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Is Art A Waste Of Time?

Since the beginning of time, art has been a form of expression that is interpreted by others. Art is a way for one to express themselves as it allows for creativity and individualization, expressed on a canvas, in a photograph, or even in a movie film. Today, art is an influential idea that is still incorporated into society. In “Is Art A Waste Of Time?”, the author Rhy Southan expresses his views on the power of art and incorporates groups that oppose his ideas as a strong addition to his perspectives. In a thoughtful TED talk by Titus Kaphar, the ideas of art connecting from history to today are beneficial when explaining the impact that art has on society. Art being a creative way to show meaning, should be viewed as important and powerful by all.

As time has evolved, the generalized ideas of what is deemed important by society have changed. Living in a technological world, individuals focus on concepts such as money and power and often disregard things that aren't influential to their lives, such as art. Reading influential articles, by Rhy Southan and Titus Kaphar give way to the underlying meaning that art can give. As mentioned by Southan, “Everything you do has something to do with art”. The ways that an individual can contribute to the world may not mean much, but Southan explains the importance that art really brings. If people were no longer able to express themselves through their work, creativity would be hidden and the meaning of art would be lost. I believe the power

of self expression is a way to add balance and diversity to the world, and this idea is stated through art. Despite Southan's article focusing on Effective Altruists whose belief is that art is a waste of time, his strong statements connecting culture and art together show the benefits that make creating worth it.

In the TED talk "How Art Changes Us" by Titus Kaphar, I noticed the connections that were made regarding art and the power of history. Kaphar's speech about how African Americans are portrayed in art as he is one, made a powerful impact on my stand with art. Connecting an experience that he encountered and then portraying that experience with artwork, showed just one of many ways one can express themselves with art. The speaker goes on explaining the ways art is depicted in present day, with the bias that not all are recognized for their work and appearance through artwork. Kaphar's recreating of a painting that he made, portrayed African Americans in history just as influential as white people are. He mentioned in the article, "I take brush to canvas and try to bring alive of what I see and try and illuminate what I think the original painter didn't see". This shows how art has importance, even if its changing minor details to create a new meaning. Kaphar's paintings are just some of many that underlie meaning through abstract, however there are many that believe art is no longer beneficial.

As Effective Altruists would view this, Kaphar's painting is not substantial enough to impact the world. They focus on bigger pictures and real-life problems such as money and value. The idea that one can be easily replaced by another is a concept that Southan follows and the EA demonstrates. Southan states, "The idea that the only good that counts is what you accomplish over and above what the next person would have done in your place." He explains that hard work is often disregarded on the bigger scale. The EA's impact on Southan as he talks about in his

article, influences his swaying opinion of art. Despite the good causes that the EA focuses on, I disagree with their concept of self-worth in the world. After reading Southan and Kaphar's text, I realized that art is a way for one to express themselves even if it doesn't involve money or bigger concepts. Society should not be centered around the idea of replaceability, as it distracts from their main goals. Every individual should be recognized as having importance regardless of their impact.

Kaphar's TED talk and Southan's article both mention similar ideas that are important when regarding art. As an experienced reader, I have read lots of different pieces of writing that all have meaning, however I never would have believed to be convinced through writing the power of art. Both artists show that equality is important as all members of society should be valued for their effort and contribution. The question Kaphar has, "What is the impact of these kinds of sculptures at museums, of these kinds of paintings on some of our most vulnerable in society..?", leaves the reader thinking about how art is really viewed and appreciated. People view art in different ways, as some would not spend time uncovering meaning that art can give. I realized that even though Effective Altruists are trying to influence society differently, there will always be people who will appreciate true creativity and dedication. This was shown in Kaphar's recreations as his motive was to portray a different outlook on society.

Due to the revolutionizing world that we live in, standards are higher and society tends to focus on idealistic perspectives. Although art does not help people, it allows artists to express their own ideas even though they are hindered and misunderstood. In Southan's text, Peter Singer explains an analogy. His analogy explains the idea that if a child was drowning, one

would not try to rescue them if they weren't the one that caused the child to drown. This being a very strong analogy, supports the EA's view on art. Singer's question demonstrated the idea that there are bigger issues that are happening in the world, as art is not impactful enough to be beneficial to all. Effective Altruists believe that in order to save the issues in the world, one must contribute on a frequent basis or else their work is not considered helpful. In my opinion, I disagree with the EA's opinion on making an impact, as throughout my experiences in my life I can say that I have seen and done plenty of good deeds that make an impact. I believe that art and self expression should not be focused on the amount of contribution, but by the positive impacts they make on an individual or society as a whole.

After reading both Southan's article and Kaphar's TED talk, I have learned the importance that one small thing can have on society. The idea of self-expression can be shown in many ways as art allows one to create and explore immensely. Despite Effective Altruists believing that time could spent focusing on real-world issues, art will continue to be appreciated in the future. Art can be valued in many ways such as therapy and it is important to keep incorporating it into everyday life. Out of respect for every individual, it is essential to appreciate artists contribution as they try their best to make a difference. Though the idea of continuing art is disagreed upon by many, I believe people should continue creating as there is always something that one can contribute to the world that has meaning.

Works Cited

- Southan, Rhys. "Is Art a Waste of Time?" *Emerging: Contemporary Readings for Writers*, edited by Barclay Barrios 3rd ed, Bedford/St Martin's, 2016.
- Kaphar, Titus. "Can Art Amend History?" TED, Oct 2012.