

GRE sample item

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Verbal Reasoning

Reading Comprehension

Question 1 is based on this passage.

Traditional architectural designs typically reflect the philosophy that form follows function. Conceptual architects bucked tradition by following in the footsteps of pioneers in the fine arts who made ideas the focus of their work. Understandably, conceptual architecture arose from the desire of these architects to align with the avant-garde, but idea-based architecture simply isn't practical. The physical presence of an architectural building is essential to its conceptualization, and the artistic method of its creator must be conducive to functionality. These unique distinctions render architecture as a discipline entirely different from fine art. The fact that many critics consider conceptual architecture a failure is no surprise given the fact that conceptual architects place more emphasis on the elevation of the abstraction and less on the interdependence of physical structure and building design.

Select only one answer choice.

1. The passage implies which of the following ideas about art, architecture, and design?
 - A. The purpose of art is self-expression.
 - B. Architecture demands a scientific approach to design.
 - C. The success of an architectural design is judged by standards unique to the arts.
 - D. Appreciation of conceptual design requires a working understanding of art theory.
 - E. The practicality of conceptual architecture is misunderstood by critics outside the field.

Explanation

Question 1: The passage discusses perceived problems with conceptual architecture by contrasting it with conceptual art. The author claims that because the field of architecture is different from the fine arts, the function of an architectural design is different from the function of an artwork.

The philosophical basis of conceptual art is that an idea can be the focus of a design while the philosophical basis of architectural design is that form follows function. Thus, the passage implies that the creation of conceptual art allows for imagination and “abstraction,” while the creation of architecture demands an adherence to set standards and scientific precision in order to achieve its functionality. Therefore, option B is correct. The passage suggests that art allows for self-expression, but never alludes to the purpose of art. Therefore, option A is incorrect. The criticism of conceptual architecture appears to come from traditional architects who promote the design of functional buildings and consider idea-based architecture impractical; the passage never indicates other standards unique to the arts. Therefore, option C is incorrect. While it stands to reason that a theoretical knowledge of art would be useful for a critical appreciation of design, this idea is never implied in the passage, which makes option D incorrect. Based on the passage, conceptual architecture is neither practical, nor underappreciated, because it is misunderstood. The passage clearly states that conceptual art is impractical and refers to it as a failure, which makes option E incorrect.