4.0 OBJECTIVES

This course module covers material about the development of modern art, social transformation, and the connection of these movements with folk art. This module should give you familiarity with the various types of modern art, the connection of this art with folklore, and questions related to the preservation of traditional society. By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- identify major movements in modern art;
- see the connections with traditional culture;
be aware of traditional arts within your own life; and
understand the problems and issues of cultural commodification.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Art is a distinct product of human culture. We will consider the following factors in examining the relationship of folk art and folklore to modern art and culture.

1) We will first look at the social, political and technological changes that have shaped the world in which we now live. These changes fundamentally altered previous patterns of social interaction, and rapidly changed the world into a far different environment.

2) The influence of these social changes on art mediums, including the visual arts, literature, and music. These topics include early Modernism, High Modernism, and Post-modernism.

3) The relationship between modern art and folklore and folk art, and their influences on each other will be determined.

4) In the final section we will examine some of the problems and opportunities faced by traditional culture production in the modern era. These include strategies of preservation and promotion, as well as issues of cultural commodification.

4.2 MODERN ART AND CULTURE

World history from 1800 onwards has been a whirlwind of ever-accelerating social, political and technological changes. Although many segments of the world’s population still live in traditional societies, they have not completely escaped the storms of change. Many of the things, like more developed social segments, taken for granted, are actually quite new, in terms of the broader scope of human history. Since art is a reflection and a manifestation of personal, social, and historical influences, many of the previous models of artistic expression have also undergone radical transformations in the last two centuries. These changes reflect the effects of wars, science and technology, and evolving social structures. This movement toward new forms has also awakened a desire to look back towards traditional modes of cultural expression. Folklore and modern art has a deep impact on each other. The preservation of traditional arts and culture is also the preservation of traditional social models, beliefs, and skill sets.

However, these traditional modes of expression are affected by social and technological changes that bring both promise and peril to their continued viability. In order to understand how modern art has evolved and how it reflects society and influences on folklore, we will first review recent discoveries and inventions that have transformed the ways in which many people live. The arts reflect these changes in the expression of the complex construction of individual and collective meaning.
4.2.1 Technological developments and social change

The greatest impact on current human life comes from the revolutions in energy technology, communication methods, and the computer, mass production, and engineering inventions. These changes have rapidly transformed many parts of the globe in a very short time span, leading to social disruption and conflict, as well as improvements in living conditions and health. The creative arts, therefore, reflected these rapid changes by breaking with traditional methods and styles of expression. However, these changes were not without their detractors. There were anti-technology movements such as the Luddites in Britain, and art movements such as the pre-Raphaelites, who sought to emulate earlier art styles.

The internal combustion engine and electricity have revolutionized modern life, by making mass and individual transportation cheap and easy. Electrical power, for both industrial and domestic use, made mass production and factory work faster, more efficient, and simpler. These changes also had a profound effect on handicrafts and home industry, displacing many people from their traditional cultures and homes. The revolution in transportation, by train, bus, auto or air, have made it possible to travel or ship items almost instantly from one part of the world to another, blending cultures.

Communication technology and computers have dramatically changed the nature of human discourse. The telephone, both wired and mobile, radio, television, and the internet have transformed the speed and reach of both mass and personal communication in developed areas. The power of electronic images and sounds to alter awareness of the wider world has affected all levels of society, and also brought change to traditional life with the awareness of other modes of living. Mass production with the aid of machines, as typified by the factory assembly line, has made profound changes in the nature of human work and the relationship between the worker and the product. This disassociation between the workers and their product, between creativity and personal expression in handicrafts, has resulted in profound changes in societies everywhere, and led to much social unrest.

4.2.2 Modern thought and cultural change

Scientific discoveries from astronomy to nuclear physics transformed the way many people viewed their religious traditions and cultures. Old myths were seen to have no basis in fact, and for some, this conclusion was devastating. “God is dead” was the proclamation of the German philosopher Nietzsche; society was cast adrift from its traditional foundations.

Another thinker, Sigmund Freud, wanted to study the personality scientifically. Freud’s use of “psychoanalysis” was a major step in psychological theory that had a tremendous impact on literature, the arts, and state institutions. The opening of the unconscious as a field of inquiry meant that artists attempted to utilize different avenues to communicate with the subconscious. It also created a renewed
interest in “folk art” and “primitive forms” of expression. In terms of the state, the belief that most people were essentially ruled by unconscious forces led to the creation of propaganda campaigns that manipulated these basic instincts to control society, such as National Socialism in Germany.

