

GILBERT'S
**LIVING
WITH**

ART
MARK GETLEIN

SEVENTH
EDITION

Gilbert's

LIVING WITH ART



ON THE FRONT COVER:

Marie-Denise Villers, *Young Woman Drawing*, 1801. Oil on canvas 63½ × 50½ in.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection,
Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917 (17.120.204).
Photograph © 1981 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ON THE BACK COVER:

Anon., *The Storm*, Punjab Hills, Guler, ca. 1760–70.
Watercolor on paper, 16.7 × 12.1 cm.
Gift of Alexander H. Bullock, Worcester Art Museum, Indian Collection, 1956.3

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Art can indeed produce pleasure, as the first philosophers of aesthetics noted. But it can also inspire sadness, horror, pity, awe, and a full range of other emotions. The common thread is that in each case we find the experience of looking to be valuable for its own sake. Art makes looking worthwhile. Similarly, art can be beautiful, but not all art tries to be beautiful, and beauty is not a requirement for art. Beauty remains a mysterious concept, something that everyone senses, many disagree about, and no one has yet defined. Artists are as fascinated by beauty as any of us and return to it again and again, though not always in the form we expect. Often they seek out beauty in new places—in a cabbage leaf, for example.

ART AND APPEARANCES

2.12 (left) Pablo Picasso. *First Communion*. 1895–96. Oil on canvas, 65 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Museo Picasso, Barcelona.

2.13 (right) Pablo Picasso. *Seated Woman Holding a Fan*. 1908. Oil on canvas, 59 × 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

The son of a painter who taught drawing, Pablo Picasso showed talent as a child and was surrounded by people who knew how to nurture it. Like a Renaissance apprentice, he grew up so immersed in art that he mastered traditional techniques while still a teenager. He completed *First Communion* in 1896 at the age of fifteen, the year he was accepted into art school (2.12). After graduation Picasso moved from Barcelona to Paris, then the center of new directions in art. There he experimented with style after style. The one that launched him on his mature path would become known as Cubism, and it began to take form in paintings such as *Seated Woman Holding a Fan* (2.13).



Picasso was part of a courageous generation of artists who opened up new territory for Western art to explore. These artists had been trained in traditional skills, and yet they set off on paths where those skills were not required. Many people wish they hadn't. Many people feel that art should aim at representing appearances as faithfully as possible, that artists who do not do this are not good artists, and that paintings such as *Seated Woman Holding a Fan* are not good art, or perhaps not even art at all.

Where do we get these ideas? The simple answer is that we get them from our own artistic heritage. For hundreds of years, Western art was distinguished among the artistic traditions of the world by precisely the concerns that Picasso and others turned their backs on. The elevation of painting and sculpture to higher status during the Renaissance had gone hand in hand with the discovery of new methods for making optically convincing representations. From that time until almost the end of the 19th century, a period of about 500 years, techniques for representing the observable world of light and shadow and color and space—the techniques evident in *First Communion*—formed the foundation upon which Western art was built.

Why did art change all of a sudden? There are many reasons, but Picasso, when asked, pointed to one in particular: photography. "Why should the artist persist in treating subjects that can be established so clearly with the lens of a camera?"³ he asked. Photography had been developed not long before the artists of Picasso's generation were born. They were the first generation to grow up taking it for granted. Photography is now so pervasive that we need to take a moment to realize how revolutionary this change was. From the Paleolithic cave paintings until about 160 years ago, images had to be made by hand. Suddenly, there was a mechanical way based on chemical reactions to light. For some artists, photography meant the end of painting, for manual skills were no longer needed to create a visual record. For Picasso, it meant liberation from a lifetime spent copying nature. "Now we know at least everything that painting isn't,"⁴ he said.

If the essence of art was not visual fidelity, however, what was it? The adventure of the 20th century began.

REPRESENTATIONAL AND ABSTRACT ART

Both paintings by Picasso refer clearly to the visible world, yet each has a different relationship to it. *First Communion* is **representational**. Picasso set out to represent—that is, to present again—the visible world in such a way that we recognize a likeness. The word *representational* covers a broad range of approaches. *First Communion* is very faithful to visual experience, recording how forms are revealed by light and shadow, how bodies reflect an inner structure of bone and muscle, how fabric drapes over bodies and objects, and how gravity makes weight felt. We call this approach **naturalistic**.

Seated Woman Holding a Fan is **abstract**. Picasso used the appearances of the world only as a starting point, much as a jazz musician begins with a standard tune. He selected certain aspects of what he saw, then simplified or exaggerated them to make his painting. In this instance, Picasso took his cue from the fan. The lower edge of the fan is a simple curve. Picasso used this curve-idea to form the woman's brow, her nose, her breast, and the line of her dress as it swings up to her shoulder. The top part of the fan is an angle or wedge. Picasso used the angle-wedge-idea almost everywhere else: the shadow below the fan, the woman's left hand and the shadow it casts, the arms of the chair and gray space they cut out of the background, and so on.

Like representation, abstraction embraces a broad range of approaches. Most of us would be able to decipher the subject of *Seated Woman Holding a Fan* without the help of the title, but the process of abstraction can continue much farther, until the starting point is no longer recognizable. In *Woman*

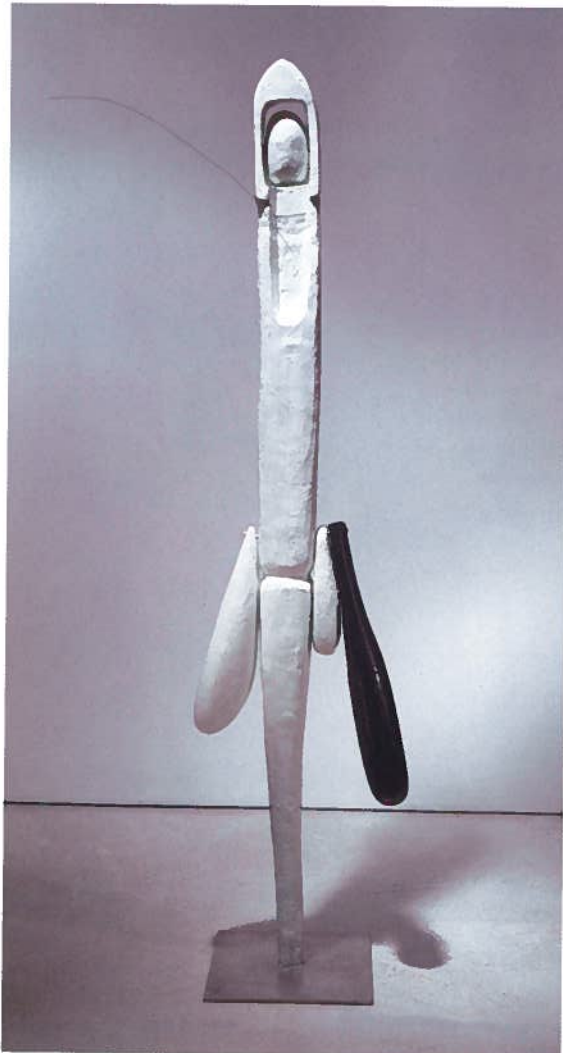
with *Packages* (2.14), Louise Bourgeois abstracted the visual impact of a standing woman all the way to a slender vertical column topped by an egg-shaped element. *Woman with Packages* belongs to a series of sculptures that the artist called *Personages*. A personage is a fictional character, as in a novel or a play. Like a writer, Bourgeois created a cast of characters in an imagined world. She often displayed her *Personages* in pairs or groupings, implying a story for them.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from Bourgeois' radically simplified forms are representational works so convincingly lifelike that we can be fooled for a moment into thinking that they are real. The word for this extreme optical fidelity is *trompe l'oeil* (pronounced tromp-loi), French for "fool the eye," and one of its modern masters was Duane Hanson. Hanson's sculptures portray ordinary people in ordinary activities—cleaning ladies and tourists, museum guards and housepainters (2.15). Like a film director searching for an actor with just the right look for a role, Hanson looked around for the perfect person to "play" the type he had in mind. Once he had found his model (and, we may imagine, talked him or her into cooperating), he set the pose and made a mold directly from the model's body. Painted in lifelike skin tones and outfitted with hair, clothing, and props, the resulting sculptures can make us wonder how much distance we actually desire between art and life.

By opening Western art up to a full range of relationships to the visible world, artists of the 20th century created a bridge of understanding to other artistic traditions. For example, sculptors working many centuries ago in the Yoruba kingdom of Ife, in present-day Nigeria, also employed both naturalistic and abstract styles. Naturalistic portrait sculptures in brass were created to

2.14 (left) Louise Bourgeois.
Woman with Packages. 1949.
Bronze, polychromed, 65 ×
18 × 12".
Collection the artist.

2.15 (right) Duane Hanson.
Housepainter III. 1984/1988.
Autobody filler, polychromed,
mixed media, with accessories,
life-size.
Hanson Collection, Davie, Florida.



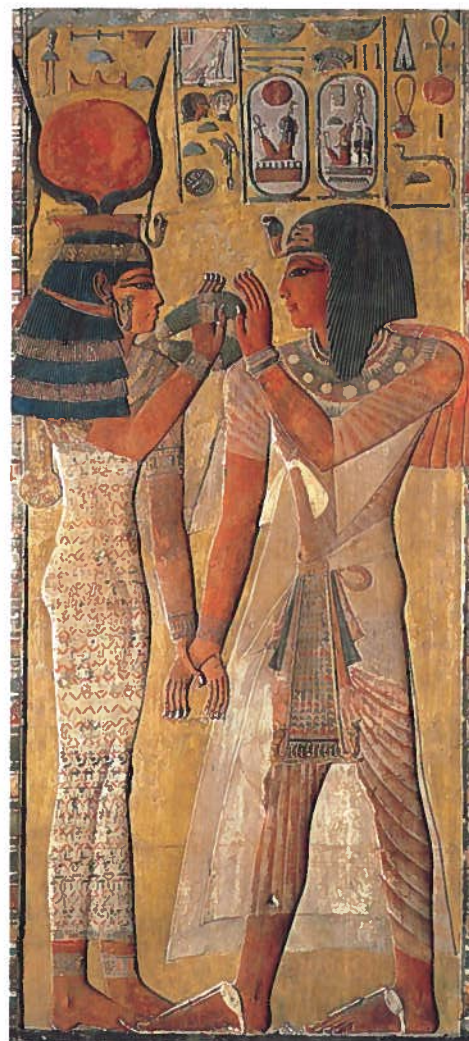
2.16 (left) *Head of a King*, from Ife. Yoruba, c. 13th century. Brass, life-size.
The British Museum, London.

2.17 (center) *Cylindrical Head*, from Ife. Yoruba, c. 13th–14th century. Terra cotta, height 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".
National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria.

2.18 (right) *Hathor and Sety*, detail of a pillar from the tomb of Sety I. Egypt, c. 1300 B.C.E.
Painted plaster on limestone, height 7'5".
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

commemorate the kingdom's rulers (2.16). Displayed on altars dedicated to royal ancestors, each head was accompanied by a smaller, abstract version (2.17). The two heads relate to concepts that are still current in Yoruba thought today. The naturalistic head represents the outer, physical reality that can be perceived by the senses, while the abstract head represents the inner, spiritual reality that can be perceived only by the imagination. Similarly, Louise Bourgeois' *Woman with Packages* could be said to portray the inner essence of the subject, while Duane Hanson's *Housepainter* is about how abstract concepts such as "housepainter" are rooted in the particular details of an individual.

Somewhere between naturalism and abstraction lies stylization. **Stylized** describes representational art that conforms to a pre-set style or set of conventions for depicting the world. Much of the art of ancient Egypt is highly stylized, as in this depiction of the goddess Hathor greeting the ruler Sety in the afterlife (2.18). Notice their hands. The fingers are evened off and set next to each other, like a single finger repeated four times. They curve gracefully and then tip up at the nail. Thumbs are placed on the side of the hand nearest the viewer, with the result that Sety looks as though he has two right hands and Hathor two left hands. For almost 3,000 years, apprentice artists in Egypt learned to draw hands following these conventions. We can imagine their drawing teacher saying to them not, "Look at a hand, observe how it works, and draw it from every conceivable angle," but rather, "This is one way we draw hands; make a row of them to show me you understand."





NONREPRESENTATIONAL ART

While Picasso and others experimented with abstraction, seeing how far art could go without severing its ties to the visible world, other artists at the beginning of the 20th century turned their backs on the visible world altogether as a starting point for art. We call such art **nonrepresentational** or **nonobjective**. Like abstract art, nonrepresentational art developed from the search for art's essence in the wake of the challenge presented by photography.

The Russian painter Vasili Kandinsky was one of the pioneers of nonrepresentational art. Kandinsky often drew comparisons between nonobjective painting and music. Music, he pointed out, does not represent anything outside of itself. It is composed of sounds and pitches arranged over time, and yet it is capable of affecting us deeply. Similarly, paintings such as Kandinsky's *Composition IX* are composed of colors and shapes arranged over a flat surface (2.19). The precision of the drawing seems to reflect scrupulous, minute observation—but of what? Dreams from an unknown universe, perhaps.

Like many of his generation, Kandinsky came to the conclusion that art's ability to communicate lay in the very language of art itself, in the elements of shape and form, color and line. His ideas were more than just the result of formal investigations, however. They were linked to a larger philosophy about art's purpose. Kandinsky believed that the role of art in an increasingly materialistic society was to be a channel for the spirit, to allow us to commune with something bigger than ourselves. These beliefs have echoed down to our own day. Contemporary artist Rebecca Purdum finds them confirmed by her own experience with her mentally handicapped siblings. "When you have a special person in your family—and I have two—you begin to see that there is a kind of communication that exists way beyond language," she has said. "And when I paint, when I'm really into it, there is a degree of non-verbal communication that becomes everything—it fills me up."⁶ To create paintings such as *Chin Up* (2.20) Purdum rubs the paint onto the rough canvas with her hands (protected by rubber gloves), gradually building up layer after layer. The result is intriguingly misty and vague, as though something we could make out were constantly about to take shape, though it never does. Purdum evokes a luminous world that remains forever just beyond our reach.



2.19 (above, top) Vasili Kandinsky. *Composition IX*. 1936. Oil on canvas, 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 76 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

2.20 (above) Rebecca Purdum. *Chin Up*. 1990. Oil on canvas, 9 × 6'. Courtesy Jack Tilton Gallery.

STYLE

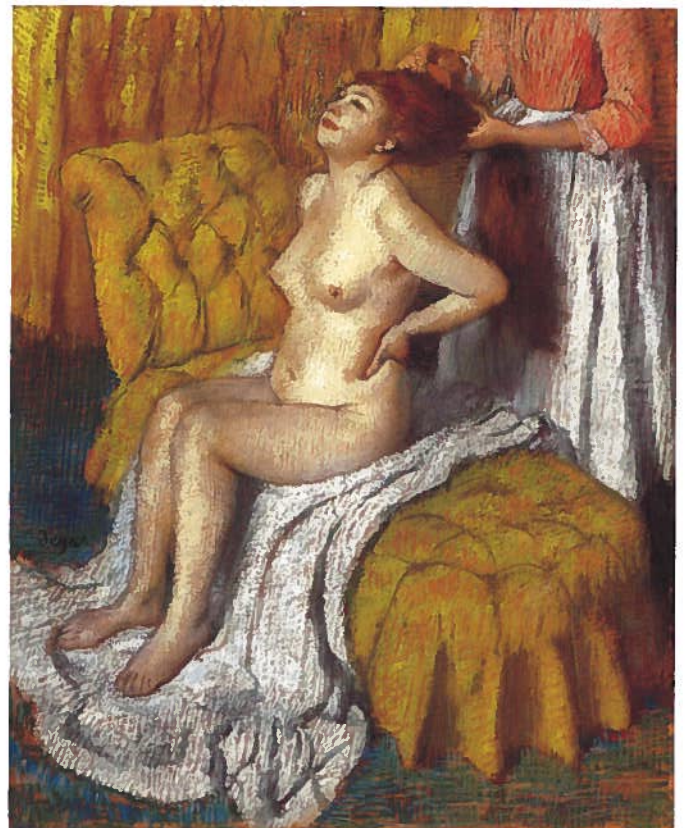
Terms such as *naturalistic* and *abstract* categorize art by how it relates to the appearances of the visible world. A work of art, of course, has a place in the visible world itself. It has its own appearance, which is the result of the artist's efforts. A term that helps us categorize art by its own appearance is *style*. **Style** refers to a characteristic or group of characteristics that we recognize as constant, recurring, or coherent. If a person we know always wears jeans and cowboy boots, we identify that person with a certain style of dress. If a friend who always wears her long hair in braids gets her hair cut very short, we speak of a change in style. If a family has furnished their living room entirely in antiques except for one very modern chair, we would recognize a mix of styles.

In the visual arts as in other areas of life, style is the result of a series of choices, in this case choices an artist makes in creating a work of art. As we grow more familiar with a particular artist's work, we begin to see a recurring pattern to these choices—characteristic subject matter or materials, distinctive ways of drawing or of applying paint, preferences for certain colors or color combinations. For example, now that you have seen three paintings by Van Gogh (1.10, the self-portrait on page 11, and 2.1), you can see certain traits they have in common such as heightened color, thickly applied paint, distinct brush strokes, distorted and exaggerated forms, and flamelike or writhing passages. Each subsequent work by Van Gogh that you come across will fine-tune what you already know about his style, just as what you already know will provide a framework for considering each new work.

One theory of art maintains that style is what distinguishes artists from other skillful makers. Not all people who set out to make art eventually develop an individual style, but all artists do. An enjoyable way to get a sense of the great range of individual styles is to compare works that treat similar subjects, as in these three depictions of a woman having her hair combed (2.21,

2.21 (left) Kitagawa Utamaro. *Hairdressing*, from *Twelve Types of Women's Handicraft*. c. 1798–99. Polychrome woodblock print, 12½ × 10½". Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

2.22 (right) Edgar Degas. *Nude Woman Having Her Hair Combed*. c. 1886–88. Pastel on paper, 29½ × 23½". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



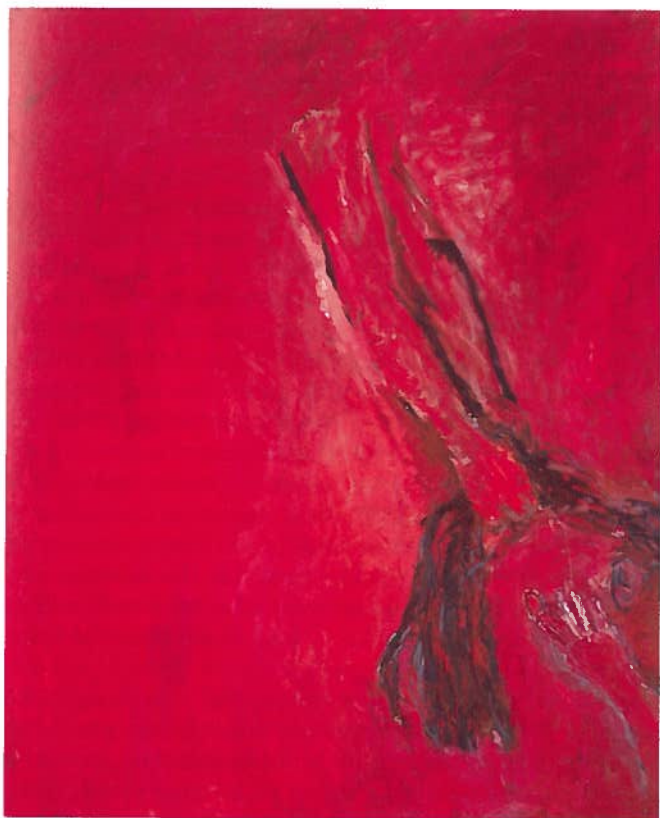
2.22, 2.23). The first is a woodcut by the 18th-century Japanese artist Kitagawa Utamaro (2.21), the second a drawing in pastel by the 19th-century French artist Edgar Degas (2.22), and the third an oil painting by the 20th-century American artist Susan Rothenberg (2.23).

Utamaro's women are slightly stylized. They do not strike us as particular people drawn from life, but as types of women drawn from the imagination—the beauty and her hairdresser. Their robes, too, are stylized into a series of sinuous curves. Slender black lines describe the faces and features, the robes and their folds, even the individual strands of hair. We could take away the color altogether, and the lines would still tell us everything we need to know. Color is applied evenly, with no lighter or darker variations. This makes the robes seem flat, as though they were cut out of patterned paper. The background is blank, and gives no hint of where the scene is set.

Edgar Degas works in a naturalistic style. The woman seems like a particular person, probably a model who posed for him in his studio. Faint lines describe the contours of her body and the chair she sits on, but these lines do not have a life of their own, as in the Japanese work. Colors are applied in individual strokes that remain distinct even as they build up in layers. Variations in color depict light and shadow, showing us the roundness and weight of the woman's body and sculpting the deep folds of the ruffles on the upholstered chair. Not all forms are depicted with equal attention to detail. The woman's body is very finely observed, while the outer areas of the image are treated more freely. The background is suggested rather than really described, yet the scene is clearly set in an interior. The composition is quite daring, with the servant's body cropped suddenly at the upper torso.

Susan Rothenberg's style is a unique combination of representational and nonrepresentational traditions. She does not portray complete figures but fragments, bits of representation that seem to surface like memories in a non-representational painting. Here, two arms detach themselves from the red.

2.23 Susan Rothenberg. *Maggie's Ponytail*. 1993–94. Oil on canvas, 65¼ × 53¼".
Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.



Their hands grasp a dark mass—we understand it as hair only when we notice the small ear to the right that indicates a human head. A hand at the lower right offers a ring to secure the ponytail.

Each of these artists formed their style within a particular culture during a particular historical moment. Artists working in the same culture during the same time often have stylistic features in common, and in this way individual styles contribute to our perception of larger, general styles. General styles fall into several categories. There are *cultural styles* (Aztec style in Mesoamerica), *period* or *historical styles* (Gothic style in Europe), and *school styles*, which are styles shared by a particular group of like-minded artists (Impressionist style). General styles provide a useful framework for organizing the history of art, and familiarity with them can help us situate art and artists that are new to us in a historical or cultural context, which often helps understanding. But it is important to remember that general styles are constructed after the fact, as scholars discern broad trends by comparing the work of numerous individual artists. Cultures, historical periods, and schools do not create art. Individuals create art, working with (and sometimes pushing against) the possibilities that their time and place hold out to them.

ART AND MEANING

“What is the artist trying to say?” is a question many people ask when looking at a work of art, as though the artist were trying to tell us in images what he or she could have said more clearly in a few words. As we saw in Chapter 1, meaning in art is rarely so simple and straightforward. Rather than a definitive meaning that can be found once and for all, art inspires interpretations that are many and changeable.

According to some theories of art, meaning is what distinguishes art from other kinds of skilled making. Art is always *about* something. One brief definition of art, in fact, is “embodied meaning.” Viewers who wonder what the artist is trying to say are thus right to expect their experience of art to be meaningful, but they may misunderstand where meaning can be found or underestimate their own role in making it. Understanding art is a cultural skill and, like any cultural skill, must be learned.

Four key terms related to meaning are form, content, iconography, and context. We look at each one in turn.

FORM AND CONTENT

Form is the way a work of art looks. It includes all visual aspects of the work that can be isolated and described such as size, shape, materials, color, and composition. **Content** is what a work of art is about. For representational and abstract works, content begins with the objects or events the work depicts, its **subject matter**. As we experience how form and subject matter interact, we begin to interpret the work, and content shades into meaning.

Two paintings by Henri Matisse allow us to explore the intimate relationship of form and content in art (2.24, 2.25). Both begin with the same subject matter, a piano lesson. Both are the same large size. They even depict the same young student, Matisse’s son Pierre, and are set in the same place, the Matisse family home, with the piano placed in front of a window looking out onto a garden. Yet their form clearly differs, and thus their content diverges as well.

Piano Lesson (2.24) is abstract. Matisse takes his cue from the metronome, the pyramidal form that sits on the piano. A metronome is a device that disciplines musicians as they practice by beating steady time. The wind-up type Matisse depicts has a slender wand that ticks as it sways back and forth like a windshield wiper. The boy is concentrating so hard that his



face is disappearing into this ticking. He is concentrating so hard that almost everything around him is vanishing into grayness. Outdoors, the garden has been abstracted into a green wedge—even nature obeys the metronome! On the piano a candle burns low, suggesting that many hours have passed. In the background a woman sits on a stool, her head turned toward the boy. She seems to be a teacher, and a severe one at that. Actually, she is a painting by Matisse hanging on the far wall. Nestled in the lower left corner is another work by Matisse, a small bronze figure of a nude woman. The boy's muse and inspiration, perhaps, but also another work of art.

Music Lesson (2.25) sets music in a social realm of family togetherness. Again Pierre practices, but he is not alone. His sister stands over his shoulder, watching him play. His older brother sits in a chair, reading, while out in the garden his mother works on a piece of sewing. Instead of a metronome on the piano there is an open violin case with a violin inside. Matisse played the violin, and this is his way of saying "I'm here too." The painting in the background is once again just a painting, its gold frame visible, while the bronze statue has moved outdoors into the garden, where it reclines by a little pond. The austere abstraction of *Piano Lesson* has blossomed here into a relaxed representational style of luscious colors and curves.

We could summarize the difference in content by saying that *Piano Lesson* is about the discipline of music, its solitary and intellectual side; *Music Lesson* is about the pleasure of music, its social and sensuous side. Matisse has expressed each message through a different form; we in turn have interpreted the form to arrive at the content.

We could say more about the form of Matisse's paintings. For example, we could point out that they are made of oil paint applied with brushes to canvas stretched over a wooden frame. Yet these aspects of their form don't seem to change things one way or the other. Oil paint, brushes, and canvas had been the standard materials of European painting for centuries, and Matisse took them for granted—they don't represent important choices he made. Similarly, Rodin probably took white marble and the technique of carving for granted

2.24 (left) Henri Matisse. *Piano Lesson*. 1916. Oil on canvas, 8½" × 6'11¼". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

2.25 (right) Henri Matisse. *Music Lesson*. 1917. Oil on canvas, 8½" × 6'7". The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania.



2.26 (left) Auguste Rodin. *The Kiss*. 1886–98. Marble, height 5'11¼".
Musée Rodin, Paris.

2.27 (right) Janine Antoni. *Gnaw*. 1992. Installation view (above) and details (below).
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York.

when he created *Kiss*, one of his most famous works (2.26). White marble had long been a standard material for sculpture in Europe, and carving was the standard way to shape it.

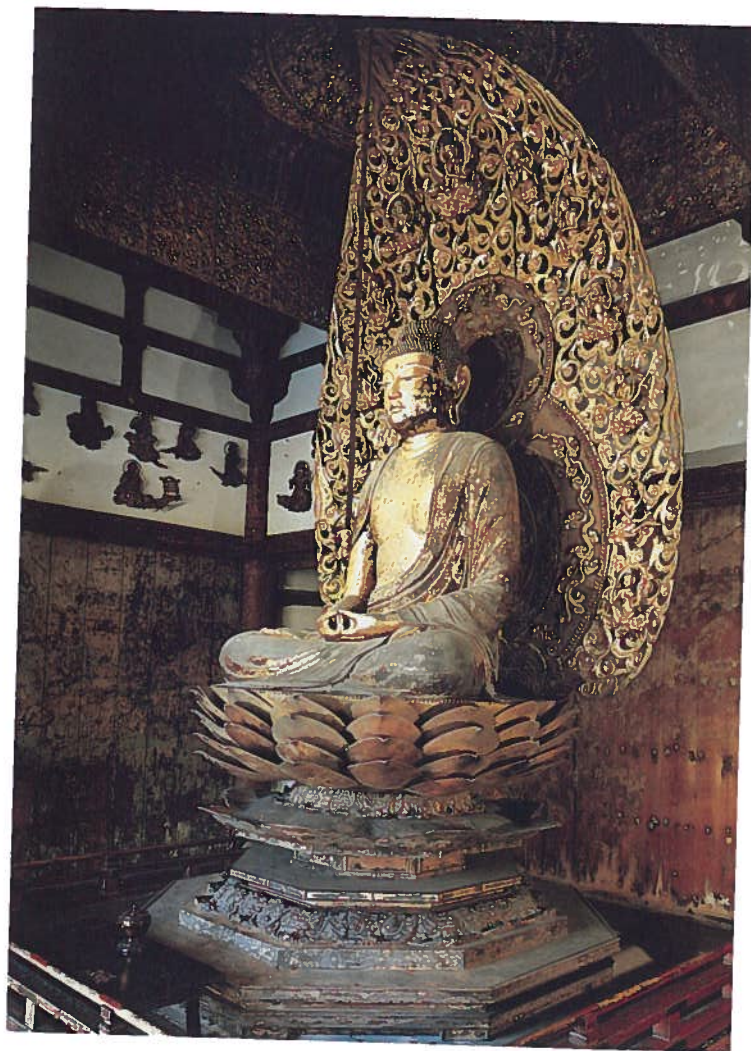
With Janine Antoni's *Gnaw*, in contrast, what it is made of and how it was made are the first things that grab our attention (2.27). The artist has reached far outside of traditional art materials and techniques, and her choices are fundamental to the work's content. *Gnaw* consists of a 600-pound cube of chocolate and a similar one of lard, each gnawed at by the artist herself. The chewed portions of lard were made into lipsticks, while the chocolate was made into heart-shaped, partitioned boxes for fancy gift chocolates. These are displayed in a nearby showcase, as though in an upscale boutique. Chocolate has strong associations with love, as both a token of affection and a substitute for it. Lard summons up obsessions with fat and self-image, which in turn are linked to culturally imposed ideals of female beauty, as is lipstick. *Gnaw* is about the gap between the prettified, commercial world of romance and the private, more desperate cravings it both feeds on and causes. The gnawed blocks of chocolate and lard resemble the base of Rodin's statue after the couple has gone, and perhaps that is part of the message as well. *The Kiss* wants to convince us that love is beautiful, and that we are beautiful when we are in love. Not always, *Gnaw* replies, and the romantic illusions that works like *The Kiss* inspire are part of the problem.

ICONOGRAPHY

In talking about form and content in Matisse's *Piano Lesson*, we relied on something so basic you may not even have noticed it. In fact, it was our very first step: we recognized the subject matter. We know what a piano looks like, and what lessons are. We expect to see a piano, a student, a teacher. Other objects depicted in the painting required some research to identify. Who was the first viewer to notice that the teacher in the background is actually another painting by Matisse? Today this information is standard knowledge, and almost any description of *Piano Lesson* will include it. But at some point it was newly discovered. One object depicted in *Piano Lesson* even carried a traditional meaning of its own: the candle burning low, which has a long history in Western art of symbolizing the passing of time.

This kind of background information about subject matter is the domain of iconography. **Iconography**, literally "describing images," involves identifying, describing, and interpreting subject matter in art. Iconography is an important activity of scholars who study art, and their work helps us understand meanings that we might not be able to see for ourselves. For example, unless you are schooled in Japanese Buddhism, you would not recognize the subject matter of *Amida Nyorai* (2.28). An important work of Japanese art, the statue was created during the 11th century by the sculptor Jocho for a temple called Byodo-in, where it still resides. Its intended audience—Buddhists who come to worship at the temple—understands the statue easily. The rest of us need some help.

2.28 (left) Jocho. *Amida Nyorai*, in the Hoodo (Phoenix Hall), Byodo-in Temple. c. 1053. Gilded wood, height 9'2".

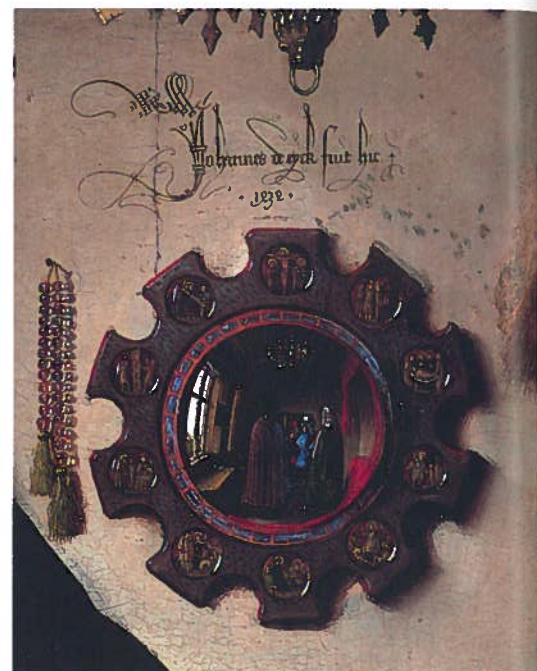


Our investigation begins with the most basic question of all, Who is Amida Nyorai? Amida Nyorai is a buddha, a fully enlightened being. The historical Buddha was a spiritual leader who lived in India around the turn of the 5th century B.C.E. His insights into the human condition form the basis of the Buddhist religion. As Buddhism developed, it occurred to believers that if there had been one fully enlightened being, there must have been others. In Japan, where Buddhism quickly spread, the most popular buddha has been Amida, the Buddha of the Western Paradise.

The iconography of the historical Buddha image was established early on and has remained constant through the centuries. Amida is portrayed following its conventions. A buddha wears a monk's robe, a single length of cloth that drapes over the left shoulder. His ears are elongated, for in his earthly life, before his spiritual awakening, he wore the customary heavy earrings of an Indian prince. The form resembling a bun on the top of his head is a protuberance called *ushnisha*. It symbolizes his enlightenment. Sculptors developed a repertoire of hand gestures for the Buddha image, and each gesture has its own meaning. Here, Amida's hands form the gesture of meditation and

2.29 (left) Jan van Eyck. *Arnolfini Double Portrait*. 1434. Oil on wood, 33 × 22½".
The National Gallery, London.

2.30 (right) *Arnolfini Double Portrait*, detail.



balance, which symbolizes the path toward enlightenment. He sits in the cross-legged position of meditation on a lotus throne. The lotus flower is a symbol of purity. Rising up behind Amida is his halo, radiant spiritual energy envisioned as a screen of stylized flames.

