**MODULE 1**

**UNIT I**

**INTRODUCTION**

**The Meaning of the Humanities**

From time immemorial man has puzzled over the meaning of his existence. “What am I? Why am I in this world?” where do I go from here?” These are some of the questions he has sought answers to in an effort to “make sense” out of life’s apparent confusion.

Through he ages many attempts have been made to answer these questions, and records of these attempts can be found in the writings of great thinkers as well as in the arts. Yet even now it seems taht man has not yet found the definitive answer to what he really is. The meaning of his existence has become all the more puzzling today when his traditional functions are being taken over by machines.

We learn what it is to be human by studying humanity. But to do this we obviously cannot depend on direct contacts wiht fellow human beings. Our contacts within out short lifetime will naturally be confined to a limited set of people, places, and events. Thus, we have to depend heavily on vicarious experience, and we rech out to people of different cultures in different times and places through whatever means would bring us nearer to them. This encounter is made possible for us in the humanities.

What, then, are the humanities?

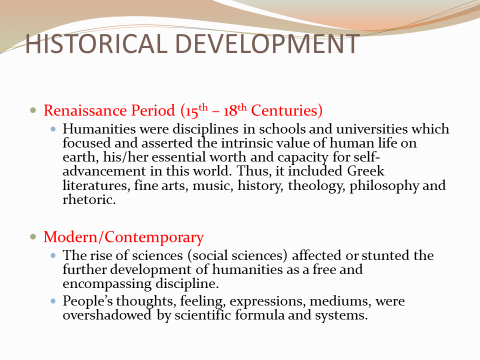
Broadly speaking, they are records of man’s quest for answers to the fundamental questions he asks about himself and about life. The content of humanities is anything that is inherently human – man’s experiences, his values, his sentiments, his ideals, his goals. The humanities are thus expressions of man’s feelings and thoughts.

The term “humanities” was first applied to the writings of ancient Latin authors which were read not only for their clarity of language and forceful literary style, but also, and more specially, for their moral teaching.



During the Medieval Age, the humanities dealt with the metaphysics of the religious philosopher. The goal was the cultivation of the spiritual life and the preparation for the hereafter.

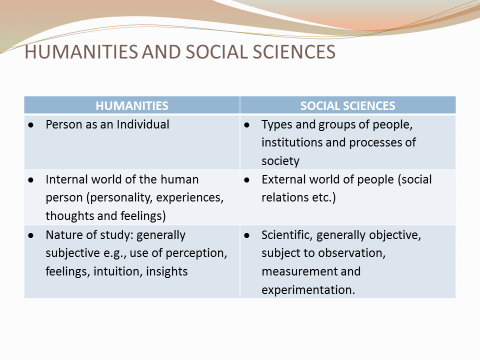
During the Renaissance, the word came to refer to the set of disciplines taught in the universities, which included grammar, rhetoric, history, literature, music, philosophy, and theology – a body of knowledge aimed to make man “human, cultured, and refined.” This developed from the concept which recognized man’s essential worth and capacity for self-advancement in this world.



In our century, the humanities serve to provide the student with certain skills and values through the arts. Instruction places his area of specialization within the broader perspective of the human condition and ideal as imaginatively rendred in painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, dance, drama and cinema, as well as in the traditional components of the humanities.

The humanities thus provide more than just an appreciation of what is “the true, the good, and the beautiful,” concepts which vary from age to age, from country to country. They are aimed to shape the student’s subjective energies (his feelings, attitudes, and aspirations) in accordance with a particular view of the social world in which he dreams, acts, and fulfills himself. The view about man and his world changes and so too the content and direction of the humanities; but in all cases, their principal task remains the same, which is to make man conscious and critical of, and sensitive and responsive to the norms and hopes of his society.

**The Humanities and the Sciences**

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The humanities are distinct from the sciences, which are studies dealing with the external world of man, as well as with the facets of man’s being that can be subjected to observation, measurement, and experiementation. The sciences enable man to understand and control nature and to harness its energy to make his life more comfortable and convenient.

The humanities, on the other hand, deal with man’s internal world – with his personality and experiences, matters that cannot be exactly measured, classified, or controlled. For this reason, the study of the humanities cannot be as precise nor as well-structured and uniform as the study of, say, biology or physics. The humanities’ approach is subjective: it makes much use of perception, feeling, intuition, and insight.

There is, too, a difference between the humanities and the social sciences. While both are concerned with man, the focus of the humanities is on man as an individual. In the social sciences, the main interest is on types and groups of human beings, and on the institutions and processes of society.

Are the humanities necessary? Yes, as much as the sciences are. Man needs an image of himself, an understanding of his nature. Through words, lones, mass, line, color, or design, the arts provide man with a measure of his own passions and desires, his relation with other men and his environment, as well as his potentials.

Both the sciences and the humanities are necessary for the development of the complete, social man, ready to take on his responsibilities in this rapidly changing world and to enjoy life as he lives it.

**UNIT II**

**I. Understanding the Arts**

**Art: Its Meaning and Importance**

**The Nature of Art**

***Art is Everywhere***

The popular feeling about art is that it exists only in concert halls museums , and art galleries in a wrld by itself, accessible only to those who can afford to pay for its enjoyment or to the critics and scholars who take time to study the art objects. On the contrary, art is found everywhere. It is very much a part of our lives. We cannot ignore its presence even if we try to.

We find art in the clothes and accessories we wear, in the design of our future and furnishings, in the style of the houses we build and the vehicles we use. We find art objects in the home and in the community, in reigion, in trade and in industry.

The coins we pay to the jeepney driver, as well as the religious medal we wear on a chain around our neck – these are examples of relief sculpture. Our paper bills and postage stamps are examples of engraving. The statues of angels and saints in our churches and cemeteries are freestanding sculpture. And the multicolored designs on the sides of and inside a jeepney are examples of decorative patterns. In every twon plaza we see a monument of some hero, a fountain, or a consciously laid out garden. The buildings we pass by on our way to school and our school buildings themselves are examples of architecture.

All these things are part of man’s effort to lessen the drabness and tedium of everyday living and to transform his environment into a more interesting place to live in.

We may go further with out list – we cannot miss the paintings of fruits, flowers, sunsets, vendors and busy streets hung for sale or hawked by vendors along equally busy streets. Neither can we ignore the landscapes on ice cream carts or on the walls of narrow downtown restaurants. And then every day, too, we hear of art exhibits in some art gallery or of recitals in a school auditorium. Memorial parks, too, compete with one another in the number and kind of sculptures they commission for use in their landscaping.

Almost every week we read notices about theatrical performances at the Cultural Center of the Philippines or some other theaters and auditoriums. We also have occasional plays and other stage presentations in campuses. Every year we look forward to the pabasa and cenaculo during the Holy Week and above everything, there are moviehouses, everywhere, for, after music, the cinema is the art form that we enjoy most nowadays.

Art is not confined to our cities and towns alone; it also exists among ethnic groups, many of whom, by choice or necessity, live far away from urban centers. T’boli women have been stringing colorful bead necklaces and wearing them for generations. The brightly colored Lepanto cloth that our dress designers rave so much about comes from the handlooms of the women of the Mountain Province. Some of the finest wood sculptures we see in many souvenir shops today have been made by Ifugao woodcarvers whose deft hands have also carved the images of thier ancestral spirits that keep constant watch over their homes and granaries.

