



The World of Art

“Church’s content is idyllic and majestic—you feel he has frozen time at perfect moments, captured, and at times orchestrated, Nature’s best at the best moment”

—Carter B. Horsley

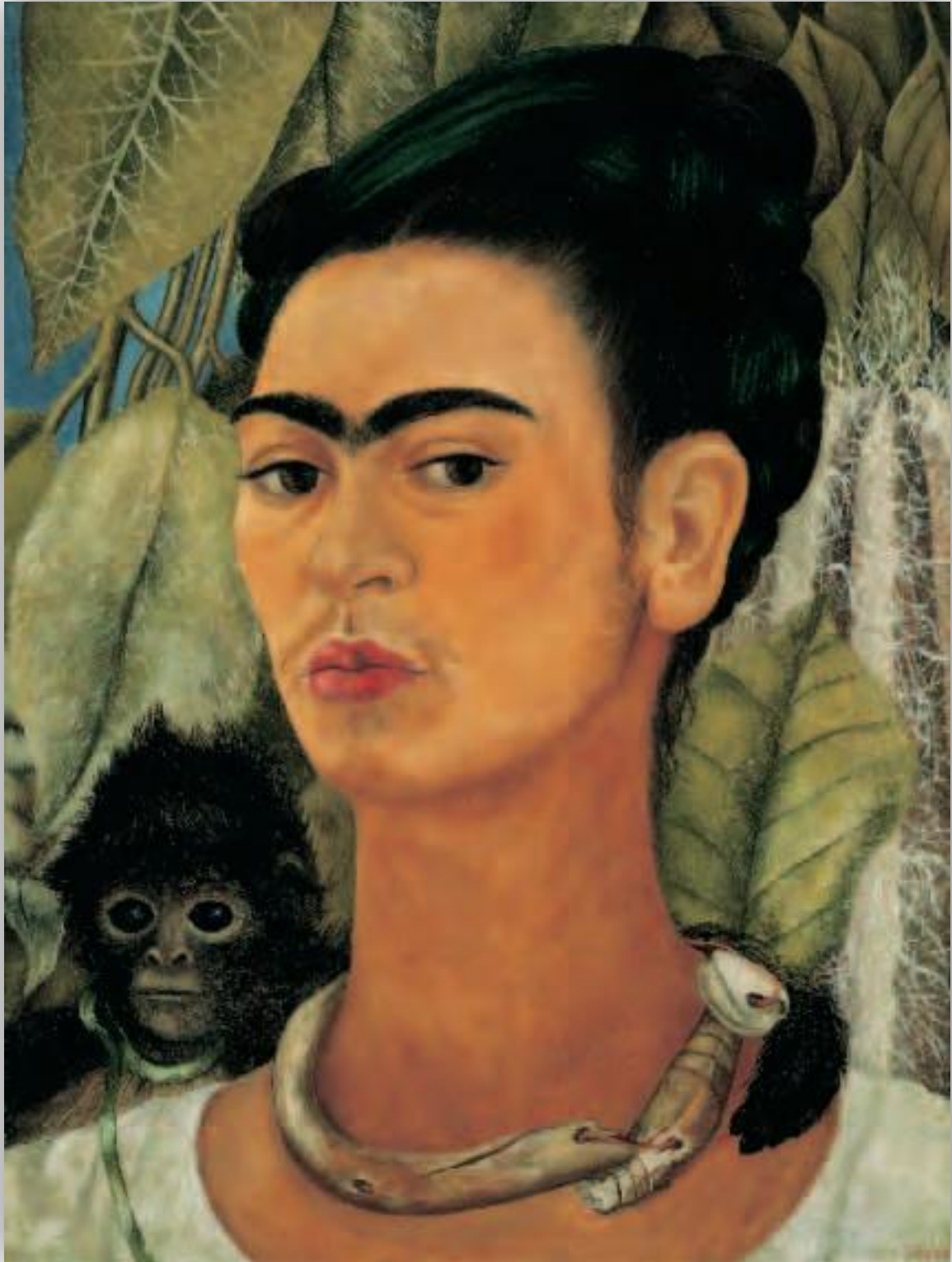
Quick Write

Analyzing Context Clues. When a word is unfamiliar, you can often use its context—nearby words and phrases—to guess its meaning. Using context clues, try to determine the meaning of *idyllic* in the above quote. Then restate the quote in your own words.