Einstein’s theories of relativity revolutionized the concepts of space and time. They provided an entirely new model with which to conduct scientific work and also were highly influential in the arts. This model states that space and time are fundamentally linked. This unitary conception is known as space/time. Einstein’s theories are close in many ways to the conceptions of reality described both in Hindu and Buddhist literature.

All the areas of change listed above have had the overall effect of a compression of space and time, making communication and travel possible in a way that would have been unimaginable in earlier generations.

4.2.3 Political thought and the rise of nations

Old empires and forms of government began to crumble under the onslaught of these social and cultural revolutions. Democracy, communism, socialism, and totalitarianism brought about sweeping changes in many areas, and new nations and states arose from the fragments of the old. National unity and identity became an important goal, and governments reached back into history, using elements of traditional culture as a tool to unify their citizens, and create a national identity. Political thought as a result gave development to the rise of nation states. The arts were a method of communication, and many artists supported this goal in their work.

4.2.4 Definition of modern art

The term “modern art” was first used after 1850. This period was the culmination of separate developments in the patterns of patronage, art instruction, and the artist’s position in society, brought about by the profound social and political upheavals of the Industrial Revolution and political revolutions in France and elsewhere. Artists produced totally new variations on 19th century realism, known as Impressionism. Some art historians point to a specific date, 1863, when Manet showed his shocking painting, *Déjeuner sur l’herbe*. This work overturned the artistic conventions of the time, both in its subject matter and technique. Post-Impressionism, as exemplified in Matisse and Picasso, was the start of nonrepresentational art, which many see as the major trademark of modern art.

Thus, one might define modern art as that which consciously rejects the past, and seeks out constant innovation. The phenomenon of abstract or nonobjective art rises from the many cultural changes listed above, and gave rise to many styles, including realism, abstract art, surrealism, cubism, and Dada. Modernism in art appears in different societies at different times. The modernist period in Indian art is generally dated from the 1930’s, while Raji Ravi Varma (1848-1906) is considered the first western style painter of note. The major issue in
decolonized countries is establishing a sense of identity which incorporates technological and social changes while maintaining connections to the past.

4.2.5 High modernism

Modernism is generally dated from about 1890 and reached its peak as a movement by the mid-twentieth century. It is typified by the emergence of an oppositional culture that produced works that were minimalist and abstract, often of an experimental and fragmentary nature, for the elite. At the same time, the rise of popular or mass culture produced art that was easily understood and lacking originality, called “kitsch” by its critics. Among the hallmarks of the High Modernist period are the mass production of new technologies and new designs, emphasizing optimism, forward thinking, ‘the future is now’ feeling, and the discarding of the past.

An example of this is the new architecture or new design in the 1950s known as ultra-modern. A skyscraper represents many important aesthetic elements of modernism, designated below in italics. The skyscraper was a simple box, all straight lines, pure design and materials. It had no frills or ornaments, used steel, glass and concrete, with colors of white, black, or grey. The stripped down aesthetic was abstract, boxy, and uncompromising. The emphasis is on a feeling of abstraction, or ‘pure line.’ In this case, the elite style becomes the popular style and box architecture can be seen in department stores, shops, and office cubicles mainly because its no-frills approach is cheaper, not necessarily well-designed.

4.2.6 Modernism in the arts

The advent of Modernism brought the development of the avant-garde culture. The unified taste of the social elite who rewarded artists who did not innovate, was replaced with the republican, democratic opinions of mass culture and a middle class, who scorned what they did not understand. The artist became an outsider, seeking to protest bourgeois values, often with revolutionary social and aesthetic values. The works produced were expression of the subjective imagination of the artists, rather than a depiction of reality. Currently, the avant-garde has lost meaning, as the modern media lead the entire population into constantly embracing the very newest trend and discarding the last fad.

4.2.7 Visual arts

The rejection of tradition and the embrace of the new are seen in many of the modernist schools. One trend was the use of industrial artifacts, as typified in the works of Marcel Duchamp, whose works Bottle Rack and Fountain displayed common non-art objects as art, turning the elitist distinctions about art upside-down. Another example in painting is abstract expressionism, which completely avoided representations of any concrete shapes or figures. An example is Jackson Pollack, who would create his works by flinging or dripping paint on a canvas. In this process, the human element is removed or diminished in the work, and
the techniques of the past are rejected. Another aspect of modernism is the use of tribal or ‘primitive’ motifs, which will be discussed in detail in the coming section.