The Maranaws are noted for their exquisite metalwork – kris handles, vases, bowls, and trays engraved with intricate floral and geometric designs. Their women wear colorful handwoven malong and delicately handcrafted jewelry. And their houses, decorated with ornamental abstractions, are interestig works of art themselves.

One must not overlook the music and dances of the Bagobos, Manobos, Tinguians, Mangyans, and other ethnic groups. These are very much a part of their religious rituals and social functions.

We find art at all times. If we go back in time to the prehistoric cave dwellers, we would find art as an integral part of their communal lives. Evidences of early man’s attempt to objectify his ideas and beliefs are found in the paintings of animals on the walls of caves in soutwestern France and northern Spain, as well as in Africa and Australia. Archaeological diggings in various parts of the world have unearthed clay statuettes of fertility goddesses and ppieces of bone, ivory and horn incised with images and animals. All these date back to antiquity. Art is indeed as old as the human race itself.

How can we account for this universal presence of art?

Art exists in all forms of human society and in every generation because it serves some fundamental human needs.

***Art as Expression and Communication***

No one can contain an intense emotion within himself for long. The tension results would compel him to unburden himself or share the feeling with others.

We express our emotional state by some visible signs and activities. We burst into song when we are happy, or we dance, for it is pleasant to express joy through rhythmic body movements. We likewise sing out our love or our despair or try to convey our deep emotions in poetic language.

Art has grown out of man’s need to express himself. Expression in the arts, however, is not limited to the revelation of emotion alone. The personal and social values of the artist and his penetrating psychological insights into human realityare also conveyed through the arts.

An artist is usally gifted with a special sensitivity towards the world around him. His perceptions is not only of surface appearances but of forces taht lie underneath – hidden realities which we ordinary laymen, do not usally notice until they are framed for our attnetion and consideration in works of art. It is the discovery of these realities that the artitst expresses in his art.

“The artist,” says Joyce Cary, “always starts with an experience which is a kind of discovery... It surprises him – that is what is ually called an intuition or an inspiration. They joy of his discovery is his starting point”. This discovery may be the perception of something interesting in the natural world such as the colors of a tropical sunset, the geometric design of a flower or the rhythm of the falling rain. Or it may be an awareness of something in the nature of man, in his relationship iwth other human beings, or in his relationship with other human beings or in his relationship with God.

As John Canaday, a noted art critic, has remarked:

Since prehistoric times man has been preoccupied with three major searches in the adventure of exploration that is recorded in works of art. First, he has been finding ways to make appropriate images of his gods. Second, he has also discovered the world around him. Or again, he has been discovering himself, pondering his own nature, trying to decipher the mystery of what a human being is.

The artist’s discovery may stem from a close scrutiny of his environment, from contact with ideas advanced by other persons and recorded in books, or from an observation of a society’s way of life. And his thoughts may be philosophical, idealistic, militant, bitter, tolerant or humorous. Whatever it is, when an artist produces a poem, a song, a sculpture, or even a chair, he is actually saying or revealling something significant.

As in other systems of communication, the artist uses symbols which he organizes into some comprehensible equivalent of the experience that he is trying to convey. If the symbols are understood by his audience, then communication has been established.

Sometimes it is not the artist’s main intention to communicate. It is enough for him to express himself vent his spleen, so to speak, to relieve himself of tension. He finds satisfaction merely in having created a new form. This is especially true of the action painters of our time who are more intensely fascinated with the act of painting itself than with the finished product. They do not care whether or not their personal imagery is understood by the viewer, nor are they interested in delighting him through the pleasing use of color, shape or design.

Generally speaking, thorugh while each work of art is evidently the expression of an artist’s perosnal viewpoint, it is at the same time an expression of a general vision of the age in which it was created. For the artist, like any other individual, belongs to a milieu and he cannot escape the influence of his social, economic, political, religious, scientific, and technological environment. These factors affect his artistic expression. His vision is also necessarily influenced by his cultural traditions and by his own training. Yet a sensitive artist is often not a conscious social agent, and a great work of art need not be a statement of what has transpired in a particular age. But usually the artists becomes unwittingly a kind of historian, recording in his work the attitudes and way of life of his period. Or he becomes a critic or moralist, analyzing and commenting on the virtues and vices of his particular society, as well as pointing out a course of action for its renovation.

At any rate, art in any given period simultaneously reflects two things – the genius of its creator as well as the sensibility or th characteristic values and attitudes toward important aspects of life held by the society in which the work of art was born. Even the most subjective and personal expressions show these two aspects. If we take any kundiman by Nicanor Abelardo, Francisco Santiago or any of their contemporaries, we will find that although it shows the particular creative ingenuity of its composer, in its melody is a haunting melacholy characteristic of the age which produced the song form.

***Art as Creation***

Man has also been led by an innate craving for order to create objects that are delightful to perceive. The word “creation” in this sense refers to the act of combining or re-ordering already existing materials so that a new object is formed.

As a creative activity, art involves skill or expertness in handling materials and organizing them into new, structurally pleasing, and significant units. This skill does not just happen. It is acquired through long training and constant practice.

The word “art” originated from the Latin ars, which means “skill.” It is equivalent to he Green techne, from which our modern word “technology” is derived. In the early days, the term was applied not only to craftsmanship but also to proficiency in performing any activitiy. Thus, medicine, agriculture and military expertise were considered arts. Now these skills have been grouped under the category of the practical sciences. Although “art” is still used to mean “proficiency”, as when we speak of the art of cooking and of the martial arts, the word is now commonly used to refer to skills and products which are primarily intended to delight the senses and produce a satisfying experience of the beautiful. While these works may also have other functions – a buidling serves a particular purpose: as a residence, a place of worship, or an office; and a stage play may have a religious or political intent – they are considered workds of art because they have aesthetic value.

Art is a planned activity. Unlike the spider when it weaves its web, the artist does not put his materials into shape instinctively. Rather, he thinks out a design, selects his materials, and arranges them according to his design. To be sure, he may not be wholly original; no artist really is. But he would be producing something that never existed before. Sometimes, the finished product may not turn out as he had originally envisioned it to be. Creation involves constant correction and redirection, depending on the demands of the material and the challenges it poses.

Sometimes, the art object may be the result of a cooperative activity, by a team of artists motivated by a common goal, as in the production of a play or a movie.

Each finished product is an expression of order – the artist’s idea of order. The artist has made the form the vehicle of his idea. Its parts have been so integrated as to produce a unique entity which communicates to all men for as long as it lasts. It is taken as a self-contained object, reacted to, and evaluated by people who come in contact with it.

***Art and Experience***

At least three major kinds of experience are involved in the artistic activity. As we noted earlier, it usually starts as an experience which the artist wants to communicate. Then the act of expressing this experience – that of crating the art object or form – is itself another kind of experience. Finally, when the work is done, there is the artists’ gratifying experience of having accomplished something significant.

But there is still another kind of experience associated with art. This refers to what an onlooker or listener undergoes when he perceives the work of art. The perception may kindle an experience which is similar or related to that which the artist tried to express.

It goes without saying that art must be directly seen or heard in order to be enjoyed or appreciated. No amount of reading about a painting or sculpture can take the place of actually seeing it. Listening to a lecture on music is of very little value unless one also hears the music itself, and reading a play is not a fair substitute for seeing it actually performed.

