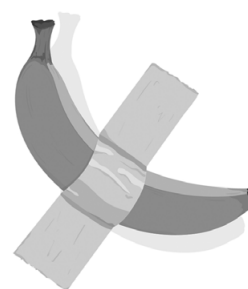


Feedback:

This art is bananas

- 1 Science and art are two separate cultures, said the novelist C.P. Snow, lamenting how few artists had ever heard of the laws of thermodynamics compared with how many scientists knew Shakespeare. He dreamed of a world where everybody took equal interest in both, which sounds great in principle, but terrible if you have standing tickets at London's Globe theatre for a 3-hour lecture on entropy. Things are marginally better today, if only because nobody in either culture has heard of C.P. Snow, and so this tiresome debate has quietly heat-deadened itself into oblivion.
- 2 A renewal of hostilities between the cultures recently caught Feedback's attention, however, and well and truly got our dander up. A few weeks ago, artist Maurizio Cattelan took the world by storm by taping a single banana to a wall at the Art Basel show in Miami Beach, Florida, and selling the resulting installation, called *Comedian*, for \$120,000. As art largely consists of communication by means other than speech, the resulting wall-to-banana-flavoured-wall coverage was undoubtedly a success.
- 3 To wit, the Twitter account of Imperial College London, an institution of higher learning devoted almost exclusively to science and engineering soon entered the debate. In a series of tweets 3, it posted pictures of bananas affixed to various on-campus surfaces with the message 'spot the art'.
- 4 Given that the original banana was able to defy the laws of gravity with the help of highly engineered material adhesives, we disagree with Imperial's assessment. If anything, the original work was science. Stick that in Magritte's pipe and smoke it.



adapted from *New Scientist*, 2020