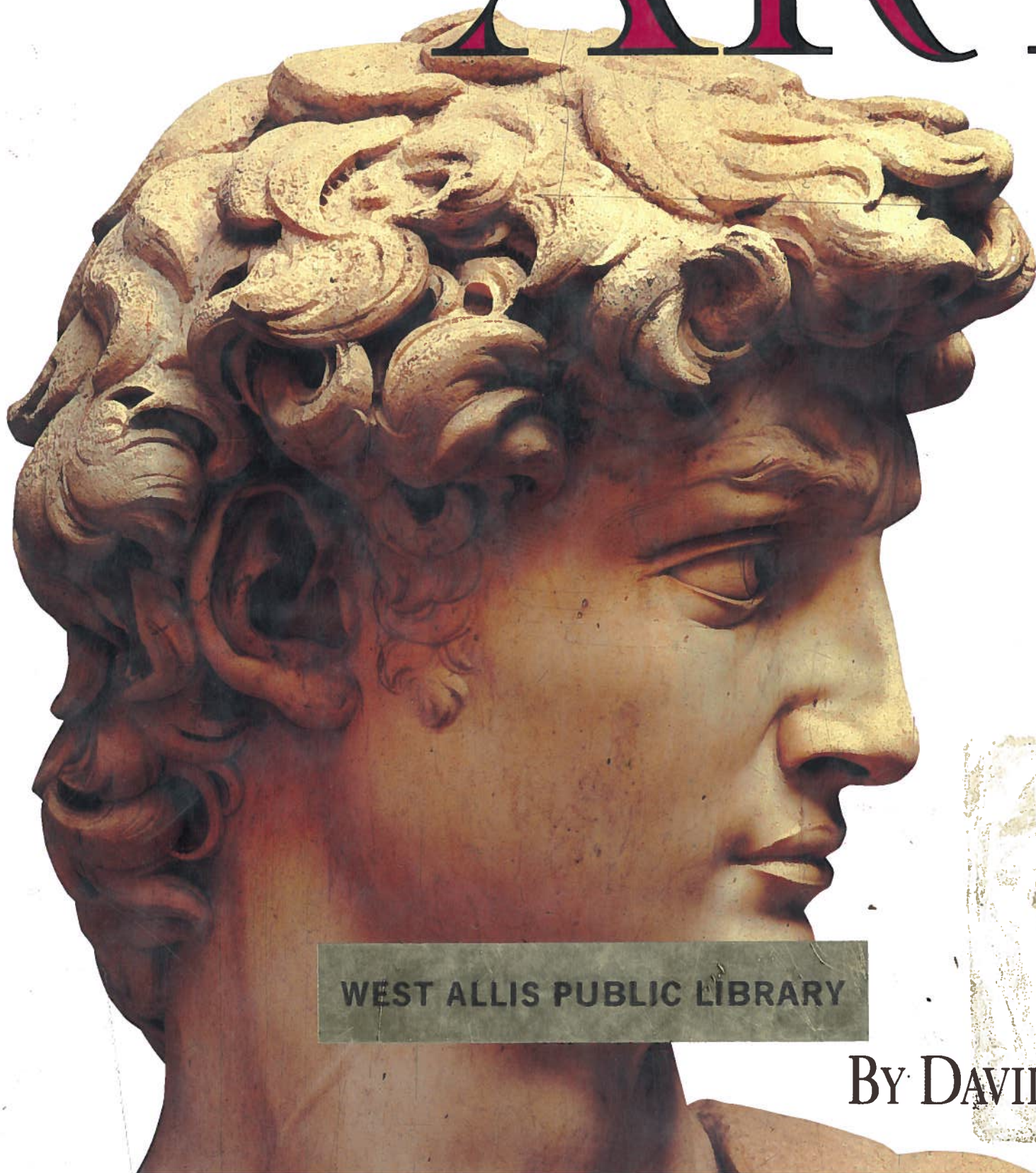


THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF



ART



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BY DAVID PIPER



The Illustrated History of Art

David Piper



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The Illustrated History of Art

David Piper

With a section on Eastern Art by Philip Rawson

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Netherlandish Art I: Sluter and the van Eycks

In the fifteenth century, both north and south of the Alps, artists succeeded in transcribing the facts and details of the natural world convincingly, in wood or stone, in tempera or in oils. An interest in decorative detail develops into a determination to render nature objectively and with consistency. The things shown have an importance of their own: they are no longer secondary to the demands of pattern or to the need to project sacred figures in hieratic form. The flat surfaces of paintings are given a luminous depth. However, particularly in the north, symbolic meanings are hidden in the naturalistic forms. Plants, fruits, furniture and buildings, carefully reproduced in a real world, in real space, are invested with religious significance.

