

# Where does art come from?

Into the Middle Ages the arts included dialectics, rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, but not sculpture and certainly not ceramics. These were crafts. It was not until Leonardo that anyone called for painting to be recognised as an art. The seven liberal arts were intended to serve education and science and were the right of the free man. This is why they were called *artes liberales*. Painting, sculpture and poetry did not belong, although music did because it had to do with arithmetic and thus with the mind. Leonardo claimed this for painting too, and he also claimed that it didn't make you dirty: until then, any art that was executed with the hand was considered to be low status craft work. This representation has burned itself so thoroughly into our consciousness that it is obvious to us that art derives from **craft**. This is what

thoughts, the whole field of art can be represented in a triangle, with **high art** at the tip.

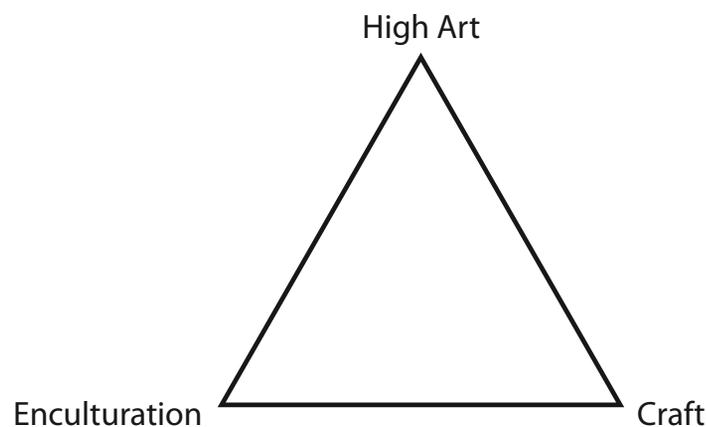
Every artwork finds a place somewhere within this triangle, depending on the direction in which it tends. The closer it comes to one of the corners, the more closely it corresponds to the relevant conditions. It may nevertheless still contain a greater or smaller amount of the features of the other two corners, and then it does not lie on one of the boundary lines but further in the enclosed area.

**High art** implies that there is also low art. Not Yes or No, art or not art, but an infinitely variable scale of works from an instinctive sense of what art is, until we speak of great art, and then we can still speak of something higher and more isolated: truly great art. Skill alone is not enough, and a trained eye alone

In the left hand corner of the triangle, the influence of regional culture is greatest. The artworks of the indigenous peoples in Africa, Oceania, Asia and America, as well as some hobby art, derive from enculturation. The origin of a work can often be recognised by minimal peculiarities (if the art market asks about provenance) – just as someone may speak in a certain way without speaking a different language.

In the right hand corner of the triangle stands craft with its functionality. This is zero in high art.

On the left hand boundary line, between enculturation and high art, the symbol is dominant, and the functionality of craft is zero.



art history teaches us. But it can also come from a different source, which we can learn from cultural anthropology: it can also come from the culture in which one lives and which is taken for granted in one's perceptions and behaviour. Humans take over the cultural norms and values of the society into which they are born before they develop as individuals, thus making art what they instinctively feel to be art. Integration into a culture is termed **enculturation**. Art can thus come from enculturation, and not only from craft, which we already knew. After these

is not enough to judge it. It is like making a judgement about people: beauty lies behind the beautiful. Since the 18th century, the age of the Enlightenment, a work of art was not supposed to be just an outward depiction but also to have an inner picture, an idea.

In high art, tradition is absent, as is the imperative for use, which are present in craft. Equally, the spatially limited influence of the culture of a society into which one was born is missing as high art is global.

On the bottom boundary line between enculturation and craft, tradition predominates: to the left, including notions of belief, to the right behaviour patterns. Globality is zero here.

On the right hand boundary, between craft and high art, applied art is located. Art is based on skill here.

