

# The Great Exhibition 2019:



## **'SPACE, God, The Universe, and Everything!'**

**An Anthropological Field Report Investigating Contemporary  
Art practice in a Sacred Space**

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## Introduction

From August 8th - 26th 2019 a large scale art installation transformed the interior of Lichfield Cathedral with contemporary art, light, sound, installation, and sculpture covering the duration of thirteen evenings created by the Artist in Residence Peter Walker with Composer David Harper (an Artistic Collaboration known as Luxmuralis).

The Great Exhibition 2019 was entitled 'Space, God, The Universe and Everything'. This was the third in a series of themed exhibitions set to take place annually at Lichfield Cathedral.

The first of The Great Exhibitions was entitled 'Earth What a Wonderful World' created in 2017 and the development of the thematic programme established by the artist working with Lichfield Cathedral and closely with the Very Rev. Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield. In 2018 'Imagine Peace' theme signified the 100 year anniversary of the WW1 Armistice. In 2019 the thematic year of Journeys through space, light and time at Lichfield Cathedral saw The Great Exhibition continue this theme throughout its duration in the evenings of 8/9/10/11/15/16/17/18/22/23/24/25/26th August.

Following the creation, development and completion of the art Installation this field report is part of a longitudinal study investigating the relationship between the contemporary art practice and the public space in which it is located.

Through conducting participant observation, structured surveys, and random sampled recorded interviews 'The Great Exhibition 2019' has been monitored and recorded and this report shows evidence of the field work taken.

From an anthropological perspective focus is upon the effect art has upon the public within the sacred space of the Cathedral which has directed the objectives of the research questions deemed most appropriate to exploring this area of research. The objective being to record qualitative narrative and observations to support quantitative data collected to reflect an accurate account of the social interactions and relationships between areas of investigation in order to communicate this to a wider audience. Such data aims to capture and explore the relationship and interaction between the artwork and the public who view it and will be added to the longitudinal research study following the Artist in Residency program at Lichfield Cathedral that continues until 2021.

## **Methodology**

This field report is part of a longitudinal study of the art created by the artist in residence at Lichfield Cathedral and the interaction it has with the public looking at the social and cultural impacts and effects. This report highlights the exploratory findings following an ethnographic method of research from a Social Anthropological perspective as notes are made within the field of enquiry. Findings have been gathered through participant observation (Ad libitum sampling) and investigative enquiry conducted throughout the development of the Great Exhibition, practical set up and completion of the artworks and during the thirteen nights that the exhibition was open to the public to view.

Un-structured Interviews and narratives collected from stakeholders involved in the development process were undertaken at different points throughout the duration of the exhibition period.

Recorded video interviews were taken on site in the field of enquiry with randomly sampled members of the public as they exited the exhibition.

Surveys were completed inside the exhibition during the period of the exhibition and quantitative data collated internally by Lichfield Cathedral staff and volunteers.

Further qualitative data post event was captured monitoring social media responses from attendees to the exhibition after they had seen it.

Ethical consideration has been taken throughout following the ASA ethical guidelines 2011.

## Theoretical Framework

Throughout history, artists have contemplated and reflected on the human condition. On our planet earth amongst an expanding unknown universe, modern artists tackle questions that evaluate humanity's relationship with the cosmos, in many different thought provoking, visual and sculptural ways.

For example : Georges Méliès, Man in The Moon, 1902



Depictions of Space through Art may be seen as far back as 16,500 B.C., when the earliest representations of constellations appeared in cave paintings in Lascaux, France and Cueva del Castillo, Spain (Murdin, 2019)

Anthropologists of Art in the past have focused on formal features in objects which, without exclusively being 'artistic', have certain evident 'aesthetic' qualities. Boas' *Primitive Art*, Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Way of the Masks* (1982) or Geertz's 'Art as Cultural System' (1983) are some examples in this trend to transform the anthropology of 'art' into an anthropology of culturally-specific 'aesthetics'. More recently, in his book *Art and Agency*, Alfred Gell proposed a new definition of 'art' as a complex system of intentionality, where artists produce art objects to effect changes in the world, including (but not restricted to) changes in the aesthetic perceptions of art audiences.

It has been suggested that the different purposes of art may be grouped according to those that are non-motivated, and those that are motivated (Lévi-Strauss) non motivated purposes are as follows: Basic human instinct, Imitation of nature, experience of the mysterious, expression of the imagination, ritualistic and symbolic function.