The iconography of this statue is readily available to us because it forms part of a tradition that has continued unbroken since it first developed almost 2,000 years ago. Often, however, traditions change and meanings are forgotten. We cannot always tell with certainty what images from the past portray, or what they meant to their original viewers. Such is the case with one of the most famous images in Western art, the *Arnolfini Double Portrait* by Jan van Eyck (2.29). Painted with entrancing clarity and mesmerizing detail, the work portrays a man and a woman, their hands joined. He has taken off his shoes, which lie on the floor next to him; hers can be seen on the floor in the background. Seemingly pregnant, she stands next to a bed draped in rich red fabric. Overhead is a chandelier with but one candle. On the floor between the couple stands an alert little dog. A mirror on the far wall (2.30) reflects not only the couple but also two men standing in the doorway to the room and looking in—standing, that is, where we are standing as we look at the painting. Over the mirror the painter's signature reads "Jan van Eyck was here."

By the time the painting ended up in the National Gallery in London in 1842, it had changed hands so many times that even the identity of the couple had been forgotten. Researchers working from old documents soon identified them as Giovanni Arnolfini, a rich merchant capitalist, and his wife, Giovanna Cenami, also from a socially prominent family. But what was the purpose of the painting? What, exactly, does it depict? One influential theory claims that the painting records a private marriage ceremony and served as a sort of marriage certificate. The men reflected in the mirror are none other than Jan van Eyck and a friend, who had served as witnesses. Moreover, almost every detail of the painting has a symbolic value related to the sacrament of marriage. The bride's seemingly pregnant state alludes to fertility, as does the red bed of the nuptial chamber. The single candle signifies the presence of God at the ceremony, while the dog is a symbol of marital fidelity and love. The couple have cast off their shoes as a sign that they stand on sacred ground.

Another, more recent theory claims that the painting does not depict a marriage but a ceremony of betrothal, an engagement. It commemorates the alliance of two prominent and well-off families. In this view, the details do not carry specific symbolism, although many of them serve to underscore the couple's affluence. Canopied beds, for example, were status symbols and as such were commonly displayed in the principal room of the house. Candles were enormously expensive, and burning one at a time was common thrift. The shoes were of a style worn by the upper class and were probably taken off routinely upon going indoors. The dog is simply a pet: everyone had dogs.⁷

Both of these theories are supported by impressive research and reasoning. Some scholars believe one, some the other. Viewers will continue to find their own meanings in this magical painting, but we may never know just what it signified for its original audience.

CONTEXT

Art does not happen in a vacuum. Strong ties bind a work of art to the life of its creator, to the tradition it grows from and responds to, to the audience it was made for, and to the society in which it circulated. These circumstances form the **context** of art, its web of connections to the larger world of human culture.

This chapter has already made use of the kind of insights that context can provide. Near the beginning, passages from the letters of Vincent van Gogh helped set his painting in the context of his life and thought. In talking about Picasso's *Seated Woman Holding a Fan*, the challenge posed by photography was mentioned in order to set the painting in the context of the development of European art.



2.31 (above) Finial of a linguist's staff, from Ghana. Asante, 20th century. Wood and gold, height 11¼".
Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva.

2.32 (above, top) Akan (Fante) linguists at Enyan Abaasa, Ghana, 1974.



The type of context that especially concerns us here is the social context of art, including the physical setting in which art is experienced. Figure 2.31 portrays a work of African art as we might see it today in a museum. Isolated against a dark background and dramatically lit, the gilded carving gleams like a rare and precious object. We can admire the harmony of the sculpture's gently rounded forms in much the same way that we contemplated the light flowing over Edward Weston's cabbage leaf earlier in the chapter (see 2.9). Yet the sculpture was not made primarily to be looked at in this way. In fact, it was not made to be seen in a museum at all.

Figure 2.32 shows similar sculptures in their original context, as they were made to be seen and used by the Akan peoples of West Africa. The men in the photograph are officials known as linguists. Linguists serve Akan rulers as translators, spokespersons, advisers, historians, and orators. Every local chief employs at least one linguist, and more powerful chiefs and kings may be attended by many. As a symbol of office, a linguist carries a staff topped with a wooden sculpture covered in gold leaf. Each sculptural motif is associated with one or more proverbs, often about the nature of leadership or the just use of power. In the photograph here, for example, the staff at the far left portraying two men seated at a table calls forth the proverb, "Food is for its owner, not for the one who is hungry," meaning that the chieftaincy belongs to the man who has the right to it, not just to anyone who wants it.

In an Akan community, the aesthetic attention that we directed at the sculpture in Figure 2.31 would have been the unique privilege of the artist who carved the work and the linguist who owned it. Other members of the community would have glimpsed the figure only during public occasions of state. More meaningful to them would have been the authority that the staffs symbolized and the pageantry they contributed to—a lavish visual display that reaffirmed the social order of the Akan world.

Museums are the principal setting our society offers for encounters with art. Yet the vast majority of humankind's artistic heritage was not created with museums in mind. It was not made to be set aside from life in a special place, but rather to be part of life—both the lives of individuals and the lives of communities. Like the Akan linguist staff, its meaning was united with its use. This is as true for Western art as it is for the art of other cultures. Figure 2.33 shows Titian's *Assumption* in isolation, as we might expect to find it in a museum or an art book. "Assumption" names another standard subject of Christian art, that of Mary, the mother of Jesus, being accepted bodily into heaven at her

death. Titian has imagined Mary being borne upward amid a crowd of angels, her garments swirling about her, into a golden glory. Above, God appears to welcome her; below, witnesses marvel at the miracle.

Titian's masterpiece does not reside in a museum, however, or on the white pages of an art book. It towers up behind the main altar of the Church of the Frari in Venice, in the exact location the artist painted it for. Thomas Struth's photograph *Church of the Frari, Venice* captures something of the experience of seeing Titian's work in context (2.34). Now we understand that the painting is part of a richly worked, massive stone altarpiece, with fluted columns, marble inlay, and gilded carving. A statue of Christ crowns the ensemble, flanked by two monks. We can see how the tall, arched shape of the painting repeats the pointed arches of the church itself, and we can appreciate how the painting's bold composition projects clearly into the cavernous interior.

But all of these ways of looking are still ways of looking at art. At its unveiling in 1518, the painting was seen through the eyes of faith. We need to imagine the effect it produced when Christianity was the central culture force of Venetian life. Citizens filling the Church of the Frari would have felt the truth of their beliefs through the splendor of the architecture echoing with music, the pageantry of the rituals, and the glorious vision of a miracle made present through Titian's skill and imagination. In Struth's photograph, light falls on a small group of tourists who have paused to look at the famous painting. They have come to look at art, as though the church were a museum. And yet for a moment they seem transfigured.

The museum as we know it today—a building housing a collection of art and open to the public—developed in Europe during the decades leading into the 19th century, the same decades that witnessed the social upheavals that

2.33 (left) Titian. *Assumption*. 1518. Oil on wood, 22'7¼" × 11'11½". Church of the Frari, Venice.

2.34 (right) Thomas Struth. *Church of the Frari, Venice*. 1995. C-print, 7'7¾" × 6'¾". Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery.



inaugurated our modern era, including the American and French revolutions. Viewed as repositories of the past, newly created museums were filled with objects that used to belong to the aristocracy or the Church, or to vanished civilizations such as ancient Rome and Egypt. All of these objects were removed from the contexts that originally gave them meaning. Placed in a museum, their new function was to be works of art.

While the first museums were concerned only with the art of the past, many museums now exhibit the work of living artists. Along with galleries that display (and usually sell) art, and a circuit of international exhibitions that survey current artistic trends, they are the principal context for the art of our time. Our artists work with these institutions and spaces in mind, and as viewers we expect to see their work in these settings.

There is a long tradition of artists who have protested this separation of art from the fabric of everyday life. Often they make art that tries to reach outside of this specialized context or to question it. We will look at some of their ideas next. But there is an equally long tradition of artists who have explored what could be done *within* such a context. One such artist is Tom Friedman, whose inventive, labor-intensive works defy categorization. Here, we illustrate a cereal box he made by cutting nine boxes into small squares and then piecing them back together as one (2.35). Elsewhere, he has exhibited a pencil processed through a sharpener into one continuous coil of shaving and a life-size statue of himself made of sugar cubes.

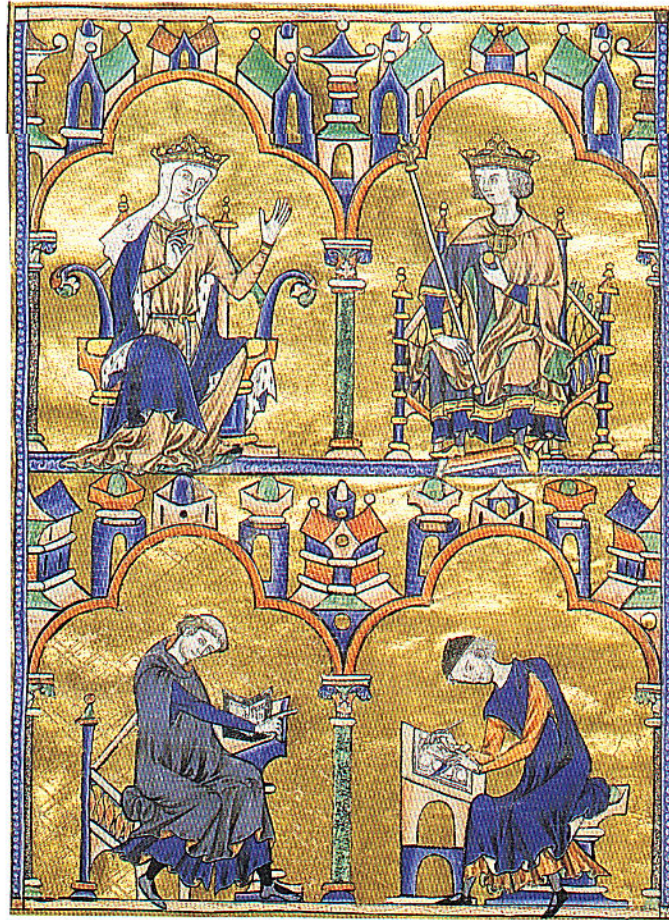
Friedman not only intends his art specifically for the quiet, empty, white spaces of contemporary galleries and museums, but even suggests that the things he makes are not quite art outside of such spaces. "I think that after I make it and it goes into the gallery it's in its sort of original context within a body of work," he explains. If a collector buys an individual work from the exhibition, "it becomes historical, more of an artifact, as opposed to the same conveyor of meaning it was originally."⁸

Friedman's remarks underscore the importance of context to meaning, just as his work illustrates how our modern context of galleries and museums opened up new possibilities for what could be seen as art.

2.35 Tom Friedman. *Untitled*.
1999. Cereal boxes, 31¼ ×
21¼ × 6¾".
Courtesy the artist and Feature Inc.



15.24 Page with *Louis IX and Queen Blanche of Castile*, *Moralized Bible*, from Paris. 1226–34. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on vellum, 15 × 10½". The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.



Gothic style became known in the rest of Europe as “French style,” after the country where it originated. France was equally famous as a center for the production of luxuriously illuminated books. This page from a manuscript produced in Paris in the early 13th century shows the influence of stained glass on manuscript illumination (15.24). On a radiant ground of gold, subtly embossed, four figures sit in their individual compartments, set off like four medallions in a stained glass window. The upper two figures represent Louis IX, then king of France, and his mother, Blanche of Castile, who had ruled until he came of age. Still a young man here, Louis will later commission the Sainte-Chapelle, which we looked at in Chapter 3 (see 3.4). Beneath the royal pair sits a monk reading a text to a scribe, who dutifully writes it all down. The circles on the page the scribe is busy with define areas that will be filled in with illuminations later.

RELATED WORKS



3.7 Cimabue,
Madonna Enthroned



11.16
Riemenschneider,
Virgin and Child

TOWARD THE RENAISSANCE

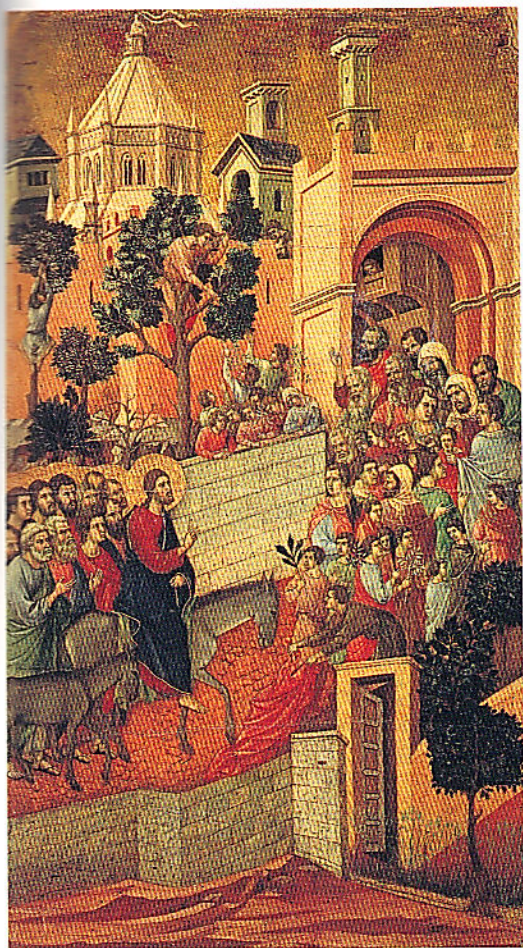
The Gothic style lasted in northern Europe into the early 16th century. By this time, however, it was overlapping with far different ideas about art that had their origins in the south, in Italy. Living in the heart of what was the ancient Roman Empire, Italians were surrounded with the ruins of the Classical world. More treasures lay buried in the earth, awaiting excavation. All that was needed was an intellectual climate that encouraged an interest in such things. This climate eventually arose, and we call it the Renaissance. But the Renaissance did not happen all at once. Many developments prepared the way, some in scholarship, some in political thought, others in art.

The last two artists in this chapter were influential in making the shift from art styles of the Middle Ages to the quite different styles of the Renaissance. Duccio was an artist of Siena, in Italy. His masterpiece was the *Maestà Altar*, a multisection panel meant to be displayed on the altar of a church, of which we illustrate the part showing *Christ Entering Jerusalem* (15.25). What is most interesting about this painting is Duccio's attempt to create believable space in a large outdoor scene—a concern that would absorb painters of the next century. Christ's entry into the city, celebrated now on Palm Sunday, was thought of as a triumphal procession, and Duccio has labored to convey the sense of movement and parade. A strong diagonal thrust beginning at the left with Christ and his disciples cuts across the picture to the middle right, then shifts abruptly to carry our attention to the upper left corner of the painting—a church tower that is Christ's presumed goal. The architecture plays an important role in defining space and directing movement. This was Duccio's novel, almost unprecedented, contribution to the art of the period, the use of architecture to demarcate space rather than to act as a simple backdrop.

Duccio's contemporary, a Florentine artist named Giotto, made an even more remarkable break with art traditions of the Middle Ages. Most of Giotto's best work was in fresco, and the most notable examples are in a small church in Padua called the Arena Chapel. *The Lamentation* (15.26), a work depicting Mary, St. John, and others mourning the dead Christ, illustrates Giotto's highly original use of space in painting. The scene has been composed as though it were on a stage and we the viewers are an audience participating in the drama. In other words, space going back from the picture plane seems to be continuous with space in front of the picture plane, the space in which we stand.

15.25 (left) Duccio. *Christ Entering Jerusalem*, detail of *Maestà Altar*. 1308–11. Tempera on panel, 40 × 21". Musco dell'Opera, Siena.

15.26 (right) Giotto. *The Lamentation*. 1305–06. 7'7" × 7'9". Arena Chapel, Padua.



Accustomed as we are now to this "window" effect in painting, it is difficult to imagine how revolutionary it was to medieval eyes, used to predominantly flat, decorative space in painting. Moreover, Giotto seems to have developed this concept of space largely on his own, with little artistic precedent. The figures in *The Lamentation* are round and full-bodied, clustered low in the composition to enhance the effect of an event taking place just out of our reach.

Giotto's grouping of the figures is unusual and daring, with Christ's body half-hidden by a figure with its back turned. This arrangement seems casual and almost random, until we notice the slope of the hill directing attention to Christ's and the Virgin's heads, which are the focal point. Yet another innovation—perhaps Giotto's most important one—was his interest in depicting the psychological and emotional reactions of his subjects. The characters in *The Lamentation* interact in a natural, human way that gives this and the artist's other religious scenes a special warmth.

Neither Duccio nor Giotto had an especially long career. Each did his most significant work in the first decade of the 14th century. Yet in that short time the course of Western art history changed dramatically. Both artists had sought a new direction for painting—a more naturalistic, more human, more engaging representation of the physical world—and both had taken giant steps in that direction. Their experiments paved the way for a flowering of all the arts that would come in the next century.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE RENAISSANCE

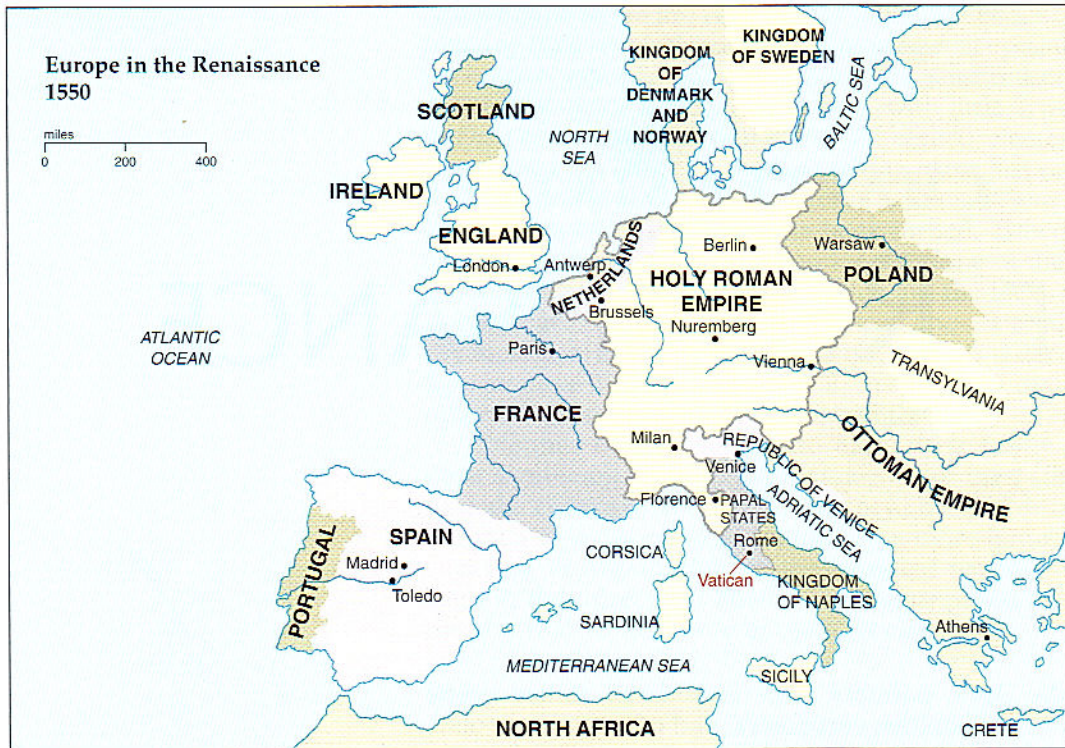
Throughout the Middle Ages, painters were considered skilled crafts workers on a level with goldsmiths, carpenters, and other tradespeople. By the mid-16th century, in contrast, Michelangelo could claim that “in Italy great princes as such are not held in honor or renown; it is a painter that they call divine.”¹ From anonymous crafts workers to divinely talented individuals more honored and renowned than princes—what had happened?

The simplest answer is that Michelangelo lived and worked during the time that we call the Renaissance. Covering the period roughly from 1400 to 1600, the Renaissance brought vast changes to the world of art. The way art looked, the subjects it treated, the way it was thought about, the position of the artist in society, the identities and influence of patrons, the cultures that served as points of reference—all of these things changed. We might even say that the Renaissance was the time when the concept of “art” arose, for it was during these centuries that painting, sculpture, and architecture began to earn their privileged positions in Western thought.

The word *renaissance* means “rebirth,” and it refers to the revival of interest in ancient Greek and Roman culture that is one of the key characteristics of the period. Scholars of the day worked to recover and study as many Greek and Latin texts as possible. Referring to themselves as humanists, they believed that a sound education should include not only the teachings of the Church and the study of early Christian writers but also the study of the liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, politics, and moral philosophy—about which the pre-Christian world had much to teach.

Renaissance humanists believed in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Above all, they held that humankind was not worthless in the eyes of God, as the Church had taught during the Middle Ages. Rather, humankind was God’s finest and most perfect creation. Reason and creativity were God’s gifts, proof of humankind’s inherent dignity. People’s obligation to God was thus not to tremble and submit but rather to soar, striving to realize their full intellectual and creative potential.

The implications of these ideas for art were tremendous. Artists became newly interested in observing the natural world, and they worked to reproduce it as accurately as possible. Studying the effects of light, they developed the technique of *chiaroscuro*; noting that distant objects appeared smaller than near ones, they developed the system of linear perspective; seeing how detail and color blurred with distance, they developed the principles of atmospheric perspective.



The nude reappeared in art, for the body was held to be the noblest of God's creations. "Who is so barbarous as not to understand that the foot of a man is nobler than his shoe," said Michelangelo, "and his skin nobler than that of the sheep with which he is clothed?"² To portray the body with understanding, artists studied anatomy, even going so far as to dissect cadavers.

Under the influence of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, whose works were newly available, beauty became equated with moral goodness. Renaissance artists sought an idealized beauty, one they created by taking the most beautiful features of numerous examples and combining them. "Be on the watch to take the best parts of many individual faces," wrote Leonardo da Vinci.³ And the German Renaissance painter Dürer advised the same: "You, therefore, if you desire to compose a fine figure, must take the head from some, the chest, arm, leg, hand, and foot from others. . . . For from many beautiful things something good may be gathered, even as honey is gathered from many flowers."⁴

The ten-volume treatise on architecture by the Roman writer Vitruvius was read avidly in an attempt to understand Classical thought and practice, including ideas about beauty and harmonious proportions. Greek and Roman ruins still standing were studied in detail—described, measured, analyzed, and drawn. Excavations revealed still more examples, along with astonishing statues such as the *Laocoön Group* (see 14.29), which served as an inspiration and ideal for Renaissance artists.

Perspective and chiaroscuro, close observation of nature, the study of anatomy, theories of beauty and proportion—these established painting, sculpture, and architecture as intellectual activities allied with mathematics, science, and poetry. Artists were no longer mere crafts workers, but learned persons whose creative powers were viewed as almost miraculous. The greatest artists were considered a breed apart, comprising a class of their own that transcended the social class determined by birth—not nobility, not bourgeoisie, not clergy, but a separate and elite category of people respected not

because of who they were, but because of what they could *do*. They lived in the courts of the nobles and popes, they moved freely in good society, their company was sought after, their services in demand.

The character of art patronage reflected the changing times. Before the Renaissance only two groups of people could afford to be art patrons—the nobility and the clergy. Both continued to be active sponsors of art, but they were joined in the 15th century by a new class of merchant-rulers, very rich, socially ambitious, fully able to support extravagant spending on art. The climate could not have been more fertile for a flowering of art: the best artists were available, and virtually unlimited funds existed to support them. With this preamble, then, let us look at the artists of the Renaissance.

THE EARLY AND HIGH RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

Why did the Renaissance begin in Italy and not elsewhere? Scholars have offered many reasons. First, Italy had been among the first areas to recover economically from the chaos of the early Middle Ages. Powerful city-states engaged in extensive trade and banking had developed. Wealthy, independent, and fiercely competitive, the city-states would vie with each other to engage the finest artists, as would the merchant-princes whose fortunes sustained them. The Church, also an important patron of the arts, was centered in Italy as well. Humanism arose first in Italy, and it was in Italy that the first university position in Greek studies was established. Finally, Italians had long lived amid the ruins of ancient Rome, and they viewed themselves as the direct descendants of the citizens of the earlier civilization. If anyone could bring back its glories, surely it was they.

Among the first generation of Renaissance artists, the finest sculptor by far was Donatello. His statue of *Saint Mark* (16.1), an early work, shows the characteristics of this new era, especially if we compare it to the statue of Saint Theodore from Chartres Cathedral, carved during the High Middle Ages (see 15.22). Whereas Gothic sculptors carved what they observed from the surface—face, clothing, limbs—Donatello thought methodically in the new way: the body provides the framework on which the fabric drapes, and therefore it must be considered first. Renaissance sculptors often created a full-scale model of a nude figure in clay, then draped clay-soaked linen about it to create garments, arranging the folds before the fabric dried. This model was then copied in marble. Scholars believe that Donatello was one of the first sculptors to use this method.

The statue is placed in a niche, but unlike most architectural sculptures from the Middle Ages, it does not depend on this framework for support. Rather, the fully rounded figure stands independently in true contrapposto, the weight on the right leg, left leg bent. The shoulders compensate: right shoulder lower, left shoulder higher. The clothing responds to the form underneath. Where the left knee bends outward, the robe falls back; where the right arm is pressed to the body, the sleeve wrinkles. We sense that if St. Mark moved, the garments would move with him. The figure is as naturalistic as any ancient Greek statue, yet there is a stamp of individual personality in both face and body that may have come from Donatello's reading of Mark's Gospel.

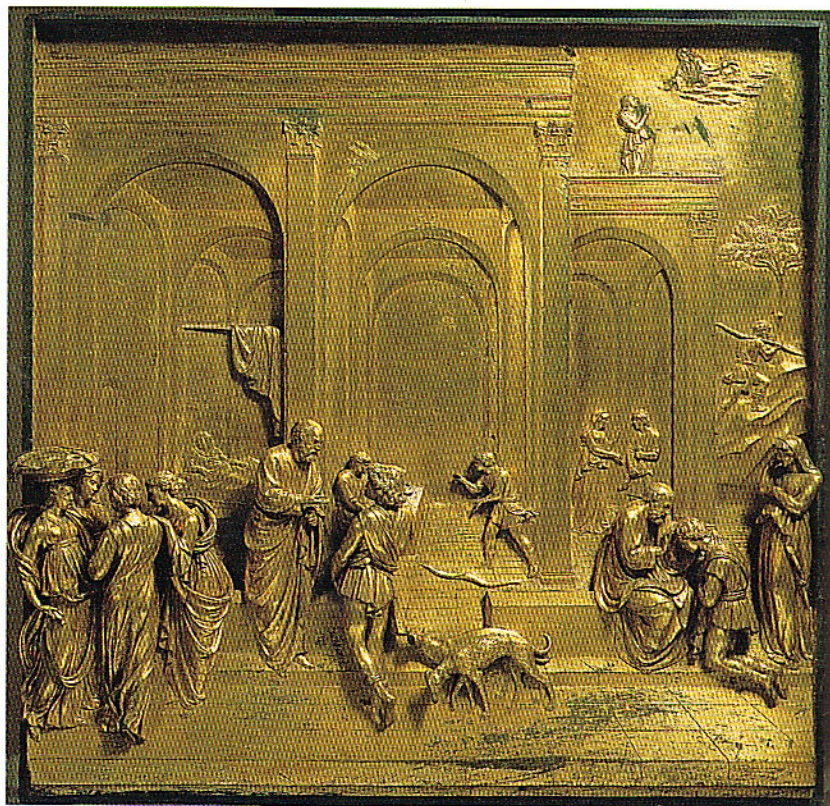
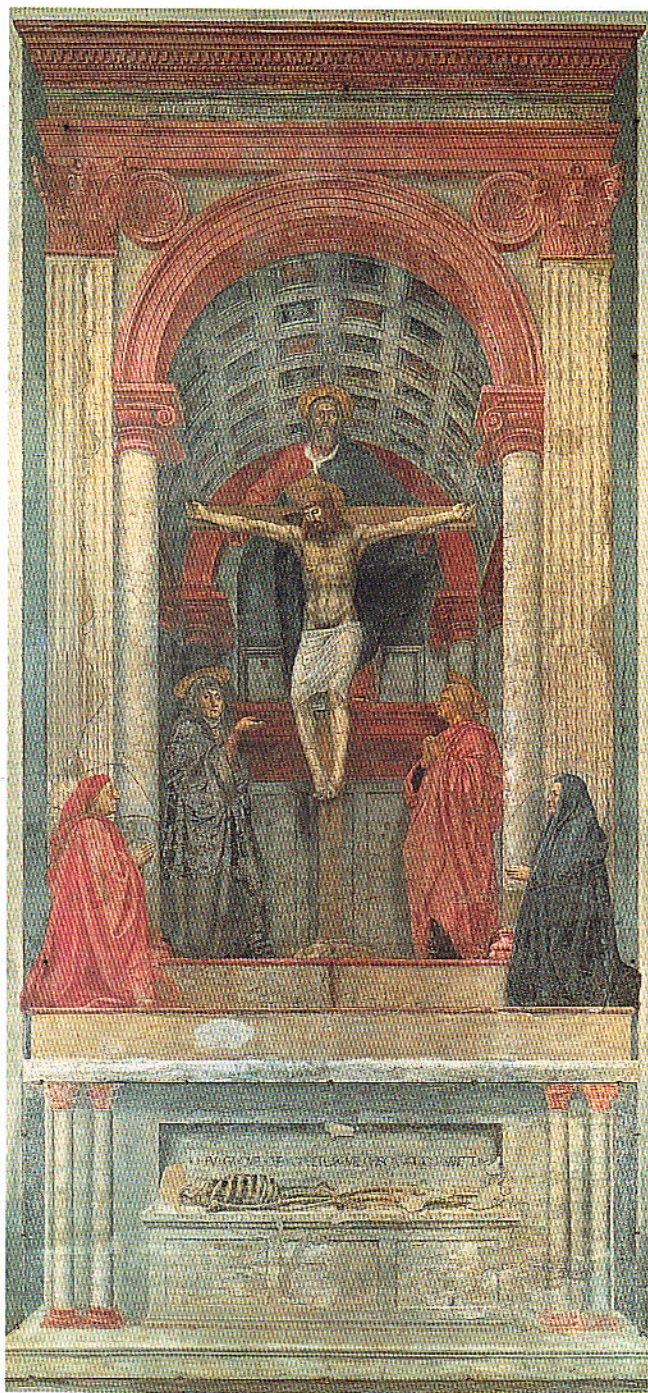
Donatello's teacher was an artist named Lorenzo Ghiberti, who had established his reputation in 1401 by winning a competition to design a set of bronze relief sculptures for the doors of the baptistry of the Cathedral in his native town of Florence. In 1425, a second set of doors was commissioned from Ghiberti. In between these two dates, the system of linear perspective had been discovered, described, and published. Ghiberti took full advantage of the possibilities opened up by the new discovery, as we can see in *The Story*

16.1 Donatello. *St. Mark*.
1411–13. Marble, height 7'9".
Or San Michele, Florence.



16.2 (right) Lorenzo Ghiberti.
The Story of Jacob and Esau, from
The Gates of Paradise. c. 1435.
 Gilt bronze, 31¼" square.
 Museo dell'Opera del Duomo,
 Florence.

16.3 (left) Masaccio. *Trinity with
 the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist,
 and Donors*. 1425. Fresco. 21'9" ×
 9'4".
 Santa Maria Novella, Florence.



of *Jacob and Esau* (16.2), one of the ten panels he executed for this second set of doors. The graceful, rounded figures in the foreground stand on a pavement whose converging lines begin a recession in space that is carried systematically through the architectural setting sculpted in low relief in the background. Renaissance artists used this new, rationally conceived space to bring clarity and order to their compositions, two qualities that Greek philosophy associated with beauty.

Artists had long used architectural settings to structure their compositions. Ghiberti's great innovation was to conceive of the architecture and the figures on the same scale instead of relying on the miniaturized, symbolic architecture of earlier artists such as Duccio (see 15.25). Ghiberti quite rightly boasted of this in his *Commentaries*. "I executed this work with the most painstaking and loving care," he wrote, "... with the buildings drawn with the same proportions as they would appear to the eye and so true that, if you stand far off, they appear to be in relief. Actually they are in very low relief. The figures in the foreground look larger and those in the distance smaller, just as they do in reality."⁵

The youth of the great innovators of the Renaissance can sometimes astonish us. Donatello was twenty-five when he began work on *St. Mark*; Ghiberti was twenty-three when he won the competition for the baptistery doors. Our next artist, Masaccio, transformed the art of painting at age twenty-four with his fresco *Trinity with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, and Donors* (16.3) in the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Masaccio does here for painting what Ghiberti did for sculpture in relief, using the new technique of linear perspective to construct a deep, convincing architectural space as a setting for his figures. Comparing this painting to the Byzantine icon we looked at in Chapter

15 (see 15.10), we can see both the continuity of the iconography (the two works depict the same subject) and the profound stylistic changes of the Renaissance.

Masaccio has arranged the figures in a stable triangle that extends from the head of God the Father, who stands over the dead Christ, through the two donors who kneel to either side of the holy grouping and outside their sacred space. Triangular (or pyramidal) organization would remain a favorite device of Italian Renaissance artists. Earlier in this book, we noticed it in Raphael's *The Madonna of the Meadows* (see 4.16). Masaccio's composition is organized by a vanishing point located directly under the cross, at the midpoint of the ledge on which the donors kneel. Five feet above the floor, it is at the eye level of an average viewer. The painting thus is designed to present as convincing an illusion as possible to visitors to the church that the sacred scene is really present before them.

Even the architectural setting that Masaccio has painted is in the new Renaissance style. We can see the sort of interior that inspired him in the church of Sant'Andrea in Mantua (16.4, 16.5), by the architect Leon Battista Alberti. In Chapter 5 we examined the rhythms of the facade of this church (see 5.31). The photograph here is taken looking up the nave toward the apse; the light in the middle distance is entering through the dome that rises over the intersection of the transept and the nave.

Sant'Andrea was Alberti's last work. Construction began in 1472, the year of his death, and was completed two decades later. Though marred by some changes carried out during the 18th century, the interior still allows us to see how Alberti developed the themes and elements announced by his facade. As in the facade, the square, arch, and circle dominate. The aisles of the standard basilica plan have given way to a procession of square, barrel-vaulted chapels along a majestic barrel-vaulted nave. This sequence of barrel-vaulted spaces placed at right angles to each other carries through the theme announced in the entryway while also preparing us for the grander right-angle crossing of the transept. The roundel (circular area) set in the pediment of the facade and again over its doors is repeated on the walls of the nave between the chapels and culminates with the great circular opening of the dome. The vast interior space composed of geometric volumes harks back to Roman examples such as the Pantheon (see 13.13).

