

Values on Abstraction

Abstract art does not depict anything from reality. It is meant to be non-representational and not at all recognizable whereas figurative art is representational and harbors aspects of reality. Throughout history, many people have both loved and hated abstraction. Many of those who dislike, do so because they don't "get" abstracted art. Abstract art has the potential to make people uneasy. The audience may think that the piece is not about anything in particular if they cannot automatically grasp the meaning. Some people would claim that those who do "get" abstraction are pretentious. These would also be the same people who may see abstract work as unjust praise to "unskilled" artists or "bad" art. With that said Waters takes a stance that would probably be labeled by many as pretentious.

Waters states "Cy Twombly isn't thrilled to be my roommate, and who could blame him?" This first statement alone lets the reader know how Waters holds Twombly's name and work in high regard. He then goes on to say that Twombly is without a doubt, the "most cutting-edge artist." He believes that Twombly's art is too good to be in his house. Waters also makes sure to inform the reader that if he were ever to buy any of Twombly's work, he would need a fortune, and/or he would go broke. Waters also mentions the different ways that Twombly's work is interpreted by the general public. Those who do not understand would consider his work "bad handwriting", in the words of Waters. To some people, his takes may be taken as pretentious, as he mentions that an untrained eye would think less of his work.

Waters places his opinions on display by giving his thoughts on the different Twombly drawings. He first calls his explanations a set of translations and deciphers. He also asks the reader to open their mind when viewing the work. He takes note of the massive amount of emotion that is shown through each stroke. Whether his takes are satirical or not, some people share these thoughts, and due to the nature of art, the opinions are valid.

Writer, Howard Kaplan made an article on John Waters' opinion of Cy Twombly. Waters shared his interpretation of Cy Twombly's *Letter of Resignation XXXI*. Waters calls Twombly's art simultaneously inventive and illegible yet distinguished. Kaplan states "Depending on your politics, Twombly's work either looks like indecipherable hieroglyphs, or, if you share Waters' vision... speaks volumes." Waters states that Twombly makes "perfect mistakes." Furthermore, Kaplan informs the reader of what Waters has to say to those who are not fond of Twombly's work. Waters states "This kind of contemporary art hates you too, and you deserve it." Depending on your politics, readers may have found a new reason to either love or hate Waters for his seemingly pretentious words.

In conclusion, your views on abstraction weigh simply on your values. This conclusion may seem to lack closure; however, art is and has always been subjective. In some regard, those who praise abstract art may always be seen as egotistic or pretentious, while those who despise it may be seen as tasteless or lacking an artistic eye. As stated prior, either of these opinions is valid simply due to the nature of art and its subjectivity.

Citations

Kaplan, H. (2009, March 30). *John Waters on Cy Twombly*. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://americanart.si.edu/blog/eye-level/2009/30/1030/john-waters-cy-twombly>

Waters, J. (2011). Roommates. *Role models* (pp. 239–264). essay, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.