Motivated purposes for Art : Communication, entertainment, political change, freedom, social enquiry, anarchy, psychological and healing purposes, commercialism, propaganda, fitness indicator. (see Appendices).

Further to this, the theory that social relations produced via art are suggested by De Marais E and Robb J (2013) who argue that art is participatory as well as visually affecting and as such art creates sites of activity for shared interaction.

Art can innovate, express cosmological themes, engage with a narrative, or re-work elements of an existing cultural tradition. All of these effects are elements of the way art facilitates social action and agency, rather than remaining a passive object of viewership (De Marais, E. And Robb J (2013)).

De Marais also highlights how art is concerned with the wider social group, through representation collectivity, by inviting participation in an event this could be a moment of creativity, a rite, a shared experience of viewing and appreciating.

So what happens when Art is created within and for a Sacred Space?

Koestler Cate (2016) suggests art for the church *“has reached a critical and decisive phase in its history, testing the assumption that contemporary art should be a taken-for-granted element of modern church life.”* By this statement the importance and relevance of the visual arts within sacred spaces is highlighted and also how the constraints artists may face in such settings should not be dismissed.

Working in an ecclesiastical setting which is so different to most artist’s standard studio space or gallery setting brings new challenges and dynamic aspects to the creation of the art work. These constraints according to Koestler- Cate (2016) may be material constraints, then there is a degree of control having to be relinquished as the artist is required to work in collaboration with many others, and also the degree to which religious context is not isolated from the work when the artist is required to incorporate a larger framework of meaning (Koestler-Cate 2016).

As well as affects upon the artist and the artwork created, significant impact can be seen upon the perception of the visitor to both the artwork and the environment the artwork is in. Fundamentally the space in which exhibitions appear affects the perception of that which is being displayed, not just physical parameters in which they appear but through the curation and movement of people as they are directed through the environment. As Swain (2007) suggests the use of space influences which parts of the exhibition are viewed in which way.

As well as consideration of space, light is a key component. According to Moser (2010) the use of light in a display environment helps to bestow meanings on objects. Light may be used as a “key interpretative tool’ (Lord and Lord, 2002). Within a Cathedral the elements of architectural design, artefacts and objects within may be reinterpreted and highlighted as relevant using light to effectively focus a viewer’s attention to specific chosen points.

From regarding these theoretical studies this report looks to investigate the art practice taking place at the sacred space of Lichfield Cathedral at The Great Exhibition 2019 and to analyse the impact of such art upon the viewer.

In light of the theoretical debate this study exposes the following questions:

What was the impact and effect upon visitors to The Great Exhibition 2019?

What were the viewer's reactions and what was the feedback given?

Is the subject matter and theme of the Great Exhibition 2019: 'Space' understood in the context of the sacred space environment in which it is displayed?

What was the social /cultural impact upon the wider community?

What was the economic impact of The Great Exhibition 2019?

## Observational description of the Exhibition

The Great Exhibition 2019: 'Space, God, The Universe, and Everything' opened to the public on 8th August. The overall attendance for the evenings of the exhibition : 10, 443 tickets sold. Visitors queued outside the west front of Lichfield Cathedral, met by volunteers and had tickets checked at the entrance door. Cathedral volunteers were enlisted as 'Space Crew' for each evening of the event to Marshall and assist.

The Great Exhibition 2019 featured several art installations that were situated around the interior of the cathedral. These consisted of the following:

1 Large projector Screen on entrance, this showed a 'Star Wars' style text that introduced and explained to the viewer what was about to be seen and why.

2 An installation of a 1960's style living room, with a projected television screen showing the original moon landing footage that was shown in 1969. A sound piece was played to coincide with the visuals, viewers heard the voice of president Kennedy and the announcement of the moon landing. Above the living room area in the North transept was a projection of space, stars, and moon eclipse imagery.

3 Newspapers and magazine archival objects from 1969 in a cabinet display case

4 Buzz Aldrin footprint projected onto the floor of the South Quire aisle. Sound piece playing the conversation between the astronauts and hosts during the Apollo 11 mission.

5 The future Mars Exploration depicted in three maps of Mars from the National Space Centre. A floor to walk upon that was the image of Mars and a film of the Mars Rover as it journeyed over the surface of Mars.