A varying combination of sensory, emotional and intellectual responses is involved in experiencing art.

Some people looking at a painting for instance, experience a kind of delight similar to that which one feels when he sees a beautiful girl or lovely scenery. This is largely a sensory response. It is the same kind of response many people have when they hear a lively march or a lilting melody. They feel like marching or dancing. They do not seem to need a deeper understanding of what the artists has tried to express and how he has managed to achieve his purpose, although, of course, such understanding would further enchance their enjoyment.

Then there is emotional response triggered by the recognition of a familiar situation presented as the subject of the work. The response may stem, on the other hand, from memories evoked by the subject. A landscape painting may recall happy childhood days spent in some such landscape; a song may bring back a pleasurable experience in the past associated with it.

Sometimes our emotional response sprigs from our identfying ourselves with the people portrayed in the work of art. This is especially true when we watch a play or a movie. We go through what Samuel Taylor Coledridge described as “the willing suspension of disbelief” and accept as real what is happening o the stage or on the screen. We may even assume the role of one of the characters and go through the same range of emotions that he goes through. This identification with the character is known as empathy. Thus, when one character has a tragic experience, we cry with pity for him, and we also feel fear and sorrow with him, because we virtually live the sme life he lives. Of course, when the lights are turned on at the end of the performance, we go back to our former selves, relieved to note that the experience was something we had only vicariously gone through.

Some works, on the other hand, delight the mind primarily. These are works whose unique arrangements of elements, apart from subject matter, stimulate the intellect more than they do the emotions.

Our reaction t oart is personal and individual. We tend to respond to works of art according to the level of our expectation. Thus, we like some works and we don’t like others, simply because they don’t reveal to us what we feel they should. We cannot escape from our personal preferences. And when we look at art, we do so with a prejudiced eye. Our reaction would be colored, too, by the ideas of our time about particular aspects of art. Each generation rends to prefer one style of art to another.

Appreciating a work of art does not just mean responding emotionally to it. It implies an intellectual involvement with what is to be appreciated, be it a painting, a novel or a musical composition. To learn to appreciate any on the arts, we must understand what goes into its making; its elements or components and how these are put together in a pattern of relationships, coalescing and becoming the unity which is the work of art itself. We can hardly appreciate that which we cannot understand. For example, we cannot like (or dislike) a poem in Chinese if we do not understand Chinese at all.

In some cases, then, our appreciation of art may be blocked by our inability to understand the language used by he artist or by his presentation of an altogether unfamiliar viewpoint. But if we are interested in getting at the artistic truth that he has tried to convey, then we must make an attempt to understand his expression. We may not altogether agree with his statement, but the work of art will at least led us to form ideas of our own about the matter.

Whatever response we have to a work of art, we cannot fail to experience a sense of awe at the objects existence. We look at its form and complexity, we consider the insight expressed and we think of the artist’s talent as something extraordinary, almost magical, even divine. And the wonder of it all is that the artist is first and foremost a man, just like all of us.

***Art and Nature***

Art is not nature. A distinction must be made between the two. The colorful sunset over Manila Bay, the sky full of stars on a summer evening, the sound of mayas singing in the field – these are natural things. They are not works of art.

A work of art is man-made, and although it may closely resemble nature, it can never duplicate nature. The closest that we can get to doing this is with a camera. But eve then, a photograph is only a record of the subject or the scene.

The plastic flower that grace many of our shop windows and living rooms may be so much like real flowers as to fool people into thinking they are real, but they will always be what they actually are – artificial, not natural. Real flowers metamorphose from buds to full-blown blossoms to faded beauties, but artificial flowers do not change. If they have been shaped as buds, they will remain buds while they last. Nature is evanescent and always recreating itself; art is non-repeatable and unchanging.

It is this permanenceance that John Keats speacks of in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” when he describes a scene painted on the Greek vase thus:

Fair, youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can these be bare;

Bold, lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal – yet, do not grieve;

She cannot face, though hast not thy bliss,

Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Nature has been a constant source of models for art, and great artists have drawn their subjects from nature, but they have never tried to make an exact copy of a natural thing. Their concern has not been to describe the actual appearance of objects but to tell us what they felt or thought about theses objects.

In presenting a human experience, although artists draw from actual life situations, they do some altering of details so that the work becomes a modified representation of real life, not an exact copy. Human experience is always complex and cluttered with incidents that are unimportant and unrelated. The artist, in his desire to help us see life more directly and clearly, re-orders the details, removing irrelevant ones and rearranging the rest, so that the “slice of life” presented is intensified and made more significant.

In many ways, we use art to improve on nature. In a garden, if we allow nature to have its own way, the plants would grow anywhere and any way they would. With art-in this case, the art of landscaping – we can bring order into the garden sculpture for accent. The result would be something different from the wilderness it would have been without our intervention.

***Art and Beauty***

The desire for beauty and order around us is another basic human need. Somehow these provide the much needed comfort and balance to our lives.

We may find beauty in nature, as in the loveliness of a volcano rising majestically to the skies, or of a slender waterfall that looks like a bridal veil from a distance. Or we may find it in man-made objects like an impressive bridge, a ceramic vase, or even in a tender love song.

A thing of beauty is one which gives us pleasure when we perceive it. The delight that we experience is called aesthetic pleasure, “aesthetic” coming from a Greek word which means “to perceive with senses.”

Our desire for beauty stems from a primordial sense of order and consistency. We close our eyes to tense up when we see garish colors, illogical arrangements, unbalanced forms, and deformities. This is an automatic, non-thinking reaction. We stop our ears when we hear shrill or harsh sounds and lou noises. But our senses quicken when we see our touch pleasurable shapes, textures and designs and hear melodious sounds.

What we call beauty is relative, however. What may be beautiful to us may not be so to others. And no two persons would derive exactly the same degree of satisfaction from seeing what they mutually agree upon as a beautiful object or from listening to what they both consider a beautiful tune. Our attitude is usually conditioned by many factors, among which are our social involvement, our education and training and our past experiences or some psychological and emotional associations we have with the object. Very often, then, this attitude is colored by some personal preferenes and biases. This explains why, when men and women sit to judge a beauty contest. It is never easy for them to quickly arrive at a verdict on the winner. There will always be as many different opinions as there are members on the panel. Some would find dark-complexioned ones. And while there would be particular standards set down on the scorecards, there would certainly be wide differences in the number of points given each contestant, so much so that the services of a computer are often regarded as necessary nowadays in getting the final judgement.

Concepts of beauty change as time passes. The prevailing idea held by one generation is usually different from that of the previous one. Nowhere is this more apparent than in fashion designs. One period may consider slenderness very attractive, and so dress designs would be such as to create the illusion of slenderness. On the other hand, one period may emphasize the fullness of the female figure, still another may conisder flat-chestedness very appealing.

An artist’s own concept may change as he grows older. This accounts for differences in an artist’s own style and expression.

Concepts of beauty vary between cultures too. That is why the Western listener finds it difficult to appreciate Asian music, just as we in our time, with our ears attuned to music in the Western tradition, find little pleasure in listening to the music of our ethnic group.