The Netherlands, the vital centre of realism in the north, passed in 1387 under the control of Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, but the Netherlandish cities, rich in the trade of cloth, wool and linen, retained their own local government. When in 1420 Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy moved his court north from Dijon to Bruges, Netherlandish artists, enjoying twin sources of patronage – pious, prosperous merchants and what was briefly the

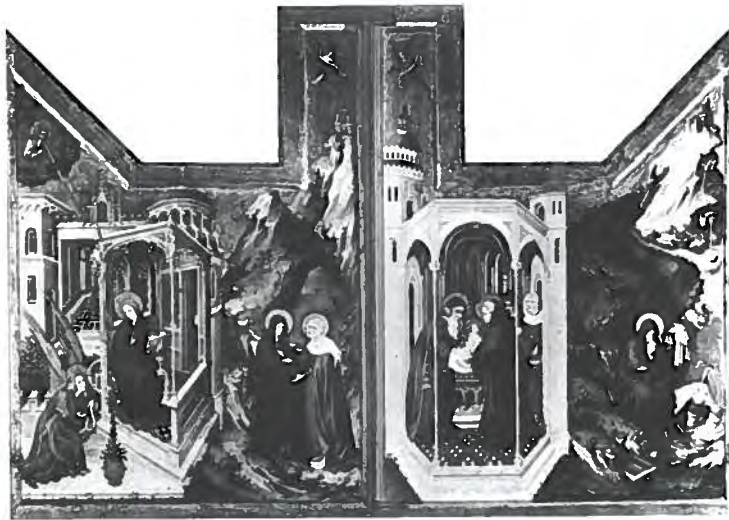
most splendid court in Europe – came into their own in their own region.

The pioneers of the new realism had worked in Dijon, at the Chartreuse de Champmol, a Carthusian monastery patronized by Philip the Bold, between about 1394 and 1404. The painter Melchior Broederlam (active 1381–1409) is at first glance essentially of the International Gothic – elegant, dreamy, clearly aware of Italian example, particularly Duccio and the Lorenzetti – but his figures have an earthy solidity that is specifically northern. The revolutionary innovator was a sculptor, Claus Sluter (died c. 1406), Broederlam's exact contemporary at Champmol. In his work uncompromising realism is injected into the Gothic world, with scarcely any concession to rhythmic pattern and ornament. In the characterization of his figures he anticipates the psychological approach of Donatello (see p. 102) working 20 years later in Florence: the more than life-size prophets on his Well of Moses at Champmol have a similar presence and emotional intensity, and, as in Donatello, the bold, freely handled draperies are outward elements of an inner drama. Some of the mourning figures about Sluter's tomb of Philip

the Bold, once also at Champmol, are invisible within their hooded draperies, and the heavy robes themselves become images of grief.

The first painter of the new realism clearly emulated the dense solidity of such sculpture as Sluter's. This master, the Master of the Mérode altarpiece, also called the "Master of Flémalle", is generally but still not universally identified as Robert Campin of Tournai (c. 1378–1444). In the work associated with him, the sharply defined bulk and mass of the figures and draperies have lost all trace of the aristocratic delicacy of International Gothic. In the Mérode altarpiece, for the first time the Annunciation, a supernatural happening, is set within a homely contemporary interior. The whole vision is related to the daily experience of the ordinary man. The angel may have wings, but neither he nor the Virgin is haloed.

Campin's *Annunciation* was painted about 1425; by then his slightly younger but far more famous and securely identified contemporary, Jan van Eyck (c. 1385–1441) was fully active, while by 1426 Jan's mysterious brother, Hubert, was already dead. Jan was the appointed court painter to Duke Philip the Good, and seems to have had a close, personal relation-



BROEDERLAM (left)
Scenes from the life of Mary, c. 1394–99
The sharply receding architectural boxes are composite interior-exterior: the formula is still that of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Presentation* (see p. 85). What is new is the symbolism residing in apparently ordinary objects: the three windows by God the Father in *The Annunciation* signify the Trinity; the domed tower and walled garden are symbols of chastity; and there is much more.



SLUTER (right)
The Well of Moses, detail: *David and Jeremiah*, 1395–1403
The prophets and kings predicting the Passion once stood beneath a Crucifix, now lost; and Jeremiah once had metal spectacles. What remains is still powerfully realistic, rich in human feeling.



