CONCEPTUAL ART

"Ideas alone can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical." Sol Lewitt.

CONCEPTUAL ART SYNOPSIS

Conceptual art is a movement that prizes ideas over the formal or visual components of art works. An amalgam of various tendencies rather than a tightly cohesive movement, Conceptualism took myriad forms, such as performances, happenings, and ephemera. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s Conceptual artists produced works and writings that completely rejected standard ideas of art. Their chief claim - that the articulation of an artistic idea suffices as a work of art - implied that concerns such as aesthetics, expression, skill and marketability were all irrelevant standards by which art was usually judged. So drastically simplified, it might seem to many people that what passes for Conceptual art is not in fact "art" at all, much as Jackson Pollock's "drip" paintings, or Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes (1964), seemed to contradict what previously had passed for art. But it is important to understand Conceptual art in a succession of avant-garde movements (Cubism, Dada, Abstract Expressionism, Pop, etc.) that succeeded in self-consciously expanding the boundaries of art. Conceptualists put themselves at the extreme end of this avant-garde tradition. In truth, it is irrelevant whether this extremely intellectual kind of art matches one's personal views of what art should be, because the fact remains that Conceptual artists successfully redefine the concept of a work of art to the extent that their efforts are widely accepted as art by collectors, gallerists, and museum curators.

CONCEPTUAL ART KEY IDEAS

Conceptual artists link their work to a tradition of Marcel Duchamp, whose Readymades had rattled the very definition of the work of art. Like Duchamp before them, they abandoned beauty, rarity, and skill as measures of art. Conceptual artists recognize that all art is essentially conceptual. In order to emphasize this, many Conceptual artists reduced the material presence of the work to an absolute minimum - a tendency that some have referred to as the "dematerialization" of art. Conceptual artists were influenced by the brut simplicity of Minimalism, but they rejected Minimalism's embrace of the conventions of sculpture and painting as mainstays of artistic production. For Conceptual artists, art need not look like a traditional work of art, or even take any physical form at all. The analysis of art that was pursued by many Conceptual artists encouraged them to believe that if the artist began the artwork, the museum or gallery and the audience in some way completed it. This category of Conceptual art is known as 'institutional critique,' which can be understood as part of an even greater shift away from emphasizing the object-based work of art to pointedly expressing cultural values of society at large. Much Conceptual art is self-conscious or self-referential. Like Duchamp and other modernists, they created art that is about art, and pushed its limits by using minimal materials and even text.
Conceptual Art Beginnings

One of the most important precedents for Conceptual art was the work of Dada artist Marcel Duchamp, who in the early twentieth century established the idea of the "Readymade" - the found object that is simply nominated or chosen by the artist to be a work of art, without adaptations to the object beyond a signature. The first and most famous true Readymade was *Fountain* (1917), which was nothing more than a porcelain urinal, reoriented ninety degrees, placed on a stand and signed and dated under the alias "R. Mutt." Duchamp described his Readymades as "anti-retinal," and dismissed the popular conception that works of art need demonstrate artistic skill. In the 1950s, long after several of his original Readymades had been lost, Duchamp re-issued *Fountain* and other Readymades for the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York. These acts sparked a resurgence of interest in his work, which not only brought the emergence of Neo-Dada led by John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns, but also rekindled a widespread interest in idea-based art throughout the contemporary art world.

