work made in this period demand our familiarity with this knowledge?
35. What does it mean to say that a work of art is truthful, or dishonest, or in bad faith?
36. Does art create knowledge and if yes, what kind of knowledge?
37. Can an artist learn from someone else something she did not previously know about an artwork that she herself made?
38. If yes, what kind of thing might this be?
39. If I have no religious belief or differing ones from the artist, does this stop me from appreciating a work of religious art—either completely, or just somewhat or not at all?
40. Can one fully describe a work of art in words?
41. If I am deeply moved by a work of art, believing it to be by the artist **C** and then discover that it was actually by the forger **D** does this invalidate my feelings?
42. Does originality matter, and what is it?
43. Is the title part of the artwork?
44. What do we recognize when we say we recognize an artist's style?
45. Can a bad person make good art?
46. Can art make us in any way better people?
47. What is art for?
48. Is art a human need and if yes, how pressing a need, comparable with what?
49. If, somewhere, there are intelligent alien beings living on a far distant planet, what do you think their art might be like and under what circumstances could we speak of understanding or appreciating it?
50. If we can appreciate and enjoy art from 1000 years ago could we appreciate and enjoy art from 1000 years in the future, if we could somehow see it?
51. How does the nature of our embodiment affect what we call art?
52. Is art useful?
53. Can we claim or discover as art a practice or an object that was previously considered 'not-art' and if so, who does this?
54. Can a work of art be made by a team of people and if yes, must that team have a leader?
55. A work of art moves me to tears. You find it clumsy and ridiculous. Can we still be friends?
56. Does art always require skill?
57. Does art always require effort?
58. By what criteria would you personally judge an art competition or prize?

59. Can a garden be a work of art?
60. Or a meal or perfume or a synchronized swimming routine?
61. What about architecture—how does that fit in?
62. In Japan, China & Korea flower arranging and calligraphy have had a similar status to activities the western tradition would designate 'art'. Does this imply that art is sometimes or always culturally specific?
63. Are there works which are both sound art and music or are these mutually exclusive categories?
64. Can one steal the content of a work of art?
65. Can one steal a style of art?
66. Do ethical reasons ever exist for not using particular techniques or styles in making a work of art?
67. Are sport and art comparable fields of human endeavor?
68. What is the relationship between popularity and value in a work of art?
69. What is the relationship between price and value in a work of art?
70. What is the relationship between critical approval and value in a work of art?
71. Why do the majority of (indeed most generally accepted) art practices use only two of our five senses?
72. If I collaborate with a child to make an artwork is that child my fellow artist?
73. If I collaborate with an elephant to make an artwork is that elephant my fellow artist?
74. Why the distinction, *art* and *design*?
75. Why the distinction *art* and *craft*?
76. Are the two previous distinctions of a similar order and character?
77. Are there any circumstances under which the suppression or destruction of a work of art would be justified or even necessary?
78. Can art ever bring about social change and if yes, how?
79. Can art bring about psychological change in an individual or group and if yes, how?
80. Can art persuade?
81. Can a work of art present a logical argument and if yes, how?
82. What percentage of art history consists of facts?
83. Are there any circumstances under which the sacrifice of a human life would be justified to save a work of art?
84. If art is something solely made and understood by humans what are the characteristics or endowments of human beings which make this the case?
85. Can I make an artwork that is exactly the same as one someone else has made?
86. Is Benjamin's 'aura' an actual thing?
87. What does it mean to say that, in a work, an artist is *solving a problem*?
88. Does the location and manner of display of an artwork make any difference to how we receive it?
89. If the answer to the previous question is yes, what does this tell us about the nature of artworks?

90. Can art heal? If yes, what can it heal and how?
91. If all art disappeared from our lives just what is it we would lack?
92. Could one visit an art gallery and rank every work in it in order of excellence?
93. Could this text be a work of art?
94. If it was would this affect the way you read and receive it?
95. Does any of this matter?
96. How?
97. Any further questions?