

Abstract

The present study sought to test if non-representational visual art, such as surreal and abstract pieces, would elicit a higher level of awe than representational art, such as portraits and still-life pieces. The study also sought to test the ability for intolerance of uncertainty, dogmatism, personal need for structure, and trait absorption to predict awe-proneness. Participants were recruited from Brandon University's Introduction to Psychology classes and completed an online research task wherein they were presented with 20 pieces of art and indicated their awe response using the Awe Experiences Scale (Yaden et al., 2019) and subsequently completed previously established self-report questionnaires on the personality variables of interest. The results revealed that non-representational art elicited a higher level of awe than representational art and that trait absorption was associated with the degree to which art could elicit awe. The other three personality variables were not found to be consistent predictors of awe-proneness. These findings have clinical implications, specifically for enhancing the therapeutic potential of art therapy, as awe experiences mitigate many of the symptoms of depression. This research contributes preliminary information regarding non-representational art and awe which opens a new avenue of research dedicated to visual art and awe elicitation.

Keywords: Awe, visual art, non-representational art, awe-proneness, intolerance of uncertainty, personal need for structure, dogmatism, trait absorption, depression, art therapy