

What Is Artistic Merit?

Artistic merit can be defined as the perceived artistic quality or value of any given work of art. When engaging with works of art the viewer often begins to form questions. These questions require the viewer to enter a dialogue with the work of art to explore whether it is “challenging” or “interesting.” To gauge artistic merit learners must unpack or reveal different layers of meaning and purpose. A work of art may challenge traditional ideas of how art is defined, what constitutes art, how art is made, or styles and movements that came before it. Artists acknowledge and find inspiration in works from previous time periods, in both subject matter and formal elements. They may appropriate past ideas and approaches, or in some cases reject them.

What does it look like in the classroom?

Learners ask

- “Do I like it?”
- “Is this work of art any good?”
- “What does this work of art mean?”
- “Could I do this myself?”

Learners will

- talk about art using the language of art
- be informed by big ideas
- make multidisciplinary connections
- question important human issues:
 - Identity
 - Community
 - Power
 - Conflict
 - Values
 - Perspective
 - Nature
 - Conservation
 - Spirituality