

AP® ART HISTORY

2011 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8

In 1917 a Dada artist submitted a mass-produced urinal as a sculpture to an exhibition in New York City.

What was the artist's real name? How did the artist's submission challenge conventional ways of thinking about art and artists? (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to identify the artist who submitted this work to an exhibition, and to discuss how the artist used the work to challenge conventional ways of thinking about art and artists. It asks students to connect the artist's submission to larger contextual issues such as the role of the artist, what constitutes art, and how a work's value is assigned and by whom.

The work shown is a replica of *Fountain*, submitted by Marcel Duchamp in 1917 to an unjuried exhibition by the Society for Independent Artists in New York City. (The original has been lost.) *Fountain* is a "readymade," a term Duchamp invented for common, mass-produced objects that he, as an artist, invested with meaning. Critics disdained these readymades, none more so than *Fountain*, a work Duchamp submitted under the pseudonym R. Mutt and in whose rejection he gloried. By definition, an unjuried exhibition must accept all works submitted; the rejection of a work from an unjuried show is thus a contradiction in terms. That Duchamp sought out this situation and submitted a work that the exhibition's organizers could not possibly accept or display suggests the extent to which he rejected conventional definitions of art and of the artist.

Fountain is a urinal. It is not a painting or a sculpture or even an art object, as collectively understood. At the time it bore no relation to the history of art nor to any accepted notion of what constituted art. The only trace of an artist's hand was the false, applied signature of R. Mutt. Traditionally a signature adds value to a work of art and sanctifies its status. Yet with *Fountain* Duchamp satirized an authentic signature, playing on the name of a plumbing company and/or a comic strip. He also painted a date onto the urinal, thus parodying another convention of traditional artistic practice. Furthermore, Duchamp changed the standard position of the urinal by inverting it.

As such, Duchamp's *Fountain* fulfilled none of the traditional functions for art at the time. It provided no visual pleasure, nor did it satisfy a social, political or religious need. Instead, *Fountain* was and is emblematic of the rejection of aesthetic taste and judgment. A defense of *Fountain*, likely penned by Duchamp himself, argues that, "Whether Mr. Mutt made the fountain with his own hands or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view — created a new thought for that object."

Duchamp later claimed he had little use for "retinal" art; his concern was the conceptual. *Fountain* supports this notion, as its creation signals the invention of conceptual art.

Two Tasks for Students

1. Identify the artist by his real name. Any reasonable variation on the spelling "Duchamp" should be accepted.
2. Explain how the artist's submission challenged conventional ways of thinking about art and artists.

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Question 8 (continued)

Points to Remember

Although some students may give the work's title and discuss its significance, students are not required to identify the work by its title.

Students may focus on the act of submission or the object itself.

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response correctly identifies Duchamp. The response explains how Duchamp's submission challenged conventional ways of thinking about art and artists. The discussion is specific but may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful impact on the response.

3 points

Response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response correctly identifies Duchamp. The response explains how Duchamp's submission challenged conventional ways of thinking about art and artists; however, the response may be somewhat general or less clear than a response that earns 4 points. There may be minor errors that have some impact on the response.

2 points

Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response correctly identifies Duchamp. The response explains Duchamp's submission in relation to conventional thinking about art and artists; however, the discussion may be vague, be overly general or descriptive, or contain significant errors.

OR

The response fails to identify Duchamp, but its discussion of how the work challenged conventional ways of thinking about art and artists has enough accuracy and specificity that it would otherwise have earned a higher score.

Note: This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not correctly identify Duchamp.

1 point

Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response correctly identifies Duchamp, but there is no other discussion of merit.

OR

The response fails to identify Duchamp, but attempts to explain how the artist's submission challenged conventional ways of thinking about art and artists. The response demonstrates some general familiarity with the issues raised by the question, but the discussion is weak, is inaccurate, or contains significant errors.

0 points

Response demonstrates no discernible knowledge or understanding of the question.

Although the student attempts to respond, the student fails to identify Duchamp and makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements about the artist's challenge to conventional ways of thinking about art and artists.

