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# DO WE KNOW ART WHEN WE SEE IT? PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATIONS IN AESTHETICS

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## ABSTRACT

Never in history was art more present everywhere and never was it more valuable. Yet, in the wake of Duchamp and Warhol, the understanding of what art is and how it is recognized is more problematic today than any time in history. This paper examines the various approaches to how one recognizes a work of art *as* a work of art. It examines the history of aesthetic theory and the various ways art was defined. In the end it considers the value of the more hermeneutic and holistic interpretations of art put forward by Heidegger, Gadamer, Danto and Beuys.

1. Let us begin with a paradox: Never in history was art more present everywhere and never was it more valuable. Yet the question is which values people usually have in mind. A German minister recently expressed this very nicely. When his state considered selling a few Warhols to fill up its empty coffers, he remarked: “A piece of art has value when you can sell it.” It’s that simple, it’s just monetary value.