

## SECTION 2

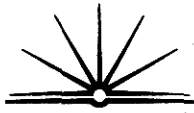
### Question Conceptual Framework - Question 5

Imagine the work ~~of~~ "Puppy" by Jeff Koons. A ~~is~~ huge, larger than life rendition of a puppy made ~~entire~~ from foliage and flowers. The meaning for Koons was a post-modernist approach to the question "what is art?"

Now imagine if we took this work back to the times of Caravaggio and ~~then~~ Artemisia Gentileschi - ~~a time of~~ the early 1600s. The mannerist work that was being produced then with a high degree of technical skill and not too much of a statement to make seems in stark contrast to Koons' "Puppy". Yet both are relevant to <sup>the art world.</sup>

The issue raised <sup>here</sup> is one of audience, and an audience is shaped by society's <sup>expectations and</sup> conditioning.

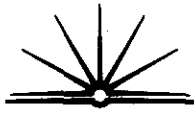
The meaning of artists' works must be taken within context of what the artist intended, and of the society from ~~which~~ which they have sprung. As the audience changes, so too does the meaning of artists' works.



As for the case of Koons' "Puppy" versus the Mannerists, one can say that the society at ~~that time~~ <sup>the time of the Mannerists,</sup> and therefore the audience, was not at a stage where it was conceded necessary to question ~~what~~ what art 'was'. They <sup>and the art world</sup> had not passed through the various movements needed to get to this stage, and therefore could not have viewed it as ~~Koons~~ was Koons' intentions.

This example is of the change of an audience over a large period of time, but 'the audience' can be 'changed' by any number of things. ~~Finding out about~~ Researching an artist's life can have a great effect on the way we view their art. ~~as seen in the world event~~

To begin with, researching the background behind a painting can offer additional contextual information and reveal nuances and symbols that we may not have previously seen. A good example of this is Gentileschi's "Judith Slaying Holofernes". A well known image, I had



viewed it many times, but it was not until I had experienced a change - that of acquiring background information on the life and times of Artemisia Gentileschi that I understood the painting more fully. For instance, one may imagine that in the story of Judith and Holofernes that Gentileschi places herself as Judith and Agostino Tassi as Holofernes. Gentileschi painted many females who had been victim to rape, as she herself was raped by Tassi, such as Cleopatra, ~~and~~ Lucretia and Susanna, from "Susanna & the Elders".

It can be then understood why she may have used this symbolism in her work to express personal emotions on her own experiences, and at the oppression of women ~~and~~ during her life.

Yet personal change is not the only change capable of changing the meaning of artist's works. It is possible that a world event is capable of changing a generation, and in doing so, how they look at certain art works.

Yasumasa Morimura's habit of placing his



own image in works has been recontextualised in a way since <sup>such world</sup> ~~the~~ events as the September 11 and Bali bombing terrorist attacks.

Instead of Morimura's meaning being "East meets West in (his) work", the meaning has become less of a personal one and more of a generational one. His appropriation of Eddie Adams' "Execution of a Vietcong Terrorist" has suddenly become more relevant for many people. They realise that it could be their face in place of the executioner, or the terrorist, their face in a scene of unadulterated war. The placing of the altered image into a Buddhist altar echoes less of Morimura's beliefs, and more so of a remembrance of loved ~~one~~ ones who have died in this so called "war on terror".

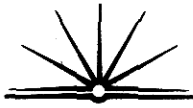
It is impossible to fully appreciate the impact of a work of art, and the artist's meaning without taking into account the context. When the audience changes, the context changes also, and in doing so, may in turn

change the ~~artists~~ meaning in the art work ~~for~~ from that ~~intend~~ intended by the artist to the one relevant to the viewer.

"The meaning of an artist's work" is a very ambiguous statement. In its ambiguity, it leaves itself open to interpretation: Do we mean "the artist's meaning"?, or the meaning that is apparent to the audience?

It is possible that works of shock value will also change or lose meaning. Just as the shock value of Manet's "Olympia" has worn off, in the future it may wear off from works of Stelarc, such as ~~hanging~~ suspending himself from hooks, and Cindy Sherman's dramatic "Untitled #188" (1985 series).

The meaning of a work changes not only when the context has changed, but also when our education of the artist or the artist's intentions has changed. We find that sometimes personal experience makes a piece more relevant, and it may not keep the original meaning as ~~it~~



intended by the artist, but the meaning ~~for~~  
of an artist's work has changed - to an  
individual or mass audience.

Therefore it is true, that as an audience  
changes, so too does the meaning of the artists'  
works.