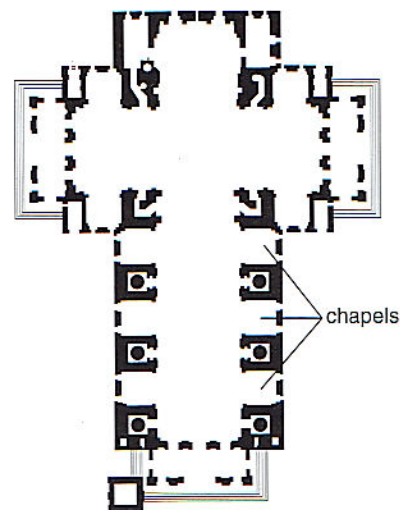
RELATED WORKS



5.31 Alberti, Sant'Andrea

16.4 (left) Leon Battista Alberti. Interior of Sant'Andrea, Mantua. 1470–1493.

16.5 (right) Plan of Sant'Andrea.

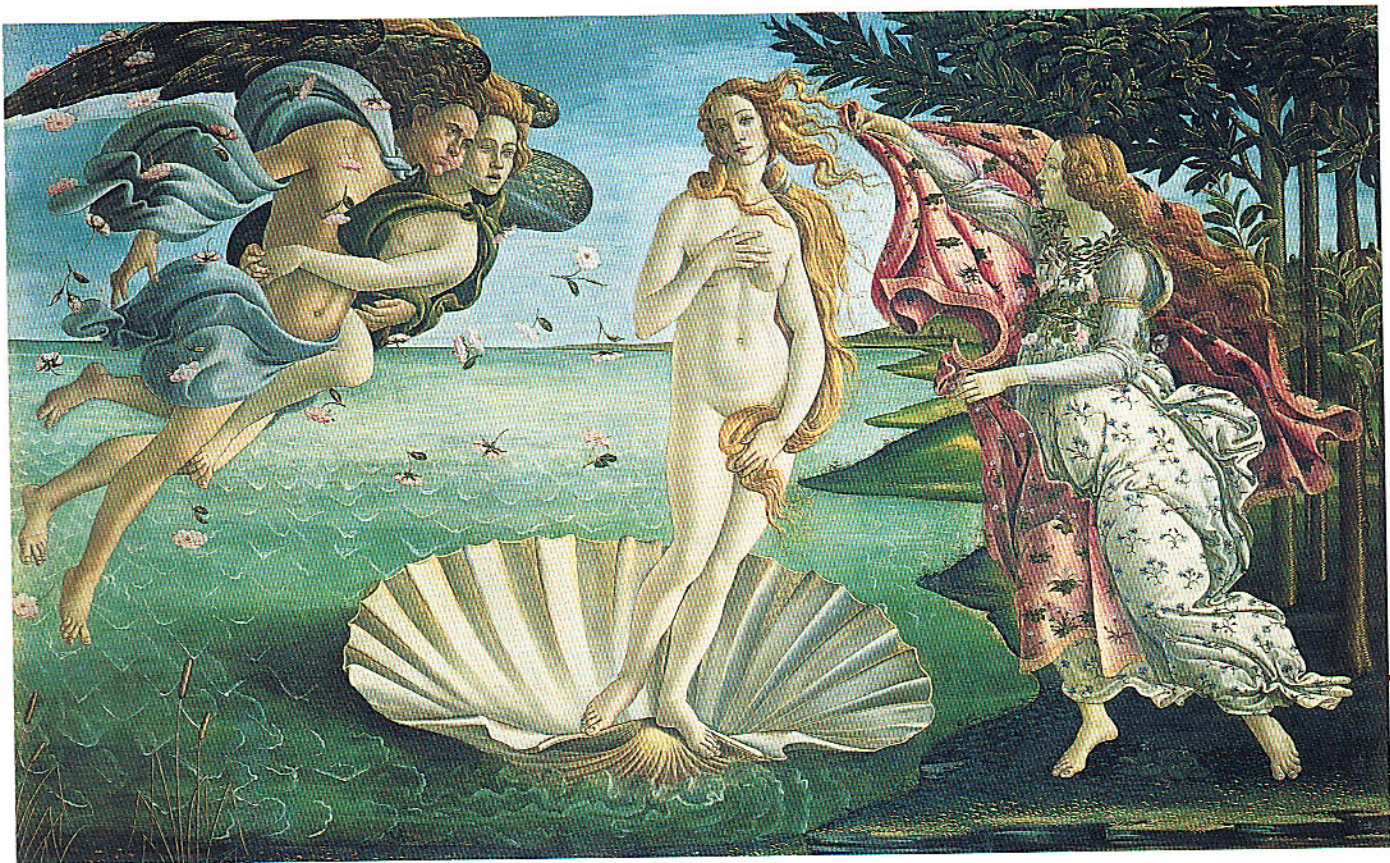


In addition to Christian themes, Renaissance artists also turned to stories of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses for subject matter, as did many Renaissance poets. An example is *The Birth of Venus* (16.6), by Sandro Botticelli. Born in 1445, Botticelli belonged to the third generation of Renaissance artists. Early in his career, he had the great fortune to enjoy the patronage of the Medici, the ruling merchant family of Florence, who probably commissioned this painting. The Medici sponsored an Academy—a sort of discussion group—where humanist scholars and artists met to discuss Classical culture and its relationship to Christianity. The reconciliation of these two systems of thought gave rise to a philosophy known as Neo-Platonism, after the Greek philosopher Plato.

Venus was the Roman goddess of love and beauty. According to legend, she was born from the sea, and so Botticelli depicts her floating upward on a shell. The wind god Zephyr and his wife blow her gently toward the shore, where a figure representing spring waits ready to clothe Venus in a flowing garment. Botticelli paints the goddess in the nude, with strategically placed hands and a tress of hair the only concessions to modesty. Such a large-scale depiction of the female nude in art had been virtually unknown since Classical times. Venus' pose is modeled after a Roman sculpture of the goddess, which Botticelli had studied in the Medici collection, but her lightness, her fragile quality, her delicate beauty and billowing hair—these are Botticelli's own.

While Botticelli's unusual linear style and shallow modeling was an exception to Renaissance norms, it was highly appreciated by the Medici circle. Venus, for example, looks as though she might be modeled in high relief, but not fully rounded. The implied space is shallow, with the sea and receding shoreline serving almost as a flat backdrop, as in a theatrical production. Medici intimates would also have understood the subtle Neo-Platonic overtones of the scene. In Neo-Platonic thought, Venus was identified with both Eve and the Virgin Mary; her birth from the water was related to the baptism

16.6 Sandro Botticelli. *The Birth of Venus*. c. 1480. Tempera on canvas, 6'7" × 9'2". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.





of Christ by John the Baptist. Botticelli's work displays the rarefied and learned side of Renaissance art. It was not painted for a large public, but for a cultivated audience of initiates.

Botticelli painted in tempera. The favorite medium of medieval and early Renaissance artists, tempera was about to be eclipsed by oil paint, which had recently been developed in northern Europe. An early master of the new medium was the Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini. While the artists of Florence and Rome emphasized sound drawing above all other artistic virtues, the painters of Venice became known for their interest in color and light. Oil paint lent itself especially well to their concerns, as we can see in Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert* (16.7).

Francis was a holy man, a monk and preacher, born in the Italian town of Assisi in the late 12th century. According to legend, he was able to converse with the birds and animals, in a language both man and creatures understood freely. Francis' goodness was so profound that God bestowed upon him the stigmata—marks or wounds upon his hands and feet like those Christ had suffered when he was nailed to the cross at his Crucifixion. The artist Bellini has chosen to capture the moment when Francis received the stigmata, a moment

16.7 Giovanni Bellini. *St. Francis in the Desert*. c. 1485. Oil on panel, 4½" × 4'7". The Frick Collection, New York.

RELATED WORKS



2.10 Bellini, *Pietà*

RELATED WORKS



2.4 Leonardo,
Mona Lisa



4.20
Leonardo,
*Virgin and St.
Anne*



4.46 Leonardo, *Last Supper*



5.25
Leonardo,
*Study of -
Human
Proportions*



11.21
Michelangelo,
Dying Slave



2.6
Verrocchio,
David

of intense pain and great joy. A brilliant golden light bathes the scene, presumably the light of God shining down on the holy man. Francis stands in awe of the light, his arms outstretched, his gaze cast upward, welcoming this sign of God's favor.

Bellini frames the saint in a protective craggy foreground landscape as solidly constructed as a work of architecture. The middle ground is defined by a grassy knoll on which a donkey stands. In the distance is a town at the foot of a hill; still farther is a hilltop fortress, and in the farthest blue-tinted distance a mountain. Unlike the setting for Botticelli's *Venus*, Bellini's magnificent landscape recedes convincingly into deep space. The recession is not smooth and continuous, however. Rather, it proceeds step by step by giving us something to look at in each new area. Our eyes follow a series of focal points into the distance, ignoring the gaps between them. (For example, there is no transition between the rocky foreground and the grassy knoll. One stops, then the other begins.) To create a continuous recession into deep space in a landscape is quite difficult. More progress would be made by the painters of the next generation, many of whom would be indebted to Bellini's explorations of color, light, and atmosphere.

We come now to a period known as the High Renaissance—a brief but glorious time in the history of art. In barely twenty-five years, from shortly before 1500 to about 1525, some of the most celebrated works of Western art were produced. Many artists participated in this brilliant creative endeavor, but the outstanding figures among them were unquestionably Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

The term "Renaissance man" is applied to someone who is very well informed about, or very good at doing, many different, often quite unrelated, things. It originated in the fact that several of the leading figures of the Renaissance were artistic jacks-of-all-trades. Michelangelo was a painter, sculptor, poet, architect—incomparably gifted at all. Leonardo was a painter, inventor, sculptor, architect, engineer, scientist, musician, and all-around intellectual. In our age of specialization these accomplishments seem staggering, but during the heady years of the Renaissance nothing was impossible.

Leonardo is the artist who most embodies the term "Renaissance man"; many people consider him to have been the greatest genius who ever lived. Leonardo was possessed of a brilliant and inquiring mind that accepted no limits. Throughout his long life he remained absorbed by the problem of how things work, and how they might work. A typical example of his investigations is the well-known *Study of Human Proportions* (see 5.25), in which the artist sought to establish ideal proportions for the human body by relating it to the square and the circle. Above and below the figure is Leonardo's eccentric mirror writing, which he used in his notes and journals.

Leonardo's interest in mathematics is also evident from his careful rendering of perspective. In Chapter 4 we examined his masterpiece *The Last Supper* (see 4.46), which uses one-point linear perspective to organize the many figures in the composition and set them into deep space. Yet another interest, experimental painting techniques, served the artist less well in *The Last Supper*. Rather than employing the established fresco method, Leonardo worked in a medium he devised for the *Last Supper* project, thus dooming his work to centuries of restoration (p. 111).

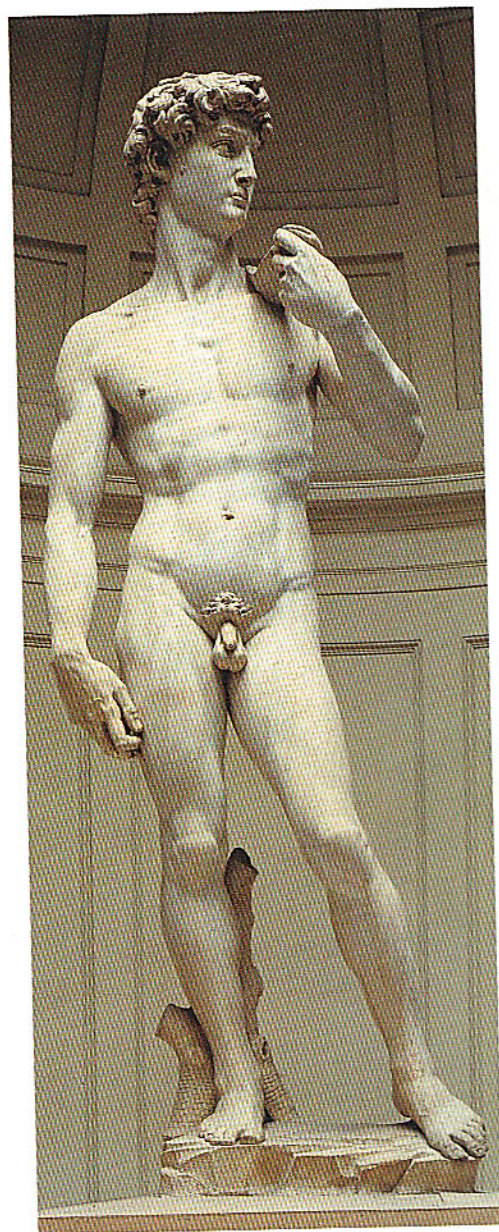
In spite of his vast accomplishments, Leonardo often had difficulty completing specific projects. Many of his most ambitious works were left unfinished, including this lovely painting of the *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne* (16.8). Leonardo has arranged his figures in a triangular grouping by having the Virgin Mary, a grown woman, sit rather improbably on the lap of her mother, Saint Anne. As so often with Leonardo, the composition is not meant to be realistic but rather to suggest theological meanings. The three figures form a single unit because they are a single lineage. Looking at the image, our gaze falls across the generations, from Saint Anne to her daughter Mary to Mary's son Jesus. Jesus attempts to climb onto a lamb, a symbol of his future

sacrifice. (The lamb was a sacrificial animal, and Christ is thus referred to as the Lamb of God.) He exchanges a look with his mother, as though both know what his destiny holds. She tenderly holds him back, as if to say, "Yes, soon enough, but not yet." Leonardo destabilizes his triangular grouping by plunging the lower left corner into darkness, then restores the balance by placing a dark tree at the upper right, an allusion to the cross on which Jesus will die. In the background is an uninhabited, primal landscape of rocks and water, suggesting perhaps the creation of the world and the beginning of time. The entire scene is bathed in the gentle light of *sfumato* (derived from the Italian for "smoke"), Leonardo's specialty, in which layer upon layer of translucent glazes produce a hazy atmosphere, softened contours, and velvet shadows.

Leonardo was based in Florence at the time he painted *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne*. Living there as well was Michelangelo, a quarter-century younger yet already thought of as Leonardo's rival in greatness. Michelangelo had established his reputation as a sculptor by the age of twenty-five. A year later he received the commission for a colossal image of the biblical hero David (16.9), the young Hebrew shepherd who killed the giant Goliath with a single stone from his slingshot. The *David* statue reveals Michelangelo's debt to Classical sculptures. *David* is not, however, a simple restatement of Greek

16.8 (left) Leonardo da Vinci. *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne*. c. 1503–06. Oil on wood, 5'6½" × 3'8".
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

16.9 (right) Michelangelo. *David*. 1501–04. Marble, height 18'.
Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence.



MICHELANGELO

1475–1564



HE IS BEYOND legend. His name means “archangel Michael,” and to his contemporaries and those who came after, his stature is scarcely less than that of a heavenly being. He began serious work as an artist at the age of thirteen and did not stop until death claimed him seventy-six years later. His equal may never be seen again, for only a particular time and place could have bred the genius of Michelangelo.

Michelangelo Buonarroti was born in the Tuscan town of Caprese. According to his devoted biographer and friend, Giorgio Vasari, the young Michelangelo often was scolded and beaten by his father for spending too much time drawing. Eventually, however, seeing his son’s talent, the father relented and apprenticed him to the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio. At the age of fourteen Michelangelo was welcomed into the household of the wealthy banker Lorenzo de’ Medici, who operated a private sculpture academy for promising young students. There he remained until Lorenzo’s death, after which Michelangelo, just seventeen years old, struck out permanently on his own.

He traveled to Venice and Bologna, to Florence, then finally to Rome, where he attracted the first of what would become a long list of patrons among the clergy. A *Pietà* (Virgin mourning the dead Christ) made in 1500 and now in St. Peter’s established his

reputation as a sculptor. Within a dozen years after that he had completed the two works most closely associated with his name: the *David* statue and the ceiling frescoes in the Sistine Chapel.

From his teen years until his death Michelangelo never lacked for highly placed patrons. He served—and survived—six popes, and in between accepted commissions from two emperors, a king, and numerous members of the nobility. All his life he struggled to keep a balance between the work he wanted to do and the work demanded of him by his benefactors. His relationships with these powerful figures were often stormy, marked by squabbles about payment, insults given and forgiven, flight from the scene followed by penitent return.

Michelangelo served these masters, at various times, as painter and architect, but he considered himself above all to be a sculptor. Much of his time was spent supervising the quarrying of superior stones for sculptural projects. His greatest genius lay in depictions of the human figure, whether in marble or in paint. Vasari writes that “this extraordinary man chose always to refuse to paint anything save the human body in its most beautifully proportioned and perfect forms.” To this end Michelangelo made extensive anatomical studies and dissected corpses to better understand the inner workings of the body.

Michelangelo formed a number of passionate attachments during his life. These inspired the artist, always a sensitive and gifted poet, to write numerous sonnets. One of his most poignant verses, however, was written as a commentary on his labors up on the scaffold under the Sistine Chapel ceiling. We might find it amusing if it were not so heartfelt:

I’ve grown a goiter by dwelling in this den—
As cats from stagnant streams in Lombardy,
Or in what other land they hap to be—
Which drives the belly close beneath the chin;
My beard turns up to heaven; my nape falls in,
Fixed on my spine; my breast-bone visibly
Grows like a harp: a rich embroidery
Bedews my face from brush-drops thick and
thin. . . .⁶

Workshop of Frans Floris. *Portrait of Michelangelo Buonarroti*. 16th century. Oil on wood, diameter 11¾". Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



art. The Greeks knew how bodies looked on the outside. Michelangelo knew how they looked on the inside, how they worked, because he had studied human anatomy and had dissected corpses. He translated this knowledge into a figure that seems made of muscle and flesh and bone, though all in marble.

There are other characteristics that make *David* a Renaissance sculpture, not a copy of a Greek one. For one thing, it has a tension and energy that are missing from Greek art. Hellenistic works such as the *Laocoön Group* (see 14.29) expressed these qualities through physical contortions, but to have this energy coiled within a figure standing quietly was new. David is not so much standing in repose as standing in readiness. Another Renaissance quality is the expression on David's face. Classical Greek statues tended to have calm and even vacant expressions. But David is young and vibrant—and angry, angry at the forces of evil represented by the giant Goliath. Contemporary Florentines found David a fitting emblem for their small but proud city, which had recently battled giants by expelling the ruling Medici family to found a republic. They placed the statue in the city square in front of the seat of the new government. (It has since been moved indoors.)

Not long after completing the *David*, Michelangelo embarked on the masterpiece which has become his best-known work, the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, in Rome (16.10). He had been called to Rome by Pope Julius II, who wanted the artist to design his tomb, a large monument with numerous sculptures. Michelangelo set to work, but a year later Julius abandoned this project and proposed instead to use the artist's skills as a painter. Michelangelo, whose distaste for painting is well documented, resisted the plan, but in the end he was forced to capitulate. For the next four years, he would spend most of his waking hours on a scaffold 68 feet above the floor.

The Sistine Chapel, named after an earlier pope called Sixtus, has a high vaulted ceiling 128 feet long and 44 feet wide. Julius required that

16.10 Interior, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome, 1473–80.

16.11 Michelangelo. Ceiling, Sistine Chapel. 1508–12. Fresco, 44 × 128'. Vatican, Rome.

Michelangelo cover this entire expanse, 700 square yards, with a painted decoration based on religious themes. Fresco was the only practical medium, and the difficulties of this technique are considerable (Chapter 7). Paint must be applied to fresh plaster just when it has the proper degree of dampness; only a small area can be covered at a time; and the painting must be done directly, with no allowance for correction of mistakes. For this project the artist had to work in a cramped position, with paint and plaster continually dripping in his face. So situated, he was only inches away from the working surface, yet the paintings had to be readable and compelling to a viewer standing on the floor, nearly 70 feet below.

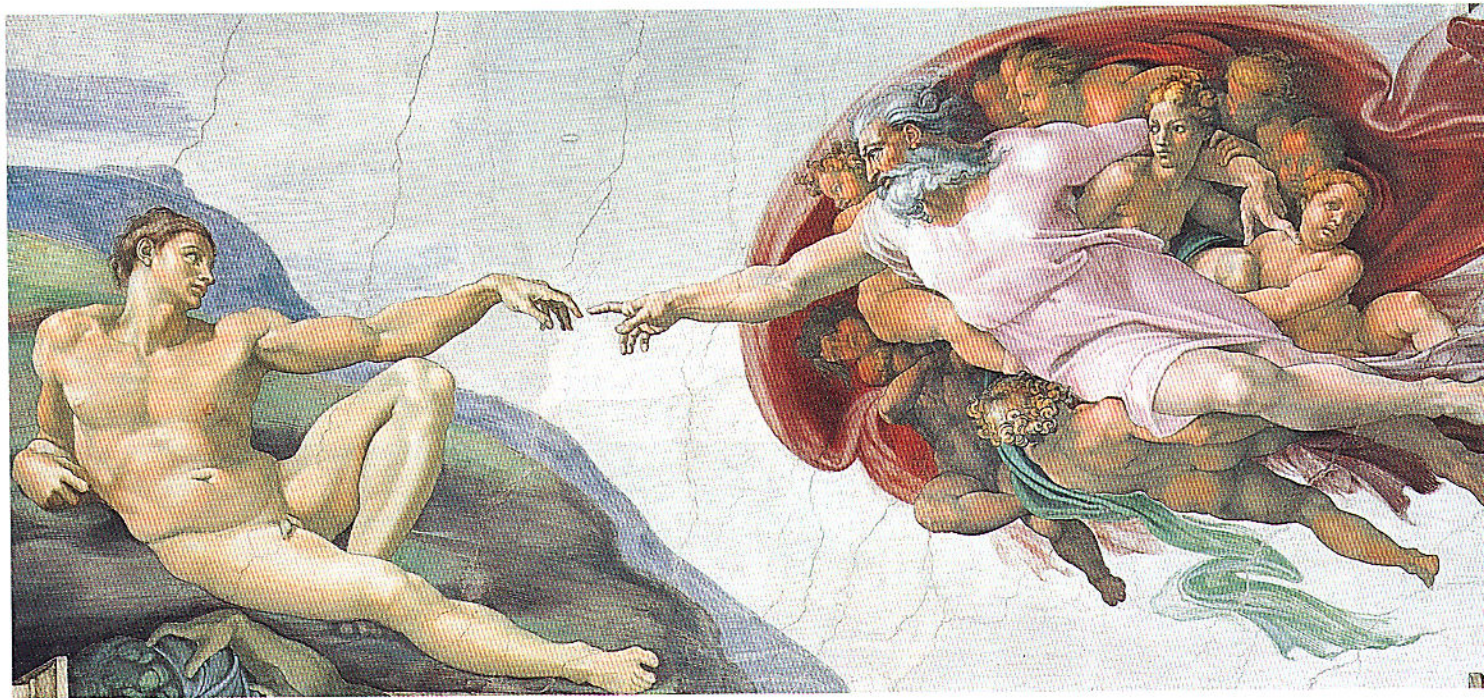
Even more overwhelming than the physical constraints was the challenge of making a coherent composition in such a huge area. Michelangelo or-



ganized the ceiling into a painted architectural framework of squares, rectangles, and triangles (16.11). These segments depict Old Testament stories of the creation of the world, the creation of Adam and Eve, the Fall of Man, and other biblical events. Some figures on the ceiling are from Greek and Roman mythology, for Michelangelo meant to connect the older Classical cultures with Christian theology of his own time.

Each of the segments is self-contained, yet the panels flow gracefully from one to the next, thanks to the artist's placement of overlapping *ignudi* (nude youths) in the spaces between them. The iconographic identity of the *ignudi* is unknown. Some historians have suggested they may represent angels. Throughout the composition Michelangelo's painted figures have the same anatomical fullness and muscular energy as his sculptures.





16.12 Michelangelo. *Creation of Adam*, detail of Sistine Chapel ceiling. 1511.

The *Creation of Adam* (16.12) is the most familiar of the ceiling images. Based on the biblical book of Genesis, this scene shows Adam, the first man, reclining on a rock. He is well-formed but listless; the spirit of life—the soul—has not yet been breathed into him. At right the dynamic figure of God sweeps toward Adam, wrapped in a symbolic cloak of Heaven. God's left arm embraces a woman thought to represent Eve, the first woman, who at this point in the story is still an idea in God's mind. His left forefinger points to a child, probably meant to be the Christ child, who will come much later to redeem the world. The focal point of this composition is the two hands, stretching toward one another. In a split second they will meet, and the long history of humankind will begin. Michelangelo's genius is nowhere clearer. He does not show us the consummation. He shows us, rather, the thrilling potential.

The ceiling frescoes were an immediate success, and Michelangelo continued as a papal favorite, although his commissions were not always in his preferred line. Just as Pope Julius had urged the sculptor to work as a painter, one of Julius' successors, Pope Paul III, encouraged the sculptor to work as an architect. In 1546 Paul named Michelangelo the official architect of the new St. Peter's, the ceremonial cathedral that is the "headquarters" of the Roman Catholic Church. This structure would be erected on the site of *old* St. Peter's (see 15.2), dating from the Early Christian era in the 4th century. By the time he began work on the project, Michelangelo was an old man, well into his seventies and physically tired, but his creative vigor was undiminished.

Construction on the new church had already begun, based on a plan by an architect named Bramante, who had died in 1514. Michelangelo revised Bramante's plan, gathering its elaborate fussiness into a bold and harmonious design (16.13, 16.14). Central and cross plans here merge in a new idea that relates the powerfully symbolic cross to the geometric forms that Renaissance artists loved, the square and the circle. Michelangelo did not live to see his church finished. The magnificent central dome was completed after his death by another architect, who modified its silhouette. During the 17th century, the nave was lengthened and the facade remodeled. The photograph illustrated here, however, was taken from the rear of the church and shows the building that Michelangelo conceived. An organic whole with pulsating contours and a powerful upward thrust, it is the architectural equivalent of his muscular nudes.

RELATED WORKS

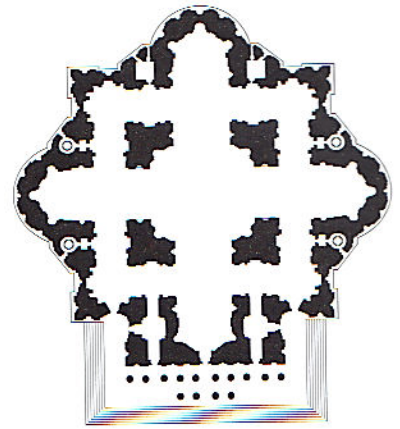


4.16 Raphael, *Madonna*



7.3 Raphael, *School of Athens*

The concentration of artistic energy in Rome during the Renaissance was such that while Michelangelo was working on the Sistine ceiling, his slightly younger rival Raphael was only a few steps away, painting his fresco *The School of Athens* (see 7.3) in the private library of the same pope, Julius II. In 1513, Julius was succeeded as pope by Giovanni de' Medici, whose family was now back in power in Florence. Raphael was increasingly in demand as a portraitist, and Giovanni de' Medici, now Pope Leo X, commissioned a likeness from him (16.15). Leo X was a passionate collector of books and manuscripts, and he eventually amassed a fine library. Raphael portrays him seated before one of his prized illuminated manuscripts, a magnifying glass in his left hand. Standing beside him are two nephews he had elevated to the office of cardinal (church officials next in rank to the pope). The rich fabrics, sumptuously painted, tell of the worldly splendor of the Church in Rome, while the keenly observed faces convey without flattery the aura of power and ambition that drove Leo X and his family.



16.13 (left) Michelangelo. Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican. c. 1546-64 (dome completed 1590 by Giacomo della Porta).

16.14 (above) Plan of St. Peter's.

16.15 (below) Raphael. *Pope Leo X with Two Cardinals*. c. 1518. Oil on wood, 5'8" x 3'8". Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

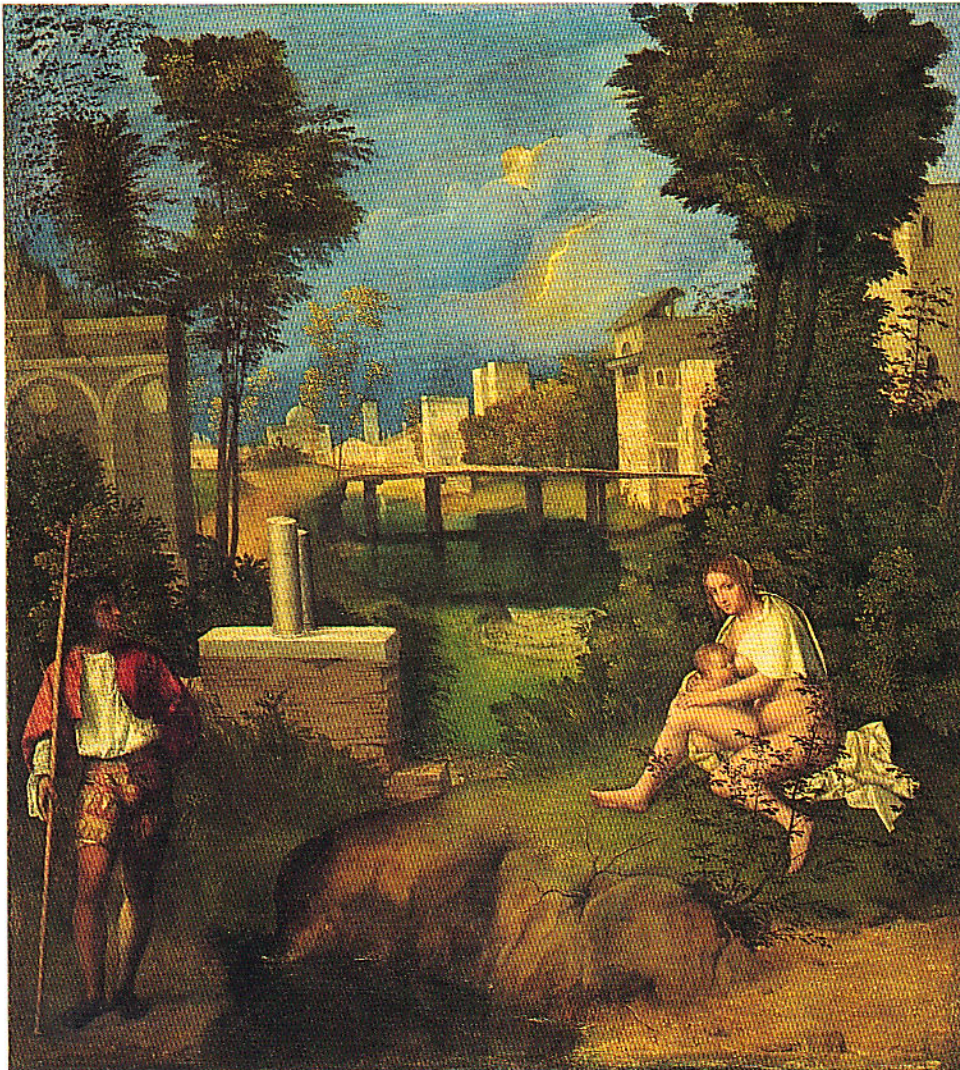


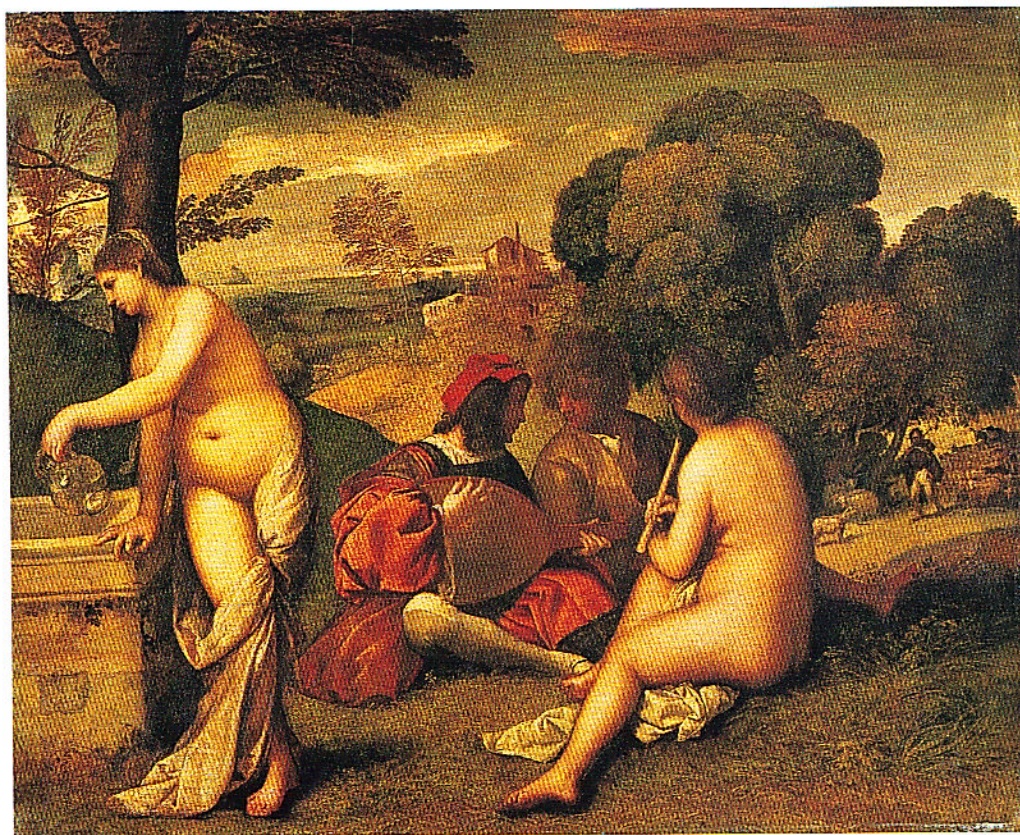
After Rome and Florence, the third great artistic center of Italy was Venice, where Giovanni Bellini worked and taught (see 16.7). Bellini's two finest students, Giorgione and Titian, went on to become the greatest Venetian painters of the High Renaissance.

The iconography of Giorgione's painting *The Tempest* (16.16) is unknown. Even the artist's contemporaries seem not to have known what story he was depicting or to have been able to identify the nude woman nursing a child at right and the soldier (or shepherd) at left. But regardless of the meaning of its subject, *The Tempest* makes an important contribution to Renaissance art in the way it is composed. Artists of earlier generations would compose a scene by concentrating on the figures and painting the landscape as a kind of backdrop. Giorgione, however, has started by constructing a landscape and then placing his figures in it. This approach paved the way for the great landscape paintings of the centuries to follow.

