

Not every piece of art has some sort of moral commentary. As the daughter of an artist mother and an architect father, I have been raised to *see* art. What I mean by this is that I have grown up to recognize something that is art, even if it might not normally be considered art. Art is subjective. It makes you feel something in your soul. Does this feeling arise from moral commentary? While the most powerful pieces of art often do have moral purposes, this does not mean that all art has this same purpose.

Now imagine you are walking through a brand new art museum. This museum is the next Metropolitan Museum of Art. Before coming into the museum, you notice the building itself. It's the most beautiful building you have ever seen. It's both an ode to the history of the land it's on and a love letter to the future of the city it's in. You look up to see magnificent marble columns holding up the beautiful entryway. Those columns are strong and bold, but they welcome you to come closer. The roof of the museum building is a glass dome. It excites you to know that when you walk inside that building, it will enchant you with all of its natural light. The doors are a pair of enormous marble slabs, signifying the beauty of what is inside. Is the building itself art? It doesn't have anything but beauty to its purpose. However, it makes you feel ready to enter into a journey that is viewing the art within. It makes you feel part of that journey. You are strong and welcoming like the building. You leave your judgments at those magnificent marble doors and step into the enchanting world within. The natural light from the ceiling acts as a spotlight for every piece in the enormous room. In the center of this enormous room, there is a giant weeping willow. It appears to be growing from the ground that the building was built upon. In fact, this enormous room was built around that tree. It was too beautiful to be removed. Hanging on some of the limbs of the willow are small pieces of multicolored glass. They look like broken pieces of beer bottles and windows, but they are now art. The light shines through each piece of glass to

reveal a mosaic of colors around the room. The beauty of this scene is so surreal to you that perhaps you could cry. You could stare at that tree forever. Is this art? It doesn't have any certain moral story to it. Was the tree there to show people it is immoral to cut down trees on the land? Surely it wasn't the only tree on the ground that the building is now set upon. Even so, it makes you feel one with nature and beauty. It makes you feel the magic of the natural world. As you begin to look around the room, you see a vibrant mixture of paintings, sculptures, poems, fabrics, china, and furniture. Some, you may have seen before and some are new to you. You notice a Van Gogh painting and walk toward it. It is one of his many small self-portraits. This piece checks all of the ordinary boxes to what could be defined as art. After all, it was created by a well-known artist. You look at his stern face and he seems to be looking back at you in judgment. "What did he mean to say by painting this?" you ask yourself. This piece has been well analyzed over the years. Using the context of Van Gogh's own life and experiences, one can assume that this piece was a commentary on how he might've seen himself. He has a very angry look on his face. It makes you feel uncertain. It makes you feel your own insecurities. But, did he have a moral commentary on this? Was he trying to say that people shouldn't morally hate themselves? Or was he just communicating his soul's deepest revelations? Why would it be that Van Gogh created so many paintings that are now enjoyed all over the world and not one of them was well known until after his death? Furthermore, Van Gogh is not an artist known for his moral commentary but rather for his relationship with art and mental health. Still, it is considered art. Across the room from this piece is a large wall full of more paintings. These paintings are all from the Romantic period. This historical period contains many well-known pieces of art. Romanticism was a time in history known for its explosion of artistic endeavors all over the world. While there were many themes surrounding this period, one significant theme in many

different works of art from Romanticism is the theme of nature. Some of the pieces are communicating the beauty and wonder of nature. Some show a darker destruction of nature. Many during the Romantic period showed the latter side of nature. This is because while the period is known for its art, it was also a time of industrial change throughout the world. Nature was being attacked. Factory fumes threatened the land's vitality and artists saw inspiration through this darkness. The way they commented on this was through art. At this time, art did have a very strong connection to morality. There was a threat to our natural world, and in return, people communicated the moral wrongs through art showing both the destruction of nature and the beauty of it. Does this mean that those Romantic era paintings are more "art" than the building or the tree or the Van Gogh? The answer is no.

Now that I have taken you through a brief tour of an imaginary art museum, I can explain to you how this connects to my argument. If my descriptions of the art museum have done what they were meant to do, you will now see that it is quite obvious that not all art is meant to play a moral role. Art can be anything to anybody. An ugly splatter paint mess that a mother's three-year-old made is art in her eyes. That three-year-old has no idea that the painting should or should not be holding any specific purpose because, of course, its frontal cortex is not yet developed enough to even understand such complex things as the connection between art and morality. Even so, the three-year-old has created art. Art is far too complex to put into a container that is holding a responsibility to have a moral purpose. Art is something that makes you feel something in your soul, whether you are the artist or the viewer.

To me, even this essay is art. It doesn't really serve any moral purpose, but I used my creativity and feelings and love, and time to create it and I am proud of my masterpiece.