

Advanced. Painting.

Advanced painting reveals its content perceptually rather than linguistically. Advanced painting utilizes the experience of looking and depends more on its internal formal properties than on its context (both physical context --the room its in-- and socio-historical context). Though those contexts can always be brought to bear on a painting, its success as a painting does not hinge upon them. Advanced painting has content derived through form as much or more than from subject matter. Advanced painting has a material presence distinct from image (like Walter Benjamin's *aura*), which makes it compelling as an individual object. This material presence has to do with: the scale of the painting and the marks within it, in relation to the size of the viewer; optical properties that cannot be reproduced photographically, such as physical depth or transparency / reflectivity; the sense of space created within the painting compared to the space it occupies as an object; and probably other elements as well. Advanced painting ought to also have a compelling two-dimensional image, which is independent of material presence, if it is going to be viewed through a process of reproduction (so as to be seen and known by many people). This image has less to do with the support or materials and more to do with composition, value, color, line, and form. Paintings which have either a compelling image or a strong material presence may be engaging in reproduction or in person, but the best paintings are compelling in both arenas.

For me, the most compelling art engages my senses (the act of looking), my emotions (a strong feeling independent of thought), and my mind (the act of thinking, though not necessarily knowing); and compelling art often engages me in that order. I find it difficult to look at painting that doesn't cause me to look long enough to derive content from it, and I soon tire of art that is purely sensory, without any emotional or mental anchor. Art without moments of excitement, tension, chaos, and drama leave me rather numb. Conversely, art without a sense of order, doubt, and a system of organization prevents me from finding enough meaning.

When I see a painting that makes me look, feel, think, and then look again, I am impressed. Advanced painting is a sensory experience that provides an opportunity for the suspension of disbelief (much like the experience of watching film). It remains self-aware and reflexive, however, such that the viewer finds not merely a gratification of desire (which can be sensory, emotional or mental), but also called to question and investigate the art, themselves, and the world. Because the content arises perceptually, the viewer is allowed a moment of commitment by suspending disbelief, and may find herself agreeing with a painting whose content, were it raised linguistically, she would have rejected. As such, advanced painting provides an opportunity for transformation through the act of looking.