We expect every work of art to be beautiful. But it may not always be so. If we look around us, we will find many works of art which we would not exactly regard as delightful to perceive. It is not always an artist’s intention to present a beautiful subject or to evoke a pleasant sensation in the viewer. Sometimes he may deliberately communicate a feeling of revulsion about things he has observed in the human condition. Sometimes he may aim to jolt us from our complacency by showing us the borrors of deprivation, violence and war. Francisco Goya’s etched series The Disasters of War, and Pablo Picasso’s Guernica especially show these.

However, “ugly” the subject, if we find in the representation a sense of order, a harmonious arrangement of formal elements, then we can also experience aesthetic pleasure from looking at it. Beauty in art may be the result of hte successful organization of lines, color, shapes and spaces in order to convey an idea or emotion.

**THE SUBJECT OF ART**

**What Subject Is**

When people look at a painting or a sculpture for the first time, the initial question that they usually ask is “What is it?” or “What does it show?” Somehow, they expect to see recognizable images in these works of art.

To a majority of peole, the appeal of most works of art lies in the representation of familiar objects. Their enjoyment of painting, sculpture and literature comes not from their perception of the “meaning” or composition but from the satisfaction they get out of recognizing the subject or understanding the narrative content.

The subject of art refers to any person, object, scene or event described or represented in a work of art. Some arts have subject, others do not. The arts that have subject are called ***representational or objective arts***. Those that do not have subject are known as non-***representational or non-objective arts***.

Painting, sculpture, the graphic arts, literature and the theater arts are generally classified as representational, although, a good deal of paintings, prints and sculptures are without subject. Music, architecture, and many of the functional arts are non-representational. Some musical compositions have subject, though. They are generally referrd to as program music. This kind of music may imitate natural sounds like Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Fight of the Bumblebee”; set a mood, like Debussy’s “Claire de Lune”; or narrate a story like Dukas’ “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice.”

The non-objective arts do not present descriptions, stories or references to identifiable objects or symbols. Rather, they appeal directly to the senses primarily because of the satisfying organization of their sensuous and expressive elements. Most musical pieces are not imitations of natural sounds, but we enjoy listening to them because the sounds have been pleasingly arranged and because they evoke certain emotional responses in us.

Through such elements of design as line and color, a painter may convey a message non-objectively. Bright colors usually convey a happy mood; dark, drab ones create a somber mood. Similarly, light and delicate lines suggest gaiety, while dark, heavy ones communicate some serious or heavy feeling.

Many contemporary painters have turned away from representational to non-objective painting. They have shifted their attention to the work of art as an object in itself, an exciting combination of shapes and colors that fulfills an aesthetic need without having to represent images or tell a story. Many modern paintings have purely visual appeal; they are therefore difficult for the literal-oriented spectator to relate to.

**Ways of Representing a Subject**

The manner of representing subject matter varies according to the inventiveness and purpose of each artist. He may employ ***realism***, ***abstraction***, or***distortion***.

When things are depicted in the way they would normally appear in nature, the representation is said to be realistically rendered.

Strictly speaking, no work of art is truly realistic, since no work of art is an accurate copy of what exists in the natural world. Anyone who has watched a painter at work knows how many details he leaves out, alters, and adds, departing from recording optical reality. Many great artists have been able to create the illusion of reality through a selective use of details.

A realistic novel is not just a narration of events which actually took place. Rather, it is an imaginative narrative, the details of which the author has so manipulated that the situation appears as something that could have really happened or may possibly happen. It could, in fact, be anchored on a historical fact, but its characters would be imaginary people, although they would seem to be like some peole we know or have met.

Some paintings seem to be photographic renderings of facts. But most paintings and sculptures are abstract to a certain degree. Abstraction is the process of simplifying and/or reorganizing objects and elements according to the demands of artistic expression. The artist selects and renders the objects with their shapes, colors and positions altered.

In some abstract works, enough of a likeness has been retained to represent real things. In others, the original objects have been reduced to simple geometric shapes and theycn be rarely identified unless the artist has named them in his title. His concern is the rendering of the essence of the subject rather than the natural form itself.

When the figures have been so arranged that proportions differ noticeably from natural measurements, the objects are said to be distorted. Distortion could also mean twisting, stretching or deforming the natural shape of the object.

The relief sculptures and paintings of ancient Egypt were distorted. The head and the lower part of the body were shown in profile, while the eye and the upper part of the body were in frontal position. Convention demanded the higly stylized representation of the figure.

Distortion is usally done to dramatize the shape of a figure or to create an emotional effect. El Greco elongated the bodies of Christ and the saints in his paintings to enhance the illusion of spirituality. Caricatures employ distortions so that their targets of ridicule would appear grotesque and hateful.

We generally regard surrealism as realism plus distortion. This is only one type of surrealism, though. In giving expression to what is in the subconscious, the surrealists compose dreamlike scenes that show an irrational arrangement of objects. The images are recognizable, sometimes drawn from nature, but they are combined in utterly fantastic and unnatural relationships. Galo Ocampo’s Ecce Homo depicts a bound Christ-figure, his heart and blood vessels exposed, standing amidst ruin and decay, with bombs falling and dogfights going on in the background. And Marc Chagall’s I and the Village is an unusual rendering of a village scene with a man and his cow shown in the foreground along with what they are both thinking about.

Another type of surrealism depicts the workings of the subconscious, the artist using symbols which are not directly associated with the familiar physical world. Some of the paintings of Paul Klee have a definite suggestion of doodling and those of Joan Miro remind us of improvisations done by children.

**The Artist and His Choice of Subject**

Practically everything under the sun is raw material for the artist to draw his subject from. Most, if not all, of athe visual arts are representations of things the artists imagined or dreamed about.

Whatever subject an artist chooses, his choice involves some personal statement; it shows what he considers significant or aesthetically satisfying.

An artist’s choice of subject is usally affected by his medium. He cannot represent landscape in a free-standing sculpture, for instance. The nature of the medium demands subjects that would show solidity and bulk.

An artist’s choice of subject also depends largely upon the time in which he lives and on the patronage he gets. During the Middle Ages, for example, almost the only subject that a European artist could depict was religious. The Church, having great influence over practically every human activity then, employed the arts in its work of spreading the Gospel. With the withdrawal of the Church’s patronage, artists turned more and more toward secular subjects, especially when the concern of man shifted from the other-worldly to matters in this world.

In our century, many subjects have become available to the artist. Developments in science and technology have opened new vistas to him. The stark mechanization of our time has led him to study and represent mechanical forms. And researches in medicine and psychology have drawn him to explore the inner world of man.

The value of a work of art does not depend on the artist’s choice of subject. It does not necessarily follow that the more profound the subject, the greater the work of art. Rather, the worth of any representational work of art depends upon the way the subject has been represented. As Harold Osborne says:

“How a work of art is to be appreciated and assessed, it would now be agreed, has more to do with the way in which its subject or theme is presented than with what is presented... It would generally be taken as a matter of course that no subject or situation or theme can of itself guarantee the aesthetic quality of a work of art by reason of any such qualities as nobility or grandeur ascribable to it independently of hte work in which it is presented... The most sublime themes can become the subject matter of trivial and medio-sublime themes can become the subject matter of trivial and mediocre works of art. Conversely, no subject or theme, however trivial or unattractive it may be, is precluded from becoming the topic of an aesthetically admirable work of art.”

