

## Debate and dissension are at the heart of art.

Debate and dissension are crucial to art. Such conflicts can in fact lead to developments in artistic style; in fact, just as in literature and music, new ideas are almost always the subject of disagreement. There can be considerable complexity and variability of ideas between artists and artistic “schools” of the same period. There can even be markedly different perspectives of one piece of art: some may find an art work aesthetically pleasing while others find it visually horrific. As a result....

Impressionist art was greatly debated when it was first introduced. Monet’s artwork series *Hay Stacks* (1890) was the focus of considerable debate. This series is a collection of different pictures Monet painted at different times. The paintings combine and merge different colours to create a view which often seems blurred when seen up close, so that some critics complained that viewers had to observe the works from a distance in order to understand their context. Yet the purpose of these paintings was not to create an accurate image like a photograph, but....

Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* (1889) gave rise to considerable debate. Van Gogh was more interested in creating, rather than imitating, technique and style. This became evident in the bold, long brush strokes in his Post-Impressionist Paintings. Van Gogh’s anguished internal struggle is sometimes reflected in these brushstrokes, although in paintings like this Van Gogh seemed to treat painting as a form of relief from reality, the exaggerated curving forms being....

The cubist approach was to represent objects from more than one angle or view. This flew in the face of the concept that art should represent what the human eye sees at one moment. Many viewers found considerable difficulty even in identifying the subjects depicted in cubist paintings – such as Picasso’s *Still Life with a Bottle of Rum* (1911), in which the bottle is obscured by cubes and circles to such an extent that only upon close inspection can the base and neck of the bottle be distinguished. The letters add to viewers’ confusion, while....

The early twentieth century was a time of great debate about the true nature of art. Dadaism represented an open rebellion against society in general and artistic conventions in particular. The presentation of a urinal (Duchamp’s *Fountain*) as a work of art was evidence of their belief that anything can be art. Collages made a similar point. Duchamp’s *Bottle Rack* (1914) is a “found” object which the artist discovered in hotel trash then proclaimed as art. The Dadaist Manifesto announced an ideology in which any object at all could be regarded as art. Yet....

Surrealists did not set out to portray scenes with visual accuracy; in fact the meaning and subject matter of their art is often debated. Often their art expressed dreams; at times it portrayed something the artist feared. Dalí’s *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans* (1936) is believed to express the artist’s fear of a future Spanish war. The disfigured monster is a likely to be a vision that Dali dreamed or thought about. To most viewers it would be horrific. Some elements of the painting are recognisable as human body parts, although their relationship, and the relevance of the boiled beans, is so uncertain that it is unlikely that many viewers would immediately understand why Dali painted the picture. Dali himself quipped that “one could not imagine swallowing all that unconscious meat with the presence of some mealy and melancholy vegetable”, but this simply adds to the confusion: how is the painting “unconscious meat” and how can beans be “melancholy”? Magritte’s *The Menaced Assassin* (1926) is thought to be based on a scene from Feuillade’s *Fantomas* film of 1912. Although most of the subject matter in the painting seems obvious at first sight, upon closer inspection....

There are some artworks which are almost universally regarded as superb – such as the *Venus de Milo*, Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa*, and Michelangelo’s *David*. However these were all related to respected artistic conventions. Debate arises when artists move beyond such conventions. Yet if there is no such movement....