

Art Elements/Principles of Today

Walker Center for Art, MSP

Appropriation: or to borrow. Appropriation is the practice of creating new work by taking a pre-existing image from another source—art history books, advertisements, the media—and transforming or combining it with new ones. The 3D version of appropriation is the use of found objects in art. A found object is an existing object—often a mundane manufactured product—given a new identity as an artwork or part of an artwork.

Space: Unlike the traditional element of space, this focuses on the physical space of a room, restricted or endless. This could be in a gallery, city street, the internet, or the sky out to outer space. Viewers might actually be within that space, or it is perceived that they can make sense of a real space. Can use more than one of your senses. Most common type is the “installation”.

Time: A specific moment in time can be the subject of an artwork, but artists today can also manipulate how that moment is experienced. They can choose historically charged moments or focus on mundane, even boring ones. Some contemporary artists make time their subject matter by systematically noting its passage. Others employ media such as film and video, which require us to invest time in order to fully experience it. These media also allow artists to manipulate time—slow motion, fast forward, rewind, repeat—as an expressive element.

Performance: Refers to art activities that are presented before a live audience and can combine music, dance, poetry, theater, visual art, and video. Whether public, private, or videotaped, performance art often involves the artist performing an action that may be planned and scripted, or may emphasize spontaneous, unpredictable elements of chance.

Hybridity: In science, a hybrid is created by mixing the characteristic of two different species in order to create one that is better or stronger. In an automobile, a hybrid combines an electric motor with a gasoline engine. Some artists continue to use traditional media such as paint, clay, or bronze, but others have selected new or unusual materials for their art, such as industrial or recycled materials, and newer technologies such as photography, video, or digital media offer artists even more ways to express themselves. Many artists working today incorporate more than material or technique in ways that create hybrid art forms. Combinations of still image, moving image, sound, digital media, and found objects can create new hybrid art forms that are beyond what traditional artists have ever imagined.

Cultural Hybridity

We live in a world that is constantly on the move. People move between places and cultures either as an immigrant, refugee, worker, or tourist. Further, with technologies such as television, radio, and the Internet, we can be virtual travelers to almost anywhere at any time. Many contemporary artists have experienced movement between and among cultures in their lives, and their work often explores issues of personal and cultural identity.