

Meaning in Art Critique by Francis Rode

Art in any form is an expression of the artist's vision or feelings. Whether or not or to what extent it moves a particular listener/viewer also is impacted by the innate feelings of that person. In other words, the feelings of the artist along with those of the listener/viewer of a given work of art interact in inducing a response. As a result, every listener/viewer of a particular work of art will have a different response to it.

For example, my son, when in high school, was given the following assignment: "express what teenage love means to you using any art form you select." In response to the assignment, he created a collage of various items that to him represented various aspect of teenage love. Among others were a heart with an arrow through it representing Cupid, a band aid representing the protection of a wounded heart, clasp hands representing affection, blood from a wounded heart and a piece of broken glass also representing a wounded heart. His art teacher love his collage, gave him an "A" and wanted to show it at the upcoming high school Art Show. However, the head of the art department was greatly offended by his collage and refused to have it shown in the Art Show. She called his collage very disturbing and indicated that she thought he was emotionally troubled. Since this piece of art was the same for both viewers, their dramatically different responses represented more the feelings of the viewers than it did that of the artist. This example is an extreme one but highlights how the feelings of both the artist and the viewer/listener impact the reaction of a person to a given work of art.

As David White has so well-articulated in his article, knowing the intent and style of the artist helps greatly to fully appreciate his/her work of art. But in the end, it is the response of the listener/viewer to a work of art that also matters.