

Art as an object of study



"Traveller" by Alex Colville

Is art “real”?

Yes

- Realism: art exists independently once its been discovered (Samuel Alexander)
- issues: disputes over what is art and what isn't, consensus

No

- products of imagination, fiction
- “conscious self-deception” (Konrad von Lange)
- issues: goes against common sense

Yes and no

- context
- experience/plurality of modes of being
- artifact/event + work of art as separate entities (Jon Dilworth)
- clusters, family resemblances

Yes and even more so than anything else

- idealism



"Faust" by
Anne Imhof

- Is there a clear answer for you? Is art real? Fully or partially?
- What does art consist of?
- Can you think of an example/occasion of art as being real or unreal?
- What is the relationship with art and history?

Does it matter?

- ❑ Technological advancements render the question even more difficult (Benjamin)
- ❑ “Art” as a category is wide
- ❑ Why should we care? Who does it help?
- ❑ Is there anything more to authenticity/particularity of art except its monetary value? (John Berger)



“The classic, common sense trinity—what is art? what is politics? what is their relation?—becomes obsolete as soon as it is acknowledged that there is not a single, ontological answer to any of these questions.”



Still from "Nightlife" by
Cyprien Gaillard

Science Wars

Scientific realists

We can observe the world as is and
that is what science is built upon

Analytical philosophers



Perpetuating existing unjust
hierarchies

Postmodernists/Post-structuralists

Our judgement is clouded by
power-structures, assumptions, etc.

Continental philosophers



Relativism
Dangers of anti-science attitudes

We recognize here the classical way for scientists to deal with philosophy, politics, and art: “What you say might be nice and interesting but it has no cosmological relevance because it only deals with the subjective elements, the lived world, not the real world.”



Hannah Levy

Questions

- ❑ How would you define the difference between the opposing sides of the “science wars”?
- ❑ What should be our goal with art and with science? Where should we aim?
- ❑ What is the relationship with art and history?



Still from "The Nightwatch" by Francis Alÿs

Back to art and the 21st century

- ❑ Bottom line: transcendence and its existence, or essentialism
 - ❑ Art as an object of study - can it be reached? Should it?
 - ❑ We are all trying to say or do something about our world
 - ❑ There are valid reasons to keep science and art separate, but they can also benefit from each other
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- ❑ Can art get closer to reality than science? Sometimes.
 - ❑ Art as an object of study but also as a continuation of inquiry about the world
 - ❑ Art as a tool for utopias and imagination
- to be continued...

Further reading

Allen, A. (2016). *The end of progress: Decolonizing the normative foundations of critical theory* (Vol. 36). Columbia University Press.

Benjamin, W. (1935). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1936.

Berger, J. (2008). *Ways of seeing*. Penguin UK.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, 14(3), 575-599.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sloterdijk, P. (2011). *Bubbles: Spheres Volume I: Microspherology*.

Resources:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/>

<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/>