SLUTER
The tomb of Duke Philip the Bold, details: (above) *Mourners*; (above right) *Duke Philip*, 1385–1405
Sluter first worked on the tomb as an assistant to Jean de Marville (died 1389), and took over at his death. The mourners – the Duke's



vassals, officers and relations in funeral robes – are entirely his work, and strongly individualized. The Well of Moses, also in stone, was originally no less richly and vividly painted. Sluter's realism had wide influence; Gerhaerts (see p. 158) took up his mantle.

CAMPIN? (right)
The Mérode altarpiece: *The Annunciation*, c. 1425
The Virgin and angel seem somewhat clumsy, almost plebeian, though the room is comfortably furnished. The presence of objects – the shadows they cast, the stuff they are made of – is crucial to Campin.





THE BOUCAUT MASTER
(below) *The Visitation*,
c. 1405
The Book of Hours from
which this page comes,
and the man who painted
it, take their name from
its owner, a commander
under the French king.
The sky and hills show
aerial perspective, the
changing light and colour
suggesting distance.

JAN AND HUBERT
VAN EYCK (above)
The Ghent altarpiece
open, detail: *The Virgin*,
c. 1426-32
The contrast between
the van Eycks and, for
instance, Campin or the
International Gothic
Boucicaut Master is
startling; though their aims
are similar, the others lack
the van Eycks' technique.



JAN AND HUBERT
VAN EYCK (above)
The Ghent altarpiece
closed, detail: *The
Virgin Annunciate*
The round, Romanesque
arches symbolize the old
order; the trefoil, Gothic
windows stand for the new,
borne in by Christ's birth.



JAN AND HUBERT
VAN EYCK (above)
The Ghent altarpiece
open, central panel:
The adoration of the Lamb
Saints, prophets, virgins
foregather to adore. The
individual heads, the grass
spread with flowers like a
tapestry, the glow of light
on the horizon are notable.



JAN VAN EYCK (left)
*The Madonna with Canon
van der Paele*, 1436
In the wealth of minutely
rendered detail – of the
architecture, draperies,
throne or carpet – there
is a carefully calculated,
often obscure, symbolism.
The light is all-pervasive.

JAN VAN EYCK (above)
*The Madonna with Chan-
cellor Rolin*, c. 1435
Jan must have refined the
use of oils as a vehicle
for the pigment, so that
he could build the painting
up slowly in thin glazes, to
achieve subtle modelling
and atmospheric luminosity.

ship with his patron, travelling to Spain and Portugal on diplomatic missions. He clearly enjoyed a status and respect, and probably an income, previously not granted to artists.

Any approach to the van Eycks must centre on their huge altarpiece at Ghent. Its inscription, crediting Hubert with its inception and Jan with its completion (in 1432), is one of the very rare pieces of evidence that Hubert existed and was a painter, though distinguishing Hubert's work from Jan's remains highly speculative. The altarpiece is both large and complex. On the outside of the wings when closed there is an *Annunciation* and below it portraits of the donors, with their patron saints, represented as monochrome statues in niches; when opened, the central theme is revealed as *The adoration of the Lamb*. Though the altarpiece as a whole has many puzzling, even contradictory elements (which the dual authorship may explain), the overall impression of rich and vivid colour, the exactitude with which the appearance of the visible world is tirelessly rendered, the conviction with which the religious theme is translated into physical terms – these qualities make it a landmark in the history of Western art.

Of Jan's own undisputed work, *The Madonna with Canon van der Paele* (1436) represents his style at its most pure. Virgin, saints, and the minutely scrutinized head of the aged donor, solid as a weather-ravaged rock, are presented with a positively ruthless objectivity and completeness: they are held together by the unifying fall of light in a stillness and silence that is almost like a *trompe-l'oeil* wax-work. Though the command of perspective is intuitive and empirical rather than geometrically based as it was to be in Italy (see p. 104), it was quite convincing enough to convey the illusion of distance and depth as never before – whether internal, as here, or external, as in the extraordinary view through the arched window over a great estuary in *The Madonna with Chancellor Rolin*. There, even though the recession of the middle ground is not quite logical, the union of the figures with the setting is complete. Virgin and Child are no less physically present than the great Burgundian official acknowledging their divinity, perhaps not all that humbly – they seem to be visiting him, not he them. Not the least of van Eyck's achievements was the establishment of the modern portrait in its own right.

Jan van Eyck: The Arnolfini Marriage



JAN VAN EYCK (right)
Giovanni Arnolfini,
c. 1437

Arnolfini's modest but warm attire (van Eyck superbly conveys the texture of heavy wool) marks him as a prosperous bourgeois merchant. He had court connections, through which he must have met and become friendly with van Eyck. He became a counsellor to the Duke of Burgundy, and advanced him money. (It is generally accepted that the sitter here and in the *Marriage* is Giovanni Arnolfini, but this is not absolutely certain.)