**Kinds of Subject**

The subjects depicted in works of art, particularly the visual arts, can be grouped into:

1. **Landscapes, seascapes and cityscapes**. Artists have always been fascinated with their physical environment. Since ancient times, landscapes and seascapes have been the favorite subjects of Chinese and Japanese painters, who would observe nature, meditate lengthily on its eternal qualities and paint it in its varying moods. It is not uncommon to see on wide screens or handscrolls Chinese brush paintings of mist-covered mountains dwarfing human figures and animals.

Filipino painters, too, have captured on canvas the Philippine countryside, as well as the sea bathed in pale moonlight or catching the reflection of the setting sun. In his works, Fernando Amorsolo romanticized Philippine landscapes, turning the rural areas into idyllic places where agrarian problem are virtually unknown.

In Europe, the painting of pure landscapes without human figures was almost unheard of until the Renaissance, when artists began to rediscover their natural environment. But for a time, though, landscapes served only as background for figures, as in the Mona Lisa, or as settings from some religious scenes.

Modern painters seem to be more attracted to scenes in cities. Traffic jams, high-rises, and skylines marked by uneven rooftops and televeision antennae have caught their fancy. Vicente Manansala, Arturo Luz, and Mauro Malang Santos are among the Filipino painters who have done interesting cityscapes.

1. **Still life**. Some artists love to paint groups of inanimate objects arranged in an indoor setting. While flower and fruit arrangements are among their favorites, they also portray such objects as dishes of food on a dining table, pots and pans on a kitchen table, or musical instruments and music sheets. They usually arrange the objects to show particular human interests and activities.

The still lifes of Chinese and Japanese painters usually show flowers, fruits and leaves still in their natural setting, unplucked from the branches.

Today, artists generally ar not so much interested in the realistic portrayal of the objects as they are in the exciting arrangement and combinations of the objects’ shapes and colors. The cubists deliberately flattened out and simplified the forms or rearranged their parts so that a unique visual effect was achieved. Cezanne’s and Picasso’s still lifes are of this nature. And so are some of Manansala’s and Ang Kiu Kok’s.

1. **Animals**. Another popular subject is animals. They have been presented by artists from almost every age and place. In fact, the earliest known paintings are representations of animals on the wall of caves. The grace and vigor of animals in action have attracted painters and sculptors alike and have inspired poets as well. William Blake wrote about the symmetry and power of the tiger and the meekness of the lamb.

The carabo has been a favorite subject of Filipino artists. Romeo Tabuena’s stylized carabaos have graced Philippine Christmas cards. Napoleon Abueva’s bronze and marble sculptures have captured the strength and beauty of the animal.

The Maranaws have an animal formcalled the sarimanok as their proudest prestige symbol. Mounted on a pole and given a place of prominence during feastivities, it is shaped like a rooster whose long tail is made to look like fern frond whorls. The sarimanok is a legendary bird that figured prominently in the story of Indarapatra and Sulayman. It is said that the great Indarapatra once saw the moon goddess bathing in a perfumed pool near his palace, as she wont to do every Friday evening. Indarapatra fell in love with her, but the goddess told him that he would have to follow her to the moon and woo her there. This impossible request made him very sad. One night, as he was playing with one of his treasures, a golden bird, he expressed his longing to be with his beloved goddess. The enchanted golden bird then promptly rose with the rajah to the sky and vanished forever with him. To remember the beautiful bird, the people made copy of it and called it the sarimanok.

Animals have also been used as symbols in conventional religious art. The dove stands for the Holy Spirit in representations of the Trinity. The fish and the lamb are symbols of Christ; the phoenix, of the Resurrection; and the peacock, of immortality through Christ (from the notion popularized in medieval bestiaries that the peacock’s flesh was not subject to decay).

1. **Portraits**. People have always been intrigued by the human face as an index of the owner’s character. As an instrument of expression, it is capable of showing a variety of moods and feelings.

A is a realistic likeness of a person in a sculpture, painting, drawing, or print. It need to be photographic likeness. A great portrait is a product of a selective process, the artist highlighting certain features of his subject and de-emphasizing others. It does not have to be beautiful, but itm ust be truthful. But some painters, desiring to please their patrons, usually soften the lines of experience on the faces, thereby robbing the onlooker of the pleasure of studying the true character of the subject.

Besides the face, other things worth noticing in portraits are the subjects hands, which can be very expressive, and his particular attire and accessories. They reveal so much of the person and his time.

States and busts of leaders and heroes were quite common among the Romans, but it was not until the Renaissance that portrait painting became popular in Europe. Rulers and religious leaders sat for their portraits or had their profiles etched in coins and medals, and the faces and figures of donors and patrons were incorporated in paintings and sculptures with religious themes.

Portraits are also used to mark milestones in people’s lives. Baptisms, graduations and weddings are often occasions for people to pose for their portraits.

Many artists did self-portraits. Their own faces provided them unlimited opportunities for character study.

In literature, Chaucer’s Prologue to The Canterbury Tales is an interesting portrait gallery of a cross-section of English society during the 14th century. There are the unforgettable Knight and his son, the Squire, the demure Prioress, the worldly Monk, and the inimitble Wife of Bath, to name a few.

1. **Figures**. The sculptor’s chief subject has traditionally been the human body, nude or clothed. The body’s form, structure, and flexibility offer the artist a big challenge to depict it in a variety of ways, ranging from the most idealistic, as in the classical Greek sculptures, to the most abstract, as in Henry Moore’s “reclining figures”.

The grace and ideal proportions of the human form were capture inreligious sculpture by the ancient greeks. To them physical beauty was the symbols of moral and spiritual perfection: thus they portrayed their gods and goddesses possessing perfect human shapes. Fond of athletics, they also enjoyed representing healthy and graceful athletes, as in the Discus Thrower.

Early Christian and medieval artists seldom represented the nude figure. And the figures they used to decorate the entrances and walls of their churches were distorted so as not to call undue attention to the sensuous physical shape and distract the mind from spiritual thoughts.

But Renaissance artists reawakened an interest in the nude human figure. Michelangelo’s David shows a closer tie with the Greek sculptures than with the Romanesque ones.

A favorite subject among painters is the female figure in hte nude as in Botticelli’s Birth of Venus, Goya’s Naked Maja, Ingres’ Odalisque, and Mnaet’s Olympia.

1. **Everyday life**. Artists have always shown a deep concern about life around them. Many of them have recorded in paintings their observation of people going about their usual ways, performing their usual tasks. Among these are representations of rice threshers, cockfighters, candle vendors, street musicians, and children at play. These are called genre paintings. Amorsolo’s Planting Rice, Laundry Women, and Batis belong to this category. Anita Magsaysay-Ho painted women doingtheir farm chores, and Manansala has painted candle vendors. Carlos V. Francisco’s favorite subjects were the fisherfolk and farmers of his hometown, Angono, Rizal whom he portrayed at work, at play and in prayer.

Honore Daumier also loved to observe the life of his times. He poked fun at the well-to-do in his paintings and drawings, but he portrayed working men and women with compassion, as in his Third-Class Carriage. Similarly, Jean Francois Millet tried to capture in all his paintings the toil and suffering of his fellow peasants. Pieter Brueghel celebrated the peasants, too.

