

It's Art If Someone Says So

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It's art if someone says it's art. Here's why.

If someone says “ X is not art”, there must be either a property p that X has which no art can have, or X doesn't have property q which all art has.

But there is no property that art cannot have (apart from not being art). Time and again we have seen the notion of art expanded to encompass things that previously were not considered art. A urinal can be art. Road kill can be art. One of the central processes in the history of art is the broadening of art to encompass things and art contexts for them that were not previously considered art. In the right context, a work of art can have any property under the sun.

Similarly, there is no property X *must have* to be art (apart from someone calling it art). It doesn't have to be an object (conceptual art). It doesn't have to deal with any particular material or type of material, and it doesn't have to deal with it in any particular way. Whenever somebody says “Art has to be Y ”, it usually doesn't take much to find art that isn't Y .

Whether something is art or not is merely a matter of whether someone says it's art.

The more complex and interesting matters about art are elsewhere. When someone calls something art, that makes it art. But it doesn't make it interesting art.

Those who say “ X is not art” sound like they're aggressively defending a notion of art that is in need of broadening. They sound aggressively ignorant.

There is no property that art must have, apart from being art. There is no list of properties that art cannot have, apart from not being art.

That art is this way is interesting. It makes the proposition “ X is art” into something like an 'undecidable' proposition. Kurt Gödel discovered the existence of 'undecidable propositions'. They are true but unprovable. They are a type of axiom. Some axioms are *independent*: you can assume the axiom or some form of the axiom's negation and still generate a consistent system. That's how non-Euclidean geometry works; the classical non-Euclidean geometries take one form or another of the negation of the [parallel postulate](#) as axiomatic. Like undecidable propositions, independent axioms are not provable. But undecidable propositions are necessarily true, unlike independent axioms.

In any case, the idea that the proposition “ X is art” is true but unprovable is rather pretty

and intuitive.