

“Art depends ultimately on our brains and by understanding what goes on in our brains when we look at a work of art we can hope to deepen our appreciation of both the art and the science.” David Hubel in *Vision and Art: the Biology of Seeing*

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Art is the beating heart upon which culture relies- the fantasmic expression of raging madmen and prim Renaissance women alike. A piece of artwork hanging on the wall acts as a teleportation device, transporting the viewer to a world that abounds with uncharted territory. This world may be a realm of vibrant, raucous colors exploding from the confines of strict geometric shapes or a calm, surrealistic view of a desolate European countryside. As our worldly cultures have evolved, art has evolved with them: from ancient Egyptian votive offerings to the awe-inspiring architecture of the Roman Empire to the electrifying pop art of Andy Warhol.

Since childhood, I have been mesmerized by any masterpiece that appeared before my curious eyes. The first page in my diary always held a running list of every art museum I had explored, coupled with a much longer list of those I dreamt of exploring. As I stand in front of a work of art and feel the breeze from the European countryside or hear the blaring music of the abstract era, I feel the joy of creative expression surging through my veins, arteries, and every last capillary. How else could one be transported to the living room of a seventeenth-century Russian royal family or to the proud Greek society of which Aeschylus wrote?

Until recently, I thought of my appreciation of art as a hobby, a way to enjoy Saturday afternoons in local museums or add depth to my ever-growing imagination. I have now realized that art is the basis of every human life. It governs the construction of our homes, alters our ideal of beauty, and even informs the process of science. Yes, science: the previously thought antithesis to art and domestic culture.

Science, at its foundation, is the begging of questions. Inquiring minds hypothesize, experiment, and conclude. It is rare, however, that such conclusions can be made on the first try; researchers begin to creatively devise ways to inspect the question, approaching the subject from a multitude of different angles. This is remarkably similar to the process of an artist rendering a portrait of a new subject. In fact, the field of vision science deliberately examines *how* the eyes of humans view and interpret the scenes around them. Likewise, an artist toils to present such scenes in the most stimulating manner, so the eyes may interpret them using a variety of different psychological processes.

In learning about and researching unique neurological phenomena, I have gleaned an even greater appreciation of art as a visual stimulus exciting to both my inquisitive, scientific brain and my cultured, creative heart. Connected in one body, they have proven to complement each other exquisitely: art is a science, and science is an art.