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Professor Susan Russinoff
PHIL-92-3 Philosophy for Children
Thursday, November 10, 2022

Aesthetics: Art or Not Art?

Subject of Discussion: Aesthetics

Age Range: 5-6

Total Time: 45 minutes

Materials: *The Dot*, print outs of art examples, paper, crayons

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to think about the nature and authorship of art.
- Students will be able to think about the standards of artistic quality, including whether “bad” art exists and whether art must be made with intent.
- Students will be able to think about the artistic quality of their own drawings and whether they meet the definition of artwork.
- Students will think about why people make art.

Introduction (5-10 mins)

- Question of the week
 - What is art?
- Intro to Lesson Questions:
 - Ask if they have ever been to an art museum... if not, explain that art museums are where art is displayed and people pay to go and look at art made by others
 - Now pretend we are in a museum looking at art :)
 - Show each art example one by one
 - Do not reveal that the art that was made by the bunny was made by the bunny
 - Do you think each is art? Who do you think made this art?
 - What makes each picture art?

~ movement break #1: pretend you're painting ~

Reading: *The Dot* (5 mins)

Book Discussion:

- How art is defined/valued
 - Was Vashti's first dot a piece of art? Why or why not?
 - Could the dot be considered “good” art?
- Artistic realism
 - Was the boy's squiggly line “bad art” because it was straight as intended?
 - If someone signs their art does that make it art? Why do people sign art?
- Does intent matter in art?

- Vashti didn't *mean* to make any art when she drew the dot. Do you have to put thought into art in order for it to be good?
 - Ex. if you spill a can of paint all over a white piece of paper and the result looks beautiful, can you call that art
 - If you do not mean to make art, can the result be art?
- ~ movement break #2: creating shapes (be a line, be a circle, be a square) ~

Activity:

- Give each child a piece of paper and drawing supplies and prompt them to draw different things (choose a subset of the following in order to avoid running out of time). Ask questions between each drawing about what they have made.
 - Randomly scribble
 - Is this art? Why or why not?
 - Can you make art unintentionally this way?
 - Draw a circle
 - Do you think this is art? Why?
 - If this is not art, what could you do to it to make it art?
 - Does everyone's circle look the same?
 - Draw a tree (likely skip)
 - Do you think this is art? Why?
 - Why did you draw your tree the way you did?
 - What if your tree was purple instead of green? Is it still "tree art"?
 - Draw your favorite animal
 - Do you think this is art?
 - Does your drawing look like the real animal?
 - If not:
 - Is that okay? Can it still be good art?
 - Is it still a drawing of that animal?
 - What if you sign your drawings?
 - Have the students sign their drawings
 - If they are not able to sign their name, have them put their initials
 - What if I hang your drawings on the wall?
 - Actually hang them on the wall and have the children observe
 - Now are they art? Were they always or did they just become art?
 - Is it important for art to be displayed or can you make art just for yourself?
 - What is the purpose of art? Why do people make art?
 - Who decides what is "good art"?
 - Did you have fun?
 - If so, why? Why do we enjoy making art?

Conclusion

- Go back to pictures we showed at the beginning and ask again if they think that the pictures are art
- Reveal that the one piece of art was made by a bunny
 - Do you think animals can make art?