Frederic Edwin Church. *The Icebergs*. 1861. Oil on canvas. 163.8 × 285.8 cm (64½ × 112½"). Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas.





▲ **FIGURE 1.1** Artists speak to us, the viewers, through their works. Sometimes, they tell a story. At other times, as in this self-portrait, they express strong emotions. What emotion, or feeling, do you “read” in this artist’s painting of herself? Does she appear happy? Sad? Explain your reaction.

Frida Kahlo. *Self-Portrait with Monkey*. 1938. Oil on Masonite. 40.6 × 30.5 cm (16 x 12”). Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Bequest of A. Conger Goodyear, 1966.



Art in Your World

The urge to create art is as old as humanity itself. Since the dawn of history, people have used art to communicate information, tell stories, and record events. Art is one of the deepest forms of personal expression.

In this chapter, you will:

- Identify the purposes of art.
- Compare and contrast sources to which artists turn for inspiration.
- Create visual solutions using direct observation and imagination.
- Compare and contrast the use of the elements of art in artworks.

Focus on Art History

Figure 1.1 is one of many self-portraits painted by the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907–1954). Kahlo's tragic personal history was a driving force in her art. At the age of 6, she was stricken with polio, a crippling disease. Twelve years later, a bus accident broke nearly every bone in her body. She spent a year in a full-body cast and underwent 30 operations. Her self-portraits, which are highly expressive, seem to reflect a life of physical pain and emotional difficulties. She never appears smiling but, rather, always wears the expression appearing in Figure 1.1.

Compare and Contrast. Examine the work in Figure 4.23 on page 82. It is also a self-portrait of a twentieth-century artist. List similarities and differences in the subject and content between the two works.

Vocabulary

artwork
perceive

What Is Art?

An **artwork** is *the visual expression of an idea or experience created with skill*. Visual art is more than paintings hanging on a wall. Visual art includes drawing, printmaking, sculpture, architecture, photography, film-making, crafts, graphic arts, industrial and commercial design, video, and computer arts.

Art Is Communication

When you talk to someone or write a letter, you communicate. You share your ideas and feelings by using words. You can also communicate through the arts. Art is a language that artists use to express ideas and feelings that everyday words cannot express. In order to experience art fully, you must do more than simply look at it with your eyes; you must develop the ability to perceive. To look is to merely notice and label an object with a name such as “chair” or “house.” To **perceive** is *to become deeply aware through the senses of the special nature of a visual object*. Perception is the result of perceiving. To understand a work of art, you must train yourself to perceive. Try to perceive what Meyer Straus is expressing in his painting, *Bayou Teche* (**Figure 1.2**). If you concentrate on his image, you can feel the humid atmosphere of the Louisiana swamps and hear the mosquitoes buzzing. You can understand how it feels to be enclosed by branches dripping with Spanish moss. You can almost hear the water lapping at the boat.



▲ **FIGURE 1.2** Straus captured the feel of the bayou by including details such as the flowers in the foreground and the gray Spanish moss hanging from the limbs of the live oak trees. Look at the figures in the boat. The trees and swamp overwhelm them. What do you think the figures are doing? What atmosphere does the painting capture?

Meyer Straus. *Bayou Teche*. 1870. Oil on canvas. 76.2 × 152.4 cm (30 × 60"). Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.



Illustrating Ideas from Direct

Observation. Select an everyday object such as one that might be found in the classroom. Closely observe the object. Allow yourself two or three minutes to perceive the object. Then put the object where you can't see it and make a list of all the attributes of the object that you can think of. Look at the object again and add at least three more attributes or characteristics to your list. Use your list and your observations to illustrate an idea for an artwork.

The Purposes of Art

People created art to record ideas and feelings long before they had written words. They used art then as we use it today. The following are some of the most common functions of art:

- **Personal functions.** Artists create art to express personal feelings. Edvard Munch had a tragic childhood. His mother died when he was very young, and one of his sisters died when he was 14. His painting, *The Sick Child* (Figure 1.3), shocked viewers who were used to seeing happy paintings with bright colors. The work was meant to remind viewers of personal family tragedies. Perhaps the artist wanted to tell them to appreciate what they had. Often people who have suffered a loss remind

others to live each day as if it were their last. That is what Munch is saying with his striking image.