6 Area for lighting a candle with text from .....projected above.

7 In the Lady Chapel area of the East end. Projection of son-et-lumiere depicting Creation and the Big Bang, the artwork incorporated images from Renaissance art (Alpha/Omega, Adam and eve, Tree of life, and historic imagery depicting time and creation, also including scientific symbols, chemical equations and an interpretation of the Big Bang theory). Three television screens showing scientific explanation of the Big Bang theory with deaf sign language footage from The National Space centre.



8 'The biggest Universe' - an interaction area for visitors to draw, using glow in the dark pens on black paper visitors were asked to interact and draw anything they could imagine may be in space to help create the biggest universes in drawings.

9 Interpretation panels depicting passages from theological reference and also NASA information about space. Interpretation panels covered the following areas: 1969 moon landing, Wonder and Exploration of Humans, The Beginning of Everything - how creation in Genesis and the big bang theory work together, Black holes and the wonder of creation, the vulnerability of planet Earth, the stars of heaven, story of Abraham and scientific facts about stars.

10 'Constellation - In the Image and Likeness' an interaction area for visitors to contribute to an artwork installation project. Visitors were asked to draw a self portrait or write about their own personal journey within a gold framed card. The card frames with self portraits would then go towards the creation of a large scale mass participation project for Christmas at The Cathedral illuminated event in December working with the Artist in Residence Peter Walker.

11 'Singularity' An art installation/sculpture depicting the universe and galaxies in the South transept.

12 Rocket - a 4.5metre high Rocket positioned in the crossing centre of the Cathedral.

13 Loading bay area - visitors could sit and watch a film recording from the Apollo Mission on a screen whilst awaiting for the final Son-et-Lumiere to start - screen on a tv provided a countdown to the beginning of the final son-et-lumiere.

14 'One Small Step' - Visitors could then Enter the Nave and walk onto a 36metre art installation that covered the entire floor of the Nave of the Cathedral. The flooring was a large scale photographic image of the surface of the moon taken by NASA.

Visitor numbers for daytime visits to Cathedral to take 'One small step' and walk on the moon floor:  
....

The art installation by Peter Walker was entitled 'One Small Step' and was also open daily for Visitors to access throughout the whole summer until September. Daily free access and free children activities were organised for visitors to interact with on the moon floor inside the cathedral

Visitor numbers for children activities on the moon: ....

The 'One Small Step' Installation also was the major feature during the summer Film festival where visitors could by tickets to watch a film sitting on the moon inside the Cathedral.

Visitor numbers for film festival on the moon floor: .....

15 Final Son -et- lumiere in the Nave: Visitors could stand, sit, or lie down on the surface of the moon floor installation and look up at the ceiling projections depicting Space, God, the universe and Everything through an immersive sound and light show.

16 visitors exit - through shop selling space related merchandise together with cathedral gifts. Visitors were thanked by volunteers, asked to fill in surveys and given a cathedral brochure of future events to attend as they left.

## Findings:

### What was the impact and effect upon visitors to The Great Exhibition 2019?

**Educational impact:** Astronaut Helen Sharman talk, school visits throughout the summer, engagement within exhibition : drawing metres of universe 208m long, 5,000 self portraits collected, 77% engaged said on a spiritual level. National press media coverage.

Spiritual impact: - visitors lit candles, took prayer cards, spent time in contemplation 77% spiritually engaged.

63% Christian 15% atheist. 9% agnostic/undecided open to all faith 10%.  
Buddhist 1% Sikh 1%

New audience attracted: Families and children up 45%, 57% new audience, 43% returning

### What were the viewer's reactions and what was the feedback given?

Most common responses given: 'Thought provoking, moving beautiful' Visitors enjoyed lying on floor, relaxed atmosphere created. Good value for money, some visitors didn't like close proximity to others. Children entertained.

**Is the subject matter and theme of the Great Exhibition 2019: 'Space' understood in the context of the sacred space environment in which it is displayed?** Balance between science and religion understood through use of interpretation and through evidence of spiritual connectivity and with activities of engagement in sacred space.

### What was the social /cultural impact upon the wider community?

Geographically wide reaching impact, Largest percentage west midlands, also wales, Scotland, London, north UK wide reach. Impact on tourism for city no data. Collected further study required to gain data of city wide impact. Social media outreach high and media national attention gained.

What was the economic impact of The Great Exhibition 2019? High impact.