1. **History and legend**. History consists of verifiable facts, legends of unverifiable ones, although many of them are often accepted as true because tradition has held them so. Insofar as the ancient past is concerned, it is difficult to tell how much of what we now know is history and howmuch is leagend. The story of urduja, for instanse , is shrouded in mystery. Up to this date, no one has conclusively proven that she existed astradition says. Ofa few pantings, as well as of an opera and a tagalog movie.

History and legend are popular subjects of art. Juan luna`s blood compact. Now at malacan~yang, commemrates the agreement between Si-katuna and Legazpi which they supposedly sealed by drinking wine in which drops of each other’s blood had been mixed. Luna’s prize-winning Spolarium depicts a scene during the days of the early Roman Empire when gladiatorial fights were a popular form of entertainment for the upper class.

Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo, Luna’s contemporary, painted the controversial Assassination of Governor-General Fernando Bustamante. History narrates that Governor Bustamante had been conducting during the administration of his predecessor. He had uncovered some anomalies whick involved some high ranking officials and religious leaders, and he was advised to keep from making further inquiries. As he was going down the stariway of his palace one day, he was met and attacked by an angry mob led by some members of the clergy. When the mob had gone, the Governor-General lay dying on the steps. It is this assault that Hidalgo depicted.

It is said that the Governor-General’s wife tried to avenge his death by causing the mysterious and violent deaths of those whom she suspected to be responsible for the crime. Her revenge is the subject matter of La Loba Negra, purportedly written by Fr. Jose Burgos. Out of this story, Virginia Moreno wrote a play, “The Onyx Wolf”, which became the basis of “Itim Asu”, a dance drama.

Carlos Francisco executed the mural that now graces the second-floor lobby of the Manila City Hall. The mural depicts figures and events in the history of the city. He was also responsible for the huge mural, which was a pageant of Philippine History for the International Fair held in Manila in 1953.

At Fort Santiago are paintings showing incidents in the life of Jose Rizal. These had won awards during the Rizal Centennial Celebration.

While many works may not be consciously done historical records, certain information about history can be pieced from them. The costumes and accessories worn by the people depicted the status symbol, the kinds of dwellings and the means of transportation, and other such incidentals reveal so much of the period as to constitute historical records.

Malakas and Maganda and Mariang Makiling are among the legendary subjects which have been rendered in painting and sculpture by not a few Filipino artists. The Mariang Makiling theme has been particularly exploited by Francisco and his pupil, Jose V. Blanco, in their paintings.

1. **Religion and mythology**. Art has always been a handmaiden of religion. Most of hte world’s religions have used the arts to aid in worship, to instruct, to inspire feelings of devotion, and to impress and convert non-believers. The Christian Church commissioned craftsmen to tell the stories about Christ and the saints in pictures, usually in mosaics, murals, and stained-glass windows in churches. It also resorted to the presentation of tableaux and plays to preach and teach.

Some religions expressly forbid the representation of divinity as human beings or animal forms, although they allow the use of some signs or symbols in their place. Pictures of God, human beings, or animals are forbidden by Judaism and Islam because people might worship the images themselves. Other religions have taught that a god may sometimes assume human or other visible forms. Thus he is distinguished from human beings by a halo, wings, a darker complexion, or by the use of some attributes. The ancient Egyptians portrayed their gods as part of human and part animal. The ancient African tribes gave the carved images of their gods some human characteristics, but they distorted the gods’ features. Among the Hindus, Shiva the Destroyer is shown as a four-armed god. Buddha, on the other hand, is symbolized by his footprints, a wheel or a tree.

In the early Christian world, representations of divinity were also symbolic. There were precise conventions in rendering them. The eye, the dove, the fish, the ship and the shepherd were widely used images. As in other religions, the serpent has been used to symbolized eveil. The four Evangelists were represented by animal forms: St. Luke, by an ox; St. John, an eagle; St. Mark, a lion; and St. Matthew, a winged man.

An interesting work which includes scenes and figures from both Christianity and classical mythology is Michelangelo’s fresco which covers the whole ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It is typical of Renaissance man’s interest in classical matters as well as of is religious orientation.

Religious beliefs and mystical experiences are also popular subjects of art, especially of literature. Dante Alighieri’s Divina Commedia represents the finest statement of Christian sought during the Middle Ages. In our time, T.S. Elot has written of a sense of spiritual emptiness as charateristic of hte 20th century. “The Hollow Men” and “The Waste Land” are poems about the sterility of life in a world given to erotic sensuality.

Some Filipino artists have attempted to render in art not only traditional religious themes but folk beliefs in creatures of lower mythology as well. Solomon Saprid has done statues of the tikbalang and some painters have renedred their own ideas about hte matanda sa punso, aswang, tianak and mangkukulam.

1. **Dreams and fantasies**. Dreams are usually vague and illogical. Artists, especially surrealists, have tried to depict dreams, as well as the grotesque terrors and apprehensions that lurk in the depths of hte subconscious. A dream may be of a lifelike situation; it can thus be realistically represented. Unless the artist tells us, we would not know that his work had a basis in dreams. But if the picture suggests the strange, the irrational, and the absurd, we would right away classify it as a fantasy or a dream picture, although the artist may not have gotten the idea from a dream at all but from the workings of his imagination. No limits can be imposed on an artist’s imagination; it can go beyond thereal and the possible.

**The Ugly and the Tragic in Art**

There is nothing that maybe considered an improper subject for a work of art. The grotesque, the ugly and the tragic are all ligitimate subjects as much as the pleasurable and the beautiful are. As a matter of fact, artists have often deviated from the sterotyped and “beautiful” subjects. Many have been attracted to decaying or dilapidated objects whose forms, colors and textures have intrigued them. They have rendered these in aesthetically pleasing paintings and prints. Rembrandt van Rijn’s painting of the flayed carcass of an ox hanging in a butcher’s stall is an example. And so ar Manuel Baldemor’s paintings and prints of weather-beaten barong-barong.

A good number of works of art are concerned with pain and evil. Among the most appealing subjects of painting and sculpture are the Crucified Christ and “La Pieta”. The greatest plays are invariably tragedies. And many of our songs speak of love denied or lost. “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts,” Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote.

There are reasons for the wide appeal of works of art that show human suffering. The interest does not have to spring from a sadistic or a masochistic tendency at all.

Each of us has suffered grief, frustration or loss one way or another. In these works of art, we find an affinity with the rest of humanity who have likewise experienced these painful emotions and tensions. It is as if by vicariously experiencing the suffering evoked by these works, we are purged of the pain and we achieved a release of tension.

**Subject and Content**

Recognizing the subject is not necessarily grasping the content of a work of art. Subject and content are two different things. While subject refers to the objects depicted by the artists, content refers to what the artists expresses or communicates on the whole in his work. Sometimes it is spoken of as the “meaning” of the work. In literature, it iscalled the “theme”. In fact, we may define it as the statement we apprehend or the feeling or mood we experience with the work of art. Content reveals tha artist’s attitude toward his subject. The subject of Hidalgo’s Wounded Soldier is a soldier nursing his wound, but its content is definitelymore than this. It is the soldier’s stoicism and dignity that the artists wanted us to see.

One does not always see content, but it is transmitted by the way subject and form interact in a work. It is easier to grasp the content in arts with explicit subject matter than in abstract arts.

