

Still Life

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What is a still life?

A still life (*pl*: still lifes) is a work of art about objects that are inanimate—that do not move or are dead—that are arranged by the artist. So they are different from portraits, which are usually about people, and they are different from landscapes because the objects are close to the artist.

How long have still lifes existed?

Still lifes have been important in art for hundreds of years. Their popularity has changed over the years; sometimes they have been very popular, especially in the 17th century, and, at other times, they have been less popular. However, they are always seen as a crucial part of art.

What are they about?

Before 1700, many of the still lifes had religious meanings and some even made meanings about death.

Typically, though, the objects that are in a still life are commonplace things. They might be natural or man-made. The natural objects can include fruit, vegetables, meat or rocks, while the man-made objects can be things such as books, tools, vases, bowls, drinking glasses and jewellery.

In very recent times, artists began making still lifes with a variety of media, such as computer graphics and photography. Artists also moved beyond 2D and started working with 3D arrangements.