Tickets: £49,057. Donations (68% candles, 32% cash): £3574.31. Shop income: £8,900.84. coffee shop: £2277.27 Total: £63,139.42

## **Qualitative Data:**

Responses captured on film as viewers exited experience:

*It's very impressive to start with, the way that they've used the space, a really immersive experience, particularly the bit at the end you get to lie down you've got all these people lying down at the end and looking up at the ceiling, so yeah a really nice fun atmosphere.*

*It's a really good experience, loved to see all the moon stuff especially the mars stuff*

*It's beautiful, beautiful to see, just the colours and you know all the architecture, the way it goes with all the architecture as well yeah beautiful.*

*And I love the bit at the end too; the combination of the science and the church.*

*There's all like things to do like to keep you occupied.*

*It was really really colourful, really interesting for all ages, grabs your imagination, and yeah its a great way to get to the Cathedral, so its great yeah.*

*The thing with me is the way you've drawn the children in, and I think that's lovely, the other thing is that it made me look at aspects of the bible its just been lovely its been a really lovely experience, thank you.*

*We are at The Great Exhibition at Lichfield Cathedral we have come here as a family and have been blown away by the fantastic experience; the light, the music, sound, the wonderment that you see in everyone's face, well worth the visit, please come and see it for yourself.*

*It's amazing, all the architecture you see as well as all the information from the exhibition, they go together really well, you could do anything in this space and it just highlights the wonderful structure that it is and anything that brings more attention to the Cathedral is a great thing.*

*I liked the bit at the end with the moon floor did you?*

*Yeah*

*What was your favourite bit?*

*erm I enjoyed the end bit as well*

*The end bit yeah and the television bit of the actual moon landing*

*Yeah*

*The exhibition was good because it was colourful and it got all of the ages involved with it.*

### INCOME

Tickets: £49,057  
 Donations: £3574.31  
 Shop Income: £8900.84  
 Coffee Shop Income: £2277.27  
**TOTAL: £63,139.42**

### ROI

Total Cost: TBC  
 awaiting August accounts  
 Total Profit:

"There's no floor I'd rather lie on than #lichfieldcathedral. It is so magical to lie there and watch the #projections on that amazing #ceiling and think about all the feet that have walked there."

"The thing with me is the way you've drawn the children in, and I think that's lovely, the other thing is that it made me look at aspects of the bible its just been lovely it's been a really lovely experience, thank you."

### ENGAGEMENT

5000 Portraits Drawn  
 208m of Universe Created  
 77% Engaged Spiritually

### DEMOGRAPHICS

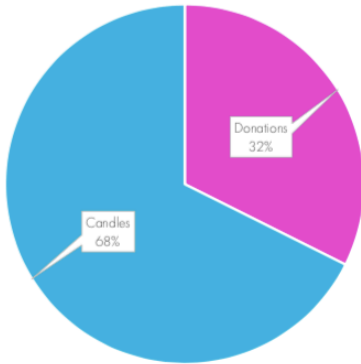
Age Profile: 36% 50-65  
 Families & Children: 45% up  
 New: 57%  
 Returning: 43%

### KEY LEARNINGS:

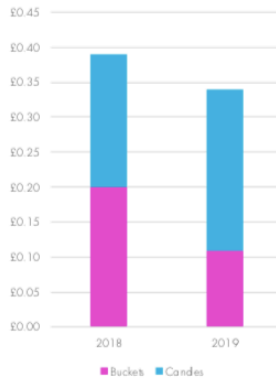
- Later showings don't seem to impact family visits
- Times after 21:30 don't sell well enough to justify costs
- Opportunity to make more of advanced ticket sales
- Donations are down BUT shop sales have increased
- We reached a new audience with this activity
- Visitors were highly engaged



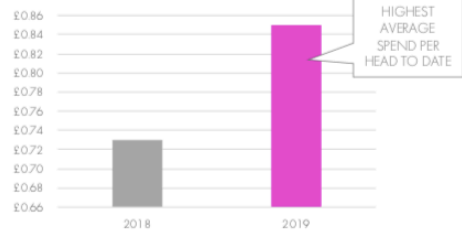
Donation Income



Average Donation Per Person



Average Spend in Shop



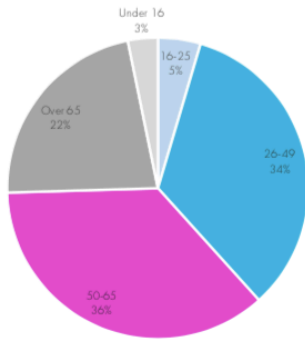
**£8900.84 SHOP**  
**£3574.31 DONATIONS**