Subject matter may acquire different levels of meaning. Cleaver classifies them as (1) **factual meaning**, (2) **conventional meaning** and (3) **subjective meaning**.

The factual meaning is the literal statement or the narrative content in the work which can be directly apprehended because the objects presented are easily recognized. This meaning is often supplemented by other levels of meaning.

The conventional meaning refers to the special meaning that a certain object or color has for a particular culture or group of people. The flag is the agreed-upon symbol for a nation. The Cross is a Christian symbol of faith; the wheel is the Buddhist symbol for the teachings of Gautama Buddha.

The subjective meaning is any personal meaning consciously or unconsciously conveyed by the artists using a private symbolism which stem from his own association of certain objects, actions or colors with past experiences. This can be fully understood only when the artist himself explains what he really means, as in the case of the poems of T.S. Eliot where he provides footnotes. Otherwise, it tends to be interpreted differently by each viewer or reader who may see it in the light of his own associations.

No one can be expected to understand without effort and study the meanings of many works of art, especially those that deal with religion and mythology. To a non-Christian the dove would not have a vivid religious meaning, nor would the four arms of Shiva or the elephant head of hte god Ganesh have to the non-Hindu. To fully grasp the content of works of art, one must learn as much as he can about the culture of the people that produced them and maintain an open mind.

**THE FUNCTIONS OF ART**

**Function in Art**

Compared to other activities of man, art is generally regarded as impractical, not meant to meet the requirements of day-to-day living. To the layman, art has very little function, the term function being taken to mean “practical usefulness”. Architecture, weaving, furniture-making, and a few other crafts have obvious purposes and are therefore classified as *functional*. But painting, sculpture, literature, music, and the theater arts seem to serve no other end than to amuse or provide a pleasant escape from life’s daily problems. Thus, they are classified as *non-functional*.

Broadly speaking, all arts have a function, for man, the maker creates things because he has a particular need for them.

From one point of view, we may consider art has having the general function of “satisfying” (1) our individual needs for personal expression, (2) our social needs for display, celebration and communication, and (3) our physical needs for utililtarian object.

**The Personal Function**

We said that the arts are vehicles for the artists’ expression of their feelings and ideas. The arts also serve as means of expression for us. Music, for instance, and literature, at times, have a way of expressing our emotions for us. As we listen to certain musical compositions, we feel that they reflect exactly what we feel and thus release the tension such emotions create in us; or, as we read certain literary passages, we note that the writer has presented exactly what we think, though we could never have expressed it as clearly as beautifully.

The therapeutic value of music cannot be ignored. “Music hat charms to soothe the savage breast,” wrote William congreve. Soft, sweet crooning can easily lull a baby to sleep. Soft, sweet music piped into modern hospital rooms has been found to speed up the recovery of patients, and music sessions are effective in treating mentally disturbed patients.’

The power of music make us feel certain emotions and act in certain ways has been written about by a good number of poets. In “Alexander’s Feast”, an ode on the power of music, John Dryden describes how the court musician Timotheur made Alexander the Great respond his playing on the lyre, now “swelling the soul to rage”, now “kindling love and desire”.

As a defense against the many upleasant and strident sounds and sights that assault our senses today, we tend to develop an indifference or a capacity of being deaf or blind to a lot of significant things around us. Art helps to educate our senses and sharpen our perception of colors, forms, textures, designs, sounds, rhythms, and harmonies in our environment. Visual and auditory “literacy” through contact with the arts can lead us to an intensified awareness of the beautiful in life. It can thus make our existence less humdrum; it can refine and elevate our aesthetic taste.

Works of art make us aware of other ways of thinking, feeling and imagining that have never occured to us before. They offer us fresh insights into nature and human nature so that we gain a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us. They help us improve our lives. This is especially true of literature, drama and cinema which capture and vivify human experience.

**Social Functions of Art**

One cannot conceive of a society without art, for art is closely related to every aspect of social life.

Art performs a social function when, (1) it seeks or tends to influence the collective behavior of a people, (2) it is created to be seen or used primarily in public situations, and (3) it expresses or describes social or collective aspects of existence as opposed to individual and personal kinds of experiences.

***Influencing Social Behavior***. Many works of art influence the way we think, feel or act. They cause us to laugh at certain phenomena, raise our voices in protest over certain matters, or see a social reality which had never been apparent to us before. They can bring about in us decisions to collectively change, correct or improve upon the human condition.

The pictorial form is a very powerful mens of putting across a message. Paintings, photographs, posters and cartoons have been used to express humanitarian concern as well as ideological or political comment. Protests agianst man’s inhumanity to man are seen in Goya’s Disasters of War. A concern for the plight of the working class is seen in the works of such Mexican artists as Jose Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, who sought to promote social change through their art.

Satire – which puts up people and institutions to ridicule so that they will change – is effectively communicated in various cartoons and caricatures. The editorial cartoons in many of our newspapers and magazines often convey the message more directly and clearly than the printed word does. Cartoonists usually comment on the foibles of society and of its leaders with the hope that something is done to correct these faults and improve the human condition.

Literature has served just as well as for political and ideological expression. And it is a powerful tool in shaping society and its manners. Propaganda literature – usually very moving and persuasive – has swayed people’s minds and feelings toward certain ends. The picture of oppression so graphically described by Rizal in his two novels undoubtedly disturbed the sensibilities and aroused the indignation of the leaders of the Philippine Revolution, motivating them to rise up in arms.

The stage and the screen are also very effective tools for political and ideological expression, the artists capitalizing on their power to make the audience empathize with the characters and situations presented.

In spreading a doctrine or teaching ideas, attitudes and wasy of behaving, paintings, prints and sculptures have been used either in place of or as complements to the written word. Religion has especially capitalized on the arts to spread belief and reinforce and sustain faith. For centuries, the stained glass windows, frecoes, statues and paintings in Christian churches have served as the “catechism” for people who do not know how to read. They not only interpret theological or spiritual matters but also provide models for the faithful. These art forms, along with religions music and rites, contrive an atmosphere in church that would put the worshipper in hte mood for spiritual meditation and communion with God.

The traditional arts of Africa south of the Sahara Desert are basically religious, exercising a significant function in the rituals of each tribe. African art reveals an animistic belief: the Supreme Being is conceive as a creative energy or force that animates all forms of life. The sculptures, masks, dances, and music all serve to reinforce the workings of such power.

African art is also bound up with ancestor worship and belief in the continuity of life. To the Africans, death is not the end of life but the transformation of the being into another kind which does not really leave this world. As with our Mountain Province communities, their statues serve as sanctuaries of the spirits of the dead ancestors and thus they continue to “live” with the family as household gods.

We usually associate art only with such “noble” functions as enlightening us in our spiritual beliefs and elevating our moral character, and we tend to ignore the more practical concerns of art which directly touch our workaday lives.

Nowhere is the function of art as an influence on social behavior more clearly seen than in commercial or advertising art. Advertising art aims to affect the buying behavior of people. The mediums include posters, billboards, magazines and newspapers ads, catalogs, handbills, package design, radio and television. By making a deep impression of people to buy a product, a service, or an idea, such as family planning, for example, or participating in the Green Revolution. The artistic activitiy involves the production of an attractive visual composition, as in a poster or package design; an arresting melody that drives home the message and makes it familiar through constant repetition, as in jingles; or film sequences that would unconsciously remind people of the product or service. Poster designs are so planned that the clear, simple message can be grasped and understood at a glance. Package design is a small-size poster that attracts immediate attention to itself, tells the prospective buyer what is inside the container, and conveys a sales message.