Within a room of some luxury, Giovanni di Arrigo Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami stand side by side. Her right hand rests on his left, and his right hand is raised as if to confirm a vow. They are being betrothed, or perhaps married. The year is 1434.

It seems that the painter Jan van Eyck, a friend of Giovanni Arnolfini, a silk merchant from Lucca in Tuscany who had settled in Bruges, attended, and recorded the event with documentary, even legal precision. The signature, *Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434* (Jan van Eyck was here 1434) is written in a careful Gothic script, as though he were inscribing his name as an official witness to the ceremony, and it is placed above a mirror in which two figures are reflected, one presumably the painter, the other a second witness. It is as if the picture were painted for posterity, as if the artist knew full well that in 1534 or 1634 he would not be there, but others would be.

The painting is not, however, a literal record of a real event, for it is rich in symbolism, unobtrusive but explicit, though more readily understood by his contemporaries than by us. Many details illuminate the significance of the event, the married state as a continuing human sacrament. The candle, lit in full daylight, was not only a necessary prop in the ceremony of oath-taking, but was a "marriage-candle", a flame emblematic of the ardour of newly-weds. The dog was a symbol of marital faith. The fruit on the window-sill and the crystal beads beside the mirror are taken over from the symbolism surrounding the Virgin Mary. The little figure carved above the back of the chair is St Margaret, patron saint of childbirth.

This little painting, about 80 x 60 centimetres (32 x 23½ in), has become one of the most famous masterpieces of Western art, a celebration of a human relationship as vital today as it was five and a half centuries ago. It was then astonishingly original – in presenting full-length portraits confronting the onlooker; in siting them in a domestic interior without a religious context; in introducing narrative, and even genre, elements into a double portrait. For the picture is also an inventory of objects lovingly described – the discarded shoes, the little dog, the fruit; the planked floor, the grandly intricate brass candelabra; the rich texture and glowing colours of materials. All these, ranged in immutable order, complementing the calmly tender central figures and extending their symmetry, are fused into the serene composition of the whole by that pervasive light, welling from the window.

The picture is the summit, but not the whole, of van Eyck's revolutionary achievement in portraiture. His single portraits reveal a human approach that is quite new; with modestly posed head and shoulders, the sitters are seen for themselves and themselves alone. Their faces (that of the *Man in a turban* may be van Eyck's own) are intensely scrutinized – one, at least, preceded by a silverpoint drawing of vivid delicacy, certainly from the life – but again the inventory of detail is modelled into harmony, each item precisely related to the others. The secret is the accuracy with which the light is realized, with a subtlety and flexibility which the refinement of the oil medium allowed for the first time.



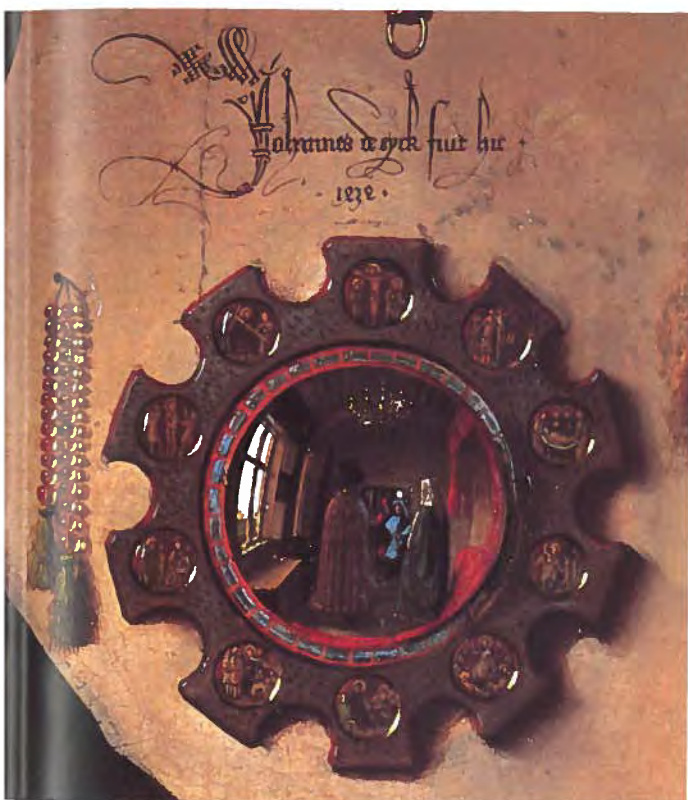
JAN VAN EYCK
A man in a turban
(Self-portrait?), 1433
The day, month and year are written on the frame, with van Eyck's motto "Als Ich Kan" – as I can (but not as I would). He seems conscious that his art will outlive him – reviving a theme of classical poets.