4.2.8 Literature

Modernist literature has many similarities with the other arts. As in the visual arts, there was a tendency to break with traditional structures of the past. In the case of literary works, this was manifested through the subversion of narrative structures. This also included the juxtaposition of multiple subjectivities and time/space locations.

Modernist literature also expressed much of the alienation and social fragmentation that was experienced by individuals as traditional modes of life faded away. T. S. Eliot is a poet who uses these themes. Another innovation of modernist literature is that of “stream of consciousness”, a practice that was directly influenced by Freud. This can be seen in the writing of James Joyce, especially in the novel *Ulysses* where the author attempts to recreate the subjective stream of impressions occurring in an individual. Modernist literature strongly called into question the social changes that were dislocating and isolating individuals. Arundhati Roy, in *The God of Small Things*, employs variations of these techniques and themes.

4.2.9 Music

Modernism had a strong influence on many styles of Western art music. *Serialism* was a form that used purely mathematical constructs to compose music no longer dependent on tonal structures. The composers wanted music of pure science, from which the irrational human element was removed. This music was extremely difficult for the average listener, and so never gained a great deal of popularity. Another style of music which became popular during this period is known as *minimalism*. Minimalism utilized very sparse, repetitive patterns which were stacked on top of each other. This style, while abstract, was much more pleasing to the average listener than serialism, and is still used today. However, popular music, with its bouncy beats, lyrics, and relentless marketing, has captured the mass audience.

4.2.10 Post-modernism

Post-modernism is generally considered the designation of the current period, although some scholars believe that we are in the post-post-modern era. In the post-modern worldview, the particular models of progress described by modernism are shown to be false constructions. For post-modernism, scientific truth is just another mode of constructing reality. That means that the scientific worldview is just one possible model, no truer than any other. One important trend in post-modernism is that of *deconstruction*.

4.2.11 Post-modern trends

*Deconstruction* is a term used everywhere from philosophy to architecture, from
music to film. Deconstruction refers to the process wherein models and belief systems are taken apart and examined to discover generally unconscious or tacitly accepted assumptions that are taken for granted. If a tradition is deconstructed, the following questions might be asked. How long has the tradition really been in place? When was this tradition agreed upon? Does it have any basis in fact? A thorough study might reveal that a particular belief system is in place only because it has been agreed upon, and it is socially unacceptable to question it.

Another type of deconstruction refers to a type of literary analysis popularized by a French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida is famous for his claims that no written text has any authority beyond that which is socially constructed. For example, take a text that is socially significant like a political or religious document. For Derrida, the meaning of the document is dependent on a whole host of arbitrary and unstable assumptions. When these are examined closely the authority of the text is subverted.

Another example of post-modernism is the social construction of reality. This is a concept that believes that everything in human society that is agreed upon structure has no inherent truth or validity, beyond the fact that it is agreed upon. Once these tacit assumptions are called into question, the whole edifice of culture is revealed to be arbitrary.

Post-modernism has also received a great deal of criticism. It has been accused of promoting a belief in nihilism, which is a philosophical stance that states that everything is meaningless. Other criticisms are its moral and ethical relativism, and its sometimes deliberate obscurity and skepticism. However, it is an important philosophical and artistic movement in the modern age.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each;

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers at the end of the Unit.

1) Through your reading come up with a definition of modern art. How is this different from earlier modes of expression?

................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
4.3 FOLKLORE AND MODERN ART

We have discussed the interplay between social change and artistic creativity in terms of Modernism and the cultural elite. We will now look at some elements of traditional artistic expression i.e. folklore and how they have influenced by the modern era. Listed below are some characteristics of folk-culture and folklore, and the differences between it and modernism.

1) Traditional folk-culture is often linked to a particular location. This means that many of folk tales, folk arts and crafts, and music often celebrate the local experience of the participants. This is quite the opposite from modern forms of art which are often distributed throughout the world, and usually have very little connection with the local.

