CHAPTER-I

What is Applied Art?

1.1 What is Applied Art?

How best to define the term “Art” is a subject of constant contention; many books and journal articles have been published arguing over even the basics of what we mean by the term “Art”. Theodor Adorno claimed in 1969 “It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident.”

Artists, philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists and programmers all use the notion of art in their respective fields, and give it operational definitions that vary considerably. Furthermore, it is clear that even the basic meaning of the term "Art" has changed several times over the centuries, and has continued to evolve during the 20th century as well.

The main recent sense of the word “art” is roughly as an abbreviation for creative art or “fine art.” Here we mean that skill is being used to express the artist’s creativity, or to engage the audience’s aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audience towards consideration of the “finer” things. Often, if the skill is being used in a functional object, people will consider it a craft instead of art, a suggestion which is highly disputed by many Contemporary Craft thinkers. Likewise, if the skill is being used in a commercial or industrial way it may be considered design instead of art, or contrariwise these may be defended as art forms, perhaps called Applied Art. Some thinkers, for instance, have argued that
the difference between fine art and Applied Art has more to do with the actual function of the object than any clear definitional difference \[^3\].

Applied Art usually implies no function other than to convey or communicate an idea. Proceduralists often suggest that it is the process by which a work of art is created or viewed that makes it Applied Art. It is about an object, that how well it is received by the institutions of the art world after its introduction to society at large.

The Arts concerned with making objects with functional purposes, but for which aesthetic concerns are significant. The Applied Arts may include architecture, interior design, the design of manufactured items, ceramics, metalwork, jewelry, textile, glass, furniture, graphics, clocks and watches, toys, leather, arms and armor, musical instruments, etc. Commercial art may be considered a branch of Applied Art. The Applied Arts are usually contrasted with the Fine Arts (drawing, painting, sculpture, fine printmaking, etc.), which are seen as serving no purpose other than providing an aesthetic experience. Most of the Applied Arts might also be described as design. The distinction between the applied and the fine arts did not emerge strongly until the time of the Industrial Revolution (about 1775-1875), and accompanied a growing secularization of art and the emergence of a need felt by some artists to replace dying spiritual values with purely aesthetic values, setting art apart from the rest of life. Nevertheless, some have emphasized the importance of craft and regard the distinction between the fine and the Applied Arts as false and undesirable. Even to those who see it as important to make this distinction, many objects make it very difficult because their purposes are so dominated by their aesthetic ones.
1.1.1 – Definition of the word 'Applied Art'

The most common usage of the word "Art," which rose to prominence after 1750, is understood to denote skill used to produce an aesthetic result. Britannica Online defines it as "the use of skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others." By any of these definitions of the word, artistic works have existed for almost as long as humankind: from early pre-historic art to contemporary art; however, some theories restrict the concept to modern Western societies. Much has been written about the concept of "art". Where Adorno said in 1970 "It is now taken for granted that nothing which concerns art can be taken for granted any more. The first and broadest sense of art is the one that has remained closest to the older Latin meaning, which roughly translates to "skill" or "craft," and also from an Indo-European root meaning "arrangement" or "to arrange". In this sense, art is whatever is described as having undergone a deliberate process of arrangement by an agent. A few examples where this meaning proves very broad include artifact, artificial, artifice, artillery, medical arts, and military arts. However, there are many other colloquial uses of the word, all with some relation to its etymology.

The second and more recent sense of the word art is as an abbreviation for creative art or fine art emerged in the early 17th century. Fine art means that a skill is being used to express the artist’s creativity, or to engage the audience’s aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audience towards consideration of the finer things. Often, if the skill is being used in a common or practical way, people will consider it a craft instead of art. Likewise, if the skill is being used in a commercial or industrial way, it will be considered Commercial Art instead of fine art.
On the other hand, crafts and design are sometimes considered Applied Art. Some art followers have argued that the difference between fine art and Applied Art has more to do with value judgments made about the art than any clear definitional difference. However, even fine art often has goals beyond pure creativity and self-expression. The purpose of works of art may be to communicate ideas, such as in politically-, spiritually-, or philosophically-motivated art; to create a sense of beauty; to explore the nature of perception; for pleasure; or to generate strong emotions. The purpose may also be seemingly nonexistent.

Applied Art can describe several things: a study of creative skill, a process of using the creative skill, a product of the creative skill, or the audience’s experience with the creative skill. The creative arts (art as discipline) are a collection of disciplines (arts) that produce artworks (art as objects) that are compelled by a personal drive (art as activity) and echo or reflect a message, mood, or symbolism for the viewer to interpret (art as experience). Applied Artworks can be defined by purposeful, creative interpretations of limitless concepts or ideas in order to communicate something to another person. Applied Artworks can be explicitly made for this purpose or interpreted based on images or objects. Applied Art is something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, or ideas through the senses. It is also an expression of an idea and it can take many different forms and serve many different purposes. Although the application of scientific theories to derive a new scientific theory involves skill and results in the "creation" of something new, this represents science only and is not categorized as Art.