Like in no other artistic genre, knowledge in skill is multifaceted and sophisticated in ceramics. With the invention of porcelain in 1708, craft knowledge derived from experience was superseded

by knowledge derived from research. This led to new possibilities of the technical perfectibility of an idea or a vision. The English term “engineering” implies this creative achievement better than German “Ingenieurwesen” - “the engineer entity”. In analogy to the term neuroengineering in brain research, which President Obama has elevated to the most iconic and ambitious research project, in the field of art, we may speak of **art engineering**. This may be the term for applied art in future if we consider the digital fabricators, the 3D printers, that are already in use today to produce items from predefined dimensions and forms. According to the magazine *Technology Review* (Heise Zeitschriftenverlag, Hanover, 2001), these printers will unleash “creativity turbo”. As yet this is only advertising.

In applied ceramics (its own form of art engineering), manipulation of material in terms of symbolism is new. Wild, rough stoneware expresses nature, in contrast to the fineness and delicacy of porcelain, although both are fired to the same temperature. Used in the same piece of work, this dualism can express conflict. Closeness to nature may mean human nature or a natural product. Fineness and delicacy may mean culture and civilisation or a refined mind.

The art market has thoroughly ruined knowledge of art for us. Art became a product and it is only art if it can be sold. The view of the whole was buried, split up into individual disciplines that must be mutually exclusive. This shows the polarised and contradictory nature of the system, i.e. that capitalism means freedom but it restricts it to the market economy. The criticism of capitalism growing to dominate all areas of life and culture is growing because this general principle is unjust towards the individual. Art as we understand it as ceramists wants to liberate itself from this long lasting relationship, and unite with cultural anthropology to form a new unity. Breaking the dominance of the one and only through the constellation with the new concept of cultural anthropology then thus serves to illuminate the concept of art. And in this autonomous constitution, the artwork itself will become a medium of cognition.

### What about hobby art?

It could be seen as a new kind of folk art, but the definition would not permit it; this requires it to be rooted in the soil, and closely tied to the traditional life cycle of a certain region and popular customs and beliefs. None of this applies to hobby art. But in every culture, an instinctive sense of what art is exists. Thus one cannot content oneself with a definition that restricts folk art to custom and belief if we are talking about a new kind of art from the people. The term folk art is only used in Europe, and the rice bowls of Korean peasants that were the models for Japanese tea ceramics are not included in it. Although the term is outdated, in Germany, there is a distinction between “Volkskunde” (folkloristics), which deals with folk art, and “Völkerkunde” (ethnology). These two areas are subsumed under cultural anthropology.

In the 17th century, house painters obtained faience from the factories to paint it, and after the invention of porcelain in the 18th century, white ware from the factories in Meissen and Vienna. They painted it with black stain (“Schwarzlot”) and iron red, painting over Chinese designs as there was a demand for a European style of painting to compete with chinoiserie. House painting could be seen as a folkloric craft executed in the home. Peasant art was similar. But as it was executed in the spare time between the demands of work, it was in effect free-time or hobby art. But this only became spoken of in the industrial age. Even if it is not art, it can serve to compensate for the disappointment over the lack of opportunities for self-expression and autonomy at work, which is widespread in industrial society.

Whilst according to cultural scientists, “folk art” died out with the advent of industrialisation in the 19th century, artisans became more interested in it. At the Paris World Exhibition in 1867, rural decorative techniques from various countries going back to the Middle Ages were exhibited, techniques absent from contemporary craft work. At the following World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, a whole section was dedicated to folk art. Increasingly, an awareness of an instinctive sense of art manifested in simple designs under various traditional influences became evident, enlivening the burgeoning arts and crafts movement.

The 1900 Paris world Exhibition again demonstrated the increased interest in folk work.

Even today at the Ceramics School in Kolimbari on Crete, a stock of traditional patterns is preserved for the students to copy. In this way, the country’s folk art heritage is continued. Schools of this kind were set up in various locations in the 19th century within the framework of what was known as folk industry – in Norway, Sweden, Bulgaria, Galicia, Russia and Portugal – especially in order to continue a tradition that had survived among the people.

In general, through industrial development, an awareness grew that something worth preserving was being lost by industry taking over all areas of life.

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