2) Traditional folklore is often orally transmitted, passed down from parent to child or from master to disciple. In cultures without literacy, the forms for the storage and dissemination of ideas and expressions were dependent upon memory. This can be contrasted with the modern mass dissemination of culture through media such as television, books, or radio. The permanence which many take for granted in modern culture depends upon a variety of external storage and transmission media.

3) Folklore is grounded in communal life. Folklore and folk artistic expressions are almost always rooted in larger social structures and communal ways of life. This gives these types of art a different relationship with society than, for example, modernist literature, which often criticizes the alienation of modern life from nature. This sense of grounding is dependent on the continuity of particular social structures.

4) Folklore is generally linked to a more static conception of history. The modern
need for change and innovation is usually not part of folk-culture, although there may be variations on a given form.

5) Folklore and the folk arts are for the whole community. The sophisticated tastes of the wealthy elite have shaped ‘high’ art for millennia, but folklore and the folk arts are usually shared among all members of a community, providing a shared identity and links to a shared historical tradition. It becomes a way to link the past with the present.

4.3.1 Folklore’s influence on modern art

When confronted by the rapid changes in the modern era, many people looked to the future. However, many wanted some way to return to a vision of the past. Folklore and folk arts represent many of the values that have been displaced in the modern period. Folklore and the folk arts can also give new stimulus to artistic works. Many painters, musicians, and others have been drawn to traditional cultures in the search for inspiration. This can include everything from techniques to subject matter and materials. Nostalgia for a cultural golden age, when life was simpler and seamless, was also a motivation.

Another way that folklore and folk arts are influential to modern art was the desire for a return to a primal source of power. The writings of Freud and Jung, with their ideas of the ‘subconscious’ and the ‘collective unconscious’ led many artists to believe that the traditional societies and arts were linked more directly to this inner energy, and they would be able to tap this potential.

4.3.2 Folk art’s influence on modern art

An early artistic movement which extolled the value of the ‘natural man’ was primitivism. Primitivism was first expressed as a concept by the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau during the 18th century. His influential concept was that of the noble savage, a belief that culture alienated people from their fundamental nature. Someone in a natural, primeval state was fundamentally pure. Organized society was viewed as constraining, corrupting, and destructive. Technology increased the alienation of humanity from the natural world.

Some European artists, such as Paul Gauguin, sought to escape western civilization by moving to more natural environments, where they drew their inspiration from the culture that surrounded them. Gauguin’s depiction of the Tahitians sought to express through the imagination subjective meanings filled with innocence and a sense of mystery that could not be found in industrialized societies.

Other artists, in emerging nations, used folk motifs, colors and forms as a way to express their identity and that of their homeland. Rabindranath Tagore, in his famous painting, Bharat Mata, used elements of Art Nouveau and Japanese art, integrated with Indian images in an effort to create new aesthetic modes. The struggle for an authentic art that draws on the multiplicity of tribes, religions, cultures and states that is modern India, while expressing the creative imagination of the individual artist, is ongoing.
There are artists who have successfully integrated these elements and achieved international success. Among the visual artists, Jamini Roy adopted the style of folk painters of Bengal, using indigenous pigments to paint on cloth, board and paper. His subject matter was the everyday life of rural Bengal. Another artist using such themes is Tyeb Mehta, who expresses the political and social conflicts in his environment using modernist methods. The artist K. G. Subramanyan also has used indigenous art techniques, including terra cotta reliefs, toys and weavings in his works. Finally, Manjit Bawa, with his colorful paintings of mythology, and Sufi mysticism, uses both themes and colors that are part of the folk tradition.

Modern architecture in India was strongly influenced in the beginning, by the modern public buildings created by Louis Kahn and Le Corbusier, but the Indian architects trained in their offices sought to voice their own authentic vision of architecture using folk or indigenous motifs. They did not want to repeat the pastiche that was the colonial Indo-Saracenic style. B. V. Doshi’s building for his office complex in Ahmedabad, Sangath, uses local forms in design, along with modern influences. Satish Gujral’s Belgian Embassy in Delhi is viewed as a successful expression of authenticity, using mandala designs. It evokes the sculptural quality of ancient domed Indian buildings.

Sculpture was a neglected art form for many years, but Ganapati Sthapati began a school that revived many of the traditional methods of building, sculpting and metal casting. He himself builds temples all over the world, using Vedic principles. Meera Mukherjee is a sculptor who is inspired by the tribal metal casters in the Bastar region, and blurs the line between ‘modern’ and ‘folk’. An example is her work, Ashoka at Kalinga, using the lost-wax technique of the tribe.

