

John Bucher

Foundations I: Core Concepts

Preference Essay

As an individual who seeks out and appreciates a deeper meaning in art or expression (intended by the artist or not), there were two pieces that stuck out to me from the *Art Index*. Cy Twombly's piece of what appears to be white chalk or charcoal on a black background scribbled in a noise-like manner with some identifiable alphabetical characters, as well as Pat Steir's piece of a potted floral arrangement with equal-in-size rectangles of different styles and colors making up the piece, each rectangular section having a white border. I've always been interested in the humanity of art and how it can be interpreted as something that reflects the human effect on themselves, as well as on the planet, and both of these pieces did just that, with one conjuring a negative reaction and the other personally relatable.

Instantaneously as I saw Twombly's piece, I had a sensation of understanding. My interpretation of the piece is this: incoherence, irritability, fragmented thought—overall a damaged or stressed mental demeanor. The scratchy, inconsistent, aggressive, writing and scribbling produced an idea of trouble with processing ideas, feelings, or attentiveness. The black background, from my perspective, was a great choice as well, representing a standard state of mental neutrality, with the value at the completely opposite end of the spectrum, white, acting as the process of thought, and we see it as problematic here. One of the ideas shown that really stands out to me as interesting is that some letters are identifiable, but not comprehensible as a complete word, as if someone was trying to formulate a thought, but their over-stressed or damaged mind wouldn't allow it, resulting in a scribbly mess.

Twombly's piece is relatable to me in the sense of unorganized or faulty thought processing as a result of stress or lack of sleep. I always enjoy keeping myself busy and productive, improving technique and skills as well as documentation, and with this constant feeling of the need to learn and improve, it can potentially pile up and break and in return cause irritability and difficulty thinking coherently. The piece acts as a reminder for me to try and stay away from over-working my brain, or else it could end up feeling like Twombly's scribbly depiction.

Pat Steir's piece represented to me, initially an ironic idea if viewed superficially, something depressing, saddening, about the human effect on the world. A solid white symmetrical lattice covers the piece, with each rectangle contained within the lattice depicting a fragment of the whole in a different style or color scheme (although some are nearly identical in these regards). The whole depiction is of something natural as well as the product of human creation, a potted floral arrangement. The lattice stands out greatly against the many darker-in-value sections, and can be argued to be a distraction and unpleasant to look at, and that's key here.

Segregation and forming boundaries against other humans has always been an issue with me, especially in public schools where people of different races, cultures and backgrounds were not treated as equally as the majority. This piece, to me, shows those boundaries, the lattice, white, bright and blatant, containing its own style or color scheme, or in other words, culture or region, an area of land with borders. The entire depiction represents to me humans in the natural world, a need for unification that has failed, the white lattice. We're creating all these borders, secluding ourselves from other cultures and people from different backgrounds, but the whole image remains. The whole image also represents to me that we are all human, we all are similar

and connected—all pieces of a whole that is planet-wide harmonic humanity. It is an unpleasant piece to look at, distracting and initially confusing, but it has its purpose at least to me.

Both Twombly's and Steir's pieces I found interesting in regards to dissecting and applying morals and life experiences onto and having an understanding reflected from that. On natural appeal, Twombly outdid Steir for me, mainly for aesthetic and that Twombly's piece has a more direct meaning than Steir, but on the other hand, Steir has created a more direct, identifiable image than Twombly had, and that may be preferable to another individual. Either way, they are both exceptional in their own regards.