**QUOTES**

"People, buying my stuff, can take it wherever they go and can rebuild it if they choose. If they keep it in their heads, that's fine too. They don't have to buy it to have it - they can just have it by knowing it."
- Lawrence Weiner

"In order to gain some insight into the forces that elevate certain products to the level of 'works of art' it is helpful - among other investigations - to look into the economic and political underpinnings of the institutions, individuals and groups who share in the control of power."
- Hans Haacke

"When objects are presented within the context of art (and until recently objects always have been used) they are as eligible for aesthetic consideration as are any objects in the world, and an aesthetic consideration of an object existing in the realm of art means that the object's existence or functioning in an art context is irrelevant to the aesthetic judgment."
- Joseph Kosuth
Erased de Kooning Drawing (1953)
Artist: Robert Rauschenberg

In 1953 Robert Rauschenberg visited Willem de Kooning's loft, requesting one of de Kooning's drawings to completely erase it. Rauschenberg believed that in order for this idea to become a work of art, the work had to be someone else's and not his own; if he erased one of his own drawings then the result would be nothing more than a negated drawing. Although disapproving at first, de Kooning understood the concept and reluctantly consented to hand over something that he (de Kooning) would miss and that would be a challenge to erase entirely, thus making the erasure that much more profound in the end. It took Rauschenberg a little over a month and an estimated fifteen erasers to "finish" the work. "It's not a negation," Rauschenberg once said, "it's a celebration, it's just the ideal!" Of course, it also signalled a farewell to Abstract Expressionist art, and the expectation that a work of art should be expressive. The absent drawing is a Conceptual work avant la lettre, and a precursor to works like Sol Lewitt's Buried Cube Containing an Object of Importance but Little Value (1968), a gag piece, where LeWitt supposedly interred a simple cube in a collector's yard, and with it he buried Minimalism's object-centered approach.

Charcoal, pencil, crayon and ink drawing by Willem de Kooning, erased - San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Sentences on Conceptual Art, by Sol LeWitt:

1. Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.
2. Rational judgments repeat rational judgments.
3. Illogical judgments lead to new experience.
4. Formal Art is essentially rational.
5. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.
6. If the artists change his mind midway through the execution of the piece he compromises the result and repeats past results.
7. The artist's will is secondary to the process that he initiates from idea to completion. His wilfulness may be only ego.
8. When words such as painting and sculpture are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a consequent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on the artist who would be reluctant to make art that goes beyond the limitations.
9. The concept and the idea are different. The former implies a general direction while the latter are the components. Ideas implement the concept.
10. Ideas alone can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.
11. Ideas do not necessarily proceed in logical order. They may set one off in unexpected directions but an idea must necessarily be completed in the mind before the next one is formed.
12. For each work of art that becomes physical there are many variations that do not.
13. A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewer's. But it may never reach the viewer, or it may never leave the artist's mind.
14. The words of one artist to another may induce an idea chain, if they share the same concept.
15. Since no form is intrinsically superior to another, the artist may use any form, from an expression of words (written or spoken) to physical reality, equally.
16. If words are used, and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature; numbers are not mathematics.
17. All ideas are art if they are concerned with art and fall within the conventions of art.
18. One usually understands the art of the past by applying the conventions of the present thus misunderstanding the art of the past.
19. The conventions of art are altered by works of art.
20. Successful art changes our understanding of the conventions by altering our perceptions.
21. Perception of ideas leads to new ideas.
22. The artist cannot imagine his art, and cannot perceive it until it is complete.
23. One artist may mis-perceive (understand it differently than the artist) a work of art but still be set off in his own chain of thought by that misconstrual.
24. Perception is subjective.
25. The artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His perception is neither better nor worse than that of others.
26. An artist may perceive the art of others better than his own.
27. The concept of a work of art may involve the matter of the piece or the process in which it is made.
28. Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. There are many side effects that the artist cannot imagine. These may be used as ideas for new works.
29. The process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.
30. There are many elements involved in a work of art. The most important are the most obvious.
31. If an artist uses the same form in a group of works, and changes the material, one would assume the artist's concept involved the material.
32. Banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution.
33. It is difficult to bungle a good idea.
34. When an artist learns his craft too well he makes slick art.
35. These sentences comment on art, but are not art.
The draftsman and the wall enter a dialogue. The draftsman becomes bored but later through this meaningless activity finds peace or misery. The lines on the wall are the residue of this process. Each line is as important as each other line. All of the lines have become one thing. The viewer of the lines can only see lines on a wall. They are meaningless. That is art. (From Pasadena catalogue.) The artists conceives and plans the wall drawing. It is realized by draftsmen. (The artist can act as his own draftsman.) The plan, written, spoken or a drawing, is interpreted by the draftsman. There are decisions which the draftsman makes, within the plan, as part of the plan. Each individual, being unique, given the same instructions would carry them out differently. He would understand them differently. The artist must allow various interpretations of his plan. The draftsman perceives the artist's plan, then reorders it to his own experience and understanding. The draftsman's contributions are unforeseen by the artist, even if he, the artist, is the draftsman. Even if the same draftsman followed the same plan twice, there would be two different works of art. No one can do the same thing twice. The artist and the draftsman become collaborators in making the art. Each person draws a line differently and each person understands words differently. Neither lines nor words are ideas. They are the means by which ideas are conveyed. The wall drawing is the artist's art, as long as the plan is not violated. If it is, then the draftsman becomes the artist and the drawing would be his work of art, but that art is a parody of the original concept. The draftsman may make errors in following the plan without compromising the plan. All wall drawings contain errors. They are part of the work. The plan exists as an idea but needs to be put into its optimum form. Ideas of wall drawings alone are contradictions of the idea of wall drawings. The explicit plans should accompany the finished wall drawing. They are of importance. (from Art Now, vol. 3, no. 2, 1971.)

