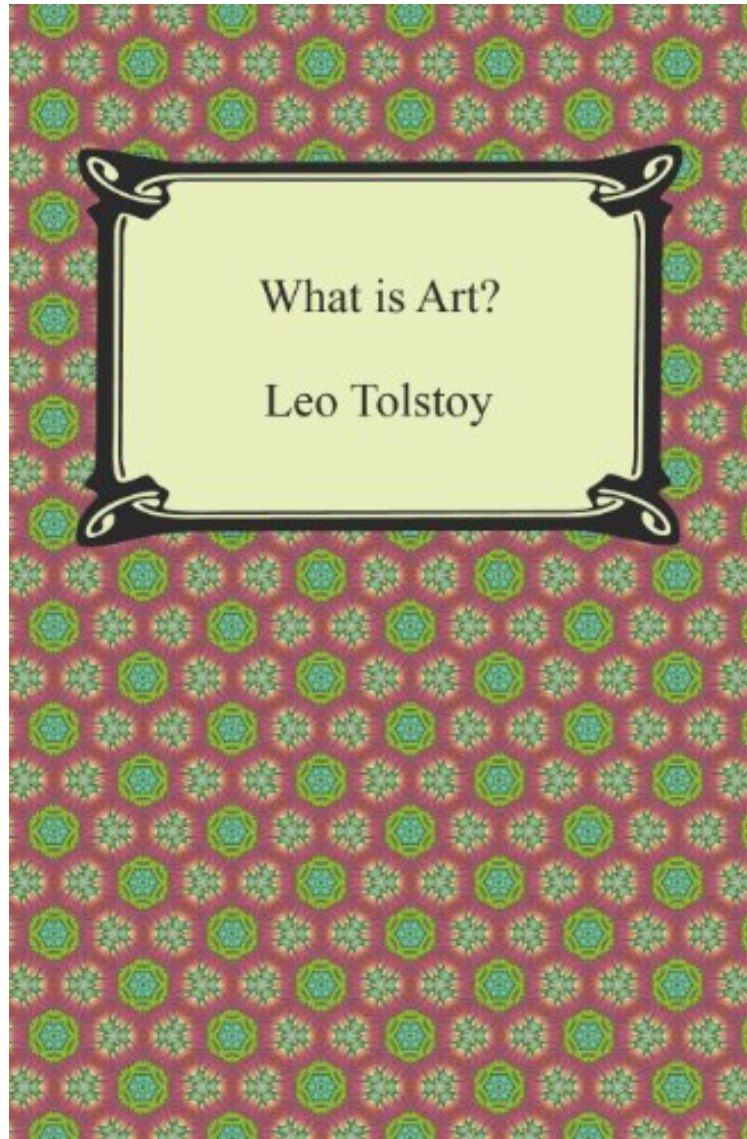


What is Art?

Leo Tolstoy

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Leo Tolstoy : What is Art? before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What is Art?:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very passionate belief driving a too narrow definitionBy PhredBottom Line: Tolstoy's "What is Art" contains an earlier draft and a final extended essay by the author of several of the world's greatest novels. He grapples with the question of what he thinks should be considered as art. Art he believes should not merely be pretty or entertaining. Art must be the original, inspired product of a naturally superior, creative person. It must clearly express the unique emotional message of a person who has experienced a spontaneous,

and unique creative moment. This expression must be so created as to be immediately understandable by any person, without that person needing any training to appreciate the artistry behind the expression. In all cases, Art to be art must further the religious beliefs common to the time and place where the artist is inspired. Despite the masterful language and forceful passion of this literary master, I am not convinced by his argument. As a reading experience, this book is very successful as a display of powerful writing. Tolstoy bears his heart and his point of view. I do not find his argument consistent or consistently convincing. This is great writing, but intended for a limited audience. It not intended as a pleasurable reading. Your experience of this book will vary depending on your need to be in agreement with an author and your ability to appreciate writing even if the conclusions proposed are ones with which you cannot fully agree.

While Tolstoy may be best remembered as the talented Russian author of such monumentally great works as "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina", he also wrote prolifically in essay format on various subjects. In this volume Tolstoy turns his attention to the study of aesthetics and art in all its forms. Based on fifteen years of research "What is Art?" is Tolstoy's intellectual exposition into answering the titular question. Rich with criticism for his contemporaries as well as even his own writings, Tolstoy makes the central argument that art should be used as a force for good and betterment of mankind and that art that is borne out of vanity, sexual desire, or some other amoral ambition should be condemned. For Tolstoy, art has a religious significance, which is instrumental to the reader in explaining the philosophy for art that he crafts in this work. As a compelling and interesting examination of the place of art in our society, "What is Art?" is a must read for all artists, written masterfully by one of the greatest writers to ever have lived.

Language NotesText: English (translation) Original Language: RussianFrom the Back CoverDuring the decades of his world fame as sage and preacher as well as author of War and Peace and Anna Karenin, Tolstoy wrote prolifically in a series of essays and polemics on issues of morality, social justice and religion. These culminated in What is Art?, published in 1898. Although Tolstoy perceived the question of art to be a religious one, he considered and rejected the idea that art reveals and reinvents through beauty. The works of Dante, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Beethoven, Baudelaire and even his own novels are condemned in the course of Tolstoy's impassioned and iconoclastic redefinition of art as a force for good, for the progress and improvement of mankind. In his illuminating preface Richard Pevear considers What is Art? in relation to the problems of faith and doubt, and the spiritual anguish and fear of death which preoccupied Tolstoy in the last decades of his life.About the AuthorLEO TOLSTOY was born in 1828 about two hundred miles from Moscow. His mother died when he was two, his father when he was nine. His parents were of noble birth, and Tolstoy remained acutely aware of his aristocratic roots, even when he later embraced doctrines of equality and the brotherhood of man. After serving in the army in the Caucasus and Crimea, where he wrote his first stories, he traveled and studied educational theories. In 1862 he married Sophia Behrs and for the next fifteen years lived a tranquil, productive life, finishing War and Peace in 1869 and Anna Karenina in 1877. In 1879 he underwent a spiritual crisis; he sought to propagate his beliefs on faith, morality, and nonviolence, writing mostly parables, tracts, and morality plays. Tolstoy died of pneumonia in 1910 at the age of eighty-two.