

Utilitarian objects as art

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The Clock The Clock is a readymade created by an unknown artist. In its utilitarian condition the object functions as a means of keeping time; it also includes a digital function that records the day of the week and the date. The Clock has a grey metal exterior that surrounds the time telling functions. The Clock's hands and face are made of plastic. Internally the Clock is battery operated and contains a motor mechanism, as well as digital functionality. Throughout the 20th century the Clock functioned as an essential object of domesticity, relaying to habitants the fabric or time and date that governed and motivated their daily lives. As such, it was used not only on a daily basis, but also many times throughout the day. The Clock has a minimal color base combining a muted grey exterior, with a white and black interior. To a great degree it is recognized that this minimal color base functions as a means of functionality. In these regards, the white and black functions as a means of creating a visual juxtaposition that allows the user to view the clock clearly and from a distance.

As a readymade the Clock has a complex artistic meaning. One recognizes the centrality of this device to the daily lives of 20th century citizens. In these regards, the object is an articulation and manifestation of the very engine of social existence. The Clock contains the traditional hands pointing to numbers, as well as a digital interface for the date. This hybridity of design is a testament to the shifting sociocultural landscape that the emerging world found themselves in at the concluding period of the 20th century, as traditional modes of living clashed with an infusion of digital culture. This post-modern combinatory aesthetic opens the art object to meditative contemplation.

The viewer is led to consider Marshall McLuhan who famously noted that the medium is the message. While McLuhan was referring to the televisual apparatus and its media dissemination message, the Clock opens this dialectic to demonstrate that time is the very medium that governs our daily existence. In this context of understanding the hybrid traditional and digital presentation is a clear indication of the shifting medium and fabric of our daily existence. In the 21st century the days of our lives are increasingly measured and mediated through a digital medium. When considered in the context of Einstein's theory of relativity one recognizes that the very nature of time is mutable and transformative. The impact of such a shift is both demonstrative of the progressively industrialized nature of modern society, but also impactful as the increasing technological complexity necessary for digital explication further removes the viewer from a natural interaction with our collective primordial being.

Ultimately, for its seminal design mechanics, the subtle yet complex meaning underlining its outward appearance, as well as for its centrality to the core of the human experience, the Clock is recognized as one of the most important pieces of late 20th century art.