

Aesthetics and Form in Animation Works

Art as Play

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When we historically examine the definition of art, we encounter two approaches:

1. External Perspective
2. Internal Perspective

In external definitions, we often face the question: “What is art for?” This approach focuses on the practical, purposeful, and instrumental aspects. It begins with Plato, who decreed the expulsion of artists from the ideal state, arguing that the artist’s work, being a representation and imitation of external reality (which itself is an imitation of the world of ideas), lacks value and authenticity. This perspective has always been present in various cultural, ethical, political, and other versions throughout the history of art. From Medieval and religious art to the moralism of Tolstoy (who even excluded some of his greatest works from the realm of art because they were not morally focused) to the 20th century and the era of social revolutions, notably the Marxist approach, which defined art as a tool for the people or the working class and the Communist Party. In essence, this approach is top-down and commissioned.

The first approach can be categorized as thematic, external, and instrumental.

The second approach, or the internal perspective, is focused on the work of art itself. This definition can be traced back to Aristotle, Plato’s student, who defended this viewpoint. His book “Poetics” is solely dedicated to the form and structure of dramatic works. Throughout the history of art, thinkers such as Kant, Schiller (the playwright), Oscar Wilde (the writer), and eventually the Russian Formalists have supported this perspective. We refer to this approach as internal and form-based.

An exception is Wittgenstein, the Austrian philosopher, who disagrees with any definition of art. His followers interpret this as the belief that offering a definition of art is futile.

We are compelled to provide a definition. A lock that any key can open is not a lock. In order to evaluate a work as art, we inevitably need a definition; even though definitions may be fluid and temporary, they are necessary (referencing the philosophical logic of Karl Popper’s view, Wittgenstein’s peer).

Art as Play:

With the internal perspective, we arrive at the definition of art as play. When we speak of play, we must consider the concept of agreement. Every game is a contract. This contract is internal and does not relate to the outside world. The world of play is self-contained and self-sufficient. The value of a game depends on its internal design, its definitions, the relationships between its components, and how these elements lead to the enjoyment and exhilaration of the players and spectators. In one word: allure.

For example, children's games, sports games, chess, and football...

Games also have victories and defeats, which appear to be the goal of each game. In a way, we can liken the structure, design, and agreements of a game to form, and the goal of the game (winning or losing) to the theme. The factor that makes an activity regarded as a game by the people is, first and foremost, its logic, structure, and engaging contracts. For this reason, designing and creating a game is very difficult. For instance, chess is known as a deep and complex game from this perspective. It seems that when we encounter a game, its evaluation is not based on the outcome of the game but on the quality of the game presented. This is why sometimes a sports team that loses a game but plays well is applauded by spectators. In football, for example, what has made the Brazilian team legendary in the sports world is not the titles they've won but the quality and style of their gameplay. Conversely, there are some fans who only care about winning or losing.

Art is a game and a contract. Every art form has its own materials and components, which are placed in a complex game according to a contractual agreement. The artist, through this game, communicates with the audience, whose understanding of the contracts draws them in. Naturally, the materials used in the artwork are specific to the art form. For instance, the art of poetry, as a complex game, utilizes all the potential and actual capabilities of words (and what has emerged historically as poetic form). With each new poem, these capabilities are put to the test, and a new definition of artistic poetry is provided. In other words, it expands our definition and view of poetry.