CHAPTER 2

The Purposes and Functions of Art
1. Contrast the ritual, social, and public functions of art.

2. Discuss the aesthetic and emotional appeal of art that gives pleasure.

3. Consider the historical shift toward greater self-expression through art.

4. Identify and explain examples that reveal art's different functions in society.
Introduction

- Art forms as a result of meeting deep and subtle needs as a society.
  - Public purposes, not personal goals of the artist
- Art in its social and cultural context
  - Six functions
  - May address more than one need
Art for Delight

- Appreciation of beauty or decoration
- Delight in an element of surprise
- **Aesthetics**
  - An awareness of beauty or a quality that evokes a sense of elevated awareness in the viewer
- Definitions of "beauty"
  - **Classical** Greek or Renaissance art in the West
James Abbott McNeill Whistler.  
**Nocturne: Blue and Gold—Old Battersea Bridge.** 1872–1875.  
Oil on canvas. 26-7/8" × 12-1/4".  
Tate, London. Photograph: akg-images/Erich Lessing. [Fig. 2-1]
Art for Delight

- Definitions of "beauty"
  - Varies across cultures
  - Painting
    - Pleasant or inspiring subject
    - Thoughtful execution
    - Harmonious balance of colors
Art for Delight

• Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Gold*
  ▪ Subtle variations of blue in sky and water
  ▪ Almost **monochromatic**
    • Based on one color
• Geometric bowl of the Mimbres culture
  ▪ Dynamic design of invented forms
  ▪ Use of **slip**, or clay thinned to the consistency of cream
Bowl. Classic Mimbres geometric. c.1000 CE.
Earthenware. Height 4-1/4", diameter 11-1/4".
Private collection. Photograph by Tony Berlant. [Fig. 2-2]
Art for Delight

• Orozco, *Juego de Limones*
  - Recognizable but unexpected surprise
  - Imagining players using lime slices as tokens on a board
  - Colors of the Mexican flag
Gabriel Orozco. *Juego de Limones (Game of Limes).*
Silver dye bleach print. 16" × 20".
Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. [Fig. 2-5]
• Gabriel Orozco: The Art of Surprise
  ▪ Forms art from the most simple means to create surprise and delight
    • Subtle displacements
  ▪ Edited version of a Citroën DS sedan
    • Middle third cut out
  ▪ Intends for his work to be a moment of poetry, pleasure, revelation, thinking
Gabriel Orozco.
Portrait by Enrique Badulescu.
Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. [Fig. 2-3]
Modified Citroen DS auto. 4' 7-3/16" × 15' 9-15/16" × 3' 9-5/16".
Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. [Fig. 2-4]
Art as Commentary

- Answer to a need for information
- A visual account of an event, person, or opinion
- Communication between artist and viewer through subject matter
- Goya's *The Disasters of War*
  - 82 *prints* surrounding Spain's war of resistance against Napoleon
    - Distributed in multiple copies
Francisco Goya. *I Saw This*. From the series *The Disasters of War*, 1810. Etching, drypoint, and burin. 6-1/14" × 9". Private collection. [Fig. 2-6]
Art as Commentary

- Goya's *The Disasters of War*
  - Gruesome, frightening account of what Goya witnessed
- **Impressionist** artists
  - Captured what they had seen
- Berthe Morisot, *In a Villa at the Seaside*
  - **Painterly** (loose, spontaneous) brushwork
  - Perhaps painted in a single sitting
Berthe Morisot. *In a Villa at the Seaside*. 1874.
Oil on canvas. 19-3/4" × 24".
[Fig. 2-7]
Art as Commentary

• Berthe Morisot, *In a Villa at the Seaside*
  - Information about dress details and vacation sites of the upper class as well as a calm portrait

• Artist's commentaries often include personal judgments.
  - Conditions
  - Facts
  - Politics
Art as Commentary

• **Occupy LA Mural**
  - Octopus personifying Federal Reserve Bank
  - Symbols of foreclosed home, money, city
  - Scale where the 1% outweighs the 99%
  - Scott Olsen, an Iraq war veteran injured in the Occupy group in Oakland
  - Not subtle in its commentary
Poster paint on wood panels. Height 14'.
Formerly City Hall Park, Los Angeles. Photograph: Patrick Frank. [Fig. 2-8]
Art in Worship and Ritual

- Enhances religious contemplation
- In the time of Thomas Aquinas
  - Attractive representations raise viewers "to the knowledge of intelligible truths"
  - *The Tree of Jesse*
    - Stained glass window
    - Genealogy of Christ
    - Composition leading the eye upward in a metaphor for religious transcendence
The Tree of Jesse. c.1150–1170.
Stained glass.
West façade of Chartres Cathedral. Sonia Halliday Photographs. [Fig. 2-9]
Art in Worship and Ritual

- Zen school of Buddhism
  - Solitary meditation
  - Rock garden as aid to contemplation
    - Chief feature of emptiness
- Eskimos of Southwest Alaska
  - Shamans interpret the spirit world
  - Masks
    - Transformation to take on identity of sacred animals
Rock Garden. Built beginning 1480.
30' × 73'.
Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan. Michael S. Yamashita/CORBIS.
[Fig. 2-10]
Complex mask. c.1880.
Wood, pigments, and feathers. Height 35".
Yupik Eskimo, Southwest Alaska. Donald Ellis Gallery Ltd., New York, NY. Photo John Bigelow Taylor. [Fig. 2-11]
Art in Worship and Ritual