### POINTS OF INTEREST

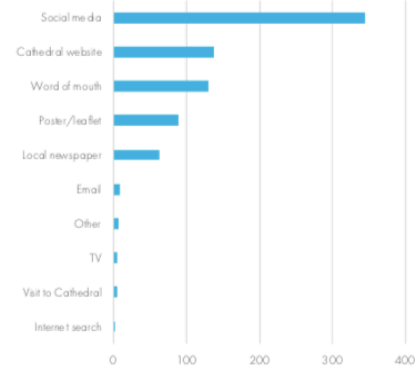
- Candle stations (high engagement) is more effective than buckets
- Donations have dropped BUT sales in the shop have significantly increased



Age Profile of Survey Responses



Source of Information



### POINTS OF INTEREST

Based on surveys alone (819 responses)

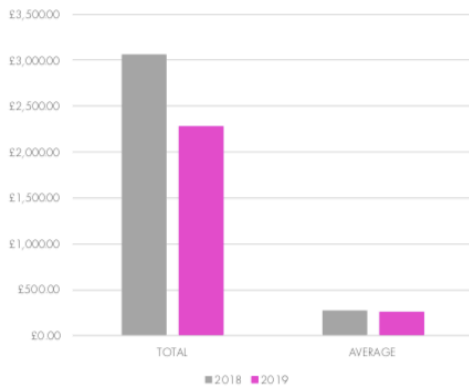
58% were 50+

A large concentration of visitors from the Midlands but wider than anticipated

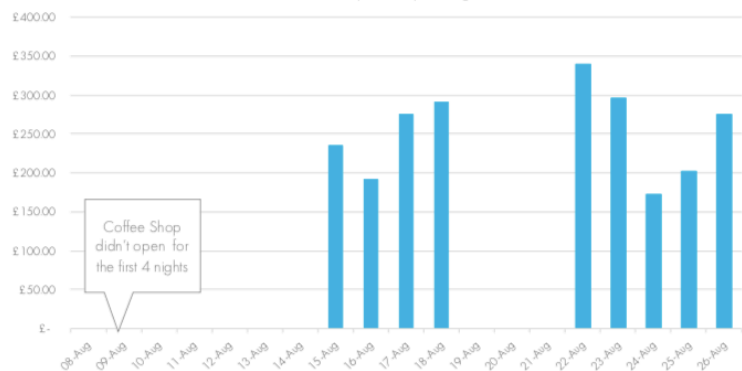
Social media, website & word of mouth seem to be the key drivers



Coffee Shop Total & Average Sales



Coffee Shop Sales per Night



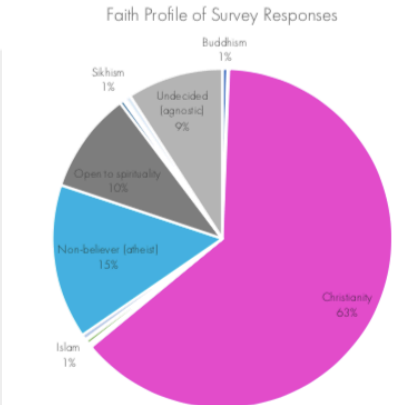
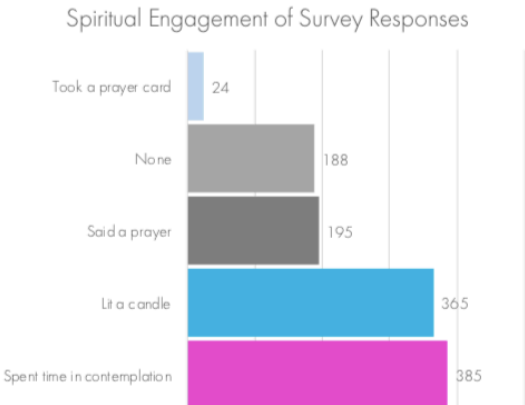
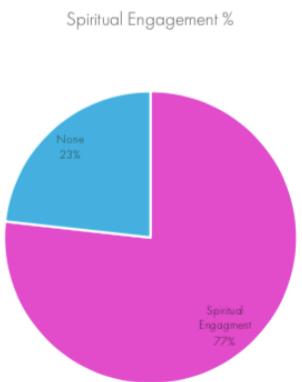
### POINTS OF INTEREST