In *The Tempest*, as the title implies, the subject is really the approaching storm, which closes in dramatically over the city while the two foreground figures are still bathed in sunlight. The artist's debt to his teacher, Bellini, will be obvious if you compare this work with the older master's *St. Francis in the Desert* (see 16.7), which also shows a highlighted foreground figure and a dis-

16.16 Giorgione. *The Tempest*. c. 1505. Oil on canvas, 32¼ × 28¾".
Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.





tant landscape. Giorgione, however, is less concerned with the human experience. His principal interest seems to have been the contrast of bucolic foreground against the city rendered in careful perspective, with the two drawn together by the violent effects of nature. The storm and the lush vegetation create a world in which nature dominates, not people, and the painting evokes a powerful, compelling mood of apprehension and anticipation.

Giorgione died in his early thirties, and so we will never know what other wonders he might have accomplished. Titian, however, lived a long and productive life, and his career, like that of Michelangelo, allows us to witness the full arc of a great artist from youth through maturity to old age. Like many other Venetian painters, Titian absorbed the lessons of Giorgione's poetic style. In fact, an early work of Titian's known as *Fête Champêtre* (16.17, also known as *Pastoral Concert* or *Pastoral Scene*) was attributed to Giorgione until quite recently. Like *The Tempest*, it places figures in a landscape that evokes a mood. It is a poetic reverie, not a depiction of an actual event or mythological scene.

Fête Champêtre stands near the beginning of a long tradition of painting that looks back to the Classical Roman writer Virgil, whose poems called eclogues celebrated the pleasures of the country as appreciated by sophisticated urban dwellers. The group here are evidently from the town depicted in the background. The young men may be poets and the unclad women their muses. The well-dressed, aristocratic youth recites his verses to the accompaniment of a lute, a courtly instrument. In contrast, an untutored shepherd in the distance plays the rustic bagpipes.

Titian became the most sought after portraitist of his day. Scholars, philosophers, and friends sat for him, as did popes, emperors, and Venetian rulers, but he never painted a more engaging portrait than the one here

16.17 Titian (Giorgione?). *Fête Champêtre*. 1511. Oil on canvas, 43 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

RELATED WORKS



2.33 Titian,
Assumption



16.18 (left) Titian. *Portrait of Ranuccio Farnese*. 1542. Oil on canvas, $35\frac{1}{4} \times 29$ ". National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

16.19 (right) Titian. *The Annunciation*. c. 1560. Oil on canvas, $13'2\frac{3}{8}" \times 7'8\frac{1}{2}"$. Chiesa di San Salvador, Venice.



of a twelve-year-old boy named Ranuccio Farnese (16.18). The grandson of Pope Paul III, Ranuccio Farnese was pursuing his studies in nearby Padua at the time that Titian painted him. The painting shows well the sympathetic insight that Titian could bring to his portraits. It shows us, too, something of what it meant to grow up within a powerful Renaissance family. Ranuccio's endearing, shy expression undercuts the worldly confidence his silk clothing tries to project, and the sword and cloak of the military-religious order of the Knights of Malta, recently conferred upon him, weigh heavily—perhaps too heavily—on his young frame. He would be made a cardinal at the age of fifteen.

As Titian aged, his brushwork became freer and his colors grew more subdued and burnished. Contemporaries marveled that his paintings, seen up close, seemed nothing but a senseless frenzy of brush strokes. Yet as the viewer stepped back, there came into focus an image of unparalleled richness. An example is *The Annunciation* (16.19), painted when the artist was seventy-five. The subject is the moment when an angel appears to Mary to tell her that she has been chosen to bear the Son of God. In Titian's imagining of the event, Mary turns quietly from her prayers and lifts her veil to look at her visitor. The angel arrives as though in a hurry, his cheeks still flush with the excitement of the news he brings. Mary does not see that behind her the air itself has opened with the force of an explosion, and from the golden light formed of endless cherubim descends the dove of the Holy Spirit. In this work, Titian produced a vision of heavenly glory as rhapsodic as the gold realm of Byzantium or the stained glass of the Middle Ages.

THE RENAISSANCE IN THE NORTH

In the northern countries of western Europe—Switzerland, Germany, northern France, and the Netherlands—the Renaissance did not happen with the sudden drama that it did in Italy, nor were its concerns quite the same. Northern artists did not live among the ruins of Rome, nor did they share the Italians' sense of a personal link to the creators of the Classical past. Instead of the exciting series of discoveries that make the Italian Renaissance such a good story, the Northern Renaissance style evolved gradually out of the late Middle Ages, as artists became increasingly entranced with the myriad details of the visible world and better and better at capturing them.

We can see this fondness for detail in one of the most famous works of the late Middle Ages, the illuminated prayer book known as *Les Très Riches Heures* ("the very rich hours"). The book was created at the beginning of the 15th century by three artist brothers, the Limbourgs, for the duke of Berry, brother to the king of France.

Meant for daily religious devotion, the *Très Riches Heures* contains a calendar, with each month's painting featuring a typical seasonal activity of either the peasantry or the nobility. Our illustration shows the *February* page (16.20). At top in the lunette (half-moon shape) the chariot of the Sun is shown making its progress through the months and signs of the zodiac. Below, the Limbourgs depict their notion of lower-class life in the year's coldest month.

This view of everyday life focuses on a small peasant hut with its occupants clustered around the fire, their garments pulled back to get maximum benefit from the warmth. With a touch of artistic license, the Limbourgs have

16.20 Limbourg Brothers.
February, from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, 1416.
Illumination, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".
Musée Condé, Chantilly.



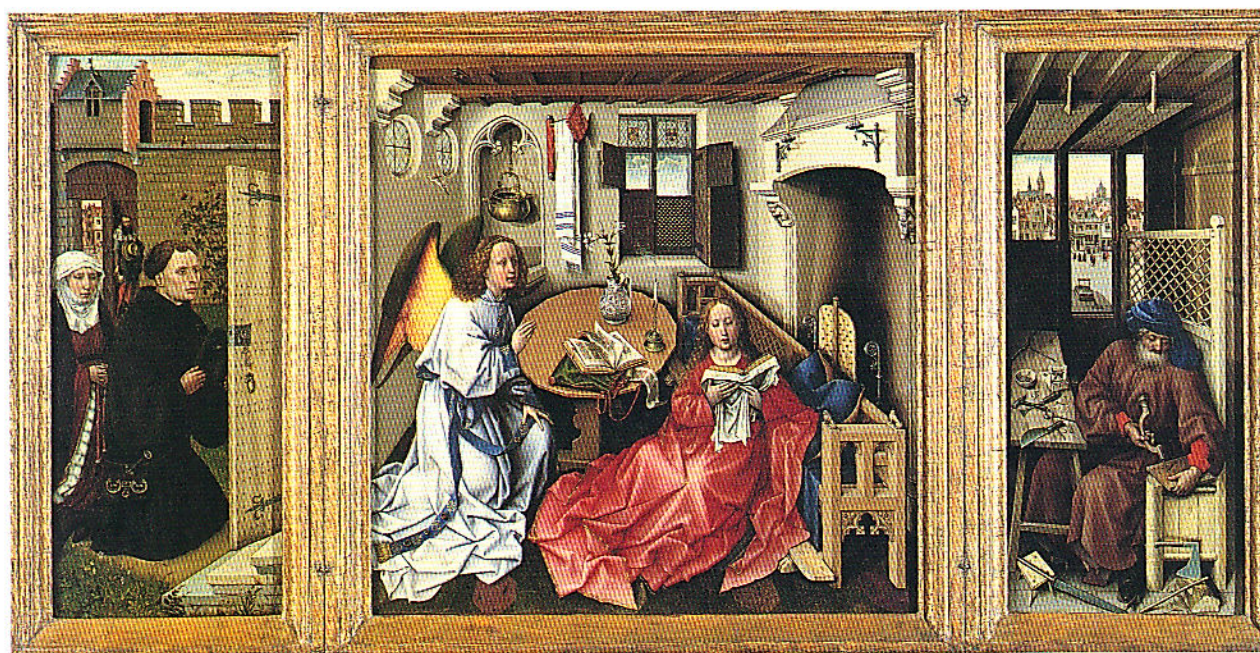
removed the front wall of the hut so we can look in. Outside the cozy hut we see what may be the earliest snow-covered landscape in Western art. Sheep cluster in their enclosure, a peasant comes rushing across the barnyard pulling his cloak about his face to keep in the warm breath. From there the movement progresses diagonally up the slope to a man chopping firewood, another urging a donkey uphill, and finally the church at the top.

One should bear in mind this is a miniature, only 9 inches high, to appreciate the richness of details. So acute is the Limbourgs' observation, on so tiny a scale, that we understand the condition of each player—the exertion of the woodcutter, the chill of the running figure, the nonchalant poses of the couple in the hut, and the demure modesty of the lady in blue.

The Limbourgs' manuscript marks a high point in a medieval tradition dating back hundreds of years (see 15.12). Within a few decades, however, the printing press would be invented, and the practice of copying and illustrating books by hand would gradually die out. In the meantime, an increasing number of Northern artists were turning to painting on panel with the newly developed medium of oil paint. An early master of the medium was Robert Campin, a prominent artist in the Flemish city of Tournai, in present-day Belgium. The subject of his *Mérode Altarpiece* (16.21) is the Annunciation, the same event we saw depicted by Titian earlier in this chapter (see 16.19). Campin painted this work in 1426, right around the time that the principles of linear perspective were discovered in Italy. The Italian system would not make its way north for another seventy-five years. Campin relies instead on intuitive perspective, in which receding parallel lines converge unsystematically. He uses it here with charming inconsistency, tilting the tabletops toward us, for example, so we can get a look at everything that sits on them.

The Annunciation setting is replete with symbols, most of them referring to Mary's purity: the lilies on the table, the just-extinguished candle, the white linen, among others. At upper left, between two round windows, the tiny figure of a child carrying a cross flies down a light ray toward Mary's ear, signifying that the infant Jesus will enter Mary's womb through God's will, not through human impregnation. The right wing of the altarpiece shows Joseph, who will become Mary's husband, at work in his carpenter shop. By tradition, Joseph is making a mousetrap, symbolic of the soon-to-come Jesus' "trapping" the Devil, bringing good to banish evil. In the left wing the donors, who commissioned the painting, kneel to witness the holy scene.

16.21 Robert Campin. *Mérode Altarpiece*. c. 1426. Oil on panel, 25 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (center), 25 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (each wing). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.





No recitation of this picture's details should overshadow its sheer beauty. Mary's face, modest above her crimson gown, is among the loveliest in all Renaissance art. The angel, with his luminous face and brilliant gold wings, displays an unearthly radiance. Both central figures wear robes that flow into rivers of sculptural folds. The *Mérode Altarpiece* is only about 2 feet in height. Its exquisitely rendered details, its clear colors, and the artist's skillful placement of light and shadow combine to give it a jewel-like quality.

Northern artists' preoccupation with decoration and surface and *things* derives naturally from their heritage. The North had a long tradition of painted miniatures, manuscript illuminations, stained glass, and tapestries—all decorative arts with a great deal of surface detail. Whereas the Italian masters were obsessed with structure—accurate perspective and the underlying musculature of the body—Northern artists perfected their skill at rendering the precise outer appearance of their subjects. They were unsurpassed at capturing in paint the textures of satin or velvet, the sheen of silver and gold, the quality of skin to its last pore and wrinkle.

In a fundamental way, Northern paintings are about looking. An apt example is Rogier van der Weyden's *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin* (16.22). At left is the Virgin Mary nursing the infant Jesus. At right is St. Luke, author of one of the four Gospels in the Bible and patron saint of artists, drawing the mother and child in silverpoint. The two larger figures are carefully balanced in an architectural setting, behind which, through a window, we glimpse a landscape in depth. Typical Northern touches include Rogier's minute attention to detail in the room—woodwork, tiles, canopy, window panes; wonderfully lavish drapery in the garments; rich colors; and faces so finely modeled and human we can think of them as portraits. There is great emotional warmth in this picture. The Virgin and Child exchange tender glances, while St. Luke, in his

16.22 Rogier van der Weyden. *St. Luke Drawing the Virgin*. c. 1435. Oil and tempera on panel, 4'6½" × 3'7½".

Courtesy Museum of Fine Art, Boston.

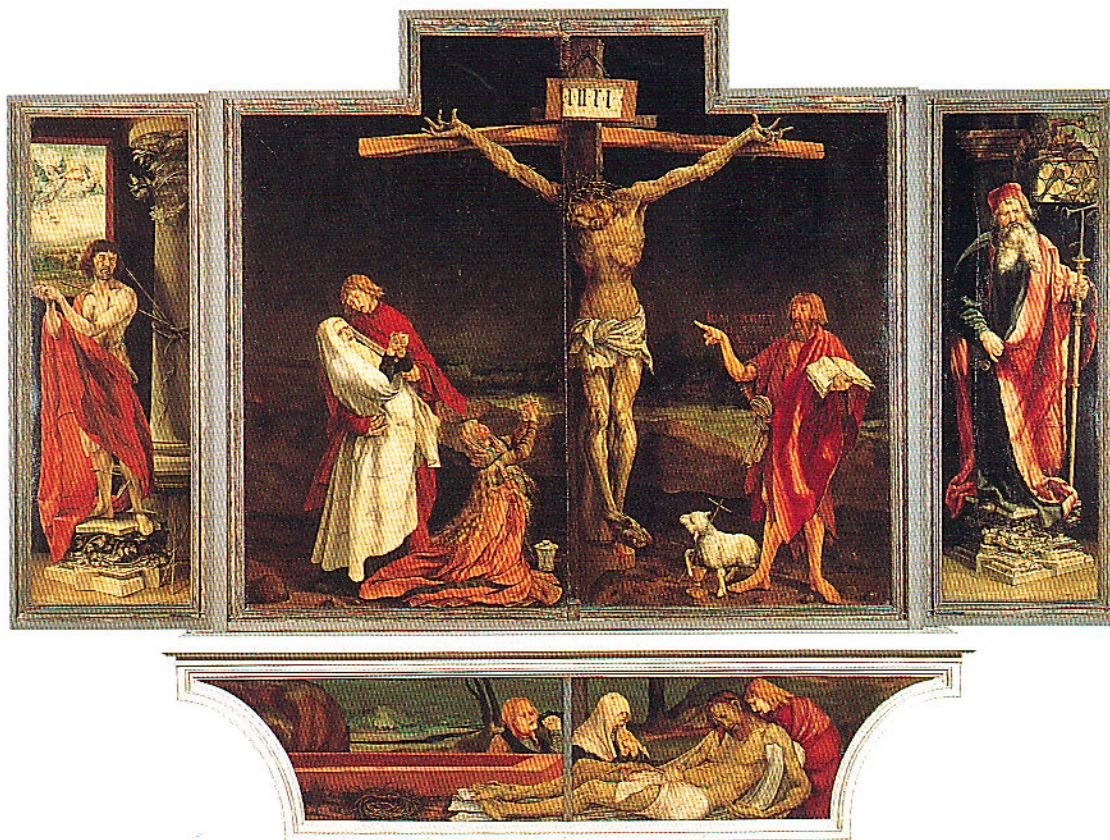
RELATED WORKS



2.29 Van Eyck, *Arnolfini Double Portrait*



7.7 Van Eyck, *Man in a Red Turban*



16.23 Matthias Grünewald.
Isenheim Altarpiece (exterior).
1515. Panel, 8'10" × 10'1".
Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar.

effort to capture their likeness, seems almost overcome with reverence and love. Everyone in the painting is caught up in looking, including the distant couple gazing out at the horizon.

While Rogier's painting is gentle, religious art of the Northern Renaissance could also be harsh in its emotionalism—far harsher than that of Italy. Northern art abounds in truly grim Crucifixions, gory martyrdoms of saints, and inventive punishments for sinners. Italian artists did sometimes undertake these subjects, but they never dwelt so fondly on the particulars.

Matthias Grünewald, a German artist active in the early 16th century, painted the Crucifixion of Christ as the center of his great masterpiece, the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (16.23). Originally, the altarpiece reposed in the chapel of a hospital devoted to the treatment of illnesses afflicting the skin, including syphilis. This helps to explain the horrible appearance of Christ's body on the cross—pockmarked, bleeding from numberless wounds, tortured beyond endurance. Without question the patients in the hospital could identify with Christ's sufferings and thus increase their faith.

In Grünewald's version of the Crucifixion, the twists and lacerations of the body speak of unendurable pain, but the real anguish is conveyed by the feet and hands. Christ's fingers splay out, clutching at the air but helpless to relieve the pain. His feet bend inward in a futile attempt to alleviate the pressure of his hanging body. To the left of the Cross the Virgin Mary falls in a faint, supported by St. John, and Mary Magdalene weeps in an agony that mirrors Christ's own. To the right John the Baptist offers the only sign of hope. He points calmly at the dying Savior in a gesture that foreshadows Christ's Resurrection. Grünewald's interpretation of the Crucifixion is in keeping with a stark Northern tradition in which depictions of extreme physical agony were commonplace.

It was Albrecht Dürer (see 4.48) who more than any other artist attempted to fuse Italian ideas and discoveries with the Northern love of meticulous observation. Dürer had visited Italy as a young artist in 1494 and returned for a longer stay in 1505. He came to share the Italian preoccupation with problems of perspective, ideal beauty, and harmony. In Dürer's view,

RELATED WORKS



3.25 Bosch, *Garden of Earthly Delights*

Northern art had relied too heavily on instinct and lacked a firm grounding in theory and science. Toward the end of his life he summarized his philosophy of art by writing and illustrating two important works, *Treatise on Measurement* and *Four Books on Human Proportions*.

An artist who matured in the climate of thought that Dürer had created was the German painter Hans Holbein. While not as intellectual as Dürer, Holbein recognized the need to grapple with the issues that Dürer had introduced. He mastered perspective and studied Italian paintings. Under their influence his modeling softened and his compositions grew more monumental. He did not lose the great Northern gift for detail, however, as his masterpiece known as *The Ambassadors* makes clear (16.24).

Holbein painted *The Ambassadors* in England, where his skills as a portraitist earned him the position of court painter to King Henry VIII. The painting was commissioned by the man on the left, Jean de Dinteville, the French ambassador to England. To the right is his friend Georges de Selve, a French bishop who also served as an ambassador. They look out at us from either side of a table richly laden with objects symbolizing the four humanist sciences—music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. The imported Islamic rug speaks of contacts with the wider world, and the globe placed on the lower shelf reminds us that the Renaissance was also the age of European exploration and discovery. Close inspection reveals that the lute resting on the lower shelf has a broken string and that the book before it is open to a hymn by Martin Luther. The broken string symbolizes discord: Europe was no longer in harmony because of the difficult issues raised by Martin Luther's recent accusations against the Church in Rome. The movement Luther started, known as the Reformation, would very soon see Europe permanently divided into Protestant countries and Catholic countries. The religious unity that had characterized the Middle Ages would be gone forever.

The strangest element in the painting is the amorphous diagonal shape that seems to float in the foreground. Dinteville's personal motto was *memento mori*, Latin for "remember you must die." Holbein acknowledged this with a

RELATED WORKS



4.47 Grien,
Groom



8.3 Dürer,
*Four
Horsemen*

16.24 Hans Holbein the Younger.
The Ambassadors. 1533. Oil on
panel, 6'9½" × 6'10½".
The National Gallery, London.

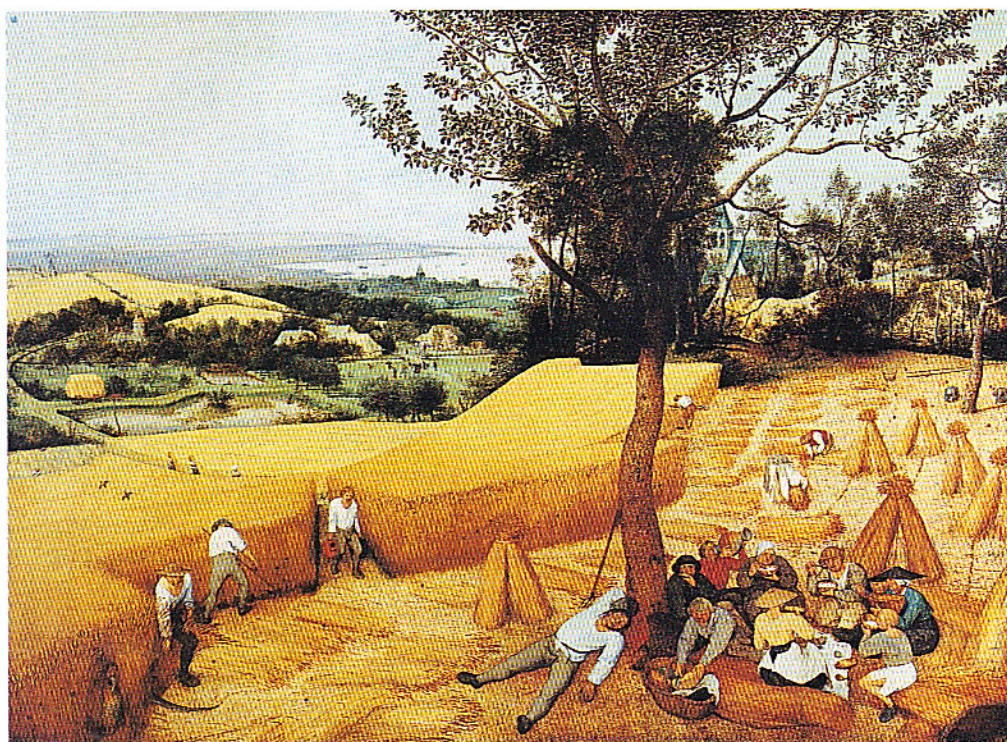


human skull, stretched as though made of rubber. The skull is painted to come into focus when the painting is viewed up close and at an angle. Death thus cuts across life and shows itself by surprise. Holbein's painting celebrates worldly splendor and human achievement even as it reminds us that death will eventually triumph. It stands as a portrait of two men, a portrait of a friendship, and a portrait of an era.

Protestant reforms of the 16th century included an attitude toward religious images that ranged from wariness to outright hostility. Images of saints and other figures, reformers felt, had all too often been thought to possess sacred powers themselves. In their view the Church in Rome had encouraged these beliefs, which amounted to idol worship. The walls of Protestant churches were bare: "The kingdom of God is a kingdom of hearing, not of seeing," said Martin Luther.⁷ One result was that Northern artists turned increasingly to the everyday world around them for subject matter, and one of the most fruitful subjects they began to explore was landscape.

We opened this brief survey of Northern Renaissance art with a manuscript page by the Limbourg brothers depicting a peasant household with a winter landscape in the background (see 16.20). *The Harvesters* (16.25), by the 16th-century Netherlandish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder, advances the season to late summer and shows us how far painting has come in 150 years. Like the February page from the *Très Riches Heures*, *The Harvesters* formed part of a cycle depicting the months of the year. In the foreground, a group of peasants have paused for their midday meal in the shade of a slender tree. No doubt they have been working in the fields since dawn. The little group sits, chatting and eating. One man has loosened his breeches and stretched out for a nap. In the middle ground, the still unmowed portion of the field stretches out like a golden carpet. Some people are still at work, the men mowing with their scythes, the women stooping to gather the wheat into sheaves. Beyond there opens a vast panorama, a peaceful, domesticated landscape stretching as far as the eye can see. Landscape, which served the Limbourg brothers as a backdrop, has here become the principal theme, a grand setting in which humans take their appointed place, the rhythm of their work and lives falling in with the rhythm of the seasons and of creation.

16.25 Pieter Bruegel the Elder.
The Harvesters. 1565. Oil on
panel, 46½ × 63¾".
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

The period encompassing the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe has often been called “The Age of Kings.” Some of the most powerful rulers in history occupied the thrones of various countries during this time: Frederick the Great of Prussia, Maria Theresa of Austria, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great of Russia, and a succession of grand kings named Louis in France, to name but a few. These monarchs governed as virtual dictators, and their influence dominated social and cultural affairs of the time as well as political matters.

This same period could equally be called “The Age of Colonial Settlement.” By the early 17th century the Dutch, the English, and the French had established permanent settlements in North America. (Spain and Portugal had earlier laid claim to much of Central and South America.) The first successful English colony was at Jamestown, in Virginia, where a party led by John Smith arrived in 1607. Thirteen years later the plucky little ship *Mayflower* made landing in what is now Massachusetts. The settlers endured many hardships as they struggled through their first winters in the New World. At Jamestown the colonists went through a period still known as the “starving time.” Ironically, the “starving time” in North America coincided exactly with a European style so opulent that its name is now synonymous with extravagance: the Baroque.

THE BAROQUE ERA

Baroque art differs from that of the Renaissance in several important respects. Whereas Renaissance art stressed the calm of reason, Baroque art is full of emotion, energy, and movement. Colors are more vivid in Baroque art than in Renaissance, with greater contrast between colors and between light and dark. In architecture and sculpture, where the Renaissance sought a classic simplicity, the Baroque favored ornamentation, as rich and complex as possible. Baroque art has been called dynamic, sometimes even theatrical. This theatricality is clearly evident in the work of the Baroque’s leading interpreter, the artist Gianlorenzo Bernini.

Bernini would have been a fascinating character in any age, but if ever an artist and a style were perfectly suited for one another, this was true of Bernini and the Baroque. Largely for his own pleasure, he was a painter,



17.1 (left) Gianlorenzo Bernini. Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. 1642–52.

17.2 (right) Gianlorenzo Bernini. *St. Teresa in Ecstasy*, from the Cornaro Chapel. 1645–52. Marble and gilt bronze, lifesize.



dramatist, and composer. In architecture and sculpture, however, his gifts rose to the level of genius. Bernini's talents are on full display in the Cornaro Chapel in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome (17.1). In this small alcove, the funeral chapel of Cardinal Federigo Cornaro, Bernini integrated architecture, painting, sculpture, and lighting into a brilliant ensemble. On the ceiling is painted a vision of heaven, with angels and billowing clouds. At either side of the chapel sit sculptured figures of the Cornaro family, donors of the chapel, in animated conversation, watching the drama before them as though from opera boxes. The whole arrangement is lighted dramatically by sunlight streaming through a yellow-glass window.

The centerpiece of the chapel is Bernini's sculptured group known as *St. Teresa in Ecstasy* (17.2). Teresa was a Spanish mystic, founder of a strict order of nuns, and an important figure in the Counter-Reformation. She claimed to be subject for many years to religious trances, in which she saw visions of Heaven and Hell and was visited by angels. It is in the throes of such a vision that Bernini has portrayed her. Teresa wrote:

Beside me, on the left hand, appeared an angel in bodily form, such as I am not in the habit of seeing except very rarely. . . . He was not tall but short, and very beautiful; and his face was so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest rank of angels, who seem to be all on fire. . . . In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he pulled it out, I felt that he took them with it, and left me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease. . . . This is not a physical, but a spiritual pain, though the body has some share in it—even a considerable share.

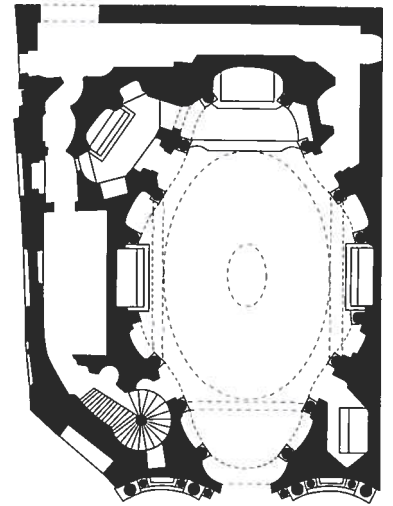
Just as Bernini transformed the chapel itself into a sort of theater complete with sculpted spectators, he has set the drama of Saint Teresa as if on a stage. We can imagine that the curtains have just parted, revealing Teresa in a swoon, ready for another thrust of the angel's spear. She falls backward, yet is lifted up on a cloud, the extreme turbulence of her garments revealing her emotional frenzy. The angel, wielding his spear, has an expression on his face of tenderness and love; in other contexts he might be mistaken for a Cupid. Master of illusions, Bernini has anchored the massive blocks of marble into the wall with iron bars so that the scene appears to float. The gilt bronze rods depicting heavenly rays of light are themselves lit from above by a hidden window: this little stage set has its own lighting. The deeply cut folds of the swirling garments create abrupt contrasts of light and shadow, dissolving solid forms into flamelike flickerings. Standing before the chapel, our experience is also theatrical, for we can both watch the ecstasy and watch people watching the ecstasy; we are both caught up in the performance and aware of it *as* a performance.

One of the great projects of Baroque Rome was the completion of St. Peter's, which had been designed by Michelangelo (see 16.13, 16.14). During the early 17th century, an architect named Carlo Maderno lengthened the nave and created a new facade. Upon Maderno's death, Bernini continued the redecoration of the interior and designed a spectacular colonnade (row of columns) to enclose the vast square in front of the church. Interestingly, Bernini's architecture was more conservative than his sculpture. To fully appreciate the innovative daring of Italian Baroque architecture we do better to turn to his principal rival, Carlo Maderno's nephew Francesco Borromini.

Like the architects of the Renaissance, Borromini worked his designs out logically so that every least detail reflected a guiding idea. But instead of basing his work in the square and the circle, he favored more subtle and dynamic forms such as the oval. Borromini's most influential building is a small church called San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane ("Saint Charles at the Four Fountains"). The domed interior, designed first, takes the form of an oval gently indented to suggest a cross (17.3). The resulting walls alternate between convex and concave curves, creating a softly undulating motion and an organic, almost pulsating space. The church became instantly famous, and requests for the plans flooded in from all over Catholic Europe.

The facade (17.4), designed twenty-five years later and completed after Borromini's death, carries the logic through to the exterior. Alternating convex and concave elements dominate, their curves describing sections of ovals. The interplay of surfaces is complex. Notice, for example, how the central portion of the facade is convex at the street level but becomes a concave setting for convex elements above, culminating in a framed oval held aloft by two angels that seem to hover in front of the building. The protrusion of the facade forward into the viewer's space is typical of Baroque architecture, as is the buildup of interest in the central portion and the overall sense of plasticity—the sense that a building can be modeled and sculpted almost like clay.

Unlike architecture or sculpture, a painting cannot literally project its figures into the viewer's space. Baroque artists, however, learned to create a similar effect by lighting their figures dramatically and plunging the backgrounds into shadow. Artemisia Gentileschi used this technique effectively in



17.3 (above) Plan of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane.

17.4 (below) Francesco Borromini. Facade of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome. 1665–7.



Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes (17.5). The artist took her subject from the biblical story of Judith. According to the scripture, Judith, a pious and beautiful Israelite widow, volunteered to rescue her people from the invading armies of the Assyrian general Holofernes. Judith charmed the general, accepted his invitation to a banquet, waited until he drank himself into a stupor, then calmly beheaded him, wrapped up his head in a sack, and escaped.

Other of Gentileschi's paintings show the decapitation in progress. Here she focuses on the moments after the gory deed is done. She poses Judith tensely, caught in the wavering light from a single candle, one hand still clutching the bloody sword, the other poised in a gesture of silence. These Baroque devices heighten the sense of danger, the urgency of deeds committed in the dark of night.

Gentileschi's dramatic way with light and dark was the influential invention of a painter named Caravaggio. His magnificent *Entombment of Christ* (17.6) is an example of the kind of painting that inspired Gentileschi and many other artists. The *Entombment* depicts the crucified Christ being lowered into an open grave. The body is held by two of Christ's followers—his disciple St. John and the Jewish ruler Nicodemus, to whom Christ had counseled that a man must be "born again" to enter Heaven. The group also includes the three Marys—Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary, at left; Mary Magdalene, center; and Mary Cleophas, at right—who look on in despair. Caravaggio's structure is a strong diagonal leading from the upraised hand at top right down through the cluster of figures to Christ's face. The light source seems to be coming from somewhere outside the top left edge of the picture. Light falls on the participants in different ways, but always enhances the sense of drama.

17.5 (left) Artemisia Gentileschi. *Judith and Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*. c. 1625. Oil on canvas, 6'½" × 4'7¼". The Detroit Institute of the Arts.

17.6 (right) Caravaggio. *Entombment of Christ*. 1604. Oil on canvas, 9'9½" × 6'7¾". Musei Vaticani, Pinacoteca, Rome.





Mary Magdalene's face, for example, is almost totally in shadow, but a bright light illuminates her shoulder to create a contrast with the bowed head. Light also catches the pathetic outstretched hand of the Virgin. Christ's body is the only figure lit in its entirety; the others stand in partial darkness.

The perspective of the painting places the viewer's eye level at the slab the grouping stands on. Set on a diagonal, the slab seems to project forward from the picture plane and into our space, involving us in the action. We may imagine ourselves standing in the grave that is about to receive Christ: perhaps this is why Nicodemus looks at us. Caravaggio painted this work to hang over an altar, and the head of a priest standing at the altar would have been at the ideal viewing level, the level of the slab. During the most solemn moment of the mass, the priest holds the communion bread aloft and repeats the words Christ spoke at the Last Supper, "This is my body." The raised bread would have been visibly juxtaposed with the body in the painting, restoring to the words an intense emotional impact.

We might compare Caravaggio's *Entombment* with a work painted just a few years later, *The Raising of the Cross* (17.7) by the Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens. Although he spent most of his life in Antwerp (in modern Belgium), Rubens had traveled to Italy and studied the works of Italian masters, including Caravaggio. There are similarities between these two paintings—in the sharply diagonal composition and dramatic lighting—but we also find several differences in the two masters' styles. Caravaggio's figures seem almost frozen in a moment of anguish, but Rubens' painting teems with movement and energy, each of the participants balanced precariously and straining at his task. While the Caravaggio group projects from the picture plane, its action is

17.7 Peter Paul Rubens. *The Raising of the Cross*. 1609–10. Oil on canvas, 15'2" × 11'2". Antwerp Cathedral.



17.8 Nicolas Poussin. *The Ashes of Phokion*. 1648. Oil on canvas, 3'9¼" × 5'9¼". National Museums Liverpool (The Walker).

contained on four sides within the frame of the canvas. But Rubens' figures burst outside the picture in several directions, suggesting that the action continues beyond the painting. Rubens' heroic treatment of musculature recalls Michelangelo's paintings on the Sistine Chapel ceiling (see 16.11), but the writhing S-curve of Christ's body is typically Baroque.