4.3.4 Modernity and folklore

The rush to modernity has affected the traditional folk arts and culture. The migration from countryside to the city has disrupted age-old patterns of society, as well as destroying many of the handicraft traditions that gave identity and meaning to local tribes and peoples. Modern artists, even using traditional techniques, are still producing work for moneyed elite, not for the masses.

Many traditional arts have been lost, due to widespread cultural change, relocation, and lack of interest of the younger generation in these types of expression. Second, many oral forms which are dependent on memory are changed when forms of cultural transmission such as print, recordings, and films, have changed how people related to these art forms. Often new storage technology supplants the important memory traditions and leads to the forgetting of many tales and skills.

Third, modern techniques can influence the way arts are produced. This includes new mechanical techniques of production, and motifs taken from mass culture. This is seen in music, where traditional styles are mixed with popular forms of music such as film music and hip-hop. Fourth, themes related to modern life can become more relevant than traditional ideas, and create new artistic, literary and musical styles. Fifth, certain types of art can be mass-produced for economic benefit, and this can result in a dilution of traditional methods. Thus, preservation
Market and Cultural Property

of folklore and folk life is very important. This brings us to the next section, which is concerned with the preservation of traditional arts.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Your answers should be about 30 words each.

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

3) Describe the elements from folk art that have influenced modern art.

................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................

4) What is primitivism? Is this a valid belief in your opinion? Why?

................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................

................................................................................................................

4.4 PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

4.4.1 History of cultural preservation in India

India’s traditional culture is so varied, rich and complex, that its preservation seems an overwhelming task, especially in the face of the challenges of migration and modernization. This has led to the establishment of many agencies and boards in India. The founding of the All-India Handicrafts Board in 1952, and associated regional design centers for training in traditional crafts were established. They have also begun a thriving export business.

Many traditional practices have been kept alive in India. However, we should say that, if the crafts are being produced apart from the community that inspired them, the item loses its context and its function can be obscured. However, many crafts are still produced in the traditional village context. Thus its cultural preservation takes place. This can be observed in traditional paintings.

Paintings done in villages include many varieties. The painted walls of the Worli of Maharashtra, the Saora of Bihar and Orissa, and the Mithila region of Bihar, have moved to paper and are now being sold to city dwellers. These designs have lost their original function. At the other end of the spectrum, other traditions of wall painting in the Bhil region of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have been unaffected. Rangoli, or kolam diagrams using colored powders placed on the ground at the entrance of the house, are used in many villages and towns.
Many varieties of decorative arts of folklore can be seen in the urban cities. Decorative arts also flourish in cities. Vans, buses, walls, signs and billboards are covered with colorful designs and motifs, advertising specific products or just celebrating with exuberance the imagination of the artist.

Textile crafts are extremely popular in the village context, and some are very well known for their quality and craftsmanship. These are also traditionally preserved in India. They are usually made exclusively by women, and embroidery is the most common form of decoration. Weaving, dyeing and printed are usually done by professionals. Northern and western India is the focal points for these crafts. Mothers make decorated wedding garments for their daughters. In Gujarat, men of the Ahir and Rabari communities wear embroidered jackets and trousers. In Bengal, embroidered quilts, or kanthas, are made for the home, with designs similar to those in rangoli. Applique work is popular in Gujarat, is used for shrines and weddings, wall hangings, bedcovers and cart decorations. Among the most well-known are those made by the Kathi families of Saurashtra, Gujarat.

Sculptural types of folk art include clay items, made in nearly every part of India. Especially well-known are the tall horses found in Ayyanar shrines in Tamil Nadu and the elephant figurines for a boy’s birth made in Saurashtra, Gujarat. Votive items made of clay are often left in temples and shrines, and they can be quite elaboruate, such as those from Gujarat and Orissa. Metal-casting to make bronze figures has changed with the advent of plastic, but the Dokra of West Bengal and the smiths from Bastar have changed to production for the tourist and export trade.

An important question arises about a craft that is no longer made for a local or individual purpose, but for export as a decorative object or form, with a price, without its original function. How does this affect the worker, and the new owner? This process is called commodification, and in some minds, destroys the authenticity of the creative process, as well as stripping the meaning from the object and the creator. We saw the same alienation and search for meaning in the avant-garde and primitivism movements in modern art.