JAN VAN EYCK
(above and below)
Cardinal Albergati,
c. 1432
The study for the oil portrait is a drawing in silverpoint, that is, using silver wire on paper specially prepared to take its impression. Notes for the colours are on the drawing; has the oil been slightly idealized?



JAN VAN EYCK
(opposite page) "*The Arnolfini Marriage*", and details: (above) the mirror; (left) St Margaret, 1434
St Margaret was said to have escaped from the belly of a dragon: hence her role as patron saint of childbirth. (Giovanna is quite possibly pregnant.) The ten roundels of the mirror show scenes from Christ's Passion, solemnizing the oath-taking. The mirror indicates things existing outside the picture's limits, and in the 17th century, when van Eyck's picture was in Madrid, Velazquez saw and used the device in his "*Las Meninas*" (see p. 210) – complicating further van Eyck's metaphysics of illusion and reality.



Netherlandish Art 2: Rogier van der Weyden

The dominant figure in Netherlandish painting in the middle years of the fifteenth century was Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400-64). He was most probably the "Rogelet" (little Roger) documented in Robert Campin's workshop in 1427, for his work certainly reflects Campin's style, though it draws also on Jan van Eyck's. He soon settled in Brussels, and in 1435 was appointed city painter. He visited Ferrara in Italy about 1450, and his works became widely known throughout Europe in his own lifetime. Many exist in several versions – witness both to his popularity and to the assistance of a large workshop.

Rogier van der Weyden's work is characterized by an intense emotionalism, expressed in flowing and dynamic line, which is alien to both Campin and van Eyck. It has been seen as a reversion to Gothic; certainly his calculated appeal to the emotions is paralleled in German art, which persisted into the fifteenth and even the sixteenth century in a recognizably medieval, late Gothic tradition. Rogier, however, whole-heartedly embraced the realism of Campin and van Eyck, and if his grieving figures weep tears, the tears glisten naturalistically. Rogier's vision, like Campin's, ex-

presses the religious sentiment of the ordinary man, but sharpened and deepened by the *devotio moderna*, a spiritual revival initiated in the Netherlands and strong also in Germany. Its textbook was *The Imitation of Christ*, a manual of meditation first appearing in 1418, ascribed to Thomas à Kempis.

Van der Weyden's art is in many ways a critical revision of the work of his two great elder contemporaries. His early *St Luke painting the Virgin* was consciously based on Jan van Eyck's *Madonna with Chancellor Rolin* (see p. 91) – two figures are again placed in a room

overlooking a river, and even van Eyck's two little figures peering over the balustrade reappear. In contrast to van Eyck, Rogier introduces an emotional relationship between his two main characters, creating a gently curving movement echoing from one to the other. Both figures are seen with an involved and tender humanity, far from the objective detachment of Jan's descriptions. The Virgin suckling a child is entirely a mother; the Child crimps fingers and toes with pleasure. Beside the fantastic detail of van Eyck's landscape, van der Weyden's view seems fairly summary,

VAN DER WEYDEN (below)
St Luke painting the Virgin, c. 1434-35?
St Luke's pose looks better suited to an angel in an *Annunciation*, and not very appropriate for drawing. The Madonna is in type like Campin's but the handling is softer more like Jan van Eyck's.

VAN DER WEYDEN (right)
The Deposition, c. 1435
The actors are set out like sculptures on a stage (such life-size tableaux were not unusual), yet overriding a sense of weight or solidity in the figures there is a dominant, dynamic line. The emotion is tragic, yet tenderly resigned.



VAN DER WEYDEN (below)
The Last Judgment, c. 1450?
In contrast to the Ghent altarpiece, the single subject continues over the panel divisions. All detail has been pared away. St Michael with the scales advances irresistibly, cleaving Saved from Damned.

AFTER CAMPIN (right)
The Deposition, central panel, c. 1430-35?
Campin's composition no longer exists in its original huge scale, but the impression it made is recorded. Van der Weyden reversed Christ's position, flattened out the figures and characteristically concentrated the effect.



and the two little figures are made more strongly the focus of attention.