While Baroque artistic principles were taken up across Europe, each country developed them in its own way. France, for example, favored a more restrained, "classical" version of Baroque style in which the order and balance of the Renaissance were retained, though infused with a new theatricality and grandeur.

Foremost among French painters of the 17th century was Nicolas Poussin, who actually spent most of his career in Rome. Steeped in the philosophy and history of the Classical past, he came to believe that art's highest purpose was to represent noble and serious human actions. An example is his painting *The Ashes of Phokion* (17.8). Phokion was a famous Athenian general of the 4th century B.C.E. In his old age, he was unjustly accused of treason, tried, and sentenced to death. The cremation or burial of his remains was outlawed. His friends and supporters dared not defy the court to accord him an honorable funeral. Only his widow did not desert him, arranging for cremation and performing the rites herself. She is shown here gathering up her husband's ashes outside of the city walls. Her virtuous act was much admired by the ancient Roman Stoic philosophers, who taught that virtue was the only good, vice the only evil, and that the triumphs and sufferings of life were to be accepted calmly and without passion.

Poussin's visual response to this story and its Stoic setting inspired a composition that is far removed from the emotionalism of Caravaggio or the energy of Rubens. In place of their active diagonals, calm verticals and horizontals dominate. Only the manipulation of light marks the painting as Baroque. Zones of light and shadow alternate across the canvas, and the white of the widow's clothing is lit as if with a spotlight, drawing our attention to the principal actor on this vast stage. In the foreground, wind-tossed trees watch

over Phokion's widow and her anxious servant. The trees are linked by visual rhymes to the mountain and clouds in the distance, emphasizing that her courageous act answers to a higher law than that of the city: the natural law of instinct.

To grasp fully the flavor of the Baroque in France, we should look at a king who for all time exemplifies the term "absolute monarch"—Louis XIV. Louis ascended the throne of France in 1643, at the age of four. He assumed total control of the government in 1661 and reigned, in all, for seventy-two years. During that time he made France the artistic and literary center of Europe, as well as a political force to be reckoned with. Showing the unerring instincts of a master actor, he created an aura around his own person that bolstered the impression of divinity. Each day, for example, two ceremonies took place. In the morning half the court would file into Louis' chambers, in full pageantry, to participate in the king's *lever*—the king's "getting up." At night the same cast of characters arrived to play ritual roles in the king's *coucher*—his "going to bed."

A life in which the simple act of climbing in and out of bed required elaborate ceremony surely also needed an appropriate setting, and Louis did not neglect this matter. He summoned Bernini from Rome to Paris to work on completion of the Louvre palace (although the final design of the building was the work of others). But Louis' real love was the Palace of Versailles, in a suburb of the capital, which he substantially rebuilt and to which he moved his court in 1682. It was from this remarkable structure that the power of kingship flowed forth.

In all, Versailles occupies an area of about 200 acres, including the extensive formal gardens and several grand châteaux. The palace itself, redesigned and enlarged during Louis' reign, is an immense structure, more than a quarter of a mile wide (17.9). The illustration here shows the central portion of the west facade, which overlooks the gardens and houses the royal apartments. Baroque style is evident in the way the facade occasionally breaks forward and in the way interest gathers toward its center, but these effects are realized in a very understated way.

17.9 Louis Le Vau and Jules Hardouin Mansart. Central portion of the garden (west) facade, Palace of Versailles. 1669–85.



If the exterior of the palace reflects the continuing classical tendencies of France, the interior revels in full Baroque splendor. As in Bernini's Cornaro Chapel, though on a much grander scale, architecture, sculpture, and painting are united, creating a series of lavish settings for the pageantry of Louis XIV and his court. Of the countless rooms inside, the most famous is the Hall of Mirrors (17.10), 240 feet long and lined with large reflective glasses. In Louis' time the Hall of Mirrors was used for the most elaborate state occasions, and even in our own century it has served as the backdrop for momentous events. The treaty ending World War I was signed in the Hall of Mirrors.

The French court clearly was a model of pomp and pageantry, and the Spanish court to the south was eager to emulate that model. King Philip IV of Spain reigned for a shorter time than his French counterpart and could not begin to match Louis in either power or ability. Philip had one asset, however, that Louis never quite managed to acquire—a court painter of the first rank. That painter was one of the geniuses of Spanish art—Diego Velázquez.

In his capacity as court painter Velázquez created his masterpiece, *Las Meninas* (The Maids of Honor) (17.11). At left we see the artist, working on a very large canvas, but we can only guess at the subject he is painting. Perhaps it is the young princess, the *infanta*, who stands regally at center surrounded by her attendants (*meninas*), one of whom is a dwarf. Or perhaps Velázquez is actually painting the king and queen, whom we see reflected in a mirror on the far wall. Their participation is clear, but where are they standing? Possibly they are outside the picture, standing next to us, the observers. This ambiguity is part of the picture's fascination, as is the dual nature of the scene. Although it shows a formal occasion, the painting of an official portrait, Velázquez has given the scene a warm, "everyday" quality.

17.10 Jules Hardouin Mansart and Charles Le Brun. Hall of Mirrors, Palace of Versailles. c. 1680.





Like Caravaggio, Velázquez uses light to create drama and emphasis, but light also serves here to organize and unify a complex space. The major light source comes from outside the top right corner of the painting, falling most brilliantly on the *infanta*, leaving the others in various degrees of shadow. Another light source illuminates the mysterious figure in the open doorway at back. Velázquez may have put him there to direct attention to the reflected images of the king and queen. Light also strikes the artist's face and the mirror reflection. What could have been a very disorderly scene has been pulled together by the device of spotlighting, much as a designer of stage lighting would control what the audience sees. The theatricality of the Baroque is more subtle in Velázquez than in Bernini, but it is no less skillful.

To end this discussion of 17th-century art, we move north, to the Netherlands. The Dutch Baroque, sometimes called the "bourgeois Baroque," is quite different from Baroque movements in France, Spain, and Italy. In the North, Protestantism was the dominant religion, and the outward symbols of faith—imagery, ornate churches, and clerical pageantry—were far less important. Dutch society, and particularly the wealthy merchant class, centered not on the church but instead on the home and family, business and social organizations, the community. We see this focus in the work of two Dutch artists with very different styles—Rembrandt and Judith Leyster.

Rembrandt's principal teacher, a painter named Lastman, had traveled in his youth to Italy, where he had come under the influence of Caravaggio. Returning to the Netherlands to establish his career, he brought with him the new kind of dramatic lighting that Caravaggio had invented. We can see how

17.11 Diego Velázquez. *Las Meninas* (*The Maids of Honor*). 1656. Oil on canvas, 10'5¼" × 9'¾". Museo del Prado, Madrid.

RELATED WORKS



4.30
Rembrandt,
"The Jewish
Bride"



6.11
Rembrandt,
Man
Rowing a
Boat



8.14
Rembrandt,
Christ
Preaching

17.12 Rembrandt. *Sortie of Captain Banning Cocq's Company of the Civic Guard (The Night Watch)*. 1642. Oil on canvas, 12'2" × 17'7". Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Rembrandt incorporated this lighting into his own personal style in the famous group portrait *Sortie of Captain Banning Cocq's Company of the Civic Guard* (17.12).

The painting portrays a kind of private elite militia. Such groups had played a prominent role in defending the city during the recent wars against Spanish domination, and while by Rembrandt's time their function was largely ceremonial, they were still widely respected, and all the most important men of the town belonged to one. Dutch civic organizations often commissioned group portraits, and painters usually responded by portraying the members seated around a table or lined up for the 17th-century equivalent of a class photograph. Rembrandt's innovation was to paint individual portraits within the context of a larger activity, a call to arms. He groups the figures naturally, in deep space, with Captain Cocq, resplendent in a red sash, at the center. The composition builds on a series of broad V-shapes, pointing upward and outward. The nested V-shapes make the picture seem to burst out from its core—and may have made its subjects feel they were charging off heroically in all directions, into battle. Lest this geometric structure seem rigid, Rembrandt has "sculpted" it into greater naturalness through his dramatic lighting of the scene. Light picks out certain individuals: Captain Cocq himself; the drummer at far right; the lieutenant at Cocq's side, awaiting orders; and especially the little girl in a golden dress, whose identity and role in the picture remain a mystery.

For many years Rembrandt's painting was known as *The Night Watch*, and it is still informally called by that name. The reason has nothing to do with the artist's intent. A heavy layer of varnish on top of the oil paint



REMBRANDT

1606–1669



OF THE FEW artists classified as “greatest of the great,” Rembrandt seems the most accessible to us. His life encompassed happiness, success, heartbreak, and failure—all on a scale larger than most of us are likely to know. Through his many self-portraits and his portraits of those he loved, we can witness it all.

Born in the Dutch city of Leiden, Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn was the son of a miller. At fourteen he began art lessons in Leiden and later studied with a master in Amsterdam. By the age of twenty-two he had pupils of his own. About 1631 he settled permanently in Amsterdam, having by then attracted considerable fame as a portrait painter. Thus began for Rembrandt a decade of professional success and personal happiness—a high point that would never come again in his life.

In 1634 Rembrandt married Saskia van Uijlenburgh, an heiress of good family, thus improving his

own social status. The pair must have been rather a dashing couple-about-Amsterdam. The artist's portraits were in demand, his style was fashionable, and he had money enough to indulge himself in material possessions, especially to collect art. One blight on this happy period was the arrival of four children, none of whom survived. But in 1641 Rembrandt's beloved son Titus was born.

Rembrandt's range as an artist was enormous. He was master not only of painting but of drawing and of the demanding technique of etching for prints. (It is said that Rembrandt went out sketching with an etcher's needle as other artists might carry a pencil.) Besides the many portraits, the artist displayed unparalleled genius in other themes, including landscapes and religious scenes.

In 1642 Rembrandt's fortunes again changed, but this time for the worse. Saskia died not long after giving birth to Titus. The artist's financial affairs were in great disarray, no doubt partly because of his self-indulgence in buying art and precious objects. Although he continued to work and to earn money, Rembrandt showed little talent for money management. Ultimately he was forced into bankruptcy and had to sell not only his art collection but even Saskia's burial plot. About 1649 Hendrickje Stoffels came to live with Rembrandt, and she is thought of as his second wife, although they did not marry legally. She joined forces with Titus to form an art dealership in an attempt to protect the artist from his creditors. Capping the long series of tragedies that marked Rembrandt's later life, Hendrickje died in 1663 and Titus in 1668, a year before his father.

Rembrandt's legacy is almost totally a visual one. He does not seem to have written much. Ironically, one of the few recorded comments comes in a letter to a patron, begging for payment—payment for paintings that are now considered priceless and hang in one of the world's great museums. “I pray you my kind lord that my warrant might now be prepared at once so that I may now at last receive my well-earned 1244 guilders and I shall always seek to recompense your lordship for this with reverential service and proof of friendship.”¹

Rembrandt. *Self-Portrait with Saskia in the Parable of the Prodigal Son*. c. 1635–39.
Oil on canvas, 5'3½" × 4'3½".
Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Dresden.



17.13 Judith Leyster. *Carousing Couple*. 1630. Oil on panel, 26¼ × 22½".
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

combined with smoke from a nearby fireplace had gradually darkened the picture's surface until it seemed to portray a nighttime scene. No one alive could remember it any differently. It was only when the work was cleaned in the mid-20th century that the light-filled painting we know today reemerged. Even now, though, some members of the group can be seen more clearly than others, and viewers have often wondered how this could have been acceptable to the militia. Documents have revealed that each member contributed to the commission according to how prominently he would appear in the finished painting, and history records no complaints about the results.

The 17th century was the great age of Dutch **genre** painting—painting that focused on scenes of everyday life—and during her lifetime Judith Leyster was highly regarded as a genre painter. After her death, however, she was virtually forgotten. Paintings from her hand made their way into important collections, but many seem to have been attributed to another (in our time, far better known) Dutch painter, Frans Hals. Leyster had studied with Hals, and so the confusion is not altogether surprising. Still, her disappearance from art history prevailed for some two centuries. Then, in 1893, a Dutch art historian who had just sold a “Hals” to the Louvre museum in Paris discovered Leyster’s distinctive monogram on the canvas. Since then, other works by “Hals” have been reattributed to Leyster.

Carousing Couple (17.13) is Leyster’s version of a standard genre subject, the “merry company” scene. Looking more than a little tipsy, a man grins blurily at us as he plays a viol—probably none too steadily. His companion holds up a glass and lifts a tankard of wine, suggesting just one more. Merry company scenes look like great good fun, and they can leave us with the idea that 17th-century Holland was a rollicking place. But the scene would have carried a warning for its original audience. The young man is being led astray, and we are supposed to fear that he may give himself over to a life of pleasure instead

RELATED WORKS



3.24 Vermeer,
Woman Holding a Balance

of pursuing a life of good, productive work. It is difficult to say how seriously artists and their audience took such stern moralizing, however. The woman here whose wiles are presumably to be condemned is in all likelihood a self-portrait of the artist!

The 17th century was also a great period for landscape painting in the Netherlands. Typical of Dutch landscape painting was the work of Jacob van Ruisdael. Van Ruisdael's *Extensive Landscape with a View of the Town of Ootmarsum* (17.14) shows not only the famed flatness of the Dutch landscape, but also the artist's reaction to that flatness as an expression of the immense, limitless grandeur of nature. The artist makes a contrast between the land—where human order has been established in the form of buildings and cultivation—and the sky, with its billowing clouds, yielding to the wind, which mere people can never tame. The horizon line is set quite low, and, significantly, only the church steeple rises up in silhouette against the sky, perhaps symbolizing that humankind's one connection with the majesty of nature is through the church.

Despite this emphasis on the church building, Van Ruisdael's art is essentially secular, as is that of Leyster and Rembrandt. Although religious subjects continued to appear in art—and do so even now—never again would religious art dominate as it did in the Renaissance and Italian Baroque periods. No doubt this is largely because of the change in sponsorship; popes and cardinals became less important as patrons, while kings, wealthy merchants, and the bourgeoisie became more so. We can follow this increasing secularization of art as we move out of the 17th century into the 18th.

THE 18TH CENTURY

The first half to three-quarters of the 18th century is often thought of as the age of **Rococo**—a development and extension of the Baroque style. The term “rococo” was a play on the word “baroque,” but it also refers to the French words for “rocks” and “shells,” forms that appeared as decorative motifs in architecture, furniture, and occasionally in painting. Like the Baroque, Rococo

17.14 Jacob van Ruisdael. *View of Ootmarsum*. 1628/29–82. Oil on canvas, 23¼ × 28⅞". Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



RELATED WORKS



4.10 Watteau, *Embarkation for Cythera*

is an extravagant, ornate style, but there are several points of contrast. Baroque, especially in the South, was an art of cathedrals and palaces; Rococo is more intimate, suitable for the aristocratic home and the drawing room. Baroque colors are intense; Rococo leans more toward the gentle pastels. Baroque is large in scale, massive, dramatic; Rococo has a smaller scale and a lighthearted, playful quality.

The Rococo style of architecture originated in France but was soon exported. We find some of the most developed examples in Germany, especially in Bavaria. The Mirror Room of the Amalienburg, a little house in Nymphenburg Park near Munich (1715), demonstrates amply why the word “rococo” has come to mean “elaborate and profuse.” Designed by a Frenchman, François Cuvillies the Elder, the Mirror Room is a perfect riot of sinuous, twisting, almost visibly *growing* decorative forms. The line between walls and ceiling has been obscured deliberately to create the illusion of “sky” above the room. Large arched mirrors multiply the effect of playful design everywhere the eye might focus. Rococo was above all a sophisticated style, and the Amalienburg shows us the height of that sophistication.

Sophistication was paramount in painting as well. In Chapter 4 we looked at *Embarkation for Cythera* by Jean-Antoine Watteau (see 4.10). Painted in 1718, it stands at the very beginning of the Rococo style. The dreamlike world Watteau invented must have appealed to French aristocrats weary of the formal grandeur of Versailles and the ceremonial character of daily life there.



17.15 (opposite page) François Cuvillies the Elder. Mirror Room, Amalienburg. 1734–39. Nymphenburg Park, Munich.

17.16 (right) Jean-Honoré Fragonard. *The Pursuit*, from *The Progress of Love*. 1771–73, 1790–91. Oil on canvas, height approx. 10'5". The Frick Collection, New York.



Even the new king, Louis XV, seems to have found his role exhausting, for he created within the palace a modest apartment that he could escape to and live, if only for a few hours, like a simple (if rather well off) gentleman.

Just over half a century later, the aging king's mistress, the Countess du Barry, commissioned one of the last masterpieces of Rococo art, a set of four large paintings by Jean-Honoré Fragonard called *The Progress of Love*, of which we illustrate *The Pursuit* (17.16). Through a lushly overgrown garden on the grounds of some imaginary estate, an ardent youth chases after the girl who has captured his heart. He holds out to her a single flower, plucked from the abundance that surrounds them. She, surprised while sitting with her friends, flees, but so prettily that we know it is all a game. She will surely not run *too* fast. Above, a statue of two cupids seems to participate, watching over this latest demonstration of their powers to see how it will all turn out.

Madame du Barry had commissioned the paintings to decorate a new pavilion she had just had built on her estate. But while Fragonard never painted a lovelier set of works, his patron rejected them. She considered them too old fashioned and sentimental. Rococo taste had run its course. Seriousness was now in vogue, together with an artistic style called Neoclassicism ("new classicism"). Since 1748, excavations at the Roman sites of Pompeii

ACADEMIES



THE PAINTING DEPICTED here is a still life by the 18th-century French artist Jean-Siméon Chardin. Chardin's career followed a typical path for his time and place. After completing his artistic training, he presented a group of his works for consideration by the Royal Academy of Painters and Sculptors, a powerful organization sponsored by the king. A committee judged his paintings worthy, and he was accepted into the Academy as a "painter of animals and fruits." As a member of the Academy, Chardin was entitled to show his paintings in a biennial exhibition called the Salon, thus gaining attention and attracting commissions. He became an officer of the Academy, and then its treasurer. Eventually the king granted him a small yearly stipend along with a place to live in the Louvre Palace. Later in life he was even placed in charge of hanging the Salon show, a delicate task that required the skills of a diplomat.

Academies were one of the many ways in which Renaissance humanists had attempted to revive Classical culture. Their model was the celebrated Academy of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, which earned its name from the park in Athens where the brilliant thinker met with his students, the Akademeia. Early Renaissance academies were private, informal gatherings that brought small groups of scholars and artists together to discuss ideas. In 1561,

however, the artist Giorgio Vasari persuaded Cosimo de' Medici, a wealthy art patron, to sponsor a formal academy devoted to art, the Academy of Design, in Florence. By founding the first public academy, Vasari sought to underscore the prestige of art as an intellectual endeavor and to solidify the social status that artists had achieved during the Renaissance. Over the course of the next two centuries, art academies were founded across Europe. By the close of the 18th century they were at the center of artistic life.

Academies were inherently conservative. Their aim was to maintain official standards of skill and taste by perpetuating models of greatness from the past, especially the Classical past. While women artists could often be accepted as members, only men could enroll as students, for academic training revolved around mastering the human figure, and it was deemed improper for young girls to gaze upon naked models. Students began by copying drawings, then advanced to drawing fragments of Classical statues—isolated heads, feet, torsos. They learned to draw gestures, poses, and facial expressions that expressed all variety of dramatic situations and emotions. They studied anatomy. Eventually they progressed to drawing from live models. They came to know the human form so thoroughly that they could draw it from memory, creating complex compositions without recourse to models at all.

This emphasis on mastering the human form was linked to the belief that the greatest subject for art was history, including biblical and mythological scenes, historical events, and episodes from famous literary works. After history, portraiture had the most prestige. Then, in descending order, came genre, still life, and landscape. These beliefs had direct consequences for painters: Upon his retirement, Chardin asked for a pension, pointing to his 20 years of service as treasurer. He was turned down. The new director of the Academy was an ambitious history painter who thought that Chardin had been far too amply rewarded already. After all, he was only a painter of animals and fruits.

Jean-Siméon Chardin. *Glass of Water and Coffeepot*. c. 1760. Oil on canvas, 12% × 16¼". Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

and Herculaneum in Italy had been uncovering wonders such as the wall paintings we looked at in Chapter 14 (see 14.31). Patrons and artists across Europe were newly fascinated by the Classical past, and their interest was encouraged by rulers and social thinkers hoping to foster civic virtues such as patriotism, stoicism, self-sacrifice, and frugality—virtues they associated with the Roman Republic.

Among the many young artists who flocked to Italy to absorb the influence at first hand was a young painter named Jacques-Louis David. Upon his return to France, David quickly established himself as an artist of great potential, and it was none other than the new king, Louis XVI, who commissioned his first resounding critical success, *The Oath of the Horatii* (17.17).

The painting depicts the stirring moment when three Roman brothers, the Horatii of the painting's title, swear before their father to fight to the death three brothers from the enemy camp, the Curiatii, thus sacrificing themselves to spare their fellow citizens an all-out war. The subject combines great patriotism with great pathos, for as David's audience would have known, one of the Horatii was married to a sister of the Curiatii, and one of the Curiatii was engaged to a sister of the Horatii. David paints these two women at the right. They are overcome with emotion, knowing that tragedy is the only possible outcome. In fact, of the six brothers, only one, one of the Horatii, will survive the bloody combat. Arriving home, he finds his sister in mourning for her slain fiancé. Outraged at her sorrow, he kills her.

17.17 Jacques-Louis David. *The Oath of the Horatii*. 1784–5. Oil on canvas, approx. 11 × 14'. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Gone are the lush gardens and pastel colors of the Rococo. In their place, David has conceived an austere architectural setting beyond which there is merely darkness. Spread across the shallow foreground space, the dramatically lit figures are portrayed in profile as though carved in relief. The creamy brush strokes and hazy atmosphere of Fragonard have given way to a smooth finish and a cool, clear light. Colors are muted except for the father's tunic, which flows like a river of blood next to the three gleaming swords.

Along with the stern "Roman family values" promoted by Neoclassicism, the late 18th century was under the spell of a new taste for simplicity and naturalness. One of the people most taken by the new informality was Louis XVI's queen, Marie-Antoinette. Another advocate of all that was unaffected was the queen's favorite portrait painter, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. Inspired in part by the sparseness of classical costume (note the women in David's painting) and in part by an ideal of the "innocent country girl," Vigée-Lebrun coaxed her highborn models into posing in airy white muslin dresses, their hair falling loosely about their shoulders, a straw bonnet tied with a satin ribbon on their head, and a flower or two in their hands.

The image confirmed the public's worst suspicions: their queen was frivolous and flirtatious. In an attempt to repair the queen's reputation, Vigée-Lebrun was asked to paint a different sort of portrait, *Marie-Antoinette and Her Children* (17.18). Here, Marie-Antoinette is portrayed as a devoted and beloved mother. She is a woman who knows that her place is in the home, not meddling in politics or advertising her charms. In a gesture meant to tug at viewers' heartstrings, her elder son, the heir to the throne, draws our attention to an empty cradle; his youngest sibling had recently died in infancy. The queen's formal velvet gown and the glimpse of the fabled Hall of Mirrors in the background are meant to convey that she is aware of the seriousness of her position and fully capable of the quiet dignity needed to fulfill it.

It was too late. Far too much damage had already been done for a single painting to repair. The nation was teetering on the brink of financial disaster. Popular opinion blamed the deficit on the queen's extravagant ways and sus-





pected her as well of shocking personal vices. Vigée-Lebrun herself tells us that when the large canvas was carried into the palace, she heard angry voices crying, "There is the deficit."

Although Vigée-Lebrun later made several copies of her own portraits of the queen, she never again painted Marie-Antoinette from life. Within two years revolution had swept the country, ultimately destroying the monarchy and the aristocracy. The artist fled and took refuge outside France. The queen died by the guillotine.

17.18 Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. *Marie-Antoinette and Her Children*. 1787. Oil on canvas, 8'8" × 6'10". Palace of Versailles, France.

REVOLUTION

The leaders of the French Revolution continued to evoke the example of Rome and to admire Roman civic virtues. Neoclassicism became the official style of the Revolution and Jacques-Louis David its official artist. David served the Revolution as propaganda minister and director of festivals. As a deputy to the Convention of 1792 he was among those who voted to send his former patron Louis XVI to the guillotine. One of the events orchestrated by David was the funeral of the revolutionary leader Jean-Paul Marat. David staged the

ELISABETH VIGÉE-LEBRUN

1755–1842



FROM HER SELF-PORTRAIT she gazes directly at us, her viewers—calm, self-possessed, sure of her talent, sure of her place in the world. Her brush is poised over the canvas; we have momentarily interrupted her work on a portrait of her great patron, the Queen of France. She will not be interrupted for long. Throughout her remarkable life, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun knew where she was going and remained steadfast on that path.

Born in Paris, the daughter of a portrait painter, Elisabeth Vigée was convent-educated and encouraged from an early age to draw and paint. At eleven she began serious art studies. After her father's untimely death, Elisabeth resolved to work as a painter, and by age fifteen she was her family's chief financial support. Patrons flocked to her studio, eager to have their portraits done by the young artist, and her fees multiplied.

One dark spot was her mother's remarriage, to a man who seems mainly to have coveted his stepdaughter's income. Because of this unpleasant circumstance, Elisabeth made the one real mistake of her life. Although she "felt no manner of inclination for matrimony," she succumbed to her mother's urgings and accepted the proposal of Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun, hoping "to escape from the torture of

living with my stepfather." Alas for the twenty-year-old artist, she had merely "exchanged present troubles for others." Lebrun was "quite an agreeable person," but, his wife soon discovered, "his furious passion for gambling was at the bottom of the ruin of his fortune and my own." The happiest result of the union was Vigée-Lebrun's only child, her daughter Julie.

Neither marriage nor motherhood interfered with the artist's burgeoning career and social life. By all evidence she was lovely, witty, charming, and perfectly at home in any company. Quite independent of her husband, she entertained a growing circle of aristocratic friends, many of whom commissioned portraits. In 1779 a summons came from the Palace of Versailles. Marie-Antoinette sought her services, and Vigée-Lebrun made the first of some twenty portraits of the queen. The two women became friends—a splendid advantage for the artist initially, but a dangerous liability as resentment of the monarchy grew. When revolution came in 1789, Vigée-Lebrun fled the country, taking Julie with her. Lebrun was left behind forever.

Then commenced Vigée-Lebrun's twelve years of "exile" from France. And what an exile it was! She traveled first to Rome and Vienna, then to St. Petersburg and Moscow, spending six years altogether in czarist Russia. Wherever she went she was treated like visiting royalty, entertained lavishly, invited to join the local painters' Academy. Wherever she went she was overwhelmed with portrait commissions. Kings and queens, princesses, counts, duchesses—she painted them all, in between the elaborate dinners and balls to which they invited her. In her memoirs she tells us she missed painting Catherine the Great because the empress died just before the first scheduled sitting.

In 1801, the furies of the revolution having abated, Vigée-Lebrun returned to Paris. She had not, however, quite satisfied her urge to travel. Only after a three-year stay in London and two visits to Switzerland did she finally settle down to write her memoirs and paint the survivors of the French nobility. She died in her eighty-seventh year, having painted more than 660 portraits. Her memoirs conclude with these words: "I hope to end peacefully a wandering and even a laborious but honest life."² And she did.

Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Self-Portrait at the Easel*.
c. 1789. Oil on canvas. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

exhibition of Marat's embalmed cadaver to the public, and he memorialized the leader's death in what has become his most famous painting, *The Death of Marat* (17.19).

A major figure in the Revolution, Jean-Paul Marat pursued the goal of wiping out France's greedy and corrupt aristocracy. He was responsible for the execution by guillotine of hundreds of people. Because of a painful skin ailment Marat spent his days in the bathtub, which was fitted out with a writing desk so he could work, and there he received callers. A woman named Charlotte Corday, incensed by Marat's excesses with the guillotine, gained entry to his apartment and stabbed him to death.

In lesser hands Marat's demise could have been laughable—a naked man murdered in his tub by a furious woman caller. But David has invested the event with all the pathos and dignity of Christ being lowered into his tomb. (Compare Caravaggio's *Entombment*, 17.6.) Marat is shown, in effect, as a kind of secular Christ martyred for the Revolution. All the forms are concentrated in the lower half of the composition, and light bathes the fallen leader in an unearthly glow, both of these devices contributing to the sense of tragedy. Marat's face and body could be those of a fallen Greek warrior, sculpted in marble by an ancient master. David's purpose in this work was to transform a man whom many considered Satan himself into a sainted hero. He projected the image the leaders of the Revolution wished to have of themselves, just as Vigée-Lebrun's art had projected the image desired by the French monarchs.

Two other revolutions occurred at more or less the same time as that in France. One was the American Revolution, preceding the French by thirteen years. During the relatively brief period covered by this chapter, the American

17.19 Jacques-Louis David. *The Death of Marat*. 1793. Oil on canvas, 5'5" × 4'2½". Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels.





17.20 John Singleton Copley.
Paul Revere. 1768–70. Oil on
canvas, 35 × 28½".
Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston.

colonists had progressed from the “starving time” of Jamestown to a nation of people capable of independence and self-government. During that time also the area that was to become the United States had developed its own artistic styles. And by the eve of the Revolution the colonies had their own master artist, born on home soil—John Singleton Copley.

Born in Boston, Copley would paint many people who later became heroes of the Revolution, including *Paul Revere* (17.20). Legend and poetry have preserved the image of Paul Revere taking his “midnight ride” on horseback, from Boston to Concord, to warn his fellow colonists that “the British are coming!” In his day, however, Revere was better known as a silversmith. The artist poses him with a silver teapot in one hand, the tools of his trade scattered elegantly on the table.

Copley’s portrait is in much the same Neoclassical style as David’s tribute to Marat. The subject sits quietly behind his table, gazing straight toward us. We as viewers might be seated just opposite him. Although he is dressed informally, Revere shows great dignity and an obvious pride in his work. Copley has rendered his subject’s features, the garments, and the polished tabletop with wonderful fidelity. We sense fullness, a three-dimensional volume, in the body and especially in the hand clasping the teapot.

The third revolution of this time was not a political uprising but an economic and social upheaval. Many would argue that the Industrial Revolution, which began slowly in the last half of the 18th century, is still going on.

It is difficult to overestimate the impact—social, economic, and ultimately political—of the change from labor done by hand to labor done by machine. Within the space of a few decades the machine drastically altered a way of life that had prevailed for millennia. People who had formerly worked in their homes or on farms suddenly were herded together in factories, creating a new social class—the industrial worker. Fortunes were made virtually overnight by members of another new class—the manufacturers. Naturally, all this upheaval was reflected in art. At the beginning of the 19th century, then, Western civilization faced a totally new world.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE MODERN WORLD: 1800–1945

For 19th-century artists and writers, walking through the teeming city streets was the equivalent of today's channel surfing—one sensation followed quickly on another, offering fleeting glimpses of thousands of lives. They found it overwhelming—sometimes thrilling, sometimes disturbing—but they recognized it as new and they called it “modern.” Modernity reflected the emergence of a new kind of society in the wake of the three revolutions discussed at the end of Chapter 17: the French Revolution, the American Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. Driven by technological progress and characterized by rapid change, the 19th century gave birth to our industrialized middle-class culture of mass production, mass advertising, and mass consumption, including the mass consumption of leisure activities such as shopping, going to entertainments, or visiting art museums.

Art museums themselves were a development of the 19th century, and they made art available to the public (including artists) in a way we now take for granted. The first national museum was the Louvre in Paris. Opened in 1793 during the fervor of the French Revolution, it placed the art that had been the private property of the kings of France on public view in what used to be the royal residence. Like everything else that used to belong to aristocrats, art was now for everybody, but what kind of art did everybody want? What kind of art was suited to a society no longer dominated by the Church or by the nobility, but by the middle class and its leaders of finance and industry? Debates about art and modernity began during the 19th century and continued into the 20th, resulting in the ever-increasing number of “isms” that appear in art history from this point on: Realism, Impressionism, Pointillism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism—each one staking out a different viewpoint about what art can be, what subjects it can treat, and how it can look. During this time as well, photography revolutionized the making of images. From the Chauvet cave paintings of 30,000 B.C.E. until the first successful daguerreotype in 1837, images had been made by hand. Suddenly, there was another way, and it posed profound questions about the nature and purpose of art even as it opened up new possibilities.

The changes of modernity occurred everywhere in Europe, but the debates they provoked in the visual arts played out most dramatically in France, especially in Paris, and this brief survey largely focuses there.

NEOCLASSICISM AND ROMANTICISM

As we saw in Chapter 17, France's foremost Neoclassical painter, Jacques-Louis David, was an ardent supporter of the Revolution and portrayed several of its heroes (see 17.19). David went on to become the official painter to Napoleon, a position that gave him great influence over the artistic life of France. When Napoleon fell from power in 1815, David went into exile, but Neoclassical style was carried forward into the new century by his students, the foremost of whom was Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.

In Chapter 7, we looked at Ingres' portrait of the Countess of Haussonville (see 7.8). Here, we illustrate an earlier work, *Jupiter and Thetis* (21.1). The subject is drawn from Homer's *Iliad*, the Greek epic of the Trojan War. The nymph Thetis is shown pleading with Jupiter, ruler of the gods, to intervene in the war on behalf of her son, the warrior Achilles. To the left, hidden in the clouds, Jupiter's jealous wife, Juno, spies on the encounter. With its clear contours, clean colors, and precise draftsmanship, the painting clearly shows Ingres' debt to his teacher.

While today Ingres' portraits and nudes are among his most admired works, Ingres himself staked his reputation on paintings such as *Jupiter and Thetis*. He had inherited the view that great art can only be made from great

RELATED WORKS



7.8
Ingres, *La Comtesse d'Haussonville*

21.1 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. *Jupiter and Thetis*. 1811. Oil on canvas, 10'8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " $\times$ 8'6 $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence.





21.2 Eugène Delacroix. *The Women of Algiers*. 1834. Oil on canvas, 5'10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " $\times$ 7'6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Musée du Louvre, Paris.

subject matter, and that the greatest subject matter of all was history—a category that included Classical mythology and biblical scenes. This viewpoint and the highly polished style that went with it became enshrined as academic art, the art that was encouraged by the official art schools and institutions of the 19th century.

The second dominant trend of the time, Romanticism, also had its roots in the preceding century. Romanticism was not a style so much as a set of attitudes and characteristic subjects. The 18th century is sometimes known as the Age of Reason, for its leading thinkers placed their faith in rationality, skeptical questioning, and scientific inquiry. Rebelling against these, Romanticism urged the claims of emotion, intuition, individual experience, and, above all, the imagination. Romantic artists gloried in such subjects as mysterious or awe-inspiring landscapes (see 4.49), picturesque ruins, extreme or tumultuous human events (see 4.8), the struggle for liberty (see 3.10 and 5.19), and scenes of exotic cultures.