- **Social function.** Artists may produce art to reinforce and enhance the shared sense of identity of those in a family, community, or civilization (Figure 12.17, page 332). That is why many families commission or hire an artist or photographer to produce a family portrait. Art produced for this purpose also may be used in celebrations and displayed on festive occasions. Think of the many forms of visual art that might be seen in a parade—costumes, band uniforms, floats, and dances are all forms of visual art that might be included in the public celebration of a parade to commemorate an important holiday or event.
- **Spiritual function.** Artists may create art to express spiritual beliefs about the destiny of life controlled by the force of a higher power. Art produced for this purpose may reinforce the shared beliefs of an individual or



► **FIGURE 1.3** The child in the painting appears pale and calm. She is not looking at her mother. What is she staring at? Notice the exaggerated drooping of the woman's head. What has the artist done to focus your attention on the sick child?

Edvard Munch. *The Sick Child*. 1907. Oil on canvas. 118.7 × 121 cm (46³/₄ × 47²/₅). Tate Gallery, London, England. © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/BONO, Oslo

a human community. In *Pueblo Scene: Corn Dancers and Church* (**Figure 1.4**), the artists have created a three-dimensional representation of a religious festival that connects two cultures and two religions. Works of art have been created for religious purposes throughout history. Many experts believe that the prehistoric cave paintings of animals had ceremonial purposes, which means they were more than simple records of events. The Greek Temples were built to honor the ancient gods. During the Middle Ages in Europe, almost all art was created for the Catholic Church.

- **Physical functions.** Artists and craftspeople constantly invent new ways to create functional art. Industrial designers discover new materials

that make cars lighter and stronger. Architects employ new building materials such as steel-reinforced concrete to give buildings more interesting forms. In **Figure 1.5**, notice how the artist has combined a variety of precious and semiprecious materials to create a unique necklace.

- **Educational function.** In the past, many people could not read and art was often created to provide visual instruction. Artists produced artworks, such as symbols painted on signs, to impart information. Viewers could learn from their artworks. In the Middle Ages, artists created stained-glass windows, sculptures, paintings, and tapestries to illustrate stories from the Bible or about rulers of a kingdom.



▲ **FIGURE 1.4** The figures and buildings for this scene were made by a family of artists. Look closely and you will notice that some of the figures are made of painted clay, while others have hair made from yarn and clothing made of fabric. What do the different figures appear to be doing? What does the procession in the foreground seem to be about?

Vigil Family, Tesuque Pueblo, New Mexico. *Pueblo Scene: Corn Dancers and Church*. c. 1960. Painted earthenware. Girard Foundation Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art, a unit of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico.





◀ **FIGURE 1.5** This necklace is unusual because each unit is different. The repetition of rectangles and the repetition of materials and shapes on the different rectangles create a unified work.

Earl Pardon. Necklace 1057. 1988. Sterling silver, 14k gold, ebony, ivory, enamel, mother of pearl, ruby, garnet, blue topaz, amethyst, spinel, and rhodolite. 43.1 × 2.8 × .3 cm (17¼ × 1¼ × ⅛"). National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Renwick collection.

In addition, when we look at art from the past, we learn from it. Art from other places and other times can tell us what people did. Paintings such as *Anne of Cleves* (**Figure 1.6**) show us people from the past, what they wore, and how they looked.

Art as a Lifelong Pursuit

Art can be a part of your lifelong learning. You may choose to pursue a career in art or to explore art as an avocation, or hobby. Avocational opportunities in art include making art or craft projects at home, taking classes for personal enjoyment, and getting involved in community art programs.

In this book you will learn to analyze and evaluate artworks. You'll also find many opportunities to create artworks and discover the tools, materials, and techniques of various art media. There are many ways to make art a part of your life and education.

Check Your Understanding

1. What does it mean to *perceive*?
2. Name the five purposes of art.
3. Describe two of the purposes of art.



▲ **FIGURE 1.6** This portrait of Anne of Cleves, one of the wives of Henry VIII, shows what a royal person in the sixteenth century might have worn for special occasions. The portrait was created before the wedding because King Henry wanted to know what his intended wife looked like. He had never met her. Notice the unusual jewelry on her hat and the rich fabrics of her dress. How many different fabrics can you identify? How does her clothing indicate her social position?

Hans Holbein. *Anne of Cleves*. 1539. Tempera and oil on parchment. 65.1 × 48 cm (25⅞ × 18⅞"). The Louvre, Paris, France.