Aesthetic refers to a type of human experience that combines perception, feeling, meaning making, and appreciation of qualities of produced and/or manipulated objects, acts, and events of daily life. Aesthetic experience motivates behavior and creates categories through which our experiences of the world can be organized.

Artistic associations include self-defined groups, workshops, academies, and movements.

Artistic traditions are norms of artistic production and artistic products. Artistic traditions are demonstrated through art-making processes (utilization of materials and techniques, mode of display), through interactions between works of art and audience, and within form and/or content of a work of art.

Artistic changes are divergences from tradition in artistic choices demonstrated through art-making processes, through interactions between works of art and audience, and within form and/or content. Tradition and change in form and content may be described in terms of style.

Audiences of a work of art are those who interact with the work as participants, facilitators, and/or observers. Audience characteristics include gender, ethnicity, race, age, socioeconomic status, beliefs, and values. Audience groups may be contemporaries, descendants, collectors, scholars, gallery/museum visitors, and other artists.

Content of a work of art consists of interacting, communicative elements of design, representation, and presentation within a work of art. Content includes subject matter: visible imagery that may be formal depictions (e.g., minimalist or nonobjective works), representative depictions (e.g., portraiture and landscape), and/or symbolic depictions (e.g., emblems and logos). Content may be narrative, symbolic, spiritual, historical, mythological, supernatural, and/or propagandistic (e.g., satirical and/or protest oriented).

Context includes original and subsequent historical and cultural milieu of a work of art. Context includes information about the time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created, as well as information about when, where, and how subsequent audiences interacted with the work. The artist’s intended purpose for a work of art is contextual information, as is the chosen site for the work (which may be public or private), as well as subsequent locations of the work. Modes of display of a work of art can include associated paraphernalia (e.g., ceremonial objects and attire) and multisensory stimuli (e.g., scent and sound). Characteristics of the artist and audience—including aesthetic, intellectual, religious, political, social, and economic characteristics—are context. Patronage, ownership of a work of art, and other power relationships are also aspects of context. Contextual information includes audience response to a work of art. Contextual information may be provided through records, reports, religious chronicles, personal reflections, manifestos, academic publications, mass media, sociological data, cultural studies, geographic data, artifacts, narrative and/or performance (e.g., oral, written, poetry, music, dance, dramatic productions), documentation, archaeology, and research.

Design elements are line, shape, color (hue, value, saturation), texture, value (shading), space, and form.

Design principles are balance/symmetry, rhythm/pattern, movement, harmony, contrast, emphasis, proportion/scale, and unity.

Form describes component materials and how they are employed to create physical and visual elements that coalesce into a work of art. Form is investigated by applying design elements and principles to analyze the work’s fundamental visual components and their relationship to the work in its entirety.

Function includes the artist’s intended use(s) for the work and the actual use(s) of the work, which may change according to the context of audience, time, location, and culture. Functions may be for utility, intercession, decoration, communication, and commemoration and may be spiritual, social, political, and/or personally expressive.

Materials (or medium) include raw ingredients (such as pigment, wood, and limestone), compounds (such as textile, ceramic, and ink), and components (such as beads, paper, and performance) used to create a work of art. Specific materials have inherent properties (e.g., pliability, fragility, and permanence) and tend to accrue cultural value (e.g., the value of gold or feathers due to relative rarity or exoticism).

Presentation is the display, enactment, and/or appearance of a work of art.

Response is the reaction of a person or population to the experience generated by a work of art. Responses from an audience to a work of art may be physical, perceptual, spiritual, intellectual, and/or emotional.

Style is a combination of unique and defining features that can reflect the historical period, geographic location, cultural context, and individual hand of the artist.

Techniques include art-making processes, tools, and technologies that accommodate and/or overcome material properties. Techniques range from simple to complex and easy to difficult, and may be practiced by one artist or may necessitate a group effort.

A work of art is created by the artist’s deliberate manipulation of materials and techniques to produce purposeful form and content, which may be architecture, an object, an act, and/or an event. A work of art may be two-, three-, or four-dimensional (time-based and performative).