As the traditional forms are well conserved in India many agencies are looking at its preservation. The next section will look at this detail.

### 4.4.2 Organizations for the preservation of traditional arts

UNESCO, a specialized agency within the United Nations, has implemented many projects for the protection of cultural heritage. These programs have had a varying degree of success. One of the controversial aspects of these preservation programs is deciding what is traditional culture, how it should best be preserved, and how to decide the aspects of a culture which are worthy of preservation. Many different groups within a society have different opinions on what is important, and often people with differing agendas come into conflict over these questions.

There are a number of ways to preserve traditional culture. Many methods are used by the organizations to conserve them. One of them is to preserve artifacts, sound recordings, write down traditional folktales, and other methods of storage. Many aspects of traditional culture have been preserved in archives throughout the world and recordings of music can be purchased. Although the objects are preserved, without a community to recreate them or understand them, their value
Market and Cultural Property

is slightly diminished, as it is not a part of a living process where interaction between the audiences and the folklore becomes lesser.

The second method is to encourage people to continue to create art works. This can be done by working with the youth or educational systems to keep traditional knowledge alive. Knowledge about traditional cultures is important for our history, and the folkways have value for understanding how to live within a particular environment. The preservation of a traditional culture also involves the protection of the environment that sustains it. This includes tribal people living in rain forests and coastal communities that can be exploited for tourism or raw materials.

Thus organizations have greatly helped to conserve and protect the folk forms in the modern context and their methods of preservation should be lauded and appreciated.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have covered the history of modern art. This history shows how cultural change influences art. At the same time as new traditions were being developed, traditional forms of cultural expression faced difficulties due to these changes. We have seen how the movements of modern art have culminated in post-modernism. This questioning of values was also part of modernism. As artists sought new means of expression, they were increasingly drawn to traditional modes of art. Sometimes the works of art borrowed or were influenced by the artist’s culture. Other artists were influenced by art from other cultures, sometimes fusing with their own cultures and new developments. We have also seen how the process of commodification has influenced how people relate to works of art in their lives. Finally we have looked at the efforts of organizations such as UNESCO which seek to preserve traditional cultures.

4.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1) Your definition should include some elements from most of the sections. The context of modern art and the questioning of art in relation to industrial society, as well as the use of folk elements should be mentioned.

2) The changes in the 20th century include technological developments and social change. These technologies include the telephone, the automobile, mass and individual transportation and the mass production of art. Political changes include the rise of the nation-state and the theory of relativity.

3) Numbers of elements from traditional art have influenced modern art. One important movement was primitivism which sought to return to a more pristine state of human existence. Many painters adopted styles of folk art to give new meanings to their works. Many artists have returned to traditional methods of compositions and employed traditional materials.

4) Primitivism was a movement that sought to capture what was perceived as the freedom and wildness of traditional cultures. It influenced all forms of art, including music, literature, architecture and painting.

4.7 GLOSSARY
Avant-garde: artistic movements that seek to break completely with the past.

Abstract Expressionism: a style of painting that used only abstract forms.

Deconstruction: a philosophical and literary technique that removes all assumptions and looks at the origins of concepts.

Minimalism: a style of music using sparse, repetitive themes.

Nihilism: a belief that life is without any real meaning.

Social Construction of Reality: A belief that everything in human society that is an agreed upon structure has no inherent truth or validity, beyond the fact that it is agreed upon.

Stream of Consciousness: a style of writing that mirrors the flow of thought.

**4.8 ACTIVITIES**

1) List types of art that you enjoy, such as film, music, or the visual arts. Can you identify characteristics of modernism or post-modernism? What elements are reflections of the social and historical conditions in which you live?

1) Do you think artistic expression is important for society? Why or why not?

2) List some forms of art that you see around you. What modern and traditional influences can you detect?

3) Choose an artist, and compare their work with the folk art form that is used in their work. What are the similarities? The differences?

4) What folk tradition is practiced in your home? In your town? Is it thriving or dying out?

5) Do you think it is important to preserve such traditions? Why?

6) Do you make or perform a ‘folkways’ tradition, such as embroidery, storytelling or singing? Describe its origins in your locale.

**4.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**


