

FOUND OBJECT

'A found object is a natural or man-made object – or fragment of an object – that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it'

The term 'found object' was conceived from a loan translation, that is, a word or phrase directly taken from another language through literal word for word translation. In this case, from the French 'objet trouvé'. This artistic concept was introduced to the world in the early 20th century, in a period where many artists sought to challenge the traditional notions on the true nature of art, and its value. Art created using the found object, describes undisguised, often altered, objects or products that one could find in day-to-day life. These objects, which lacked any association with art, being an item or thing with their own individual purpose, were considered particularly unconventional, in their use as an artistic medium.

Pablo Picasso, acknowledged globally for his contributions to the development of Modern art during the 20th century, first applied the concept in his painting titled 'Still Life with Chair Caning' (1912). The piece was completed on a circular canvas, edged with rope, with a printed image of chair caning. By incorporating industrially produced products (low culture), into the field of fine art (high culture), Picasso effectively opens up a line of questioning, concerning both the role of the technical skills in making art and of mass-produced objects.

Despite Picasso's earlier involvement, the concept is widely thought to have been perfected, several years later, when Marcel Duchamp released a series of "ready-mades". They were a group of unchanged, ordinary items, that had been selected and exhibited as art. The highly acclaimed ready-made piece,

entitled Fountain (1917), displays a standard urinal, acquired from an ordinary hardware store, on a pedestal. At the time of its exhibit, Duchamp was a board member of the Society of Independent Artists. He had anonymously submitted the piece to the board, and after much deliberation, the rest of the committee went on to state that "its place is not an art exhibition, and it is by no definition, a work of art". Contrary to the board's position, Duchamp believed in the importance of intellectual interpretation.

Following this, he left the organization, and in the years leading up to World War I, he too rejected the work of many fellow artists. Artists who created what he classed as "retinal" art – art created with the sole intention of pleasing the eye. Duchamp thought little of this, and instead found greater importance in efficiently utilising art in ways that seek to serve the mind.