Perhaps van der Weyden's best-known masterpiece is his *Deposition* in Madrid. For this the starting point was surely a famous huge *Deposition* by Campin, of which a fragment survives, but which is known in full only in a small copy. From Campin Rogier took over the scale – his figures are almost life-size – the use of a gold background and, above all, the frieze-like disposition and sharp, sculptural definition of the figures. Campin's composition has been superbly simplified – the expressive curving diagonals of the dead Christ and his fainting Mother are held in balance by the central stark vertical of the Cross behind and by the protective sway of the figures at each side. Colour is used to heighten the tragedy: on the left it is in a sombre key, then breaks into agitation in the gold and red of the stricken Nicodemus and the multicoloured garb of Mary Magdalen on the right.

Van der Weyden's enormous *Last Judgment* at Beaune seems a response to the challenge of the van Eycks' Ghent altarpiece. Rogier succeeds in treating a similar compositional problem with much greater unity and monu-

mental effect. This suggests an Italian influence, although it was probably begun before Rogier went to Italy; such an influence is specifically visible in his *Madonna and saints* at Frankfurt, arranged like a *sacra conversazione* (see p. 107) of Italian tradition, uniting saints and Virgin in a tiered semicircle. An *Entombment* (not shown) in Florence is clearly connected with a similar subject by Fra Angelico.

In his portraiture, van der Weyden continued the themes established by van Eyck, but was again more sculptural in feeling: the planes of his faces are more sharply cut by light focused from the side or front, rather than diffused from slightly behind the sitter. There is, too, a greater decorative feeling, as in the transparent linen head-dress of the woman in the portrait in Washington. His people are still, tinged with a pensive melancholy.

The two other important artists active in the mid-fifteenth century were Petrus Christus (died 1472/3) in Bruges and Dirk Bouts (died 1475), working mainly, it seems, in Louvain. Christus was the painter nearest in style and talent to van Eyck, but his drawing is less decisive and he tends to simplify that all-embracing, all-accounting vision. His portrait

of Edward Grimston (1446) is a charming but relatively generalized account of the sitter's likeness; it is novel in setting a head and shoulders against an interior. His *St Eligius with two lovers* (1449), a visual inventory of a goldsmith's shop, is much in the spirit of van Eyck, but, while it has again a novel element – a hint of genre story-telling – it is weaker in drawing and rather cluttered in composition.

Bouts' style seems nearer in feeling to that of Rogier van der Weyden, though lacking his dramatic intensity. His use of colour was highly individual, while his delight in landscape was stronger than Rogier's. His masterpiece, *The Last Supper* (1464-68), illustrating the institution of the Eucharist, is drawn out with solemn precision in true geometrical perspective, with Christ, mild and patient, exactly central. The elongated proportions of the figures are typical of Bouts, and will recur in the work of his followers, such as Justus of Ghent. Bouts' little *Young man* of 1462 has a similar modest, calm and reserved quality, extending the innovation of Christus' *Grimston* to show a landscape glimpsed through a window; but the modelling and lighting of the face is far subtler and more minute.



VAN DER WEYDEN (left)
The Madonna and saints,
c. 1450
Cosmas and Damian, the
Medici patron saints,
appear on the right, and
the arms of Florence
beneath: this was surely
an Italian commission.

BOUTS (right)
The Last Supper, central
panel, 1464-68
Bouts was commissioned
by the Confraternity of
the Holy Sacrament in
Louvain – hence this
subject. The emotion
is quiet, like the quietness
during the Elevation
of the Host in the Mass.

CHRISTUS (left)
*St Eligius and two
lovers*, 1449
Objects are rendered as
scrupulously as Jan van
Eyck's – even pedantically
– and surely have symbolic
significance (now obscure);
the couple have come to
the saint to buy a ring.



VAN DER WEYDEN (left)
A young woman, c. 1440?
Her head-dress, bare
temples and low-cut
bodice mark the lady as
noble, perhaps of the
Burgundian court. The
portrait is calm, simple,
serene and respectful.

CHRISTUS (right)
Edward Grimston, 1446
In the manner of van Eyck,
there is an attempt to
trace the fall of light
from the window on to
the sitter. The device of
placing in the hand a
symbol of accomplishment
or rank is persistent
in 15th-century portraits.



BOUTS (above)
A young man, 1462
The pose has an engaging
touch of awkwardness or
uncertainty. The hands
rest as if upon the edge
of the frame, a typical
illusionistic device.

Netherlandish Art 3, and its Diffusion

The legacies of Robert Campin, Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden were taken up and amalgamated by Hugo van der Goes, in his brief but fruitful career in Ghent between about 1464 and 1482. In 1482 he died in a monastery, an insane melancholic, and the legend is recorded by a contemporary that he was driven mad by his inability to match the perfection of the van Eycks' Ghent altarpiece, although his own contribution established him securely as one of the greatest masters of early Netherlandish painting.