If the coffee shop had been open for first 4 nights, sales would have outmatched last year's

Coffee shop being open during the evening wasn't publicised in advance, this could have brought in more sales

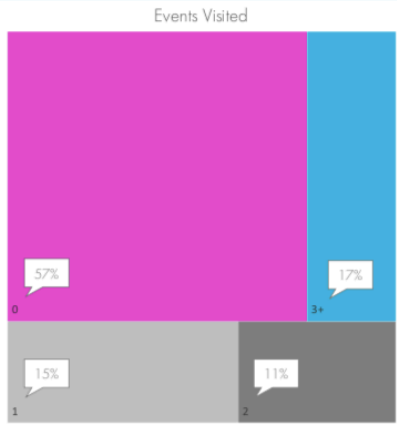
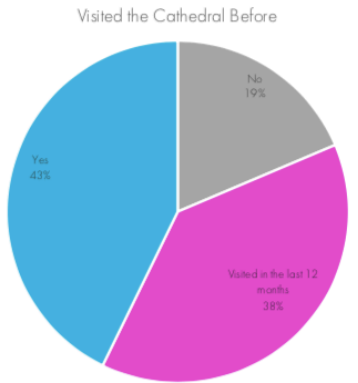
Operationally this was a better solution





**POINTS OF INTEREST**  
 With over 5000 portraits being drawn for Image & Likeness  
 208m of black paper was used to create the drawn Universe  
 This event was engaging both on a practical and spiritual level  
 77% of visitors engaged spiritually at the event, most spend time in contemplation or lit a candle  
 Whilst a large proportion of visitors are Christians, 35% we either open, agnostic or atheist

"Science and Spirituality working together to create a profound experience. I defy anyone to leave this exhibition and not have their faith in God renewed, confirmed (or discovered in the first place)!"



**POINTS OF INTEREST**  
 19% of visitors had never visited the Cathedral before  
 57% had never been to an event at the Cathedral

"It was so good I came twice, once with my partner then again with my children. They're looking forward to seeing what events you have coming up next!"



# Appendices

## Levi Strauss - Non motivated and motivated purposes of Art:

Non- Motivated purposes of Art :

**1** *Basic human instinct for harmony, balance, rhythm.* Art at this level is not an action or an object, but an internal appreciation of balance and harmony (beauty), and therefore an aspect of being human beyond utility.

**2** "Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm, meters being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry." -Aristotle<sup>[1]</sup>

**3** *Experience of the mysterious.* Art provides a way to experience one's self in relation to the universe. This experience may often come unmotivated, as one appreciates art, music or poetry.

**4** "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." -Albert Einstein<sup>[2]</sup>

**5** *Expression of the imagination.* Art provides a means to express the imagination in non-grammatical ways that are not tied to the formality of spoken or written language. Unlike words, which come in sequences and each of which have a definite meaning, art provides a range of forms, symbols and ideas with meanings that are malleable.

**6** "Jupiter's eagle [as an example of art] is not, like logical (aesthetic) attributes of an object, the concept of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but rather something else – something that gives the imagination an incentive to spread its flight over a whole host of kindred representations that provoke more thought than admits of expression in a concept determined by words. They furnish an aesthetic idea, which serves the above rational idea as a substitute for logical presentation, but with the proper function, however, of animating the mind by opening out for it a prospect into a field of kindred representations stretching beyond its ken." -Immanuel Kant<sup>[3]</sup>

**7** *Ritualistic and symbolic functions.* In many cultures, art is used in rituals, performances and dances as a decoration or symbol. While these often have no specific utilitarian (motivated) purpose, anthropologists know that they often serve a purpose at the level of meaning within a particular culture. This meaning is not furnished by any one individual, but is often the result of many generations of change, and of a cosmological relationship within the culture.

**8** "Most scholars who deal with rock paintings or objects recovered from prehistoric contexts that cannot be explained in utilitarian terms and are thus categorized as decorative, ritual or symbolic, are aware of the trap posed by the term 'art'." -Silva Tomaskova<sup>[4]</sup>

Motivated functions of art

**Motivated purposes** of art refer to intentional, conscious actions on the part of the artists or creator. These may be to bring about political change, to comment on an aspect of society, to convey a specific emotion or mood, to address personal psychology, to illustrate another discipline, to (with commercial arts) sell a product, or simply as a form of communication.