Geographically, the closest "exotic" cultures to Europe were the Islamic lands of North Africa. To European thinking, these were part of "the Orient"—a realm imagined as sensuous and seductive, full of barbaric splendor and cruelty. Eugène Delacroix, the leading painter of the Romantic movement in France, spent several months in North Africa in 1832. Fascinated by all he saw, he filled sketchbook after sketchbook with drawings, watercolors, and observations. Later, he drew upon this material to create numerous paintings, including *The Woman of Algiers* (21.2), which portrays three women and their servant in a harem, the women's apartment of an Islamic palace. Delacroix had apparently been allowed to visit an actual harem, a rare privilege for a man, not to mention a European. Compared with the cool perfection of Ingres' careful drawing and glazed colors, Delacroix's technique is freer and more painterly. Forms are built up with fully loaded brush strokes, contours are blurred, and colors are broken.

RELATED WORKS



3.10 Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*



5.19 Goya, *Executions of the Third of May*

REALISM

The first art movement to be born in the 19th century was **Realism**, which arose as a reaction against both Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Realist artists sought to depict the everyday and the ordinary, rather than the historic, the heroic, or the exotic. Their concerns were very much rooted in the present. One of the leaders of the Realist movement was Gustave Courbet, who in 1855 exhibited a huge painting, *The Artist's Studio* (21.3), subtitled *A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*.

At the center of the canvas sits Courbet himself, at work on a landscape painting. Although a great many people crowd into the studio, the artist seems aloof from them, as though his aesthetic concerns are all-consuming. A little boy (usually identified as Innocence) gawks up at the work in progress. Behind the artist stands a nude model, whom some consider to be his Muse, or inspiration, others the personification of Truth (that is, the "naked truth"). All the figures to the left of the composition are common people; they are "types," not individuals, derived from Courbet's origins in a rural village. At right are the artist's "intellectual" friends, many of them identifiable figures—his patrons, other artists, writers, and so on. Perhaps Courbet is saying the artist represents a special elite, fed by his origins and by his comrades, but apart from them, alone with Innocence and Truth. We know from Courbet's work as a whole that here the artist was trying to make a particular point—that everyday activities, such as an artist working at his easel or peasants toiling in the fields, were fit subject matter for grand-scale art. In an age when only paintings of religious or historical or mythological scenes were considered "great art," this was a revolutionary idea.

21.3 Gustave Courbet. *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist*. 1855. Oil on canvas, 11'9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " $\times$ 19'6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Two of the paintings we have considered so far include a nude or semi-nude woman. In each case, their nudity served a specific, accepted purpose. Thetis, for example, is a character from Classical mythology. Her nudity was underwritten by the art of ancient Greece and Rome, which cultivated viewers had been taught to admire. But eight years after Courbet exhibited *The Artist's Studio*, a painting was placed on display in Paris that portrayed female nudity without any apparent justification at all. It caused a terrific scandal—the first of many artistic scandals that would shock the art world in the decades to come. The artist responsible for setting off this earthquake was a mild, conventional, well-to-do gentleman: Edouard Manet.

MANET AND IMPRESSIONISM

In 19th-century France the mark of an artist's success was acceptance at the annual Salon, a state-sponsored exhibition of paintings. Artists submitted their work for consideration by an official jury, whose members varied from year to year but tended to be conservative, if not downright stodgy. In 1863 the Salon jury rejected almost 3,000 of the submitted works, which caused such an uproar among the spurned artists and their supporters that a second official exhibition was mounted—the “Salon des Refusés” (showing of those who had been refused). Among the works in the “refused” show—and very soon the most notorious among them—was Edouard Manet's painting *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (21.4).

Luncheon on the Grass, as it is usually translated, shows a kind of outdoor picnic. Two men, dressed in the fashions of the day, relax and chat in a woodland setting. Their companion is a woman who has, for no apparent rea-

21.4 Edouard Manet. *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. 1863. Oil on canvas, 7' × 8'10".
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



son, taken off all her clothes. In the background another woman, wearing only a filmy garment, bathes in a stream.

Manet seems to have wanted to accomplish two goals with this work. The first was to join Courbet and other artists in painting modern life. But the other was to prove that modern life could produce eternal subjects worthy of the great masters of the museums. His solution was to “update” two famous Renaissance images, Titian’s *Fête Champêtre* (see 16.17) and Raphael’s *The Judgment of Paris* (see 8.11, lower right). The public saw what Manet was doing: the Titian, after all, was in the Louvre Museum close by, and the Raphael was routinely copied by art students. They saw what he was doing, and they didn’t like it. Surely Manet was making fun of them. In place of Titian’s idealized and dignified nudes, he had painted a common woman of loose morals: who else would sit there with no clothes on, meeting our gaze so frankly? The men in the painting, too, were completely undistinguished—not noble poets as in Titian, but ordinary students on holiday. One critic lamented that Manet was trying to achieve celebrity the easy way, by shocking his public. Others found the technique inept. Perhaps if Manet would learn something about perspective and drawing, they said, his taste might improve as well.

Manet’s painting *is* odd, and art historians still debate just what he meant by it. In modeling his figures, Manet focused on the highest and lowest values, all but eliminating the middle, transitional tones. As a result, the forms appear flattened, as though illuminated by a sudden flash of light. The perspective is off: contemporary viewers were quite right. The bather is as far away as the rowboat, but if you imagine her standing in it, you see that she is a giantess. It was evidently more important to Manet to have her form the apex of his triangle of figures than to place her correctly in perspective. This, too, flattens the painting, for the bather seems to move forward to join the rest of the figures, compressing the space between foreground and background. The spatial tension plays out in the landscape itself: on the left side of the painting, the ground recedes convincingly into the distance, but on the right side there is no recession—just flat bright green. Nor do we believe for a minute that these people are really sitting outdoors. Clearly they are posing in a studio. The landscape is painted around them like a stage set or a photographer’s backdrop. Finally, the borrowed composition *feels* borrowed, as though it were in quotation marks.

All of these qualities—the public scandal, the flatness, the artificiality, the ambiguity, and the self-conscious relation to art history—have made the painting a touchstone of modern art. Painting in the modern era could no longer be a simple, transparent window on the world. It would also be increasingly conscious of itself *as* a painting.

During the years following Manet’s sensation in the Salon des Refusés, young French artists increasingly sought alternatives to the Salon. One group in particular looked to Manet as their philosophical leader, although he never consented to exhibit with them. They thought of themselves as Realists, for like Manet and Courbet they believed that modern life itself was the most suitable subject for modern art. In 1874 they organized their first exhibition as The Anonymous Society of Artists, Painters, Sculptors, Printmakers, etc. A painting in the exhibit by Claude Monet called *Impression: Sunrise*, however, earned the special scorn of one critic, who dubbed the whole endeavor Impressionism. The name stuck in the public imagination, and the artists largely accepted it: scenes glimpsed for a moment, sketched rapidly in paint as impressions of light and color on the eye—these were indeed some of their concerns.

With Impressionism, art moved outdoors—not the artificial outdoors of Manet, but the true outdoors. Painting up until then had been a studio product, in part because of the cumbersome materials it involved. Thanks to the new availability of portable oil colors in tubes (as they are still manufactured today), many of the Impressionists took their canvases, brushes, and paints outside to be part of the shifting light they wanted to depict. A lovely example

RELATED WORKS



5.16 Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*



8.11 Raimondi/Raphael, *Judgment of Paris*



16.17 Titian, *Fête Champêtre*



21.5 (above) Berthe Morisot. *The Harbor at Lorient*. 1869. Oil on canvas, 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

21.6 (below) Pierre-Auguste Renoir. *Le Moulin de la Galette*. 1876. Oil on canvas, 4'3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " × 5'9". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

of the new "open air" painting is Berthe Morisot's *The Harbor at Lorient* (21.5). The diagonal of a parapet leads our eyes into the composition to the demure figure of Morisot's sister Edma, who has been out for a stroll. Lost in a day-dream, she does not return our gaze, which is now free to roam over the harbor with its milling people and accurately observed ships. The expanses of pale blue sky and water convey the feeling of a wide open space filled with light. Manet admired the painting so extravagantly that Morisot gave it to him.

The light in Renoir's enchanting *Le Moulin de la Galette* (21.6) is a light we have not seen before in painting, the dappled, shifting light that filters through leaves stirred by a breeze. Traditional chiaroscuro required a steady and even source of light for modeling form. But light in nature wasn't always like that. It moved, it shifted, it danced. And the forms it revealed weren't al-

ways clear. A house in the distance might just seem like a patch of yellow. A waltzing couple might be a blur. The desire to capture such optical sensations of perception required a new kind of painting technique. Instead of building a painting up from preliminary layers of drawing and modeling, Renoir began directly with paint, weaving individual brush strokes into an all-over tapestry of colors that resolve into forms. The Impressionists surrendered the smooth surface of academic painting, with its layers of glazes and other studio refinements, for a straightforward painting technique devoted to capturing the fleeting sensations of perception. The resulting sketchiness disturbed Impressionism's critics; to them, the paintings looked unfinished and the forms not solid. Renoir would later adjust his style to create more solid figures and largely abandon modern life for "timeless" subjects, but here he is in his full Impressionist glory, capturing a moment's pleasure with flickering strokes of paint that record sensations of light, color, and movement.

Le Moulin de la Galette was an establishment on the outskirts of Paris where working people gathered on their day off to relax and enjoy themselves. Renoir paints a group of his own more elegant friends there, dancing and talking, drinking and flirting. The leisure activities of the emerging middle class were a favorite subject of the Impressionists, and we may be forgiven if because of them we picture 19th-century France as a land where there is always time to stroll in the country, where a waltz is always playing under the trees.

Another member of the Impressionist group was Edgar Degas. Degas' concerns were somewhat different from the rest of the Impressionists. He was not interested in painting outdoors, or in recording sensations of perception, or in landscape. A superb draftsman, his great interest was the human figure, and he was endlessly ingenious at finding subjects in contemporary life that allowed him to depict it (see 6.3, 6.10). Degas was a Parisian to the core and a keen observer of Parisian life. He was reported to be an excellent mimic, and he delighted in capturing the characteristic gestures of people he watched. We can be sure that the gesture of the woman biting the tip of her thumb in *Women At a Café, Evening* (21.7) was one he saw and filed away for use later. Typical of Degas, the composition seems as spontaneous as a snapshot, though it is actually carefully calculated. From Japanese prints, then widely collected in Paris, Degas borrowed the device of having an element such as a lamppost or pillar interrupt the composition and block our view. Such interruptions also reflect Degas' interest in photography, which lent itself naturally to intriguingly cropped views.

RELATED WORKS



4.25
Pissarro,
*Palette with
a Landscape*



7.9
Morisot, *Girl
Arranging
Her Hair*

21.7 Edgar Degas. *Women at a Café, Evening*. 1877. Pastel on monotype, 16 1/2 × 23 3/4". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.





21.8 Claude Monet. *A Bridge Over a Pool of Water Lilies*. 1899. Oil on canvas, 36½ × 29". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Degas drew the scene in black paint as a monotype, then worked over the print with pastels. Perhaps he felt such an improvised technique was better suited to the unstable nature of contemporary life than oil paint with its history of masterpieces and museums. Above all, the scene reflects Degas' fascination with the social levels of Paris, which were mingling in new ways during his lifetime. The women are prostitutes, gathered at a café to swap stories or wait for clients. The clues are lost on us today, but Degas' contemporaries had no trouble recognizing them, and they took the artist to task for depicting the women with what one critic called "terrifying realism."

The painter who best exemplifies the ideas of Impressionism, and who remained most faithful to them throughout his long life, was Claude Monet. Monet's great subject was landscape. While still in his teens he had taken up the new practice of painting outdoors. As a mature artist Monet roamed the countryside, painting the views near wherever he happened to be living. He often spent the summer months painting along the French seacoast, and he made several painting trips to London and Venice as well. Monet eventually settled in Giverny, a town along the Seine river north of Paris. There he created a garden that became the favorite subject of his later years (21.8). Here is a miracle of Impressionist sensibility, a painting woven entirely of broken greens, the flicked brush strokes suggesting now masses of foliage, now their reflection in the smooth surface of a pond. Water lilies float between the open parentheses of an arching bridge and its shadow. Everything shimmers in the light.

POST-IMPRESSIONISM

The next generation of artists admired many aspects of Impressionism, especially its brightened palette and direct painting technique. But they reacted in various ways to what they perceived as its shortcomings. Their styles are so highly personal that we commonly group them together under the neutral term *Post-Impressionists*, meaning simply the artists that came after Impressionism. They include Georges Seurat, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Paul Cézanne.

RELATED WORKS



1.10 Van Gogh,
Starry Night



2.1
Van Gogh,
*Wheat
Fields and
Cypress
Trees*



3.19
Seurat,
*Bathers at
Asnières*



4.32
Seurat,
*Sunday on
La Grande
Jatte*

Seurat wanted to place Impressionism's intuitive recording of optical sensations on a more scientific footing. His reading of color theories led him to develop the technique of Pointillism, in which discrete dots and dashes of pure color were supposed to blend in the viewer's eye. Of all the Post-Impressionists, Seurat was the most faithful to the idea of painting modern life. In *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (see 4.32), he portrayed ordinary people enjoying their day off with ceremony and dignity, and *Bathers at Asnières* (see 3.19), set in the working-class outskirts of Paris, frankly acknowledged the factories that were now a part of the landscape.

For other Post-Impressionists, the industrialized modern world was not something that needed to be confronted but something that needed to be escaped. Vincent van Gogh arrived in Paris from Antwerp in 1886, but he stayed for only two years—just long enough to catch up with the latest developments in art. Van Gogh settled instead in Arles, a small, rural town in the south of France, where he painted the landscape, people, and things closest to him. The high-key colors, agitated brushwork, and emotional intensity of such works as *The Starry Night* (see 1.10) and *Wheat Field and Cypress Trees* (see 2.1) would have an enormous influence on the next generation of artists.

Paul Gauguin worked in an Impressionist style early in his career, but he soon became dissatisfied. He felt the need for more substance, more solidity of form than could be found in optical perceptions of light. Beyond this, Gauguin was interested in expressing a spiritual meaning in his art. All these he sought on the sun-drenched islands of the South Pacific, where he journeyed to escape what he called "the disease of civilization." The brilliant high-keyed colors of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings reveal his debt to Impressionism. To this lightened palette he added his own innovations: flattened forms and broad color areas, a strong outline, tertiary color harmonies, a taste for the exotic, an aura of mystery, and a quest for the "primitive."

Tē Aa No Areois (*The Seed of the Areoi*) (21.9) was painted about a year into Gauguin's first long stay in Tahiti, and it shows all of these characteristics.

21.9 Paul Gauguin. *Tē Aa No Areois* (*The Seed of Areoi*). 1892. Oil on burlap, 36¼ × 28¾". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



PAUL GAUGUIN

1848–1903



WHEN GAUGUIN SET sail from France in 1891, headed for the remote island of Tahiti in the South Pacific, he wrote a new chapter in the legend of the romantic, bohemian artist. To this day the legend persists. Many people want an artist to be—and Gauguin himself perhaps wanted to be—a dramatic, tormented soul who turns away from the comforts of modern civilization, who is not subject to society's conventions, who thrives in an exotic climate.

Paul Gauguin's origins gave but little hint of what was to come. Born in Paris, he spent part of his childhood in Peru, then returned with his family to France. After a stint in the merchant marine, he settled down and established himself as a stockbroker in Paris. When his career prospered, he married a young Danish woman, Mette Gad, who eventually bore him five children. Sometime in this period he took up painting as a hobby.

Over the years this hobby gradually came to be an obsession. In 1883, when he was thirty-five, Gauguin suddenly announced to his wife that he intended to quit his job and become a full-time painter. His attempts to support himself in this profession were not rewarding; eventually, Gauguin's wife rejoined her

family in Denmark, taking the children, and the couple never lived together again. In 1886 Gauguin made the first of three visits to Brittany, the westernmost province of France. By this time he had already begun to establish his style of painting in broad shapes and flat color areas. A year later the artist journeyed to the island of Martinique, in the Caribbean, where the lush tropical colors heightened his palette even further. Late in 1888 Gauguin paid a brief—and disastrously unpleasant—visit to Van Gogh in the south of France. Finally, disillusioned with Western society and its values, Gauguin departed for Tahiti.

In Tahiti, Gauguin “went native.” He lived in a grass hut and took as his *vahine*, or woman, a thirteen-year-old Tahitian girl, who gave birth to his son. At first all seemed idyllic, but even in the tropics one could not live for free, and Gauguin's finances were tight. He returned to Paris in 1893, hoping to sell his paintings, but the trip was not a success. Two years later Gauguin again set sail for Tahiti—never to return home.

During the second Tahitian period, Gauguin's fortunes went from bad to ghastly. He was wracked by a severe case of syphilis, suffered from a broken ankle that would not heal, and was desperately poor. At lowest ebb he attempted suicide, but the arsenic he swallowed was vomited up, causing him great agony. In 1901 he made his final voyage, to the Marquesas Islands, where—after a series of strokes—he died, peniless and completely alone. Three years after his death a memorial exhibition of Gauguin's work was organized in Paris. The show was a triumph. Gauguin was recognized as one of the great artists of his time.

Through all his ordeals, Gauguin seems to have considered the sacrifice worth it—necessary to achieve the vision he sought in art. As he wrote to his wife, “I am a great artist. . . . I am a great artist and know it. It is because of what I am that I have endured so many sufferings so as to pursue my vocation, otherwise I would consider myself a rogue.”²

Paul Gauguin. *Les Misérables (Self-Portrait)*.
1888. Oil on canvas, 28 × 35".
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.



21.10 Paul Cézanne. *Mont Sainte-Victoire*. 1902–04. Oil on canvas, 27½ × 35¾". Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Whereas Monet's painting is woven together out of distinct brush strokes like a piece of fabric, Gauguin's seems pieced, like a puzzle or a quilt. We can almost imagine assembling it by cutting the shapes from sheets of colored paper. The white motifs on the blue cloth dance free of their ground, as do the yellow palm trees in the background. In the midst of all this whirling brilliance, a golden brown woman sits in quiet dignity, holding a sprouting seed in the palm of her hand. Her pose—legs shown in profile, shoulders depicted frontally—is derived from Egyptian art. Gauguin believed that European art had been in thrall for too long to the legacy of Greece and Rome, and he looked to the art of Egypt, Islam, and Asia to renew it. The woman's gesture is mysterious, and yet we sense that there is some profound meaning to it, if only we could understand what she is offering us. Though he painted a paradise, Gauguin in fact was bitterly disappointed in Tahiti. He felt that European missionaries and colonists had already ruined it. In the end, he painted what he dreamed of finding, because what he found was that there was no escape.

In contrast to Gauguin's need for travel and exotic subjects, Paul Cézanne found everything he needed within walking distance of his home in the south of France. Cézanne admired the Impressionists' practice of working directly from nature, and he approved of their bright palette and their individual strokes of color. He was dissatisfied, though, with their casual compositions and their emphasis on what is transitory, such as the dappled sunlight on

Renoir's spinning dancers. He felt that what had made painting great in the past was structure and order. He admired, for example, Poussin's majestic structuring of nature in such paintings as *The Ashes of Phokion* (see 17.8). Could the brush strokes that the Impressionists used to register optical sensations be used to build something more solid and durable? Could one paint directly from nature and find in it the order and clarity of Poussin? This was the goal that Cézanne set for himself.

A favorite subject of Cézanne's last years was Mont Sainte-Victoire, a mountain near his home (21.10). Altogether he made seventy-five painted or drawn versions of the scene. The broad outlines of the composition are simple and noble: a rectangular band of landscape surmounted by the irregular pyramid of the mountain. This underlying geometry emerges clearly from hundreds of small, vivid patches of color. Each patch is composed of the terse, precise, parallel strokes that Cézanne used to register what he called his "little sensations before nature"—the impressions that colors shimmering in the hot southern sun made on his eyes. Near the foreground, the red tile roofs of farmhouses are like ready-made color patches. The roof of the isolated house near the center reproduces exactly the silhouette of the mountain. To the left, the upward diagonal of the other area around the group of three farmhouses is exactly parallel to the upward slope of the mountain. These echoes are a key to Cézanne's way of thinking: Major structural lines are echoed everywhere. The line of the horizon, for example, is broken into segments, none of them quite horizontal. Segments of almost-horizontal lines appear throughout the painting, even in the sky, which is also painted in patches of color.

With paintings such as *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, Cézanne's treatment of nature grew increasingly abstract. Repetitions and echoes of key contour lines help unify the composition, but they have also begun to take on their own independent logic apart from the subject. Similarly, the terse strokes and color patches help unify the painting's surface, but they tend to fracture the image into facets. The next generation of painters would study these devices and build on them.

BRIDGING THE ATLANTIC: AMERICA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Europe remained America's artistic touchstone during the 19th century, for America viewed itself then as a continuation of European culture. American artists often went to Europe for part of their training, not only to study with European teachers but also to see the collections of the great museums. In Europe, they could absorb more easily the history of their art at first hand. There was no American substitute, for example, for wandering through the ruins of ancient Rome or visiting a Gothic cathedral. Some American artists remained in Europe and spent their careers there. Similarly, some European artists emigrated to America, where opportunity seemed greater. Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism, and Impressionism were broad trends in America as they were in Europe, though without the intense battles they provoked in Paris.

Romanticism was a many-sided movement, and in America it expressed itself most clearly through an attitude toward landscape, an almost mystical reverence for the natural beauty of the unspoiled land itself. The broad vista and threatening storm of Thomas Cole's *The Oxbow* (see 3.29) display one aspect of American Romanticism. Cole was born in England, and his family emigrated to America when he was seventeen. His artistic training was in the United States, although he later spent two years looking at art in Europe.

In contrast to Cole, American-born George Caleb Bingham was largely self-taught. Bingham was the first major painter to live and work west of the

RELATED WORKS



5.18
Cézanne,
Still Life

RELATED WORKS



8.13
Bingham,
*The Jolly
Flat Boat
Men*



4.6
Eakins,
*The Biglin
Brothers*

21.11 George Caleb Bingham.
*Fur Traders Descending the
Missouri*. c. 1845. Oil on canvas,
29 × 36½".
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York.

Mississippi River. His *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri* (21.11), painted around 1845, portrays a French trapper and his son gliding down the Missouri River in a dugout canoe. The air is heavy with the golden light of dawn about to break. The son leans on their cargo, casually cradling a rifle. A duck he has recently shot lies in front of him. Father and son both look our way. The son's gaze is open; his father's more guarded. But the strangest and most haunting gaze in the painting is one we can't decipher at all: that of a bear cub chained to the prow of the canoe. Stock still, doubled by its lengthening reflection in the river, the bear has an eerie presence, reminding us of how mysterious and unknowable nature truly is.

Realism found its finest American practitioner in Thomas Eakins, whose *The Biglin Brothers Racing* is illustrated in Chapter 4 (see 4.6). Eakins had studied in Paris and toured the museums of Europe, but he returned to Philadelphia to paint American lives. Eakins had a distinguished career as a teacher. Among his students was Henry Ossawa Tanner, whose *Banjo Lesson* is illustrated in Chapter 5 (see 5.17). One of the first important African American artists, Tanner moved to Paris in 1894, where he turned increasingly to religious subjects and exhibited regularly in the Salon.

Another American artist who traveled to Paris and remained there was Mary Cassatt. While her artistic training in America had been conservative and academic, her natural inclination drew her toward scenes from daily life, especially intimate domestic scenes of mothers and children—a world men rarely depicted in art. Degas was impressed by the paintings she exhibited at the Salon during the 1870s, and he invited her to show with the Impressionists instead. "Finally I could work with absolute independence without concern for the eventual opinion of a jury," Cassatt later wrote. "I admired Manet, Courbet, and Degas. I detested conventional art. I began to live."³

Painted in 1893, Cassatt's *The Boating Party* shows the joyous results of her artistic liberation (21.12). A well-to-do woman has hired a boatman to take her and her child on a pleasurable outing. The child, sprawled contentedly across her mother's lap, stares at the boatman with undisguised curiosity. The mother looks at him as well, pleasantly, but from a more polite distance. The bold, simplified forms and the broad areas of color reflect the influence of Japanese





prints, which had been the subject of a major exhibition in Paris three years earlier. The straightforward color harmony of blue, yellow, and red is set singing by the boatman's deep blue clothing and the boat's brilliant white gunwale.

21.12 Mary Cassatt. *The Boating Party*. 1893–94. Oil on canvas, 35½ × 46⅞". National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

INTO THE 20TH CENTURY: THE AVANT-GARDE

When you hear people talking about the newest, latest, most advanced art, you may hear them use the French term *avant-garde*. Avant-garde was originally a military term, referring to the detachment of soldiers that went first into battle. By the 1880s, younger artists began to refer to themselves as the avant-garde. They were the boldest artists, going first into uncharted territory and waiting for others to catch up. Their "battle" was to advance the progress of art against the resistance of conservative forces. Newness and change became artistic ideals. Each generation, even each group, believed it was their duty to go further than the one before. As the 20th century began, the idea of the avant-garde was firmly in place, and two of art's basic building blocks, form and color, were the focus of great innovation.

FREEING COLOR: FAUVISM AND EXPRESSIONISM

Though it no longer wielded the power it once did, the annual Salon of Paris was still a conservative force in artistic life, and movements regularly arose against it. In 1903, a group of young artists founded the Salon d'Automne, the "autumn salon," as a progressive alternative. From the exhibits they organized, it was clear who their heroes were. In 1904, the artists of the Salon d'Automne organized a large exhibition of Cézanne. In 1906, they mounted a major retrospective of Gauguin. But the most notorious exhibit of the Salon d'Automne was the one they organized for themselves in 1905. It was then that a critic dubbed them *fauves*, "wild beasts."

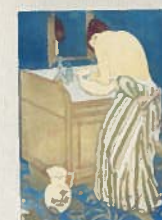
RELATED WORKS



4.35
Whistler,
Nocturne



5.17
Tanner,
Banjo Lesson



8.16
Cassatt,
Woman Bathing

21.13 (above) André Derain. *View of Collioure*. 1905. Oil on canvas, 26 × 32¾". Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany.

21.14 (below) Henri Matisse. *The Joy of Life*. 1905–06. Oil on canvas, 5'8½" × 7'9¼". The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania.



RELATED WORKS



4.29
Matisse,
*On the
Terrace*

One of the paintings that earned the wild beasts their name was André Derain's *View of Collioure* (21.13). Collioure is a small port on the Mediterranean coast of France. Derain and his friend Henri Matisse had spent the summer painting there. Like many young artists, they had been experimenting with the Pointillism of Seurat, which seemed to embody the most advanced thinking of the day. But they found it too theoretical and constraining. The more instinctive works of Van Gogh and Gauguin offered a way out. Derain's debt to Van Gogh is clear in the whirlwinds of short brush strokes, but Van Gogh would never have considered a painting this bare to be finished, nor would he have used pure, unmixed pigments, applied sometimes straight from the tube. The foreground, which Van Gogh would have labored over until it lay firmly underfoot, is nothing but swarms of brush strokes that register a kind

of visual excitement. Most important, color is freed from its role in describing objects. Surely the distant hills and the near grasses were not orange! Derain painted them that way because orange, vibrating strongly near its complementary blue, seemed to convey the emotions he felt in the warmth, the sun, the sea air, the breeze.

Derain's fellow Fauve Henri Matisse took the liberation of color even further in a major work of the following year, *The Joy of Life* (21.14). Pink sky, yellow earth, orange foliage, blue tree trunks—in Matisse's hands, color itself became a world, a place to be. The discrete dots of color that were a legacy of Seurat are gone, as are the frantic brush strokes of Van Gogh. In their place is a radiant sense of well-being, a calm that Gauguin had often sought in his pictures of Tahiti.

Fauvism did not last long, a mere three years or so. *The Joy of Life* is already in some ways beyond it. But though brief, Fauvism was crucial for the development of modern art. Never again would artists feel they must confine themselves to replicating the "real" colors of the natural world. Freed from its descriptive role, color could be used as an independent expressive element.

Fauvism was part of a larger trend in Europe called expressionism, which arose as artists came to believe that the fundamental purpose of art was to express their intense feelings toward the world. Broadly speaking, **expressionism** describes any style where the artist's subjective feelings take precedence over objective observation. Spelled with a capital E, it refers especially to an art movement that developed in Germany in the early 20th century, where the expressive ideal had its greatest influence. Like the Fauves, Expressionist artists looked to Gauguin and Van Gogh as their predecessors. They admired as well the stark works of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, who was then living in Berlin (see 4.36).

One important Expressionist group was Die Brücke ("The Bridge"), founded in Dresden 1905, the same year as the Fauve exhibit in Paris. The bridge the artists had in mind was one they would build through their art to a better, more enlightened future. One of the founders was Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, whose *Street, Dresden* we illustrate here (21.15). The intense, arbitrary colors show Expressionism's link with Fauvism, and the wavering contours suggest the influence of Munch. To the right, a crowd moves toward us. Everyone seems to have a purpose—shopping, going to work, all of the usual reasons that keep city streets teeming with people. To the left, a crowd walks in the other direction. In the center is the small figure of a child. She stands isolated from the crowds, her feet planted apart, resisting the flow. Perhaps she is a stand-in for the artist, who also questions all this coming and going, what purpose it serves, and why everyone is alone.

RELATED WORKS



4.36
Munch,
The Scream

21.15 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.
Street, Dresden. 1907. Oil on
canvas, 4'11¼" × 6'6⅞".
The Museum of Modern Art, New
York.



RELATED WORKS



2.19
Kandinsky,
Composition IX



8.6
Nolde, *The Prophet*

Another Expressionist group was Der Blaue Reiter ("The Blue Rider"), organized in 1911 by the Russian painter Vasili Kandinsky. Kandinsky had been teaching law in Moscow when an exhibit of Impressionist painting so moved him that he abandoned his career and moved to Germany to study art. Kandinsky's early paintings were intensely colored, Fauve-like works on Russian mystical themes. He never abandoned his idea that spirituality and art were linked, but he became increasingly convinced that art's spiritual and communicative power lay in its own language of line, form, and color, and it was he who took the decisive step of eliminating representation altogether in such works as *Black Lines* (21.16). In his own telling, Kandinsky discovered the power of nonrepresentational art when he was struck by the beauty of a painting he didn't recognize in his studio. It turned out to be one of his own works, set the wrong way up. He realized then that subject matter was only incidental to art's impact. About color, Kandinsky wrote, "Generally speaking, color influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul."⁴

SHATTERING FORM: CUBISM

While artists associated with Europe's many expressionist tendencies were exploring the possibilities of color, two artists in Paris were reducing the role of color to a minimum in order to concentrate on the problem of representing form in space. One of these artists was a young Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso. In 1907, at age twenty-six, Picasso had already painted what is widely regarded as a pivotal work in the development of 20th-century art, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J. 111) (21.17).

Les Femmes d'Alger was not Picasso's title but was given to the painting years later by a friend of his. It translates as "the young women of Avignon" and refers to the prostitutes of Avignon Street, a notorious district of Barcelona, Picasso's hometown. In early sketches for the painting Picasso included a sailor entering at left to purchase the prostitute's services, but as the composition evolved, the sailor was eliminated. Instead, the prostitutes display themselves to us.

21.16 Vasili Kandinsky. *Black Lines No. 189*. 1913. Oil on canvas, 51 × 51".
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.





If these are prostitutes, then how extraordinary they are! They are far from enticing. Picasso has chopped them up into planes—flat, angular segments that still hint at three-dimensionality but have no conventional modeling. Almost as an affront to traditional pictures of curvaceous nude bathers, the artist has defined his nudes in sharp geometric shapes. Figure and ground lose their importance as separate entities; the “background”—that is, whatever is not the five figures—is treated in much the same way as the women’s bodies. As a result, the entire picture appears flattened; we have no sense of looking “through” the painting into a world beyond, as with Delacroix or even Manet.

To many people who see *Les Femmes d'Alger* for the first time, the faces cause discomfort. The three at left seem like reasonable enough, if abstract, depictions of faces, except for the fact that the figure at far left, whose face is in profile, has an eye staring straight ahead, much as in an Egyptian painting. But the two faces at right are clearly masks—images borrowed from “primitive” art—and they create a disturbing effect when set atop the nude bodies of European females.

In *Les Femmes d'Alger* Picasso was experimenting with several ideas that he would explore in his art for years to come. First, there is the inclusion of non-traditional elements. Picasso had recently seen sculptures from ancient Iberia (Spain before the Roman Empire), as well as art from Africa. In breaking with Western art conventions that reached back to ancient Greece and Rome, Picasso looked for inspiration from other, equally ancient, traditions. Second, there is the merging of figure and ground, reflecting the assumption that all portions of the work participate in its expression. And third, there is fragmenting of the figures and other elements into flat planes, especially evident in the breasts of the figure at upper right and the mask just below. This last factor proved especially significant for an artistic journey on which Picasso was soon to embark—the movement known as **Cubism**.

21.17 Pablo Picasso. *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*. 1935. Oil on canvas, 8' × 7'8". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

PABLO PICASSO

1881–1973



THE LIFE OF Picasso defies summary in a one-page biography. Few artists have lived so long; none have produced such an immense volume of work in so diverse a range of styles and media; and only a rare few can match him in richness and variety of personal history.

Pablo Ruiz y Picasso was born in the Spanish city of Málaga. He attended art schools in Barcelona and Madrid but became impatient with their rigid, academic approach and soon abandoned formal study. After two trips to Paris—where he saw the work of Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Lautrec—he settled permanently in that city in 1904 and never again lived outside France.

Although Picasso worked in many different styles throughout his life, much of his art is classifiable into the well-known “periods”: the “Blue” period, when his paintings concentrated on images of poverty and emotional depression; the “Rose” period, whose paintings included depictions of harlequins and acrobats; the Cubist period, when he worked with the

painter Georges Braque; and the “Neoclassical” period, in which the figures took on qualities resembling ancient Greek sculptures.

Success came early to Picasso. Except for brief periods when he was short of funds (usually because of some romantic entanglement), he lived well and comfortably and enjoyed a large circle of friends. His work was always in demand, whether in painting, sculpture, prints (of which he made thousands), theatrical design, murals, or ceramics (he took up ceramic art in 1947 and decorated some two thousand pieces in a single year).