His Monforte altarpiece, probably of the early 1470s, shows Hugo fully mature. It is perhaps the most relaxed of his major works, painted with superb delicacy in very rich colours. His masterpiece is the Portinari altar-

piece (finished before 1476), showing *The Adoration of the shepherds*. Here the colour is more subdued, and the mood is full of awe and even disquiet. The painting is very large, some six metres (19ft) wide including the wings, and full of minutely observed detail – examine the variety of texture of the garments, the still life and the modelling of the figures, faces and – Hugo's speciality – hands. The gentle hills and chill winter trees and sky in the right-hand wing constitute the most beautiful landscape painted in the north in the entire fifteenth century. Despite the naturalism, older traditions are drawn upon – the disparity of scale between the figures; the Gothic angels in elaborate fluttering robes, which contrast with the still birds in the bare trees; above all,

the pervasive symbolism. The flowers, the birds, the colours of the draperies, the cornsheaf, Joseph's discarded gloves and shoes – almost every detail hints at an episode in the Old Testament or in Christ's life to come. All these, but especially the figures, have an extraordinarily intense, or charged, presence, and in what is probably Hugo's last major work, *The death of the Virgin*, the undertones of anxiety in the Portinari altarpiece have sharpened to utter psychological disorientation.

The second major centre of art in the latter half of the century was Bruges. There Hans Memlinc (c. 1430/40-94) became the most successful and prolific painter, working primarily for a prosperous merchant clientèle. He was born in Germany, and is believed to have

VAN DER GOES (right)
The Portinari altarpiece:
The Adoration of the shepherds, c. 1474-76
The figures seem heavy with the sorrows awaiting Christ and his Mother. The Child is tiny and isolated; the spacing of the figures is oddly unsettling. The earthy naturalism of the shepherds particularly impressed the Florentines when the altarpiece was installed in the city in 1483, and Ghirlandaio copied them in one of his frescos. The violets strewn in the foreground are among many details invested with symbolic meaning: they were associated with Lent, when they flower, and thus with Christ's Passion.



VAN DER GOES (left)
The Monforte altarpiece:
The Adoration of the Magi, early 1470s
The setting is a ruined Romanesque building, rather than the decrepit stable favoured by Campin. This is Eyckian symbolism: Romanesque architecture symbolizes the old order (and ruined, its passing); Gothic symbolizes the new. The superbly painted landscapes are an advance even on the aerial perspective of Jan van Eyck. The top of the picture, where angels once hovered, is missing.



MEMLINC (left)
The Donne triptych:
The Virgin and Child with saints and donors, c. 1480
Memlinc's understatement has been little understood: this used to be thought an early work. In fact it shows his bland, undramatic style in its maturity. Sir John Donne, who ordered the work, travelled from England to Bruges on several occasions.

VAN DER GOES (above)
The death of the Virgin, c. 1480
The apostle in the foreground, staring wildly out of the picture with his head-dress askew, is extraordinarily expressive of a world gone awry. Each apostle is an isolated individual, unable to offer his neighbour comfort. The colours have become strange, and ring harshly.

started in van der Weyden's workshop. In contrast to van der Goes, his style is almost bland, but consistently and flawlessly proficient, maintained by a large and well-run workshop. Memlinc's unobtrusive artistic personality has led to an undue depreciation of his achievement. The *Donne triptych* (probably of about 1480) is typical: calm and meditative, Madonna, saints and kneeling donors are all upright and symmetrical; there is a hint of music from one attendant angel, and the orderly countryside rolls away beyond. But his portraits are his most characteristic contribution: more than 25 are known. Often forming one half of a diptych, adoring a *Madonna* on the other half, they have always an air of composed contemplation, like lesser saints in their niches. They are unidealized, though the sitters are seen no doubt "at their best".

The diffusion of the Netherlandish vision through Western Europe in the fifteenth century was almost as pervasive as the Italian was to be in the sixteenth. Jan van Eyck, van der Weyden and van der Goes were all patronized by members of the Italian merchant community in the trade centres of Flanders, and their works were known and valued in Italy. A

friend and associate of van der Goes, Justus of Ghent (active c. 1460- after 1475) migrated to Italy, to work for Federigo da Montefeltro at Urbino; such immigrants disseminated Netherlandish oil techniques. In the 1470s Federigo seems also to have employed the Spaniard Pedro Berruguete (active 1474-1503: the portrait of Federigo attributed to him is reproduced on p. 112). Netherlandish influence was particularly strong in central Spain, coalescing with the native taste in a distinctive Hispano-Flemish style. In England, by the end of the century, a pale imitation of Netherlandish painting was dominant; but in Germany the vigorous realism of the Netherlands took firmer root and was practised by individual artists of great quality.