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Question 8 (continued)

— This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words or personal notes.

8. In 1917 a Dada artist submitted a mass-produced urinal as a sculpture to an exhibition in New York City.

What was the artist's real name? How did the artist's submission challenge conventional ways of thinking about art and artists? (10 minutes)

Although the avant-garde artist signed his "ready-made" urinal as R. Mutt, this proved to be a pun made up of other companies' names. His name was Marcel duChamp. Beginning this Dada style of art as early as the early twentieth century, duChamp raised major controversy. This piece titled Fountain, pokes fun at the ability to make an ingenious piece of art that was essentially factory produced, or made by someone else. duChamp exposed the new idea of conceptual and modern art — leading a whole school behind him. He challenged and widened the window of what art really is. He provoked those who felt that it took no skill, but only an idea. By calling it Fountain and not urinal he also skewed the meaning and function of something as basic as a urinal. This ready-made proved that the concept is as valid as the skill. ~~_____~~ This early movement in art would soon become a big inspiration causing artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to delve deep into with fauvism, conceptual art, and much more.

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8. In 1917 a Dada artist submitted a mass-produced urinal as a sculpture to an exhibition in New York City.

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The artist was Marcel Duchamp. The submission of this piece was shocking to the public and art judges everywhere as it was a challenge of what could be considered art and what wouldn't. This is due to the ready-made nature of the piece, which is also a major element of Dada art. Instead of making something on his own, Duchamp simply repurposed a urinal, causing an outburst from the art community. This can be seen in other Dada art as well such as George Braque's work. Further, this piece challenged how people thought of art due to its random nature, which Dada art largely focuses on, even the name Dada came from randomly selecting the word "hobby horse" from a dictionary.

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The artist's real name was Duchamp. His submission challenged ~~conventional~~ a conventional art in various ways. The goal of the Dada movement was to take ordinary objects and make small variations to turn them into something unique, but not necessarily with meaning. This particular piece/"sculpture" takes something most modern society people are familiar with, and presents it at a foreign and new and interesting angle just by turning it over on its side. This obviously isn't conventional or traditional in terms of art because most art, ^{historically,} is traditionally regarded as original or at least created from scratch. In contrast, the urinal piece has very little differences from an average urinal, which is not ^{considered} art, but just a toilet on a wall.

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2011 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 8

Overview

This 10-minute essay question asked students to identify Marcel Duchamp as the artist who submitted a urinal to an exhibition, and to discuss how Duchamp used the work to challenge conventional ways of thinking about art and artists. Students had to connect Duchamp's submission to larger contextual issues, such as the role of the artist, what constitutes art, and how a work's value is assigned and by whom.

Sample: 8A

Score: 4

The student correctly identifies the artist as Duchamp. The response addresses how Duchamp's submission challenged conventional ways of thinking by stating that he "raised major controversy" and "pokes fun." The student also states that the artist "challenged and widened the window of what art really is." The response refers to the work's title, saying that the artist "skewed the meaning and function" by calling it *Fountain*. The student emphasizes the importance of the conceptual, stating that "the concept is as valid as the skill." The response also notes that this "early movement in art would soon become a big inspiration" for later artists. A minor error — the mention of Fauvism — has no impact on the response. The discussion is specific and demonstrates thorough knowledge of the topic.

Sample: 8B

Score: 3

The student correctly identifies the artist as Duchamp. The student addresses how Duchamp's submission challenged conventional ways of thinking by stating that the submission was "a challenge of what could be considered art." The response aptly states that "Duchamp simply repurposed a urinal, causing an outburst from the art community." In addition "this piece challenged how people thought of art due to it's [*sic*] random nature." The discussion is somewhat general, but it demonstrates sufficient knowledge of the topic.

Sample: 8C

Score: 2

The student correctly identifies the artist as Duchamp. The student summarizes readymades without naming them, stating that this work takes something familiar and "presents it in a foreign and new and interesting angle just by turning it over on its side." The response also notes that art "is traditionally regarded as original or at least created from scratch." As a whole this response is overly general and descriptive, but it demonstrates some knowledge of the topic.