Purposes of Art

- Why do people create visual art? What is it used for? Why is it valued? Art plays different roles in different situations.

- There are five purposes for visual art: Ceremonial, Artistic Expression, Narrative, Functional and Persuasive.
Ceremonial art is made to celebrate or commemorate something important in the culture, in ritual or worship, or in personal life.

Ex. “The Last Supper”  
By Leonardo Da Vinci
Public art that is ceremonial in nature includes statues of events or people, often of historical relevance. The Vietnam Memorial and other structures and sculptural objects in the nation's capital are examples.

“Washington Crossing the Delaware” by Emmanuel Leutze
1851
Narrative art tells a story or makes a point. Some communities commission narrative murals for buildings or walls to depict stories from local history. Narrative art describes or illustrates experiences, documents important or historical events, or communicates ideas or information.

Notice all the action in this narrative painting by Pieter Bruegel called “The Peasant Wedding”
Art created for Artistic Expression focuses on the artist most of all, for it is a self-expression of the artist’s personal, internal emotions, feelings, experiences or ideas. This type of art is sometimes, but not always, abstract or non-objective.

Functional art seeks to beautify objects that are useful in everyday life. Many of the objects we use – including pottery, quilts, baskets, furniture (serve a useful purpose) but are also designed or decorated in a way that is artistically pleasing.
Persuasive artworks promote ideas, philosophies or products. Advertising, marketing, propaganda and visual messages of ideology fall into this category.

“We Can Do It”, J. Howard Miller (Rosie the Riveter)
What can art be about? Think of all the types of subjects you have seen in paintings, photographs, sculptures. You have probably seen examples of landscapes, portraits, still life, abstract images, and even non-objective subject matter.
Landscape

-A landscape is a work based on the land and what is on it.

Notice in the painting “On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt” that Claude Monet includes a woman in the painting, but she is not the focus of the painting.
Portraits have always been popular. Here is the “Mona Lisa” by Leonardo, arguably the most famous portrait in history. Leonardo carried this painting around with him until his death.
Still-life

-artwork based on inanimate objects.

Ex. A bowl of fruit

“Still-life with Apples”
Paul Cezanne
1895
Abstract

-An abstract painting distorts, simplifies or changes reality, but the subject should still be recognizable.

Pablo Picasso was quite possibly the most well-known and successful abstract artist in history. Here is his work, “Three Musicians”.
Non-Objective

- A non-objective painting has no subject. Contains no recognizable forms; often is more about the media it is made from, rather than any identifiable subject.

Jackson Pollock was an action painter. In action painting there is no apparent subject. Here we have Pollock’s “Number 18” from 1950.