

American Art: Mid-20th Century and Beyond

Modern and Contemporary Art terms

Term	Definition	Works of art/artists + descriptive phrases
parody	to broadly mimic a style and hold it up to ridicule, mockery, or travesty; often humorous and exaggerated	
subversion	an act of destroying, ruining, undermining, corrupting; questioning whether a work of art is a true image of reality	
appropriation	to copy all or part of a work or product or remake it in some way; including incorporation into another work or serving as the basis for a new work	
consumption/consumerism	dissolving the distinction between art and consumer culture; consumer items become the subject of art; the act of expending, using up, wasting, squandering	
commercialism	an attitude that emphasizes tangible profit or success; includes the practices, aims, and spirit of commerce; exploitation for financial gain	

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minimalism	uses basic geometric forms and shapes; defines a work not as an object but as an encounter between an object, space, and the viewer; purges all representation and illusionism	
conceptualization	to form a general idea or understanding, thought, or notion; develop in the mind; includes conflating art and tasks or problems	
performance	an artist's actions during the creation of a work; a one-time event or process of making where the activity is often more important than the end product or object; spectators become participants	
postmodernism	rediscovery of ornament, color, symbolism; includes diversity of materials, styles, structures, and environment; quotes or appropriates motifs from the past	
photorealism	appropriation of the aesthetic of the photograph in painting and printmaking; use of mechanical aids to produce technically precise imagery; the photograph is the subject (a postmodern activity)	