A central problem in Applied Art history has been the definition of ‘Applied Art' as an object of study. In particular, commentators have found it difficult to define boundaries between art and craft. Sometimes
social distinctions are drawn, between 'high art' and 'popular art'. The term 'Applied Art' provides instead an interface between art and craft, as if to defuse the problem of defining art. Applied Art might be defined materially as products considered by the viewer as both practical and artistic. A distinction may be sought in the training: did the person producing an object require special training, as compared with producers of other objects with the same function? It is important not to overlook problems with functional definitions: arguably, any object produced in a society has some function for that society (for example, the communicative function of a painting, or the function of a monument to express differences in personal wealth or status). Instead, it may be safer to explore the differences between objects of similar type, in the presence or absence of (1) non-figurative and (2) figurative two-dimensional motifs and three-dimensional forms. The study of 'Applied Art' then becomes a study of the presence or absence of motif and figure in the material products of a society.

- In *Technical-Vocational/Comprehensive High Schools Review Committee Report* (1987) the following definition was recommended:

  "The practical and Applied Arts should include but not be restricted to the subjects within industrial arts, home economics, business education, and technical-vocational education. They are intended to acquaint students with the day to day aspects of adult life, including employment, family responsibilities, and leisure. These courses are typically delivered in regular classrooms, or shops, but are sometimes delivered best by outside agencies or through the use of community and distance education resources."

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The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation Practical and Applied Arts policy does not define what a Applied Art course is, but does state:

"Practical and Applied Arts courses are an essential element of the basic education of all students and must continue to be an integral part of the curriculum in order to ensure that all students obtain a well-rounded education. Practical and Applied Arts courses compliment academic courses by integrating theory with practice and giving students an opportunity to apply what they learned in a concrete fashion."

(STF, Policy Statement on the Practical and Applied Arts, 1995)

1.1.2 – The Value of Applied Art

Tolstoy defined art, and not incidentally characterized its value, this way: "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them."

1.1.3 – The Aims Objectives & Value of studying Applied Art

Other possible views are these: Applied Art can act as a means to some special kind of knowledge. Applied Art may give insight into the human condition. Applied Art relates to science and religion. Applied Art serves as a tool of education, or indoctrination, or enculturation. Applied Art makes us more moral. It uplifts us spiritually. Applied Art is politics by other means. Applied Art has the value of allowing catharsis. In any case, the value of Applied Art may determine the suitability of an
Applied Art form. Do they differ significantly in their values, or (if not) in their ability to achieve the unitary value of Applied Art?

But to approach the question of the value of Applied Art systematically, one ought to ask: for whom? For the artist? For the audience? For society at large, and/or for individuals beyond the audience? Is the "value" of Applied Art different in each of these different contexts?

Working on the intended value of Applied Art tends to help define the relations between Applied Art and other acts. Applied Art clearly does have spiritual goals in many contexts, but what exactly is the difference between religious art and religion per se? The truth is complex - Applied Art is both useless in a functional sense and the most important human activity.

1.1.4 – Objectives of studying Applied Art [6]
1. Expertise or virtuosity. Technical artistic skills are cultivated, recognized, and admired.
2. Nonutilitarian pleasure. People enjoy Applied Art for art's sake, and don't demand that it keep them warm or put food on the table.
3. Style. Artistic objects and performances satisfy rules of composition that place them in a recognizable style.
4. Criticism. People make a point of judging, appreciating, and interpreting works of art.
5. Imitation. With a few important exceptions like music and abstract painting, works of art simulate experiences of the world.
6. Special focus. Applied Art is set aside from ordinary life and made a dramatic focus of experience.
7. Imagination. Artists and their audiences entertain hypothetical worlds in the theater of the imagination.

1.1.5 – What should Applied Art be like?

Many goals have been argued for art, and aestheticians often argue that some goal or another is superior in some way. Clement Greenberg, for instance, argued in 1960 that each artistic medium should seek that which makes it unique among the possible mediums and then purify itself of anything other than expression of its own uniqueness as a form. The Dadaist Tristan Tzara [7] on the other hand saw the function of art in 1918 as the destruction of a mad social order. “We must sweep and clean. Affirm the cleanliness of the individual after the state of madness, aggressive complete madness of a world abandoned to the hands of bandits. [8]”

Formal goals, creative goals, self-expression, political goals, spiritual goals, philosophical goals, and even more perceptual or aesthetic goals have all been popular pictures of what applied art should be like.

1.2 – Significance of Studying Applied Art

The Applied Arts is an integral part of the program of studies and play a significant role in developing the potential of all students. The significance of studying Applied Arts is to attain the Goals of Education. It enhances the quality of personal life

- Providing a balance of theory and practice
- Developing appropriate attitudes for lifelong learning
- Incorporating and enhancing the Common Essential Learnings including the acquisition and development of generic and specific
entry-level employability skills which include academic skills, personal management skills, and teamwork skills

- Supporting career development principles by providing opportunities for career awareness, career exploration and experience, as students begin selecting career pathways
- Applying and enhancing knowledge, skills and principles developed through a multi-disciplinary approach to education
- Understanding the way technology supports and constrains personal and societal endeavours and how it is shaping culture and society
- Providing specialized learnings to assist students to access post-secondary education and training enhancing opportunities for the transition from the world of school to the world of work.