

What is Art? Darren Hunt and Kyle Taylor

The vast majority of the art submissions that *VOICES* receives each year are photographs. Even though we encourage submissions of paintings, drawings, and sculpture, most people find that photography is more accessible and easier to create. With this ease of use and access comes the difficult proposition of determining which of these submissions are art or are merely documentaries.

To be art, a work must have form and content. These two requirements are supported by the creative intention of the artist and the ability to interpret the art by the audience. Form has three parts: elements of art (color, value, space, and line), principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, and proportion), and medium (painting, sculpture, photography, etc.). The question the artist must ask him or herself is whether the product meets these requirements. Additionally, the artist should be attempting to communicate a message to the audience. This is content. Photography as art must meet these requirements just the same as paintings or sculptures.

Good photography is more than good subject matter. When someone takes a photograph of a flower, what is the photographer trying to communicate? Has the flower been framed in such a way to expose a particular detail or perspective, utilizing a certain lighting or background focus, or has the point simply been to document nature? There is nothing wrong with a pretty picture, but a good photograph shows what the photographer was thinking about when he or she took the picture or leads the audience to explore individual reactions to the photograph. The photographer wants the audience to feel something as a result of the photo; he or she wants more than just, "Okay, that's nice."

As you consider this year's art selections, ask yourself how you feel about each one. No one can define art for everyone else. But we encourage you to plan photographs rather than just take them. This is where photographs become art.