It would be impossible to discuss Picasso's life without reference to the women who shared it, because they are a constant presence in his art. Picasso married only twice, but he maintained long, occasionally overlapping, liaisons with several other women. His attachments included Fernande Olivier; Eva Gouel; Olga Koklova, his first wife and the mother of his son Paulo; Marie-Thérèse Walter, mother of his daughter Maïa; Dora Maar; Françoise Gilot, who bore him Claude and Paloma, then later wrote a scandalous memoir of her years with the artist; and finally Jacqueline Roque, whom he married in 1961, in his eightieth year.

Despite his international celebrity, Picasso gave almost no interviews. One of the few took place in 1935 and included this insight into the nature of art: “Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird? Why does one love the night, flowers, everything around one, without trying to understand them? But in the case of a painting people have to understand. If only they would realize above all that an artist works of necessity, that he himself is only a trifling bit of the world, and that no more importance should be attached to him than to plenty of other things which please us in the world, though we can't explain them. People who try to explain pictures are usually barking up the wrong tree.”

Pablo Picasso. *Self-Portrait with Palette*. 1906.
Oil on canvas, 36¼ × 28¾".
Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Picasso's partner in this venture was the artist Georges Braque. Braque was older than Picasso in years but younger as an artist. Picasso, after all, had been an artist since his early teens (see 2.12). He was one of the most naturally gifted artists in history, and his hand could produce any kind of style he asked it to. Braque was less precocious, but because of that more disciplined and determined. He developed an intense personal identification with Cézanne, who also progressed from awkward beginnings to mastery. Picasso grew to share this interest, and for a time he renounced his natural gifts to pursue together with Braque this new line of investigation. Both artists emerged stronger for it.

Picasso and Braque began working together in 1909, and by 1910 their experiments were so closely intertwined that their styles became virtually identical. For a time, they even ceased signing their works. "We were prepared to efface our personalities in order to find originality,"⁶ Braque later recalled. Illustrated here are two paintings by Braque that demonstrate how Cézanne's methods led to something new, *The Castle at La Roche-Guyon* (21.18) and *Le Portugais (The Emigrant)* (21.19).

Castle at La Roche-Guyon depicts a hillside town of houses surmounted by a castle. Following Cézanne's advice, Braque has reduced the architecture to its simplest geometric forms: cube, cylinder, cone. (It was a painting of similar hillside houses that prompted a visiting friend to remark, "Look, little cubes," thus accidentally and misleadingly naming the style.) We recognize Cézanne's parallel brush strokes and color patches, which seem to break the surface into facets (see 21.10). Also learned from Cézanne is the way the principal linear motifs of the composition echo outward to influence everything around them. Here, the earth around the castle and the surrounding green of nature all partake of the angles and facets of the houses. Braque has reined in Cézanne's bright Impressionist palette to a restricted range of gray, ocher, and green, allowing the forms to interpenetrate more easily. Some of the forms seem solid, but others shade off into transparency.

21.18 (left) Georges Braque. *The Castle at La Roche-Guyon*. 1909. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 23¾". Musée d'Art Moderne, Villeneuve-d'Ascq.

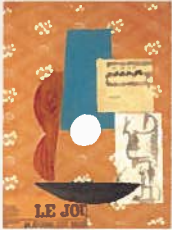
21.19 (right) Georges Braque. *Le Portugais (The Emigrant)*. 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 46 × 32". Kunstmuseum Basel.



RELATED WORKS



2.13
Picasso,
*Seated
Woman*



7.17
Picasso,
*Guitar, Sheet
Music, and
Glass*

In *The Emigrant*, a fully Cubist work, these discoveries are taken to their logical conclusion. The figure of a seated man playing his guitar is broken into facets based in simple geometric shapes—triangle, circle, line. Because the forms are so basic, they easily echo throughout, unifying the composition. Color is reduced to gray warmed with ochre, allowing the shards of the foreground and background to interpenetrate at will. The principal lines of the composition suggest a classic Renaissance pyramid such as Leonardo used for *Mona Lisa* (see 2.4). Visual cues help viewers orient themselves: the open hole and strings of the guitar; the player's mustache; the rope to the right that sets the scene on a dock. The addition of stenciled letters, an intrusion from the "real world," was Braque's innovation. As Cubism progressed, the two artists experimented with incorporating other elements such as newspaper, wallpaper, and fabric. The psychological tension of merging the "real" with the "not real" (the illusory world of paint on canvas) would have important applications for later 20th-century art. Picasso and Braque also realized that the geometric rhythms of an object could be assembled from multiple views. For example, if you look at a pitcher from the front, the side, the top, the bottom, you will see a number of versions, but your true understanding of a pitcher is the sum of all of these. With Cubism, this sum of viewpoints could be painted. Cubism thus followed up on another discovery implicit in much of Cézanne's work: the eye is always moving, and motion is how we assimilate the world.

The great beauty of Cubism was that, like linear perspective, anyone could do it. Cubism offered the most original and powerful system for rethinking the representation of form and space since the Renaissance. Over the ensuing decade and more, many young artists in Europe passed through a Cubist phase in order to break free of the past.

FANTASY AND FUTURISM

Cubism poured all its energy into formal concerns. The subjects that Braque and Picasso treated while working out their discoveries were so traditional as to be neutral—a still life on a table top, a seated figure with a musical instrument, a landscape with some houses. Any of these subjects could have been painted in the 17th century. Other innovators, however, believed that art would move forward only through exploring new subjects. One of the most original and influential of these artists was the Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico. "It is most important that we should rid art of all that it has contained of *recognizable material* to date, all familiar subject matter, all traditional ideas, all popular symbols must be banished forthwith," he wrote. "To become truly immortal a work of art must escape all human limits: logic and common sense will only interfere. But once these barriers are broken it will enter the regions of childhood vision and dream."⁷

Dreams are what come to mind in front of *The Disquieting Muses* (21.20). The hot afternoon sun casts long shadows across an open plaza. There are no trees, no people. Nothing of nature at all. In the background, banners snap in the wind over an early Renaissance fortress. Next to the fortress is a factory. In the shade, a statue in classical garments stares (though her face is featureless) at the two presences in the foreground, the disquieting muses themselves: a pockmarked classical column, a sculpture with a hat-maker's dummy for a head, a tailor's dummy seated nearby. The painting is composed of fragments of Italy's own past and present—ancient Rome, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution. How can we make any sense out of what history has left to us, it seems to ask? What do we do now?

In contrast to De Chirico's motionless dream world, a group of Italian artists calling themselves the Futurists decided that motion itself was the glory of the new 20th century, especially the motion of marvelous new machines. The view from an airplane, the feeling of racing through the countryside in an automobile—how could these new sensations not be reflected in art? In Chapter 4 we looked at a Futurist painting by Giacomo Balla (see 4.54). Here we



illustrate a work by the movement's foremost sculptor, Umberto Boccioni (21.21). *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* represents a striding human figure as the Futurist imagined it to be in the light of contemporary science: a field of energy interacting with everything around it. "Sculpture," wrote Boccioni, "must give life to objects by making their extension in space palpable, systematic, and plastic, since no one can any longer believe that an object ends where another begins and that our body is surrounded by anything . . . that does not cut through it and section it in an arabesque of directional curves."⁸

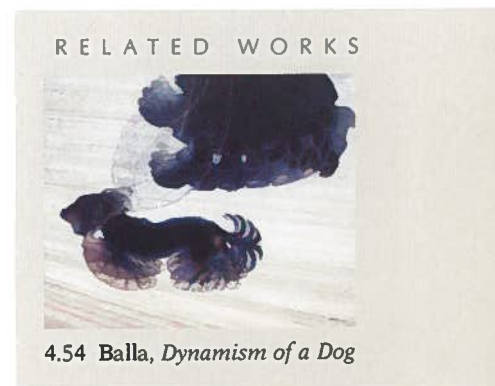
21.20 (left) Giorgio de Chirico. *The Disquieting Muses*. 1916. Oil on canvas, 38¼ × 26". Private collection.

21.21 (right) Umberto Boccioni. *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. 1913. Bronze, height 43¾". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

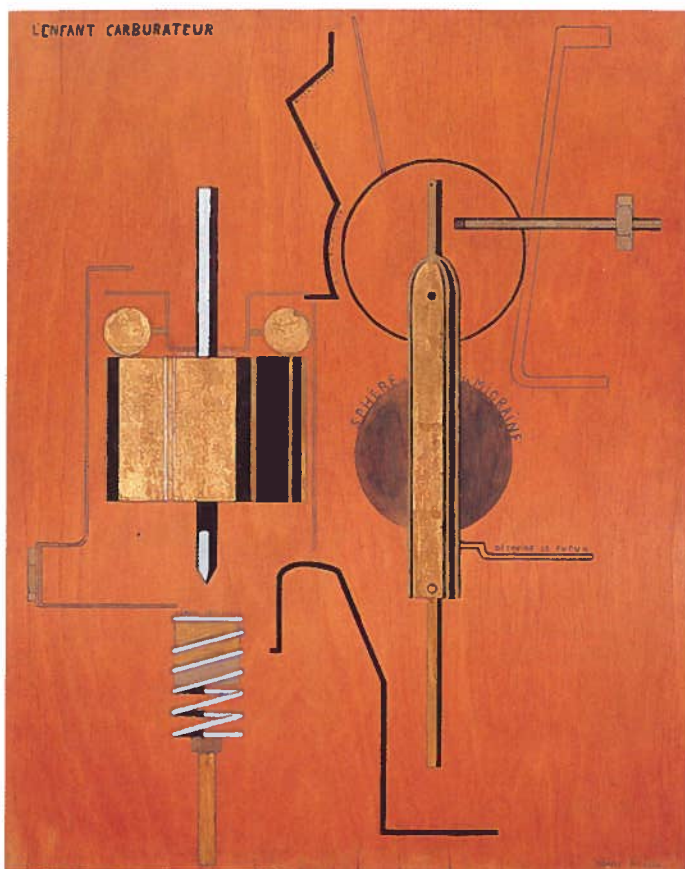
WORLD WAR I AND AFTER: DADA AND SURREALISM

In 1914, conflict broke out in the Balkan Peninsula. Soon, thanks to treaties and alliances, every major power in Europe was drawn into war. Soldiers with their heads full of gallant ideas about battle rushed headlong into the most horrible deaths imaginable. Trench warfare, poison gas, bombardment by air, machine guns, tanks, submarines—science and technology, in which the 19th century had put its faith, revealed their dark side. The ideal of progress was shown to be utterly hollow, and ten million people lost their lives in one of the bloodiest wars in history.

In 1916, a group of artists waiting out the war in Zurich, in neutral Switzerland, banded together as a protest art movement called Dada. What did Dada protest? Everything. Dada was anti. Anti art, anti middle-class society, anti politicians, anti good manners, anti business-as-usual, anti all that had brought about the war. In that sense, Dada was a big *no*. But Dada was also a



4.54 Balla, *Dynamism of a Dog*



21.22 (left) Francis Picabia. *The Child Carburetor* (*L'Enfant Carburateur*). 1919. Oil, enamel, metallic paint, gold leaf, pencil and crayon on stained plywood, 49 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

21.23 (right) Marcel Duchamp. *Fountain*. 1963 replica of 1917 original. Porcelain, height 14". Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington.

big yes. Yes to creativity, to life, to silliness, to spontaneity. Dada was provocative and absurd. Above all, it refused to make sense or to be pinned down.

More an attitude than a coherent movement, Dada embraced as many different kinds of art as there were artists. In Germany, Dada developed a biting political edge in the work of Hannah Höch and others (see 9.17). In France, its absurd and philosophical aspects came to the fore. Picabia, a French artist who joined the Dada movement, delighted in the similarities between humans and machines, and he created paintings that looked like diagrams. *L'Enfant Carburateur* (*The Child Carburetor*) (21.22) would seem to offer a perfectly reasonable plan for constructing a child if the child you have in mind is part of an internal combustion engine. A carburetor is designed to produce an explosive mixture of fuel and air, and perhaps Picabia thought that children weren't so different. Labels point out such key areas as "Sphere of the Migraine" and "Destroy the Future." The materials include gold leaf, which gives the work a strangely precious and perhaps even sacred aura.

The Dadaist with the most lasting impact on American art in the 20th century was Marcel Duchamp, whose "ready-mades" probed the border between art and life in a way that later generations have returned to again and again. A ready-made is a work of art that the artist has not *made* but *designated*. Undoubtedly the most notorious of Duchamp's ready-mades was *Fountain*, a work of 1917 shown here in a signed replica of 1963 (21.23). *Fountain* was an ordinary porcelain urinal set upright on its back. Duchamp entered it into a New York art exhibition under a pseudonym, R. Mutt, which he slobbered on in black paint as a signature. We illustrate a replica because

RELATED WORKS



9.17 Höch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*

Duchamp never intended for his ready-mades to be permanent. His project was to find an object—he insisted that it be an object with no aesthetic interest whatsoever—and exhibit it as art. After the exhibition, the object was to be returned to life.

Fountain was pure provocation. The exhibition organizers had stated that all entries would be accepted, and Duchamp wanted to see whether they really meant it. Yet as Duchamp well knew, *Fountain* also raised interesting philosophical questions: Does art have to be made by an artist? Is art a form of attention? If we have spent our lives perfecting this form of attention on various acknowledged masterpieces, can we then bestow it on absolutely anything? If so, how is an art object different from any other kind of object? Does art depend on context, on being shown in an “art place” such as a museum or gallery? Can something be art in one place and not another? Is *Fountain* still art today, or was it only art for the time that Duchamp said it was? Duchamp thought that art and life could regularly trade places, and he suggested helpfully that one could use a Rembrandt as an ironing board.

A movement that grew out of Dada was Surrealism, which was formulated in Paris in the 1920s. Like Dada, Surrealism was not a style but a way of life. Fascinated by the theories of Sigmund Freud, who was then setting out his revolutionary ideas in Vienna, the Surrealists appreciated the logic of dreams, the mystery of the unconscious, and the lure of the bizarre, the irrational, the incongruous, and the marvelous. A central Surrealist practice, at least theoretically, was automatism—writing or drawing that flowed straight from the subconscious, unchecked by reason or inhibitions. The combination of automatism and dream imagery resulted in paintings such as André Masson's *The Blood of the Birds* (21.24). Onto a surface of sand, Masson glued feathers collected during random walks. He then dripped and splattered paint across the surface in a series of “automatic” gestures. The American artist Jackson Pollock would later draw on these ideas to make his famous drip paintings, which also grew out of a Surrealist belief in the creative superiority of the unconscious (see 22.1).

21.24 André Masson. *The Blood of the Birds*. 1925/26. Tempera, sand, and feathers on canvas, 29½ × 29½".
Musée National d'Art Moderne,
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



RELATED WORKS



5.10
Kahlo,
*The Two
Fridas*



5.21
Magritte,
*Delusions of
Grandeur II*



9.19
Miller,
*Solarized
Portrait*

A distinctive contribution of Surrealism to art was the poetic object—not a sculpture as it had traditionally been understood but a *thing*. Surrealist objects often juxtapose incongruous elements in order to provoke a shiver of strangeness or disorientation. One of the most famous and unsettling Surrealist objects is Meret Oppenheim's *Object (Luncheon in Fur)* (21.25). Perhaps Oppenheim witnessed two ladies taking tea together in their best fur coats and melted them into a dreamlike object? Perhaps we really are supposed to imagine bringing the furry cup to our lips for lunch. Freud's theories famously claimed a large role for unconscious sexual desire, and Surrealist works often have erotic overtones.

Possibly the most famous of all Surrealist works is Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* (21.26), a small painting that many people call simply "the melted watches." Dali's art, especially here, offers a fascinating paradox: His rendering of forms is precise and meticulous—we might say *super*realistic—yet the forms could not possibly be real. *The Persistence of Memory* shows a bleak, arid, decayed landscape populated by an odd, fetal-type creature (some think representative of the artist) and several limp watches—time not only stopped but melting away. Perhaps in this work Dali's fantasy, his dream, is to triumph once and for all over time.

Joan Miró's *Carnival of the Harlequin* (21.27), representing the abstract phase of Surrealism, shows us not the oddly distorted landscape of a Dali work but rather a completely invented landscape—and one teeming with life. Miró's fantasy world is aswarm with odd little creatures—animals and fish and insects and perhaps a snake or two—as well as nameless abstract forms that



21.25 (above) Meret Oppenheim. *Object (Luncheon in Fur)*. 1936. Fur-covered cup, saucer and spoon, overall height 2½". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

21.26 (below) Salvador Dali. *The Persistence of Memory*. 1931. Oil on canvas, 9½ × 13". The Museum of Modern Art, New York.





participate in the artist's madcap party. Much of Miró's imagery suggests a cheerful sexuality, as though the whole space of the universe were occupied with lighthearted erotic play and reproduction. In contrast to the utter stillness of Dali's *The Persistence of Memory*, Miró's *Carnival* is all movement. There are even a few musical notes at the top to accompany the dance. As interpreted by Miró, Surrealism's dreams are lively ones.

21.27 Joan Miró. *Carnival of the Harlequin*. 1924–25. Oil on canvas, 26 × 36". Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.

BETWEEN THE WARS: BUILDING NEW SOCIETIES

Surrealism offered a personal solution to life during the years following the trauma of World War I. But in the view of many artists, society, and possibly even human nature itself, had to be transformed so that such a horror would not happen again. That art could play a central role in bringing about a better society was a 19th-century idea, yet it found renewed application after World War I in a collective approach. It was not through the personal insights of individual artists that the world would change, but through the cooperative endeavors of artists, designers, and architects. Together, they could create a new environment for living, one that was completely modern, purged of associations with the past, and comfortable with the new spirit of the machine age.

Even more radical opportunities presented themselves in Russia and Mexico, where successful revolutions had toppled older governments. In these countries, new societies were being formed that embraced lofty ideals of social and economic equality for all and a concern for ordinary workers. In Chapter 7, we looked at a fresco commissioned from Diego Rivera by the revolutionary Mexican government (see 7.4). Prior to the Mexican Revolution, Rivera had been living in Paris and painting in an advanced Cubist style. On his return to Mexico, he developed a more accessible style for his murals, and he stayed with it for the rest of his career. His great desire was to communicate with everyone, to leave no one out. The demands of the European avant-garde must have seemed far away.

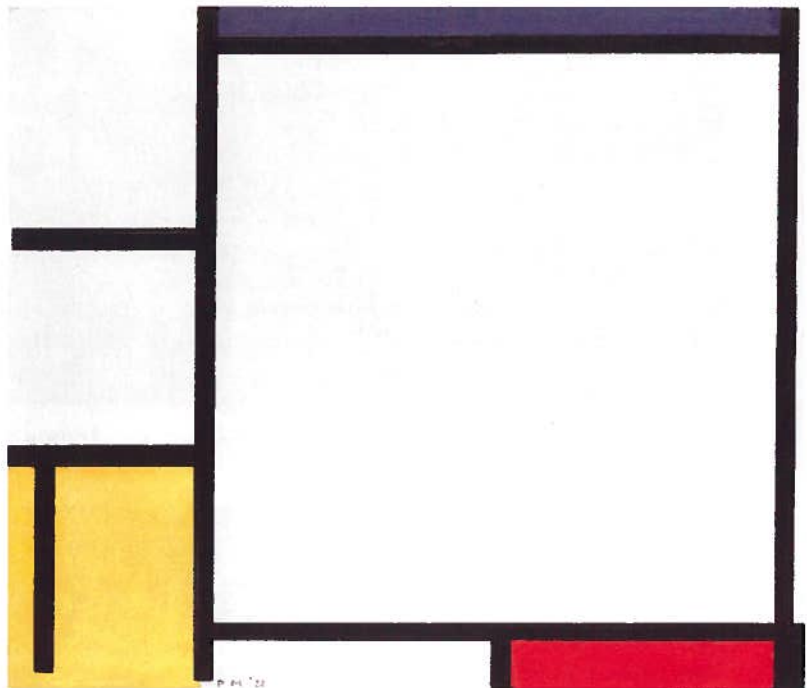
RELATED WORKS



7.4
Rivera,
Mixtec Culture



21.28 (left) Vladimir Tatlin.
Model for the Monument to the
Third International. 1919–1920.
Wood, iron, and glass. Destroyed.



21.29 (right) Piet Mondrian.
*Composition with Red, Yellow, and
Blue*. 1922. Oil on canvas, 16½ ×
19¼".
Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

The Soviet government of Russia would eventually demand that its artists similarly turn their backs on modern tendencies, but during the first few years after the Russian Revolution of 1917, many artists believed that only the most revolutionary art could bring about a new world. One important movement was Constructivism, which had been founded by Vladimir Tatlin in 1913. Tatlin believed that advanced ideas about art should be put to practical use, and that artists should apply their talents to architecture, graphic design, theatrical productions, textiles, monuments, festivals, and all other visual forms. Tatlin's own design for the Monument to the Third International demonstrates what he thought could be done (**21.28**). Designed to house the Russian congress, the monument was never built, but what a work of architecture it would have been! An open steel framework would support the building from the outside, its spiral combining the industrial look of the Eiffel Tower (see 13.22) with a Futurist sense of motion. Suspended inside would be four chambers in pure geometric forms: a cube, a pyramid, a cone, and a sphere. The various branches of the government would meet in these rooms, which would rotate at speeds varying from one revolution per year (the large cube at the bottom) to one revolution per hour (the small sphere at the top).

When Constructivism was condemned by the Soviet regime in 1922, many of its artists left the Soviet Union to spread its ideals elsewhere. One of the European movements touched by Constructivist ideas was De Stijl, in the Netherlands. The most famous artist associated with De Stijl was Piet Mondrian, whose *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* we looked at in Chapter 5 (see 5.29). Mondrian painted *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* in response to the rhythm of life

he discovered in New York, where he eventually emigrated late in his life. More typical of the work Mondrian painted in Europe is the tranquil *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue* (21.29). Beginning as a painter of flowers and landscapes, Mondrian distilled his art to what he considered to be the most universal signs of human order: vertical and horizontal lines, and the primary colors of red, yellow, and blue. To Mondrian, these formal elements radiated a kind of intellectual beauty that was humanity's greatest achievement. Nature, with its irrationality and irregularity, encouraged humankind's primitive, animal instincts, resulting in such disasters as war. In Mondrian's vision of the world, people would be surrounded by rational beauty, and thus become balanced themselves.

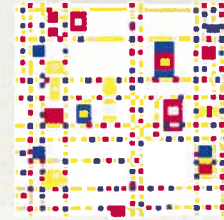
Mondrian thought of his canvases as places where we could turn to stabilize ourselves and restore our calm. He also believed that they would not be necessary—no art would be necessary—in a future where people lived in environments such as Gerrit Rietveld's Schroeder House (21.30). Rietveld was the foremost architect of De Stijl, and Schroeder House looks very much like a Mondrian painting projected into three dimensions. Schroeder House is like an inhabitable sculpture—a construction in space of intersecting vertical and horizontal planes, color-coded inside and out in primary colors. As in Mondrian's painting, symmetrical elements are placed in subtle asymmetrical balance. No art hangs inside. Instead, the floor of one room is painted red, the wall of another is painted blue, and so on. Movable partitions allow the interior space to be reconfigured, and spaces flow into each other rather than being clearly separated.

Construction by intersecting planes in space is also the principle behind Marcel Breuer's famous armchair, designed in 1928 (21.31). Breuer was a teacher and a former student at the Bauhaus, a school of design founded in Germany in 1919 by the architect Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus was yet another incarnation of the ideal of collective artistic endeavor in the years following World War I. Students studied a variety of disciplines, and their education was designed to eliminate traditional divisions between painters, sculptors, architects, craft artists, graphic designers, and industrial designers. The word *Bauhaus* translates roughly as "building house," and its leaders sought to "build" new guiding principles of design compatible with 20th-century technology. Structures, rooms, furniture, and everyday household objects were stripped of superficial embellishment and pared down to clean lines. Breuer's armchair, made of canvas panels and steel tubing, was supposed to be

RELATED WORKS



5.30 Klee, *Landscape with Yellow Birds*



5.29 Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*

21.30 (left) Gerrit Rietveld. Schroeder House, Utrecht, The Netherlands. 1923–24.

21.31 (right) Marcel Breuer. Armchair. c. 1928. Chrome-plated tubular steel with canvas slings. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



economical to manufacture, making good design available to everyone. After the Nazis closed the Bauhaus in 1933, several of its key members emigrated to the United States, and the school's influence continued to be felt in all design disciplines for decades.

The Bauhaus and De Stijl both sought to create harmony between individual lives and modern industry and technology. A man who painted visions of what this might be like was Fernand Léger (21.32). *Woman and Child* is a grand, symphonic composition like those of the 19th century, but this is a *modern* symphony, with straight lines, right angles, clear shapes, and forthright colors. Léger forged a painting style that has the honest surfaces of industrial production—even the bodies seem to be made of manufactured parts. Yet the effect is not alienating at all. The woman and child are content in their calm, ordered, well-lit world. In a lecture entitled “The Machine Aesthetic,” Léger praised the beauty of industrial products and the dedication of those who made them. “A worker would never dare deliver a product other than clear-cut, polished, burnished,” he later said. “The painter must aim at making a clear-cut picture, clean, with *finish*.”⁹ Léger had painted in a radical Cubist style before the war. After the war, he was not the only artist to step back from the avant-garde in what one French critic called “the return to order.”

In the United States, the period following World War I also saw the flowering of art dedicated to building a better society. One of the most vibrant movements of the time arose in the New York neighborhood called Harlem. Harlem is the northeast section of Manhattan Island. It was and is home to many black Americans, of all economic classes. During the decade of the 1920s Harlem served as a magnet for some of the greatest talents of that generation—artists, musicians, composers, actors, writers, poets, scientists, and educators. Louis Armstrong came to Harlem, and so did Duke Ellington. The writer Langston Hughes and the poet Countee Cullen were in residence. Cre-

21.32 Fernand Léger. *Woman and Child*. 1922. Oil on canvas, 5'7¼" × 7'11".
Öffentliche Kunstsammlung,
Kunstmuseum, Basel.





ative energy was in the air, and for a time it seemed as though almost every Harlemit was doing something wonderful—a book, a play, a Broadway show, a sculpture series, a jazz opera, a public mural. This phenomenon came to be called the Harlem Renaissance.

Much of the spirit embodied in the Harlem Renaissance had to do with merging three experiences: the rich heritage of Africa, the ugly legacy of slavery in America (ended barely more than fifty years earlier), and the realities of modern urban life. There is no single style associated with artists of the Harlem Renaissance, but the work of the painter and illustrator Aaron Douglas is representative of the spirit and aspirations of the group. Douglas, who was born in Kansas, moved to Harlem in 1924. During the Harlem Renaissance years he gradually developed a style he called “geometric symbolism.” He worked prolifically through the twenties but is perhaps most noted for a series of murals done a few years later, for the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. The series is called *Aspects of Negro Life*. Our illustration shows the segment that Douglas called *From Slavery Through Reconstruction* (21.33).

Several of Douglas’ influences are evident in the mural. Douglas’ simplification and stylization of forms surely derived from his studies of West African sculpture. Space is flattened, as in the paintings of modern masters like Gauguin (see 21.9), and the palette of colors is limited, as in Cubism (see 21.18, 21.19). This section of the mural shows a progression from left to right and (as the title implies) from slavery to freedom. At left, the silhouette figures seem bowed down and fearful. One plays a drum, symbolic of African heritage. At right, the figures are upright and proud and joyful. One plays a trumpet, symbolic of the Jazz Age and of black musical brilliance. The dominant center figure synthesizes these polarities. He points upward, toward freedom.

The Harlem Renaissance, as a movement, lasted only a decade. Its momentum was stopped by the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression of the 1930s. Aaron Douglas’ vision of a better society was actually painted during the early years of the Depression, as the dream of the Harlem Renaissance faded. It is nevertheless a vision of hope. Other artists continued to believe that art had a social mission during these difficult times. Dorothea Lange documented the dignity of ordinary people faced with extraordinary adversity in photographs such as *Migrant Mother* (see 9.11). Rockwell Kent produced a stirring call to action in *Workers of the World, Unite!* (see 8.8). The Depression was in fact worldwide. In Europe, severe hardship fueled nationalist resentments against the unjust settlement of World War I. Anger swept the fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini into power in Germany and Italy. In 1939, the world was plunged again into war.

21.33 Aaron Douglas. *Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery Through Reconstruction*. 1934. Oil on canvas, 5' × 11'7".

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

RELATED WORKS



3.11
Picasso,
Guernica



7.6
Lawrence,
Cabinet Maker

8.7
Hu Yichuan,
To the Front!



8.8
Kent, *Workers of the World, Unite!*

9.11
Lange,
Migrant Mother



GLOSSARY

Words in *italics* are also defined in the glossary. Numbers in **boldface** following the definitions refer to the numbers of figures in the text that best illustrate the definitions.

abstract Descriptive of art in which the forms of the visual world are purposefully simplified, fragmented, or otherwise distorted. Compare *representational*, *naturalistic*, *stylized*, *nonrepresentational*. (2.14)

Abstract Expressionism An American art movement of the mid-20th century characterized by large ("heroic") scale and *nonrepresentational* imagery. An outgrowth of *surrealism*, Abstract Expressionism emphasized the artist's spontaneous expression as it flowed from the subconscious, which in turn was believed to draw on primal energies. See also *action painting*. (22.1)

acrylic A synthetic plastic resin used as a *binder* for artists' paints. Also used in the plural to refer to the paints themselves: acrylics. (7.15)

action painting *Nonrepresentational* painting in which the physical act of applying paint to a *support* in bold, spontaneous gestures supplies the expressive content. First used to describe the work of certain *Abstract Expressionist* painters. (22.2)

adobe Sun-dried (as opposed to furnace-baked) brick made of clay mixed with straw. (13.1)

aesthetics The branch of philosophy concerned with the feelings aroused in us by sensory experiences such as seeing and hearing. Aesthetics examines, among other things, the nature of art and the nature of beauty.

afterimage An image that persists after the visual stimulus that first produced it has ceased. The mechanics of vision cause an afterimage to appear in the *complementary* hue of the original stimulus. (4.31)

aisle Generally, a passageway flanking a central area. In a basilica or cathedral, aisles flank the *nave*. (15.4)

alla prima Italian for "all in one go." In oil painting, the technique of completing a painting in a single session, as opposed to building it up slowly over a period of time. *Alla prima* technique rules out such time-consuming procedures as *glazing* in favor of a more spontaneous approach that often features opaque *impasto* and visible brush strokes. (7.9)

ambulatory In church architecture, a vaulted passageway for walking (ambulating) around the *apse*. An ambulatory allows visitors to walk around the altar and choir areas without disturbing devotions in progress. (15.14)

analogous harmony The juxtaposition of hues that contain the same color in differing proportions, such as red-violet, pink, and yellow-orange, all of which contain red. (4.29)

animal style A style in European and western Asian art in ancient and medieval times based in linear, stylized animal forms. Animal style is often found in metalwork. (15.11)

appropriation A postmodern practice in which one artist reproduces an image created by another artist and claims it as his or her own. In postmodern thought, appropriation is felt to challenge traditional ideas about authenticity and individuality, the location of meaning within a work of art, and copyright issues involving intellectual property. (22.21)

apse The semicircular, protruding niche at one or both ends of the *nave* of a Roman *basilica*. In basilica-based church architecture, an apse houses the altar and may be elongated to include a choir. (15.4)

aquatint An *intaglio* printmaking method in which areas of tone are created by dusting resin particles on a plate and then allowing acid to bite around the particles. Also, a *print* made by this method. (8.15)

arch In architecture, a curved structure, usually made of wedge-shaped stones, that serves to span an opening. An arch may be semicircular or rise to a point at the top. (13.9)

Archaic In the history of ancient Greece, the period between 8th and 6th centuries B.C.E., when what would later be leading characteristics of Greek art can be seen in their earliest form. (14.22)

architrave In *Classical* architecture, the lowest band of the *entablature*. (13.5)

Art Deco An art style of the 1920s and 1930s based on modern materials (steel, chrome, glass) and repetitive geometric patterns.

assembling The technique of creating a sculpture by grouping or piecing together distinct elements, as opposed to *casting*, *modeling*, or *carving*. An assembled sculpture may be called an **assemblage**. (11.9)

asymmetrical Not *symmetrical*. (5.12)

atmospheric perspective See *perspective*. (4.49)

auteur French for "author," the word describes a filmmaker, usually a director, who exercises extensive creative control over his or her films, imbuing them with a strong personal style. (9.29)

axis In three-dimensional art, an imaginary straight line that serves as an implied center of gravity and around which elements are grouped. In two-dimensional art, an imaginary straight line that divides a pictorial field into two equal parts either horizontally (a horizontal axis), vertically (a vertical axis), or diagonally from corner to corner (a diagonal axis).