• Objects used in divine rituals
  ▪ Made to look precious
  ▪ Beatrice Wood's *Chalice*
    • Glowing metallic technique produced by Muslim potters centuries ago
    • Lacks straight lines and square edges
      • Origins in natural forms of the earth
    • Symmetrical loops
Pottery. Height 12-7/8", diameter 7-5/8".
Collection of The Newark Museum. Purchase 1986 Louis Bamberger Bequest Fund (86.4) © 2013 Photo The Newark Museum/Art Resource/Scala, Florence. Courtesy Beatrice Wood Center for the Arts/Happy Valley Foundation. [Fig. 2-12]
Art for Commemoration

- An aid to memory
- Often a public celebration
  - Of a person or event
  - Honoring patriotic actions
- Connection with chain of humanity
  - Human life significant and valuable
Art for Commemoration

• Taj Mahal
  ▪ Personal commemoration of Shah Jahan's favorite wife, who died in childbirth
  ▪ Testament to romantic love and devotion
• The Death of General Wolfe
  ▪ Depiction of patriotic self-sacrifice
Taj Mahal. 1632–1648.
Agra, India. Photograph: Peter Adams/Corbis. [Fig. 2-13]
Art for Commemoration

• *The Death of General Wolfe*
  ▪ Controversy of contemporary clothing
    • Subjects not represented in Greek or Roman figures
    • Royal Academy sent by King George III to stop work
      • West argued for depicting history as it occurred.
      • They sided with him and the painting went on to influence European art.
Oil on canvas. 60" × 84-1/2".
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Transfer from the Canadian War Memorials, 1921. Gift of the 2nd Duke of Westminster, Eaton Hall, Cheshire, 1918. Gift of the Duke of Westminster. [Fig. 2-14]
Art for Commemoration

• **Vietnam Veterans Memorial**, Maya Lin
  - Simple chronological list of almost 60,000 Americans who died or are missing from the Vietnam War
  - Initial resistance to uniqueness of work
  - Solemn black granite walls
  - Personal attention in recording every lost soldier's name

Video: Maya Lin: Disappearing Bodies of Water
Art for Persuasion

- Inviting and urging viewer to do or think things that would not otherwise be done

- **Augustus of Prima Porta**
  - Head is a portrait
  - Body implies emperor of divine status
    - Shoeless feet, as in Roman manner of representing gods
    - Cupid riding dolphin
Augustus of Prima Porta. Early 1st century CE. Marble. Height 6' 8".
Araldo de Luca/CORBIS. [Fig. 2-16]
Art for Persuasion

- Louis XIV
  - Realized the power of visual imagery on public opinion
  - Versailles, palace and garden
    - Ornate symbol of monarchy
- Classical Greek sculpture
  - Idealism of humans presented in the prime of life with serious pursuits
  - Encouraged sober self-restraint
Oil on canvas. 45-1/4" × 63-1/2".
Chateau de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library. [Fig. 2-17]
Charioteer. c.470 BCE.
Height 5' 11".
Archeological Museum, Delphi. © Craig & Marie Mauzy, Athens. [Fig. 2-18]
Art for Persuasion

- Lorenzetti, *Effects of Good Government*
  - Depicts a city under wise administration
    - Decorates the hall where the governing council met
    - Intended to influence deliberations by example
  - Contrasting work of the effects of bad government
  - More literal depictions of persuasion
Ambrogio Lorenzetti. 
Fresco. 
Palazzo Pubblico, Siena. Studio Fotografico Quattrone, Florence. [Fig. 2-19]
Art for Persuasion

- Mende masks
  - Symbolic visual language to instill proper behavior
  - Qualities of this mask in particular
    - Initiation ceremonies for girls on the verge of adulthood
    - Symbols encourage young women to be virtuous and have impeccable appearance
Mende peoples, Sierra Leone. Mask. 19th century. Wood, pigment, plant fiber. Height 26-3/4". Fowler Museum at UCLA. Photograph by Don Cole. [Fig. 2-20]
• Recent times
  ▪ Advertisement media persuade us to buy or believe something.
  ▪ Artists criticize or influence values and public opinion.
    • Chaz Maviyane-Davies, *Global Warning*
Chaz Maviyane-Davies. *Global Warning*. 1997. Poster for 3rd United Nations Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto. Courtesy of the artist. [Fig. 2-21]
Art as Self-Expression

• Not the primary reason for creating art for most of human history
  ▪ Other social and cultural needs engaging artists' talents until recently
• Artist conveys information about:
  ▪ Personality
  ▪ Feelings
  ▪ Worldview
• Separate from social cause/demand
Art as Self-Expression

- Self-portraiture
  - Nussbaum's *Self-Portrait with Jewish Identity Card*
    - Personal and political anxiety of the artist
  - Yong Soon Min's *Dwelling*
    - Sense of divided self
      - Traditional dress over pile of books
  - **Assemblage**
    - Collection of objects gathered into work
Felix Nussbaum. *Self-Portrait with Jewish Identity Card*. 1943. Oil on canvas. 22" × 19-1/4". Kulturgeschichtliches Museum, Osnabrueck, Germany/Artothek/ The Bridgeman Art Library. [Fig. 2-22]
Mixed media. 72" × 42" × 28".
Photo by Erik Landsberg. Courtesy of the artist. [Fig. 2-23]
Art as Self-Expression

- Wassily Kandinsky
  - "Inner necessity," or emotional stirrings of the soul
    - Attempted to translate inner spiritual energies into color and form
    - Wanted work to communicate like music
  - Composition VI
    - Conveyed restless and aroused inner state probably known to viewers
Oil on canvas. 76-3/4" × 118".  
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia/The Bridgeman Art Library © 2013  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. [Fig. 2-24]