

# **THE AESTHETICS INTERSECTION BETWEEN ART AND JOURNALISM**

## **A Study on the Cultural and Political Influence of Historical Pieces that Embody Artistic and Journalistic Values**

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### **Abstract**

Products delivered to consumers from the art world and journalism industry serve as poignant representations of how any given individual experienced personal and global events at any given time in history. Upon accepting art and journalism as opposite spectrums of the same historical documentation method, millions of everyday visuals can be reinterpreted through the philosophical lens of aesthetics. By constructing a database of pieces through history that embody the intersection between art and philosophy, we can begin to understand how people value objectivity and how information is designated as historically significant.

## **Introduction**

The visual art field and the art market have long been staples of the western world's cultural framework. As we study history, we often use art as a tool to understand the psyche and perspective of major events through different artists. Through its conceptual role in language, culture and politics, art turns out to play a similar role in our understanding of the world as journalism. What initially appear as diametrically opposed concepts -- one medium based primarily in creative expression and manipulation, the other valued strictly in its ability to objectively report world events -- turn out to coexist and weave together in ways thought impossible. Both stand on varied spectrums of a creative foundation with a goal of seeking the truth, closely incorporating the motivations of their creators. In exploring this idea that journalism and art are one and the same, one can observe its application on contemporary sociological experiments and pursuits. Today we explore, to what extent does the overlap between art and journalism seep into our everyday understanding of cultural and political phenomena?

## **Background/Related Work and Motivation**

The philosophical methodology used to analyze this overlap lies in the field of aesthetics. Described in depth in Elain Scarry's 2011 *On Beauty and Being Just*, the study of beauty can be applied to politics and perception as a vital and additional lens because it provides the viewer an unencumbered mind when approaching dilemmas of truth and justice. With this mentality in mind, one can begin to reconsider the ways in which art bleeds through journalism on a daily basis. From a consumer's perspective, we are subject to the visual manipulations of magazine covers, photographs, propaganda and billboards when forming our opinions of current events. From an operations perspective, we observe similar precarious working conditions, baseline values and worker motivations.

The ethical dilemma that lies inherent in the capitalism that drives that art market and the intrinsic beauty value of art can also be tackled when contrasting art and journalism. This is explored in depth in "Artistic Journalism: Confluence in Forms, Values and Practices, Journalism Studies," a 2020 dissertation that dictates the thematic intersection between the two industries. Observing both mediums as "methods in culture for forming consciousness," it is understood that both industries should assume the responsibility of guiding the opinions of the masses in the direction of progress and justice, projecting values that promote the wellbeing of the planet. Contemporary examples of this lie clearly in visuals accompanying publications of crucial historical events. For example, "Cover Coverage: How U.S. Magazine Covers Captured the Emotions of the September 11 Attacks" by Ted Spiker describes how in the months following 9/11, magazines collaborated closely with art consultants to present covers that elicited specific emotions like sorrow, hope, terror and pride depending on the rate of recovery demanded of the American public in 2001.

An example that errs more on the side of art is the social media project, "Humans of New York." Brandon Stanton's mission to photograph and document the day-to-day lives of New Yorkers became a viral phenomenon, leading to the publishing of two books, verified social media accounts and charity organizations set up in its name. The journalistic values that run throughout the project are fairly transparent, Stanton is

merely capturing the reality of his subjects' existence and providing a quick and easy platform for his vast audience to experience. This project integrates values of both key elements of the research and its value can be assessed both for its journalistic and artistic integrity, as well as its sociological worth as a snapshot of contemporary political and cultural understanding.

In the midst of the information revolution and globalization, it is important to consider the health of the art and journalism markets. The rise of technology has led to the increased interaction between the viewer and the creator, making it all the more important for artists and journalists alike to properly respond and integrate a socio politically active public. As race, gender and sexuality issues are being brought to the forefront, it is the art and news worlds' responsibility to include diverse voices and provide a platform for long oppressed groups.

Research with this topic involves applying the idea that art and journalism are methods to describe history with the specific lens of the time to contemporary examples. During COVID-19 and the age of social media, there are a variety of cases that serve as poignant instances of how reporting and art of today are distinctly representative of the values we hold as much as they are portrayals of things happening around us. Considering that aesthetics coaches us to shift our perception in viewing the world, one must examine the utilitarian value of understanding this art and journalism overlap. More specifically, how the intersection and in depth exploration of products conjoining the two fields impact our everyday interpretation of culture and politics.