***Display and Celebration***. One function of sculpture and painting is the commemoration of important personages in society. The statues of national heroes that grace our parks and plazas are commemorative works as are the commissioned paintings of leaders of rulers. Often they serve to record important historical events or reveal of heroism and leadership that the community would want the young to emulate.

The arts are also linked to rituals. Rituals have played an important role in poeple’s lives and have influenced the growth of certain arts as well. The religious worship of Dionysus among the ancient Greeks gave rise to the Greek drama, and Hindu religious ceremonies have produced dance traditions that have remained virtually unchanged through the centuries. The daily commemoration in the Christian Church of Christ’s death at Calvary has been formalized in the dramatic form that is the Mass. Not only have liturgical texts been written for it; music has also been composed for its celebration. A most recent composition is Leonard Bernstein’s “Mass”.

Public celebration such as festivals, involve rituals of some kind and these, in turn, employ the arts. Lanterns are made for Christmas, decorative bamboo arches are put up at street intersections during fiestas for the passage of religious processions, and masks are made for such celebrations as the Moriones Festival in Marinduque and the Ati-atihan in Kalibo, Aklan. Artistic attention is lavished on them. And it does not matter that theses objects last for only a few days, they are really meant to serve only the particular occasion.

These activities unite people in a shared experience, just as the celebration of important phases of life do. Music and dance are the arts most often employed when a person’s coming of age, graduation, engagement, or marriage is celebrated. Certain musical compositions have now become identified with graduation and wedding rites, although they were not originally composed for such occasions.

***Social Description***. Even without the slightest intention of artists to present historical pictures, art works are vital historical documents. They describe aspects of existence at certain periods. Because many of them focus on facets of daily life, they tell us what the societies that produced them were like.

Tools, weapons, furnitures, paintings, statues, stories and songs, and buildings reflect the feelings, struggles and achievements of people. They reveal how people thought, felt and lived in a certain historical period. The temples, sculptures, epics, plays and even the pottery of ancient Greece tell us so much about the age when man first regarded himself as the measure of all things.

Portraits are especially informative. For example, the portrait of Romana Carillo done by Justiniano Asuncion in 1875 shows a young woman in a richly embroidered baro and panuelo and wearing pearl earrings, a pearl brooch, a pearl-studded comb, and several rings on her right hand which clutches a prayer book. Here we are not shown only the costume of ladies belonging to the ilustrado class in the 19th century. The painting also attests to the values and tastes in material acquisition of hte middle class Filipino families of the time. This affluent middle class had just emerged by then as a result of the country’s having attained some economic prosperity following the opening of Manila to international trade.

**Physical Functions of Art**

Tools and containers are objects which function to make our lives phsycially comfortable. Functional works of art may be classified as either tools or containers. A spoon is a tool; so is a car. A building and a community are containers, as is a ceramic vase or a chair.

The problem of the artist in designing a functional object is making the thing exactly right for its particular use and at the same time pleasing to the eye of the user.

***Form and Function***. The function of an object generally determines the basic form that it takes. A chair is so designed as to allow the seated body to rest comfortably on it. Its different parts are harmoniously related to one another and integrated into an object that fulfills its particular purpose.

The shapes and sizes of spoons indicate their uses: a teaspoon, which is smaller than a tablespoon, is used to put sugar in the tea or coffee and to stir the beverages. It is unlike a baby’s spoon which has a blunted end so as not to hurt the baby’s soft palate as he is fed, nor does it look like the grapefruit spoon which has serrated edges for scooping out the fruit’s meat.

The shapes of knives also tell us about their uses; the curved blade of the scythe for mowing; the large, sharp butcher’s knife for cutting and slicing meat; the serrated bread knife; the small-sharp-edged knife; the carving knife for meat and poultry; and the blunt table knife to spread butter with.

**Architecture**. The design of a building is determined primarily by its operational function. What is the building for? Who are going to use it? How many are they? These are some of the questions usually asked by the architect before he begins. A place for worship requires a big hall for the congregation to gather in, a school, a place where it can offer a level or type of education (kindergarten, elementary, vocational, etc.) and serve a given number of students. These considerations determine the height of the building, the sizes and shapes of the rooms, the locations of doors and windows, the traffic patterns and the location of facilities.

The design that a building tkes is also adapted to the climate of the region. The pitched roofs of most houses in the tropical countries are suitable to the alternation of periods of heavy rainfall months of warm sunshine. Extending far beyond the supporting walls, these roofs allow for rain water to speedily slide down and not accumulate and cause the roofing material to deteriorate. At the same time, the wide overhang keeps the glaring sunlight from getting into the house through the wide windows that are characteristic of the architecture.

With the introduction of new construction materials, methods and provisions for overcoming climatic limitations, architects are now freer to innovate designs.

Houses are built for people to live in. Obviously, then, then the architect must take the physical, psychological and physical needs of the family into account when he designs the house. He must consider the occupants needs and interests and must allot space for the varied activities, locating the activity areas where they show logical relationship with each other and providing paths for easy circulation. A family that love to entertain will need a particular entertainment area; a family of booklovers and collectors may need a library. The room must be sensibly located in relation to each other and the pattern for moving about must be planned to cut down on unneccessary steps between areas as well as to avoid interference with other activities.

The designs of modern industrial building show a big difference from the factory stereotypes of the past. Their interiors have become more suited to human needs, both physical and psychological. Murals, mosaics and sculptures now appear in lobbies and hallways of office buildings. Potted plants and even carpets, are used to relieve the severity of the walls.

***Function and Beauty***. Many things remain the same in shape throughout the years because their functional requirements do not allow for greater variations in their form. Time has proved that their designs best enable them to accomplish their purpose.

But these designs may not necessarily be the most beautiful ones. Within the limitations of the functional requirements of a cup, for example – it must have a particular breadth and depth to contain liquid – varied shapes are formed. Some are pleasing to our eyes, others are not. Since cups, like chairs and tables, pots and pans, and many other functional objects in our home are seen and used daily, theycan be a constant source of satisfaction and dleight or of irritation. Their visual appeal must also be given consideration. Functional works of art must not only perform their function efficiently but must also be aesthetically pleasing.

A home should not only meet the needs but also express the personality of its owner. It should likewise stimulate the eyes and spirit and awaken in the one who looks at it a sense of balance, rhythm and harmony, not just because of the design of the house itself, but also in the relation to the surrounding landscape and the other buildings nearby.

It is the presence of this quality of delighting the beholder because of a harmonious arrangement of the formal elements that distinguishes a work of art from an ordinary functional object.

STUDY GUIDES

What to discuss

1. Why is art found in human societies? What basic needs does it meet?
2. What are some of the thoughts that man conveys through his art?
3. Must art communicate? What is communicated by a church?

By a ceramic vase? By a piece of furniture?

1. What is the relationship between art and nature?
2. How is beauty in art different from beauty from nature?
3. From the concepts that you have learned about art, form a definition of art?
4. What would you gain from a study of art?
5. Is the presence of subject matter an important consideration in judging a work of art?
6. Differentiate subject matter and content?