

# The nature of beauty in contemporary art

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



The Nature of Beauty in Contemporary Art Art in the modern world is defined by its position as a status symbol, contributing to the impression of money and power, while excluding the artist from the process. The artist is a solitary figure, his or her only contact with the public being what the dealer decides to show. This has led to a general belief in art as merely something decorative, lacking any power to change the world. It is because of this general belief regarding art that has diminished the artist's ability to take constructive action – the disenfranchisement of art.

However, many artists have realized that there are problems in the world and have been working to try to change their role. This shift in the production of art to something that is more commentary and call to action is forcing the viewing public to change the way they think about art as well as the form in which the art is expressed. “ Vision is not defined by the disembodied eye, as we have been trained to believe. Vision is a social practice that is rooted in the whole of being” (Gablick).

In describing this break, Gablick describes a project conducted by a friend on the Rio Grande River in which the journal of the friend documents the emergence of the river itself as artist and the relationship it develops with the friend as art. Rather than simply an ecological clean-up effort, Gablick argues that Dominique Mazeaud's project was artwork because of the way it was serving to bring out the beauty of the river as it was being cleaned up and as a realization of nature as a living, breathing thing with which one could have a relationship. In discussing this project, Gablick argues against critics who claim art as social commentary reduces its aesthetic value by arguing that such art works to create a more beautiful world and to heal the

soulless attitudes held toward the physical world.

Gablick concludes her article with transcriptions of dialogue she had with other artists. Thomas Moore indicates that art is the most important vehicle for the return of the soul and the importance of bringing art into everyday social life. James Hillman emphasizes that the ideas of beauty and metaphor are critical to what he considers art. In addition, art should be put to service life, rather than to just hang in museums, such as the dances of India that were dances to serve the tribal community rather than to entertain an audience. This conversation concludes with the concept that art originated as a means of serving the gods of the community and it has been doing so ever since. The problem has been that in the modern age, art has been serving the gods of money and capitalism, with little thought to whether these gods should be served. The artist on the river clean up project serves a different god from this, leading the way for artists to change their focus of service to something worth the effort.