**1** *Communication.* Art, at its simplest, is a form of communication. As most forms of communication have an intent or goal directed toward another individual, this is a motivated purpose. Illustrative arts, such as scientific illustration, are a form of art as communication. Maps are another example. However, the content need not be scientific. Emotions, moods and feelings are also communicated through art.

**2** "[Art is a set of] artifacts or images with symbolic meanings as a means of communication." -Steve Mithen<sup>[5]</sup>

**3** *Art as entertainment.* Art may seek to bring about a particular emotion or mood, for the purpose of relaxing or entertaining the viewer. This is often the function of the art industries of Motion Pictures and Video Games.



**4** **The Avante-Garde. Art for political change.** One of the defining functions of early twentieth-century art has been to use visual images to bring about political change. Art movements that had this goal—Dadaism, Surrealism, Russian Constructivism, and Abstract Expressionism, among others—are collectively referred to as the *avante-garde* arts.

**5** “By contrast, the realistic attitude, inspired by positivism, from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France, clearly seems to me to be hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement. I loathe it, for it is made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit. It is this attitude which today gives birth to these ridiculous books, these insulting plays. It constantly feeds on and derives strength from the newspapers and stultifies both science and art by assiduously flattering the lowest of tastes; clarity bordering on stupidity, a dog’s life.” -André Breton (Surrealism)<sup>[6]</sup>

**6** **Art as a “free zone”**, removed from the action of the social censure. Unlike the avant-garde movements, which wanted to erase cultural differences in order to produce new universal values, contemporary art has enhanced its tolerance towards cultural differences as well as its critical and liberating functions (social inquiry, activism, subversion, deconstruction ...), becoming a more open place for research and experimentation.<sup>[7]</sup>

**7** **Art for social inquiry, subversion and/or anarchy.** While similar to art for political change, subversive or deconstructivist art may seek to question aspects of society without any specific political goal. In this case, the function of art may be simply to criticize some aspect of society

Graffiti art and other types of street art are graphics and images that are spray-painted or stenciled on publicly viewable walls, buildings, buses, trains, and bridges, usually without permission. Certain art forms, such as graffiti, may also be illegal when they break laws (in this case vandalism).

**8** **Art for social causes.** Art can be used to raise awareness for a large variety of causes. A number of art activities were aimed at raising awareness of autism,<sup>[8][9][10]</sup> cancer,<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> human trafficking,<sup>[14][15]</sup> and a variety of other topics, such as ocean conservation,<sup>[16]</sup> human rights in Darfur,<sup>[17]</sup> murdered and missing Aboriginal women,<sup>[18]</sup> elder abuse,<sup>[19]</sup> and pollution.<sup>[20]</sup> Trashion, using trash to make fashion, practiced by artists such as Marina DeBris is one example of using art to raise awareness about pollution.

**9** **Art for psychological and healing purposes.** Art is also used by art therapists, psychotherapists and clinical psychologists as art therapy. The Diagnostic Drawing Series, for example, is used to determine the personality and emotional functioning of a patient. The end product is not the principal goal in this case, but rather a process of healing, through creative acts, is sought. The resultant piece of artwork may also offer insight into the troubles experienced by the subject and may suggest suitable approaches to be used in more conventional forms of psychiatric therapy.

**10** **Art for propaganda, or commercialism.** Art is often utilized as a form of propaganda, and thus can be used to subtly influence popular conceptions or mood. In a similar way, art that tries to sell a product also influences mood and emotion. In both cases, the purpose of art here is to subtly manipulate the viewer into a particular emotional or psychological response toward a particular idea or object.<sup>[21]</sup>

**11** **Art as a fitness indicator.** It has been argued that the ability of the human brain by far exceeds what was needed for survival in the ancestral environment. One evolutionary psychology explanation for this is that the human brain and associated traits (such as artistic ability and creativity) are the human equivalent of the peacock’s tail. The purpose of the male peacock’s extravagant tail has been argued to be to attract females (see also Fisherian runaway and handicap principle). According to this theory superior execution of art was evolutionary important because it attracted mates.<sup>[22]</sup>

The functions of art described above are not mutually exclusive, as many of them may overlap. For example, art for the purpose of entertainment may also seek to sell a product, i.e. the movie or video game.

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