

THE HEaRT OF THE MATTER, CONTEMPORARY ART

How to Talk About Art Like You Know What You Are Doing

Levels B1-C2

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Learning goals

When you look at a piece of work, any interpretation is valid, any reading acceptable. It's a visual conversation between the artist and the viewer. However, talking about art is much more difficult.

In this course, we will first review Modern Art, then define Contemporary Art, discuss why the term 'contemporary art' is problematic, look at how contemporary artists reflect and comment on modern-day society, and how they treat traditional ideas of what constitutes art and how art is made.

The aim of this course is to allow students to discover and talk about artists working today, improve oral fluency and gain confidence expressing personal opinions using new vocabulary. First, we'll address the question, 'Is this art?', then we'll move on to 'Do I like the idea this artist presents?' instead of asking, 'Do I like how this looks?'

We will discuss issues concerning art as critique, art as appropriation, art existing outside traditional exhibition spaces and big money. We will also touch on architecture and photography as well as challenging works by artists such as JR, Ai Weiwei, Grayson Perry, Jeff Koons, Anselm Kiefer, Nan Goldman and others.

Learning objectives

In this course we will look at images of artworks, read press articles and listen to podcasts and watch videos on and by contemporary artists in order to practice speaking and listening to English and to build vocabulary and ease speaking in public. Students will work on analyzing images and press articles, giving personal opinions and making presentations. By the end of this course, students will be able to talk about contemporary art more confidently.

Course expectations

Students will actively participate in article reading, listening activities, discussions and debates, plus individual and group presentations. **Written summaries after each class will be required and will count for 40% of the grade)**

Autonomy project

A 30-minute presentation beginning or ending with a game, question and answer section or a

debate. In small groups, students will choose a contemporary art exhibition to view together outside class. They will decide on a framework or angle to discuss the show, do research giving background information about the theme or artist and put together a slide show using images and short videos. Before the official presentation, the students should practice in front of each other and their slideshow should be submitted for correction.

Grading

Grades are based on active participation (20%), presentations (individual and group - 40%) and **8 written summaries (40%)**.