

Take the Ogden Art Challenge

by Jane Font

I have no idea how to start this. If it were up to me, I'd slap a blob of paint onto a canvas and get my thoughts across that way. It's how I prefer to communicate; give me paint on canvas any day over ink to paper. Or, in this case, fingertip to keyboard. But I guess I just made the point: everyone communicates in a different way.

It's easy for people to forget that art is a form of communication. It's not just about "making something pretty" that'll look awesome with your living room rug. In fact, it's believed that the oldest known artwork in the world was created by hunters to communicate and track herd migration. Whether or not those primitive cave drawings complemented the rest of the décor is still up for debate. What's not up for debate, however, is the influence that art has had throughout the entirety of humanity—especially with regard to the development of civilization.

Imagine how different our world would be if it hadn't been for the ancient Roman sculptors and architects, or the ancient Chinese potters and painters. What if Michelangelo had been a politician, and Van Gogh a priest? Not only would our world be a lot less beautiful, but we wouldn't have had the opportunity to explore complex topics, ideas, and social issues as only art allows us to.

Unfortunately, aside from aesthetics, art no longer seems to carry the same weight of importance in society that it once did. Of course, when we hang a piece of art in our homes, we want it to be pleasing to look at. This is why we all gravitate to certain styles. But preferring type A over type B doesn't mean that type B is "bad art." It simply means it doesn't resonate with you, and that's okay. I mean, how boring would this world be if we all liked the same art? Art would cease to carry meaning. But that's a topic for another day.

As people, we tend to look at art through filters of our personal experiences, beliefs, and philosophies. This is what leads us to assign our own significance to certain works of art. But just because the artist may not have intended to communicate the effect a piece of art has on you doesn't mean your interpretation is "wrong." Viewing art is an experience as personal as creating it.

For a small city, I'm constantly surprised by the number of artists living and working in Ogden, and the range of styles and genres of our resident artists is staggering! I've seen everything here: world-class traditional artists, street artists, pop-culture artists, artists making functional art, and completely unclassifiable artists. That's an impressive and exciting spectrum that speaks volumes not only about who we are collectively, but about the kind of city we are becoming.

With the wealth of creativity right here in Ogden, we have an exciting opportunity to see art we've never seen, to think of things we've never considered, and to experience the world through someone else's eyes—someone who may see the world in a completely different light than you or I.

So get out into the city to see the art for yourself. If you don't know where to begin, start with your calendar. The first Friday of every month offers you the opportunity to visit a variety of local art galleries you might otherwise not have a chance to see. The citywide First Friday Art Stroll also gives you the

opportunity to meet and talk to the artists themselves—people you might be shocked to discover are a lot like you, but who use a different form of communication than you may be used to.

By stepping out and seeing the various styles of art our city has to offer, you can challenge yourself to appreciate things you never thought you would. If you like traditional art, dip your feet in the water by perusing those things found in smaller, out-of-the-way establishments. If you like the crazy, non-traditional art you see in places like Pandemonium Art Gallery, I challenge you to visit a traditional gallery and find a way to connect to something that might feel foreign to you.

Remember, you don't necessarily have to like a piece of art to get something out of it, or to let it speak to you. You simply have to be willing to open your eyes and mind.

About: Jane Font is a local artist and owner of Pandemonium Art Gallery at 155 Historic 25th Street in Ogden. As a member of the Ogden City Arts Advisory Committee, she focuses on bringing to light the works of underrepresented artists.