http://www.franklinfurnace.org/research/projects/flow/lewitt/lewitt.html
Transcript of Conceptual Art

"Ideas alone can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical. - Sol Lewitt History

Conceptual art first emerged in the late 60s. The first wave of the "conceptual art" movement extended from approximately 1967 to 1978. Marcel Duchamp The Fountain, L'urinoir 1917 By: Masooma Shah & Zarnab Afzal

The movement is clear by a focus on ideas and communication rather than visual perception. The movement began in the early 20th century and soon it became one of the largest and quickly undertaken movements. The artists don't believe in art exhibitions in museums and neither have they believed in painting or sculptures. The basis of this artistic movement can be found in the European Dadaist movement of the early twentieth century. Became an international movement It was a major turning point in 20th century art Conceptual art engaged critically with the conditions that have defined art as well as new systems of meaning-making in an age of mass media. A piece of conceptual art challenges the viewer to defend the work as a true piece of art instead of something masquerading as art. Thinking about the artist's deeper meaning in a conceptual art piece helps the viewer understand an important statement about society. Damien Hirst

Joseph Kosuth One and Three Chairs' (1965) MAN RAY Tears, 1930 Conceptual art is all about free thinking and it takes the principles of the idea, not the object. For the Love of God by Damien Hirst (2007) The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living by Damien Hirst (1991) Bicycle Wheel (1913)

https://www.evernote.com/pub/zarnab_afzal/bibliographyofconceptualart Bibliography

Vancouver Art Gallery Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980 is the first major exhibition to track the impact of conceptual art as it was taken up across the country. Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980 September 29, 2012 – January 20, 2013 Comprising work by more than 90 Canadian & international artists, MAN RAY Tears, 1930 Sol Lewitt

Born on July 28, 1887, in Blainville, France. Died on October 02, 1968 Neuilly, France

Born on September 09, 1928, in Hartford, Connecticut Died on April 08, 2007 New York City, New York A giant copy of the Rosetta stone, by Joseph Kosuth in Figeac, France, the birthplace of Jean-François Champollion Born on 1945, in Toledo, Ohio. "Actual works of art are little more than historical curiosities."--Joseph Kosuth

Born in Bristol, England, on June 7, 1965. "I wasn't really that interested in objects. I was interested in ideas." Large Modular Cube, 1969 A Rectangle Bordered and Divided Vertically into Three Equal Squares; One Red, One Yellow; and One Blue, Each with Black Lines in Four Directions, 1992 Conceptual Art.