### **Methods**

The most comprehensive method to apply these theories would be to create a portfolio of different stories, art pieces and projects; then analyzing them for its role in every respective field. By building a spectrum of examples spanning from most objectively journalistic to most artistically expressive, we can begin to see the ways different mediums manipulate our perception of the world around us.

First, pieces will be placed on scale ranging from extremely subjective to extremely objective. Instances of more objective art would be photography, installation art pieces in organic locations or photorealistic paintings; more subjective journalism would alternately be opinion columns and editorial cartoons. Respective pieces will then be judged on lenses such as economic, social justice, foreign policy, everyday. They can further be scaled based on technological integration, where an Instagram graphic could play a central control role because its lack of journalistic integrity *and* artistic creativity is made up by the wide-scale exposure that only a one billion member platform can grant you. In creating something resembling an Aaron Thompson-Uther Index, this categorization system can help us better understand whether this philosophical concept exists better as an idea or if it actually has practical application in the way we read new articles or observe new work.

### **Expected Results**

With respect to traditionally interpreted art with political or social influences, results are expected to lean heavily on the subjective side and have high cultural significance. Exhibitions of this will range between photography, painting, sculpture and performance art. Historical evidence of lasting influence lie in pieces like

*Migrant Mother*, depicting a migrant woman holding her children during the American Depression and Eugene Delacroix's 1830 *Liberty Leading the People*, a Romantic painting commemorating the French's July Revolution of 1830.

For more journalistic pieces with visual artistic value, results are expected to exhibit more mainstream values of the time, integrating cultural references tied heavily to the time period, and hold lesser lasting significance. Primary examples of this will include editorial cartoons, magazine covers, art critic writing and corporate/government campaigns. Key historical examples of this include the "I Want You" propaganda posters from World War Two, Time Magazine's 1968 cover "The Gun in America," and Clement Greenberg's revolutionary art criticism article "Modernist Painting." While these examples certainly hold great historical significance, widespread recognition will be lesser than their traditional art counterparts. This is because art is designed to be felt and remembered, while journalism is designed to critique and tell a blatant message in as few words as possible.

### Works Cited

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### Conclusion

Understanding the application of aesthetics theory on journalism and art involves the analysis of real-world productions that serve to bridge the two fields. First, one must understand art and journalism to be extensions of each other through their abilities to tell any given individual's story through history, experience comparable industry cycles and and risks, and hold the same value based dilemmas surrounding objectivity and audience. Samples that represent varying degrees of artistic value and journalistic value best exemplify the impact that adopting an aesthetician's perspective of the world. These can be found in the visual counterparts to traditional journalistic mediums, historical artworks, government issued graphic, and most recently, social

media campaigns. In quantifying and categorizing said samples, one can potentially find the respective societal significance of products that project the shared values of both fields.

### **Budget/Timeline**

| <b>Stage</b>                       | <b>Deliverables</b>  | <b>Budget</b>   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Preparation                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select easily interpreted scale for artwork's objectivity/subjectivity value and historical significance value</li> <li>● Create content categories where the selected pieces may reside. This includes but is not limited to: political critique, economic critique, feminist critique, etc.</li> <li>● Establish parameters for selected pieces (i.e. visual, written, musical limits)</li> </ul> | \$0   |
| Data Collection                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create database of at least 100 pieces that serve as ideal examples where journalistic and artistic value may be judged</li> <li>● Properly document piece name, year of creation, publication location, creator, and piece type (political cartoon, painting, etc.).</li> </ul>  | \$0   |
| Initial Scaling and Categorization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place pieces on the initial scale</li> <li>● Place pieces in initially established categories, allow overlap</li> <li>● Consult and confirm with mentors and consultants</li> </ul>   | \$100 (mentor compensation)   |
| Adjustments                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amend scale degrees and labels as necessary</li> <li>● Amend add categories as necessary, emphasizing ease of indexing and search optimization</li> </ul>   | \$0   |
| Data Collection Addendum           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure documents in each categories and across all scales are balanced in amount and accuracy</li> </ul>  | \$0   |
| Final Product                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place pieces in online coded database, with categories as tags and scales as interactive sources for users to explore</li> <li>● Create standard with which more pieces can be added to database as examples of intersection will change in coming years</li> </ul>   | \$350<br>(freelance developer at \$50/hr for 6 hours + 5 years website domain at \$10/year) |