Baroque The period of European history from the 17th through the early 18th centuries, and the styles of art that flourished during it. Originating in Rome and associated at first with the Counter Reformation of the Catholic Church, the dominant style of Baroque art was characterized by dramatic use of light, bold colors and *value* contrasts, emotionalism, a tendency to push into the

- viewer's space, and an overall theatricality. Pictorial composition often emphasized a diagonal *axis*, and sculpture, painting, and architecture were often combined to create ornate and impressive settings. (17.1)
- barrel vault** See *vault*. (13.10)
- basilica** In Roman architecture, a standard type of rectangular building with a large, open interior. Generally used for administrative and judicial purposes, the basilica was adapted for early church architecture. Principal elements of a basilica are *nave*, *clerestory*, *aisle*, and *apse*. (15.4)
- bas-relief** See *relief*. (11.12)
- Bauhaus** A school of art and architecture in Germany from 1919 to 1933 whose influence was felt across the 20th century. Bauhaus instructors broke down the barriers between art, craft, and design, and they believed that artists could improve society by bringing the principles of good design to industrial mass production. (21.31)
- bay** In architecture, a modular unit of space, generally cubic and generally defined by four supporting *piers* or columns. (13.10)
- binder** A substance in paints that causes particles of *pigment* to adhere to one another and to a *support*.
- broken color** 1. A color whose pure *hue* has been toned down ("broken") through the addition of a second color, often a *complementary*. 2. In painting, the practice, popularized by the *Impressionists*, of creating a color area from small strokes of individual colors, often closely related, that blend optically when seen at a certain distance. See *optical color mixture*. (2.5)
- buttress, buttressing** In architecture, an exterior support that counteracts the outward thrust of an arch, dome, or wall. A *flying buttress* consists of a strut or arch segment running from a freestanding *pier* to an outer wall. (13.12)
- calligraphy** From the Greek for "beautiful writing," handwriting considered as an art, especially as practiced in China, Japan, and Islamic cultures. (19.22)
- cantilever** In architecture, a horizontal structural element supported at one end only, with the other end projecting into space. (13.38)
- capital** In architecture, the decorative sculpted block surmounting a column. In *Classical* architecture, the form of the capital is the most distinctive element of the various *orders*. (13.3)
- Carolingian** The period in medieval European history dominated by the Frankish rulers of the Carolingian dynasty, roughly 750–850 C.E. In art, the term refers especially to the artistic flowering sponsored by Charlemagne (ruled 800–840). (15.13)
- cartoon** A full-scale preparatory drawing for a *fresco* or *mural*.
- casting** The process of making a sculpture or other object by pouring a liquid into a *mold*, letting it harden, and then releasing it. Common materials used for casting include bronze, plaster, clay, and synthetic resins. (11.4)
- ceramic** Made of baked ("fired") clay. See also *terra cotta*. (12.1)
- chiaroscuro** Italian for "light-dark." In two-dimensional, representational art, the technique of using *values* to record light and shadow, especially as they provide information about three-dimensional *form*. See *model*. (4.20)
- chroma** See *intensity*. (4.26)
- cire-perdue** See *lost-wax casting*. (11.4)
- Classical** Most narrowly, the "middle" period of ancient Greek civilization, beginning around 480 B.C.E. and lasting until around 350 B.C.E. More broadly, the civilizations of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and the centuries during which they flourished. Most generally, and with a lowercase *c*, any art that emphasizes rational order, balance, harmony, and restraint, especially if it looks to the art of ancient Greece and Rome for models. (14.24, 13.28)
- clerestory** The topmost part of a wall, extending above flanking elements such as *aisles*, and set with windows to admit light. In a *basilica* or church, the clerestory is the topmost zone of the *nave*. (15.2)
- coffer** A recessed, geometrical panel in a ceiling, often used in multiples as a decorative element. (13.15)
- collage** From the French for "glue," the practice of pasting shapes cut from such real-world sources as magazines, newspapers, wallpaper, and fabric onto a surface. Also, a work of art made in this way. (7.18)
- Color Field painting** A style of nonrepresentational painting featuring broad "fields" or areas of color. Arising in the 1950s after *Abstract Expressionism*, it shared that movement's fondness for large *scale* as well as its desire to transcend the visible world in favor of universal truths viewed as unconscious or spiritual. (22.4)
- color wheel** A circular arrangement of hues used to illustrate a particular color theory or system. The most well-known color wheel uses the spectral *hues* of the rainbow plus the intermediary hue of red-violet. (4.24)
- complementary colors** *Hues* that intensify each other when juxtaposed and dull each other when mixed (as pigment). On a *color wheel*, complementary hues are situated directly opposite one another. (4.24, 4.28)
- composition** The organization of lines, shapes, colors, and other art elements in a work of art. More often applied to two-dimensional art; the broader term is design.
- Conceptual Art** Art created according to the belief that the essence of art resides in a motivating idea, and that any physical realization or recording of this idea is secondary. Conceptual art arose during the 1960s as artists tried to move away from producing objects that could be bought and sold. Conceptual works are often realized physically in materials that have little or no inherent value, such as a series of photographs or texts that document an activity. They are often ephemeral. (22.17)
- Constructivism** A Russian art movement of the early 20th century. Based in the principles of geometric abstraction, Constructivism was founded around 1913 by Vladimir Tatlin and condemned in 1922 by the Soviet government. (21.28)
- content** What a work of art is about, its subject matter.
- context** The personal and social circumstances surrounding the making, viewing, and interpreting of a work of art; the varied connections of a work of art to the larger world of its time and place.
- contour** The perceived edges of a three-dimensional form such as the human body. Contour lines are lines used to indicate these perceived edges in two-dimensional art. (4.4)
- contrapposto** A pose that suggests the potential for movement, and thus life, in a standing human figure. Developed by sculptors in ancient Greece, contrapposto places the figure's weight on one foot, setting off a series of adjustments to the hips and shoulders that produce a subtle S-curve. (11.20)
- cool colors** Colors ranged along the blue curve of the *color wheel*, from green through violet. (4.24)

Corinthian order See *order*. (13.3)

cornice In *Classical* architecture, the uppermost element of an *entablature*; a raking cornice frames the upper, slanting edges of a *pediment*. More generally, a horizontal, projecting element, usually molded and usually at the top of a wall. (13.5)

cross-cutting In film, the technique of alternating between two or more ongoing scenes so that all seem to move forward simultaneously.

cross-hatching See *hatching*.

Cubism A movement developed during the early 20th century by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. In its most severe “analytical” phase, Cubism abstracted the forms of the visible world into fragments or facets drawn from multiple points of view, then constructed an image from them which had its own internal logic. A severely restricted *palette* (black, white, brown) and a painting technique of short, distinct “touches” allowed shards of figure and ground to interpenetrate in a shallow, shifting space. (21.19)

Dada An international art movement that emerged during World War I (1914–1918). Believing that society itself had gone mad, Dada refused to make sense or to provide any sort of aesthetic refuge or comfort. Instead, it created “anti-art” that emphasized absurdity, irrationality, chance, whimsy, irony, and childishness. Deliberately shocking or provocative works, actions, and events were aimed at disrupting public complacency. (21.23)

daguerreotype The first practical photographic process. Invented by Jacques Louis Mandé Daguerre and made public in 1839, it produced a single permanent image directly on a prepared copper plate. (9.3)

design The organization of visual elements in a work of art. In two-dimensional art, often referred to as composition.

diptych A composition consisting of two panels side by side, often hinged to open and close like a book. (7.10)

direct casting A casting technique in which molten metal incinerates and replaces the object itself instead of a wax intermediary. (11.9)

dome In architecture, a convex, evenly curved roof; technically, an arch rotated 360 degrees on its vertical *axis*. Like an arch, a dome may be hemispherical or pointed. (13.13)

Doric order See *order*. (13.3)

drum In architecture, a cylindrical wall used as a base for a dome. (13.18)

drypoint An *intaglio* printmaking technique similar to *engraving* in which the design is scratched directly into a metal plate with a sharp, pointed, tool that is held like a pen. As it cuts through the metal, the tool raises a rough edge called a burr, which, if left in place, produces a soft, velvety line when printed. Also, a print made by this method. (8.12)

earthwork A work of art created at, for, and from a natural site, for example by reshaping the earth or rearranging natural elements found there. (11.25)

edition In printmaking, the total number of prints made from a given plate or block. According to contemporary practice, the size of an edition is written on each print, and the prints are individually numbered with it. The artist’s signature indicates approval of the print and acts as a guarantee of the edition.

embroidery A technique of needlework in which designs or figures are stitched into a textile ground with colored thread or yarn. (15.17)

encaustic Painting *medium* in which the *binder* is wax, which is heated to render the paints fluid. (7.1)

engraving An *intaglio* printmaking method in which lines are cut into a metal plate using a sharp tool called a burin, which creates a clean, v-shaped channel. Also, a print resulting from this technique. (8.11)

entablature In *Classical* architecture, the horizontal structure supported by capitals and supporting in turn the pediment or roof. An entablature consists of three horizontal bands: *architrave*, *frieze*, and *cornice*. (13.5)

entasis In *Classical* architecture, the slight swelling or bulge built into the center of a column to make the column seem straight visually. (14.26)

etching An *intaglio* printmaking method in which the design is bitten into the printing plate with acid. Also, the resultant print. To create an etching, a metal plate is covered with an acid-resistant *ground*. The design is drawn with a sharp, pen-like tool that scratches the ground to reveal the metal beneath. The plate is then submerged in acid, which bites into the exposed metal. The longer the plate remains in contact with the acid, the deeper the bite, and the darker the line it will print. (8.14)

Expressionism An art movement of the early 20th century, especially prevalent in Germany, which claimed the right to distort visual appearances in order to express psychological or emotional states, especially the artist’s own personal feelings. More generally, and with a lowercase *e*, any art style that raises subjective feeling above objective observation, using distortion and exaggeration for emotional effect. (21.15)

Fauvism A short-lived but influential art movement in France in the early 20th century that emphasized bold, arbitrary, expressive color. (21.13)

ferroconcrete Concrete reinforced internally with iron rods or steel mesh. (13.26)

figure See *figure-ground relationship*.

figure-ground relationship In two-dimensional images, the relationship between a *shape* we perceive as dominant (the figure) and the background shape we perceive it against (the ground). Figure shapes are also known as **positive shapes**, while the shapes of the ground are **negative shapes**. Psychologists have identified a list of principles we use to decide which shapes are figure and which ground. When none of these conditions are met, figure and ground may seem to shift back and forth as our brain organizes the information first one way and then another, an effect known as figure-ground ambiguity. (4.12, 4.13, 4.14)

flashback In filmmaking, a cut from events occurring in the present to events that are understood to have occurred earlier.

flying buttress See *buttress*. (13.12)

foreshortening The visual phenomenon whereby an elongated object projecting toward or away from a viewer appears shorter than its actual length, as though compressed. In two-dimensional representational art, the portrayal of this effect. (4.47)

forging The technique of shaping metal, especially iron, by heating it until it softens and then beating or hammering it.

form 1. The physical appearance of a work of art—its materials, style, and *composition*. 2. Any identifiable shape or mass, as a “geometric form.”

fresco A painting medium in which colors are applied to a plaster ground, usually a wall (*mural*) or ceiling. In *buon fresco*, also called **true fresco**, colors are applied before the plaster dries and thus bond with the surface. In *fresco secco* (“dry fresco”) colors are applied to dry plaster. (7.4)

frieze Generally, any horizontal band of *relief* sculpture or painted decoration. In *Classical* architecture, the middle band of an *entablature*, between the *architrave* and *cornice*, often decorated with relief sculpture. (13.5)

Futurism Art movement founded in Italy in 1909 and lasting only a few years. Futurism concentrated on the dynamic quality of modern technological life, emphasizing speed and movement. (4.54)

genre The daily lives of ordinary people considered as subject matter for art. Also, **genre painting**, painting that takes daily life for its subject. (17.13)

geodesic dome An architectural structure invented by R. Buckminster Fuller, based on triangles arranged into tetrahedrons (four-faceted solids). (13.27)

gesso A brilliant white undercoating made of inert pigment such as chalk or plaster and used as *ground* for paint, especially for *tempera*.

glaze In oil painting, a thin, translucent layer of color, generally applied over another color. (For example, blue glaze can be applied over yellow to create green.) In ceramics, a liquid that, upon firing, fuses into a vitreous (glasslike) coating, sealing the porous clay surface. Colored glazes are used to decorate ceramics. (12.1)

Gothic Style of art and architecture that flourished in Europe, especially northern Europe, from the mid-12th to the 16th centuries. Gothic architecture found its finest expression in cathedrals, which are characterized by soaring interiors and large stained glass windows, features made possible by the use of the pointed *arch* and *flying buttress*. (15.18)

grisaille A painting executed entirely in gray-scale values, often as a foundation for colored glazes.

groin vault See *vault*.

ground 1. A preparatory coating of paint, usually white but sometimes colored, applied to the *support* for a painting or drawing. 2. An acid-resistant coating applied to a metal plate to ready it for use in *etching*. 3. The information that is perceived as secondary in a two-dimensional image; the background. See *figure-ground relationship*.

happening An event staged or directed by artists and offered as art. Coined in 1959 and widely used during the 1960s, the term has generally been replaced today by *performance art*. Compared to contemporary performance art, happenings were more open to spontaneity and often encouraged audience participation. (22.9)

hatching Closely spaced parallel lines that mix optically to suggest values. Hatching is a linear technique for modeling forms according to the principles of *chiaroscuro*. To achieve darker values, layers of hatching may be superimposed, with each new layer set at an angle to the one(s) beneath. This technique is called **cross-hatching**. (4.21)

Hellenistic Literally “Greek-like” or “based in Greek culture.” Descriptive of the art produced in Greece and in regions under Greek rule or cultural influence from 323 B.C.E. until the rise of the Roman Empire in the final

decades of the 1st century B.C.E. Hellenistic art followed three broad trends: a continuing classicism; a new style characterized by dramatic emotion and turbulence; and a closely observed *realism*. (4.28, 4.29)

hierarchical scale The representation of more important figures as larger than less important figures, as when a king is portrayed on a larger scale than his attendants. (5.23)

high relief See *relief*. (11.13)

hue The “family name” of a color, independent of its particular *value* or *saturation*. (4.24)

hypostyle An interior space filled with rows of columns that serve to support the roof. (3.4)

icon In Byzantine and later Orthodox Christian art, an image of a holy person such as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, or a saint. Generally small in scale and painted in a highly stylized manner on a gold ground over a wooden support, icons are often themselves held to be sacred. (15.10)

iconography The identification, description, and interpretation of subject matter in art. (2.26)

illumination 1. The practice of adding hand-drawn illustrations and other embellishments to a manuscript. 2. An illustration or ornament thus added. (15.24)

impasto From the Italian for “paste,” a thick application of paint. (2.1)

Impressionism A movement in painting originating in the 1860s in France. Impressionism arose in opposition to the academic art of the day. In subject matter, Impressionism followed *Realism* in portraying daily life, especially the leisure activities of the middle class. Landscape was also a favorite subject, encouraged by the new practice of painting outdoors. In technique, Impressionist painters favored *alla prima* painting and *broken color*, which were put into the service of recording fleeting effects of nature and the rapidly changing urban scene. (21.8)

installation An art form in which an entire room or similar space is treated as a work of art to be entered and experienced. More broadly, the placing of a work of art in a specific location, usually for a limited time. (2.40)

intaglio Printmaking techniques in which the lines or areas that will take the ink are incised into the printing plate, rather than raised above it (compare *relief*). *Aquatint*, *drypoint*, *etching*, and *mezzotint* are intaglio techniques. (8.10)

intensity The relative purity or brightness of a color. Also called *chroma* or *saturation*. (14.26)

interlace Decoration composed of intricately intertwined strips or ribbons. Interlace was especially popular in medieval Celtic and Scandinavian art. (15.12)

International style A style that prevailed after World War II as the aesthetic of earlier Modernist movements such as de Stijl and the Bauhaus spread throughout the West and beyond. International style buildings are generally characterized by clean lines, rectangular geometric shapes, minimal ornamentation, and steel-and-glass construction. (13.24)

Ionic order See *order*. (13.3)

isometric perspective See *perspective*. (4.51)

keystone The wedge-shaped, central stone in an arch. Inserted last, the keystone locks the other stones in place. (13.9)

kinetic Having to do with motion. Kinetic art incorporates (rather than depicts) real or apparent movement. Broadly defined, kinetic art may include film, video, and

- performance art. However, the term is most often applied to sculpture that is set in motion by motors or air currents. (11.10)
- kore** Greek for “maiden” or “girl,” used as a generic name for the many sculptures of young women produced during the *Archaic* period of Greek civilization.
- kouros** Greek for “youth” or “boy,” used as a generic name for the numerous sculptures of nude youths produced during the *Archaic* period of Greek civilization. (14.22)
- layout** In graphic art, the disposition of text and images on a page, or the overall design of *typographic* elements on page, spread, or book. (10.9)
- linear perspective** See *perspective*. (4.44)
- linocut** A *relief* printmaking technique in which the printing surface is a thick layer of linoleum, often mounted on a wooden block for support. Areas that will not print are cut away, leaving raised areas to take the ink. (8.9)
- lintel** In architecture, a horizontal beam or stone that spans an opening. See *post-and-lintel*. (13.2)
- lithography** A *planographic* printmaking technique based on the fact that oil and water repel each other. The design to be printed is drawn in greasy crayon or ink on the printing surface—traditionally a block of fine-grained stone, but today more frequently a plate of zinc or aluminum. The printing surface is dampened, then inked. The oil-based ink adheres to the greasy areas and is repelled by the damp areas. (8.17)
- lost-wax casting** Also known by the French name *cire-perdue*, a technique for *casting* sculptures or other objects in metal. A model of the object to be cast is created in wax, fitted with wax rods, then encased in a heat-resistant material such as plaster or clay, leaving the rods protruding. The ensemble is heated so that the wax melts and runs out (is “lost”), creating a mold. Molten metal is poured into the mold through the channels created by the melted wax rods, filling the void where the wax original used to be. When the metal has cooled, the mold is broken open to release the casting. (11.4)
- low relief** See *relief*. (11.12)
- Mannerism** From the Italian for “style” or “stylishness,” a trend in 16th-century Italian art. Mannerist artists cultivated a variety of elegant, refined, virtuosic, and highly artificial styles, often featuring elongated figures, sinuous contours, bizarre effects of scale and lighting, shallow pictorial space, and intense colors. (16.26)
- mass** Three-dimensional *form*, often implying bulk, density, and weight. (4.12)
- medium** 1. The material from which a work of art is made. 2. A standard category of art such as painting or sculpture. 3. A liquid compounded with *pigment* to make paint, also called a *vehicle* and often acting as a *binder*.
- megalith** A very large stone. (1.4)
- metalpoint** A drawing technique in which the drawing medium is a fine metal wire. When the metal employed is silver, the technique is known as **silverpoint**. (6.7)
- mezzotint** An *itaglio* printmaking technique in which the printing plate is first roughened with a special tool called a rocker, which creates a fine pattern of burrs. Inked and printed at this point, the plate would print a velvety black. *Values* are created by smoothing away the burrs in varying degrees (smoothing the plate altogether creates a non-printing area, or white). Also, the resultant print. (8.13)
- minaret** A tower forming part of a mosque and serving as a place from which the faithful are called to prayer. (18.1)
- Minimalism** A broad tendency during the 1960s and 70s toward simple, primary forms. Minimalist artists often favored industrial materials (sheet metal, bricks, plywood, fluorescent lights), and their sculptures (which they preferred to call objects) tended to be set on the floor or attached to the wall rather than placed on a pedestal. (22.15)
- mixed media** Descriptive of any work of art employing more than one *medium*—for example, a work that combines painting, *collage*, and *screenprinting*. (7.19)
- modeling** 1. In sculpture, manipulating a plastic material such as clay or wax to create a *form*. 2. In figurative drawing, painting, and printmaking, simulating the effects of light and shadow in order to portray optically convincing *masses*. (11.2, 4.20)
- mold** A casing containing a shaped void in which liquid metal, clay, or other material may be *cast*. (11.4)
- monochromatic** Having only one color. Descriptive of work in which one *hue*—perhaps with variations of *value* and *intensity*—predominates. (4.35)
- monotype** A *planographic* printmaking method resulting in a single impression. A typical technique is to paint the design in oil paint on a plate of glass or metal. While the paint is still wet, a piece of paper is laid over it, and pressure is applied to transfer the design from the plate to the paper. (8.22)
- mosaic** The technique of creating a design or image by arranging bits of colored ceramic, stone, glass or other suitable materials and fixing them into a bed of cement or plaster. (18.3)
- mural** Any large-scale wall decoration in painting, *fresco*, *mosaic*, or other *medium*. (20.19)
- narthex** In early Christian architecture, the porch or vestibule serving as an entryway to a church. (15.4)
- naturalistic** Descriptive of an approach to portraying the visible world that emphasizes the objective observation and accurate imitation of appearances. Naturalistic art closely resembles the forms it portrays. Naturalism and *realism* are often used interchangeably, and both words have complicated histories. In this text, naturalism is construed as a broader approach, permitting a degree of idealization and embracing a stylistic range across cultures. *Realism* suggests a more focused, almost clinical attention to detail that refuses to prettify harsh or unflattering matters. (2.12)
- nave** In an ancient Roman *basilica*, the taller central space flanked by *aisles*. In a cruciform church, the long space flanked by *aisles* and leading from the entrance to the *transept*. (15.4)
- negative shape** See *figure-ground relationship*.
- Neoclassicism** Literally “new classicism,” a Western movement in painting, sculpture, and architecture of the late-18th and early 19th centuries that looked to the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration. Neoclassical artists worked in a variety of individual styles, but in general, like any art labeled *classical*, Neoclassical art emphasized order, clarity, and restraint. (17.17)
- neutral** Descriptive of colors that cannot be classified among the spectral hues and their intermediaries on the color wheel: black, white, gray, and the browns and brownish grays produced by mixing complementary colors.
- nonobjective** Descriptive of art that does not represent or otherwise refer to the visible world outside of itself. Syn-

- onymous with *nonrepresentational*. Compare *abstract*, *stylized*. (2.19)
- nonrepresentational** See *nonobjective*. (2.19)
- oculus** A circular opening in a wall or at the top of a dome. (13.13)
- open palette** See *palette*. (1.8)
- optical color mixture** The tendency of the eyes to blend patches of individual colors placed near one another so as to perceive a different, combined color. Also, any art style that exploits this tendency, especially the *pointillism* of Georges Seurat. (4.34)
- order** In *Classical* architecture, a system of standardized types. In ancient Greek architecture, three orders pertain: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The orders are most easily distinguished by their columns. **Doric:** The shaft of the column may be smooth or fluted. It does not have a base. The capital is a rounded stone disk supporting a plain rectangular slab. **Ionic:** The shaft is fluted and rests on a stepped base. The capital is carved in graceful scrolling forms called volutes. **Corinthian:** The shaft is fluted and rests on a more detailed stepped base. The elaborate capital is carved with motifs based on stylized acanthus leaves. (13.3)
- palette** 1. A surface used for mixing paints. 2. The range of colors used by an artist or group of artists, either generally or in a specific work. An **open palette** is one in which all colors are permitted. A **restricted palette** is limited to a few colors and their mixtures, tints, and shades. (4.25, 4.30)
- pastel** 1. A drawing medium consisting of sticks of color made of powdered *pigment* and a relatively weak *binder*. 2. A light-value color, especially a *tint*. (6.10)
- pediment** In *classical* architecture, the triangular element supported by the columns of a *portico*. More generally, any similar element over a door or window. (13.5)
- pendentive** In architecture, a curving, triangular section that serves as a transition between a *dome* and the four walls of a rectangular building. (13.16)
- performance art** An event or action carried out by an artist and offered as art. In widespread use since the 1970s, *performance art* is an umbrella term that embraces earlier practices such as the *happenings* of the 1960s and the events staged by *Dada* artists in 1920s. Performances may range from improvisatory to highly scripted, and from actions of daily life to elaborately staged spectacles. (22.33)
- perspective** A system for portraying the visual impression of three-dimensional space and objects in it on a two-dimensional surface. **Linear perspective** is based on the observation that parallel lines appear to converge as they recede from the viewer, finally meeting at a vanishing point on the horizon. Linear perspective relies on a fixed viewpoint. **Atmospheric perspective** is based on the observation that distant objects appear less distinct, paler, and bluer than nearby objects due to the way moisture in the intervening atmosphere scatters light. **Isometric perspective** uses diagonal lines to convey recession, but parallel lines do not converge. It is principally used in East Asian art, which is not based in a fixed viewpoint. (4.45)
- Photorealism** Also called *superrealism*, a movement in painting and sculpture of the 1960s and 70s that imitated the impersonal precision and wealth of minute detail associated with photography. Photorealist sculptors sometimes clothed their figures in real clothing, and painters sometimes took actual photographs for their subject, faithfully depicting the effects of depth of field (sharp detail giving way to blurred areas), forced perspective, and other characteristics of the technology. (22.17)
- picture plane** The literal surface of a painting imagined as window, so that objects depicted in depth are spoken of as behind or receding from the picture plane, and objects in the extreme foreground are spoken of as up against the picture plane. A favorite trick of *trompe-l'oeil* painters is to paint an object that seems to be projecting forward from the picture plane into the viewer's space.
- pier** A vertical support, often square or rectangular, used to bear the heaviest loads in an arched or vaulted structure. A pier may be styled to resemble a bundle of columns. (13.11)
- pigment** A coloring material made from various organic or chemical substances. When mixed with a *binder*, it creates a drawing or painting *medium*.
- plane** A flat surface. See *picture plane*.
- planography** Printmaking techniques in which the image areas are level with the surface of the printing plate. *Lithography* and *monotype* are planographic methods. (18.1)
- plastic** 1. Capable of being molded or shaped, as clay. 2. Any synthetic polymer substance, such as *acrylic*.
- pointillism** A quasi-scientific painting technique of the late-19th century, developed and promulgated by Georges Seurat and his followers, in which pure colors were applied in regular, small touches (points) that blended through *optical color mixture* when viewed at a certain distance. The drive behind pointillism was a desire to produce more brilliant paintings by avoiding *broken colors*. (4.33)
- Pop Art** An art style of the 1960s, deriving its imagery from the popular, mass-produced culture. Deliberately mundane, Pop Art focused on the overfamiliar objects of daily life to give them new meanings as visual emblems. (22.11)
- porcelain** A *ceramic* ware, usually white, firing in the highest temperature ranges and often used for fine dinnerware, vases, and sculpture. (12.4)
- portico** A projecting porch with a roof supported by columns, often marking the entrance to a building. (13.13)
- positive shape** See *figure-ground relationship*.
- post-and-lintel** In architecture, a structural system based on two or more uprights (posts) supporting a horizontal crosspiece (lintel or beam). (13.6)
- Post-Impressionism** A term applied to the work of several artists—French or living in France—from about 1885 to 1905. Although all painted in highly personal styles, the Post-Impressionists were united in rejecting the relative absence of *form* characteristic of *Impressionism*. The group included Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, and Georges Seurat. (1.10)
- primary color** A *hue* that, in theory, cannot be created by a mixture of other hues. Varying combinations of the primary hues can be used to create all the other hues of the spectrum. In pigment the primaries are red, yellow, and blue. (4.24)
- primer** A preliminary coating applied to a painting *support* to improve adhesion of paints or to create special effects. A traditional primer is gesso, consisting of a chalky substance mixed with glue and water. Also called a *ground*.

- print** An image created from a master wood block, stone, plate, or screen, usually on paper. Prints are referred to as multiples, because as a rule many identical or similar impressions are made from the same printing surface, the number of impressions being called an *edition*. See *relief*, *intaglio*, *lithography*, *screenprinting*. (8.4)
- proportion** Size relationships between parts of a whole, or between two or more items perceived as a unit; also, the size relationship between an object and its surroundings. Compare *scale*. (5.22)
- Realism** Broadly, any art in which the goal is to portray forms in the natural world in a highly faithful manner. Specifically, an art style of the mid-19th century, identified especially with Gustave Courbet, which fostered the idea that everyday people and events are fit subjects for important art. Compare *naturalism*. (21.3)
- refraction** The bending of a ray of light, for example, when it passes through a prism. (4.23)
- registration** In printmaking, the precise alignment of impressions made by two or more printing blocks or plates on the same sheet of paper, as when printing an image in several colors. (8.5)
- relief** Anything that projects from a background. 1. Sculpture in which figures are attached to a background and project from it to some degree. In **low relief**, also called **bas-relief**, the figures project minimally, as on a coin. In **high relief**, figures project substantially from the background, often by half their full depth or more. In **sunken relief**, outlines are carved *into* the surface and the figure is modeled within them, from the surface down. 2. In printmaking, techniques in which portions of a block meant to be printed are raised. See *woodcut*, *linocut*, *wood engraving*. (16.2, 8.1)
- Renaissance** The period in Europe from the 14th to the 16th century, characterized by a renewed interest in *Classical* art, architecture, literature, and philosophy. The Renaissance began in Italy and gradually spread to the rest of Europe. In art, it is most closely associated with Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael. (16.9)
- representational** Descriptive of a work of art that depicts *forms* in the natural world. (2.6)
- restricted palette** See *palette*. (4.30)
- ribbed vault** See *vault*. (13.11)
- Rococo** A style of art popular in Europe in the first three quarters of the 18th century. Rococo architecture and furnishings emphasized ornate but small-scale decoration, curvilinear *forms*, and *pastel* colors. Rococo painting, also tending toward the use of pastels, has a playful, light-hearted, romantic quality and often pictures the aristocracy at leisure. (17.15)
- Romanesque** A style of architecture and art dominant in Europe from the 9th to the 12th century. Romanesque architecture, based on ancient Roman precedents, emphasizes the round *arch* and *barrel vault*. (13.10)
- Romanticism** A movement in Western art of the 19th century, generally assumed to be in opposition to *Neoclassicism*. Romantic works are marked by intense colors, turbulent emotions, complex *composition*, soft outlines, and sometimes heroic subject matter. (21.2)
- rotunda** An open, cylindrical interior space, usually covered by a dome. (13.15)
- saturation** See *intensity*. (4.26)
- scale** Size in relation to some “normal” or constant size. Compare *proportion*. (5.20)
- screenprinting** A printmaking method in which the image is transferred to paper by forcing ink through a fine mesh in which the areas not meant to print have been blocked; a stencil technique. (8.20)
- secondary color** A *hue* created by combining two *primary colors*, as yellow and blue mixed together yield green. In pigment the secondary colors are orange, green, and violet. (4.24)
- serigraphy** See *screenprinting*. (8.20)
- sfumato** From the Italian word for “smoke,” a technique of painting in thin *glazes* to achieve a hazy, cloudy atmosphere, often to represent objects or landscape meant to be perceived as distant from the *picture plane*. (16.8)
- shade** A color darker than a hue’s normal value. Maroon is a shade of red. (4.26)
- shape** A two-dimensional area having identifiable boundaries, created by lines, color or *value* changes, or some combination of these. Broadly, *form*. (4.14)
- silkscreen** See *screenprinting*. (8.21)
- silverpoint** See *metalpoint*.
- simultaneous contrast** The perceptual phenomenon whereby *complementary* colors appear most brilliant when set side by side. (4.28)
- site-specific** Descriptive of art that was conceived for display in a particular place, and which generally can only be fully understood in the context of that place. (11.27)
- stained glass** The technique of creating images or decorations from precisely cut pieces of colored glass held together with strips of lead. (12.5)
- still life** A painting or other two-dimensional work in which the subject matter is an arrangement of objects—fruit, flowers, tableware, pottery, and so forth—brought together for their pleasing contrasts of shape, color, and texture. Also, the arrangement of objects itself. (5.18)
- stippling** A pattern of closely spaced dots or small marks used to create a sense of three-dimensionality on a flat surface, especially in drawing and printmaking. See also *cross-hatching*, *hatching*. (4.22)
- stupa** A shrine, usually dome-shaped, associated with Buddhism. (19.3)
- style** A characteristic, or a number of characteristics, that we can identify as constant, recurring, or coherent. In art, the sum of such characteristics associated with a particular artist, group, or culture, or with an artist’s work at a specific time.
- stylized** Descriptive of *representational* art in which methods for depicting *forms* have become standardized, and can thus be repeated without further observation of the real-world model. Compare *abstract*. (2.18)
- sunken relief** See *relief*. (14.16)
- support** The surface on which a work of two-dimensional art is made; for example, canvas, paper, or wood.
- Surrealism** A movement of the early 20th century that emphasized imagery from dreams and fantasies. (21.25)
- suspension** A structural system in architecture, most common in bridges, in which the weight of a horizontal member is suspended from steel cables supported by uprights called pylons. (13.25)
- symbol** An image or sign that represents something else, because of convention, association, or resemblance. (10.1)
- symmetrical** Descriptive of a design in which the two halves of a composition on either side of an imaginary central vertical *axis* correspond to one another in size, shape, and placement. (5.8)

tapestry An elaborate textile meant to be hung from a wall and featuring images and motifs produced by various weaving techniques. (12.13)

tempera Paint in which the pigment is compounded with an aqueous, emulsified *vehicle* such as egg yolk. (7.5)

tensile strength In architecture, the ability of a material to span horizontal distances with minimum support from underneath.

terra cotta Italian for “baked earth.” A *ceramic* ware, usually reddish, fired in the low temperature ranges and somewhat porous and fragile; earthenware. (12.3)

tertiary colors Colors made by mixing a primary color and an adjacent secondary color (for example, red and violet). (4.24)

tint A color lighter than a hue’s normal value. Pink is a tint of red. (4.26)

transept The arm of a cruciform church perpendicular to the *nave*. The transept often marks the beginning of the *apse*. (15.15)

triadic harmony A color scheme based in three *hues* equidistant from one another on the *color wheel*, such as yellow-orange, blue-green, and red-violet. (21.9)

triptych A composition consisting of three panels side by side, generally hinged in such a way that the outer two panels can close like shutters over the central one. (16.21)

trompe l’oeil French for “fool the eye,” *representational* art that mimics optical experience so faithfully that it may be mistaken momentarily for reality. (2.15)

typeface In graphic design, a style of type. (10.6)

typography In graphic design, the arrangement and appearance of printed letter forms (type). (10.8)

value The relative lightness or darkness of a *hue*, or of a *neutral* varying from white to black. (4.26)

vanishing point In *linear perspective*, the point on the horizon where parallel lines appear to converge. (4.44)

vault An arched masonry structure or roof that spans an interior space. A **barrel vault** is a half-round arch ex-

tended in depth. A **groin vault** is formed by the intersection of two barrel vaults of equal size at right angles. A **ribbed vault** is a groin vault in which the lines marking the intersection of the vaults are reinforced with a raised rib. A **corbelled vault** is a vault made with the technique of **corbelling**, in which each course of stone projects slightly beyond the one below to create an arch form (but not a true, weight-bearing arch). (13.10)

vehicle Another term for *medium*, in the sense of a liquid compounded with pigment to make paint.

visual weight The apparent “heaviness” or “lightness” of the forms arranged in a composition, as gauged by how insistently they draw the viewer’s eye. (5.11)

volume Similar to *mass*, a three-dimensional *form* implying bulk, density, and weight; but also a void or empty, enclosed space. (4.42)

volute In architecture, a spiral, scroll-like ornament such as the *capital* of a column in the *Ionian order*. (13.4)

warm colors Colors ranged along the orange curve of the *color wheel*, from red through yellow. (4.24)

wash Ink or *watercolor* paint thinned so as to flow freely onto a *support*. (6.11)

watercolor A painting *medium* in which the *binder* is gum Arabic. (7.12)

woodcut A *relief* printmaking method in which a block of wood is carved so as to leave the image areas raised from the background. Also, the resultant *print*. (8.7)

wood engraving Similar to *woodcut*, a *relief* printmaking process in which the image is cut on the end grain of a wood plank, resulting in a “white-line” impression. (8.8)

ziggurat In ancient Mesopotamian architecture, a monumental stepped structure symbolically understood as a mountain and serving as a platform for one or more temples. (14.4)