



THANKS

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QUESTIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

If you have any questions, or would like to contribute a letter for our next issue, feel free to contact the journal at elements@bc.edu.

COVER

Photo of the Blue Koran, courtesy of the David Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark, accession number 77.2004

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Everyone knows the greatest artists of all time. Picasso, Monet, and Rembrandt are among the most oft-cited names on any college campus. Yet the vast majority of the Boston College student body would have trouble naming just three of the great artists of the last 50 years. Perhaps some would name Christo, the French artist who most recently placed hundreds of orange curtains in New York City's Central Park. But many would even question whether or not wrapping the Reichstag in cloth constitutes "art." It seems that, at least in the classic academic sense, our modern society's appreciation of art has waned. One of the articles in this second issue of *Elements* examines the work of the great American 20th century artist Rothko, a painter who would be hard-pressed to find fame outside of art history circles.

Of course the definition of art cannot be confined to painting. Art encapsulates everything from music and literature to sculpture. Art began as man's attempt to recreate nature. And at least until the last 150 years, mainstream art was praised for its virtuosity at recreating the human experience. Michelangelo's *David* is the greatest recreation of the human form in sculpture. But as human thought evolved, the idea of what constituted "reality" changed. Perhaps the human mind could create a reality separate from that found in nature, intellectuals theorized. Although Cervantes in *Don Quixote* foresaw this shift in thought centuries earlier, by the mid-19th century art became focused upon a new representation of reality. Artists such as Monet and Picasso began to warp what they saw in nature into a very distinct art form. Not surprisingly, this period seems to mark the peak of the popular recognition of art. Painting, sculpture, and even literature in large part ceased to represent any tangible reality found in nature. Art became obscure.

Impressionist exhibits continue to be the most popular at art museums. It seems that slight alterations to an observable reality are what draw the most admiration from modern audiences. All popular modern media fit this mold. Movies allow viewers to get lost in an imaginary but familiar world. Popular music also creates a slight diversion from a perfect natural beat through its use of syncopation. In short, the viewer of art wants to utilize his imagination but only to a certain degree. And so we have seen a division of art into the academic and the popular. Art has always been the business of the high-minded wealthy classes; this rule has eroded of late. Some even consider pornography a form of artistic expression. Several of the articles in this issue of *Elements* examine the artistic elements of everything from the Koran to presidential speeches. What we find is that art is ubiquitous: no longer just to be found behind a ticket counter with a \$10 museum admission charge. Name three of the great artists of the last 50 years: Francis Ford Coppola, Meryl Streep, and, of course, John Lennon.

Sincerely,



GREGORY WILES

Editor-in-chief

