



# **Definitions of Art**

Stephen Davies

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In the last thirty years, work in analytic philosophy of art has flourished, and it has given rise to considerably controversy. Stephen Davies describes and analyzes the definition of art as it has been discussed in Anglo-American philosophy during this period and, in the process, introduces his own perspective on ways in which we should reorient our thinking. Davies conceives of the debate as revealing two basic, conflicting approaches? the functional and the procedural? to the questions of whether art can be defined, and if so, how. As the author sees it, the functionalist believes that an object is a work of art only if it performs a particular function (usually, that of providing a rewarding aesthetic experience). By contrast the proceduralist believes that something is an artwork only if it has been created according to certain rules and procedures. Davies attempts to demonstrate the fruitfulness of viewing the debate in terms of this framework, and he develops new arguments against both points of view? although he is more critical of functional than of procedural definitions. Because it has generated so much of the recent literature, Davies starts his analysis with a discussion of Morris Weitz's germinal paper, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics." He goes on to examine other important works by Arthur Danto, George Dickie, and Ben Tilghman and develops in his critiques original arguments on such matters of the artificiality of artworks and the relevance of artists' intentions.



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