# Terms in the study of visual images

The understanding of visual art requires that one understands certain concepts and terms effectively to be able to place each artistic work in its intended context. More often, a single piece of artwork bears more than one meaning depending on the contextual interpretations adopted by the consumers. As Hackett (21-2) observes, understanding the concepts of interpreting such works is important in understanding them and their meanings. The concepts that are commonly used in the visual art are representational, abstract and non-objective. Whether three or two-dimensional, all visual artworks fall in any of these three categories. Most of the times, the intent of the artist informs us about the type of art they have developed. Besides, the application of the medium in which the piece is developed can also act as an important effect on categorizing the artwork in any of the mentioned classes. This paper describes these three concepts by distinguishing their salient characteristics setting them apart from the others.

## Representational

The representational art is used to refer to the images which represent real objects in their natural settings. These images are recognizable, from their physical looks, to represent the objects they are purported to be. Such include images of humans, trees, etc. For these figures, the images do not necessarily need to resemble the exact features of the real objects they represent other than possessing the basic characteristics of these objects. For instance, a representational image of a tree may not necessarily be upright or green as long as it can be recognized as a tree. An example of such a representational artwork is the portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife developed by Van Eyck. The image is believed to be a true depiction of the Italian Merchant known as Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini standing alongside his wife. The image is presumed to be in their home in the Flemish City of the Bruges. The image qualifies for classification as a representational art since it represents a real object.

## Abstract art

The abstract art, as opposed to the representational art, is a deviation from the actual representation of the real objects. The departure from accurate representation can be either complete, partial or just slightly deviational. The artworks which alter only a few aspects of the objects such as form and colour in conspicuous manners are said to be only partially abstracted. On the other hand, total abstraction can be described as images which bear no resemblance to the objects they represent. Abstraction is commonly used in artistic works in which the artists are not willing to give a direct picture about the objects they want to communicate about. The Les Demoiselles d’Avignon image, created by Pablo Picasso in around 1907 is a perfect example of a partial artwork. The piece depicts images of female prostitutes in a Barcelonan brothel. The regular and disjointed body shapes accorded to the women in the image greatly qualify them as abstract artworks (Furnham and Walker 58).

## Non-objective art

The non-objective art gives no impression of reality in the images they represent. Most of the non-objective art is usually created purely for aesthetics purposes and not for any figurative use in the artistic field. Its primary goal is to use the principles and elements of artistic creations to stimulate the emotions and curiosity of the people. The detachment of the non-objective art makes it quite difficult for the consumers to interpret the real meanings of the pieces. An example is the Black Square by Kazimir Malevich. The image can be interpreted in a wide array of perspectives depending on the artists’ key considerations. This widening of the themes represented by the image is what makes it non-objective regarding depiction and consequently, meaning.

To conclude, artworks are created to represent certain aspects of life. These can be true or existing objects of abstract objects, only present in the artists’ minds. Three artistic aspects: representational, abstract and non-objective are commonly used to represent images in artistic works. The representational art depicts true or real objects which exist in reality. The abstract arts, on the other hand, presents a distorted perception of reality. Partial distortions can generate some link between the object and the image as opposed to complete abstractions. However, the non-objective art tends to dissociate itself completely with real representation and thus calls for the curiosity of the art consumers to interpret the images correctly.

## Works Cited

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