

Art and its context

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A. The objects are not recognizable, which is typical of abstract art: they do not represent physical objects but emotions and impressions, sensory or otherwise. I prefer paintings of things I can recognize.

B. The style is neo-classical but later than Goya. If I cover the dagger with my finger, the painting suddenly changes and could be a placid, ordinary portrait of a beautiful young girl with no malevolence evident on her face.

C. I know that this is by controversial sculptor Daniel Edwards, who makes statements about social polemics such as alcoholism and public nursing of babies. Because of the black background, this is probably installed in an exhibition. It looks as if the clay is fresh and wet: so the idea has 'just occurred' to the artist - but the tiaras on both the dog and the woman, and her careful hairstyle suggest a long consideration of the subject, which at first looks beautiful, but is then confronting because of her position.

D. This is a chocolate box top. It is a pretty scene: very bland and without statement. It is photographically correct, and although there is a contrast between the church steeple in the background that is bathed in light and the dark shack in the foreground, there is a lack of meaning. Paintings without people such as this landscape can be hung quite high on a wall because they are not intimate.

E. This immediately says 'Dali' - the recognizable mustache makes it a portrait of that famous surrealist. But it is signed Merello, so it is by Jose Merello, the modern Spanish expressionist. But even if I did not know this, I

would expect the painting to be hung in a colorful room full of other modern paintings. The various shapes, objects, and words around the figure make it interesting, making the viewer want to approach and inspect every detail.

Musical genius: Mozart's Number 40

Mozart alternates very fast stretches with slow ones in this symphony. It makes you feel that the composer was in a furious hurry to put down the notes before someone interrupted his muse. His character is fully in the music, like the speech of a very precocious child: fast and furious, saying everything before the listener gets distracted by something else. It gave me thoughts of this young man in a white wig holding a quill and writing music notes on lined paper very fast. But then he slows down and starts to add complication and meditation. It is a very mixed piece, but very memorable. People remember it because of the repetitions: the main theme keeps coming back. It is easy to hum after hearing it because the repetitions are of only 3 - 5 notes before they get longer. The music suggests excitement and impulsiveness.