In the middle Rhine area, Stephan Lochner (active 1442-51), who is said to have trained with Campin, was the leading painter. Lochner acknowledges Netherlandish perspective and naturalistic characterization, yet is very sweet in colour and softly delicate in his draperies, and still often uses the Gothic convention of the gold background. But very Eyckian indeed was Konrad Witz (c. 1400-47), working in the upper Rhine area, Basel and

Geneva. His *Miraculous draught of fish* is set in a closely observed Geneva lakescape with a fascinating and meticulous rendering of reflection and even refraction in water.

In France, the disruption of the Hundred Years War inhibited patronage, but there emerged nevertheless in Charles VII's court one major artist, Jean Fouquet (c. 1420-81). He was in Rome between 1443 and 1447, and knew the work of early Renaissance masters such as Fra Angelico as well as he knew the realism of the north. His figures, in settings of classical architecture, are singularly pure and monumental, and drawn with wonderful mastery. He also illuminated manuscripts, in which he made remarkable experiments with perspective. In the south, at René of Anjou's court in Provence, Netherlandish influence was also felt, and the illuminator of *Le Livre du Cueur d'Amour Espris* (The Book of Heart Smitten by Love, completed c. 1465) applied Netherlandish techniques to scenes of allegorical romance with highly original results.

However, the most haunting image in French art of the period is on a traditional theme: "The Avignon Pietà" of about 1460 is at once harsh, austere and strikingly tender.



JUSTUS OF GHENT (above)
The Institution of the Eucharist, 1473-75
The elongated figures can be paralleled in van der Goes' and others' work, but may reflect Italian influence. Federigo da Montefeltro (with broken nose) appears on the right, copied from a medal(?).



WITZ (above)
The miraculous draught of fish, c. 1444
Witz's lake is perhaps the first topographical landscape in Western art. His observation of light in water can be compared to Piero della Francesca's *Baptism* (see p. 110).



FOUQUET (above)
"The Virgin of Melun", c. 1450
The King's mistress is said to have posed for the Madonna, though she seems built out of spheres; Fouquet must have learnt his obsession with three-dimensional form in Italy.



LOCHNER (right)
The Adoration of the shepherds, 1445
The sweetness in the face of the Virgin, and in the animals and the angels, is typical of Lochner's brand of unworldly mysticism. All God's creatures seem gentle and lovable.

AVIGNON SCHOOL (right)
"The Avignon Pietà", c. 1460
That delight in rendering the texture of things, so typical of Netherlandish art, has been put aside; instead the figures are like painted wooden sculptures. They are posed life-size on a shallow stage in strikingly expressive silhouettes.



THE MASTER OF THE CUEUR D'AMOUR ESPRIS (right)
How Hope rescued Heart from the water, c. 1465
The *Cueur d'Amour* is a typically Gothic romance, but its illustrations are in the latest realistic style - observe the variety of trees round the Black Knight.



Bosch: The Garden of Earthly Delights



BOSCH (left and right)
The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1505-10

(left) with the wings closed:
The creation of the world
The world is housed in a crystal orb, like those often shown held by God the Father. He looks down on the third day from the top left: there are as yet no animals, only strange vegetable and mineral forms presaging those so weirdly and profusely developed in the interior of the triptych.

(right) with the wings open,
left panel: *The creation of Eve*; middle panel: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*; right panel: *Hell*
The central panel at first glance appears innocuous enough: a light green landscape, nudes disporting, pinks and blues, touches of scarlet. At a closer view, it resolves into separate groups and zones, into a weird motley of animal, technological, humanoid and architectural apparitions, and the nature of the Delight becomes ambiguous and disquieting.

The Garden of Earthly Delights by Jerome ("Hieronymus") Bosch (active c. 1470-1516) is in many ways the last fling of the Gothic Middle Ages. It is a huge triptych, more than two metres (7ft) high, painted, incredibly enough, about 1505-10, when in Italy the High Renaissance had already begun. Bosch, however, seems indifferent to the rationalism and realism of north or of south; instead, the symbolism underlying so much Netherlandish art – Jan van Eyck's work, or Hugo van der Goes' Portinari altarpiece – seems in the *Garden of Delights* to have run riot, and become entirely detached from reality. Its grotesque and fantastic elements are akin to the *drôleries* in the initials or margins of illuminated manuscripts, or to the gargoyles of Gothic cathedrals. But its pessimism, and love-hate obsession with the world of the senses turned sinful and terrifying, are representative of a deep-seated strain in the Christian outlook. In his own day Bosch's work was widely disseminated in engravings.

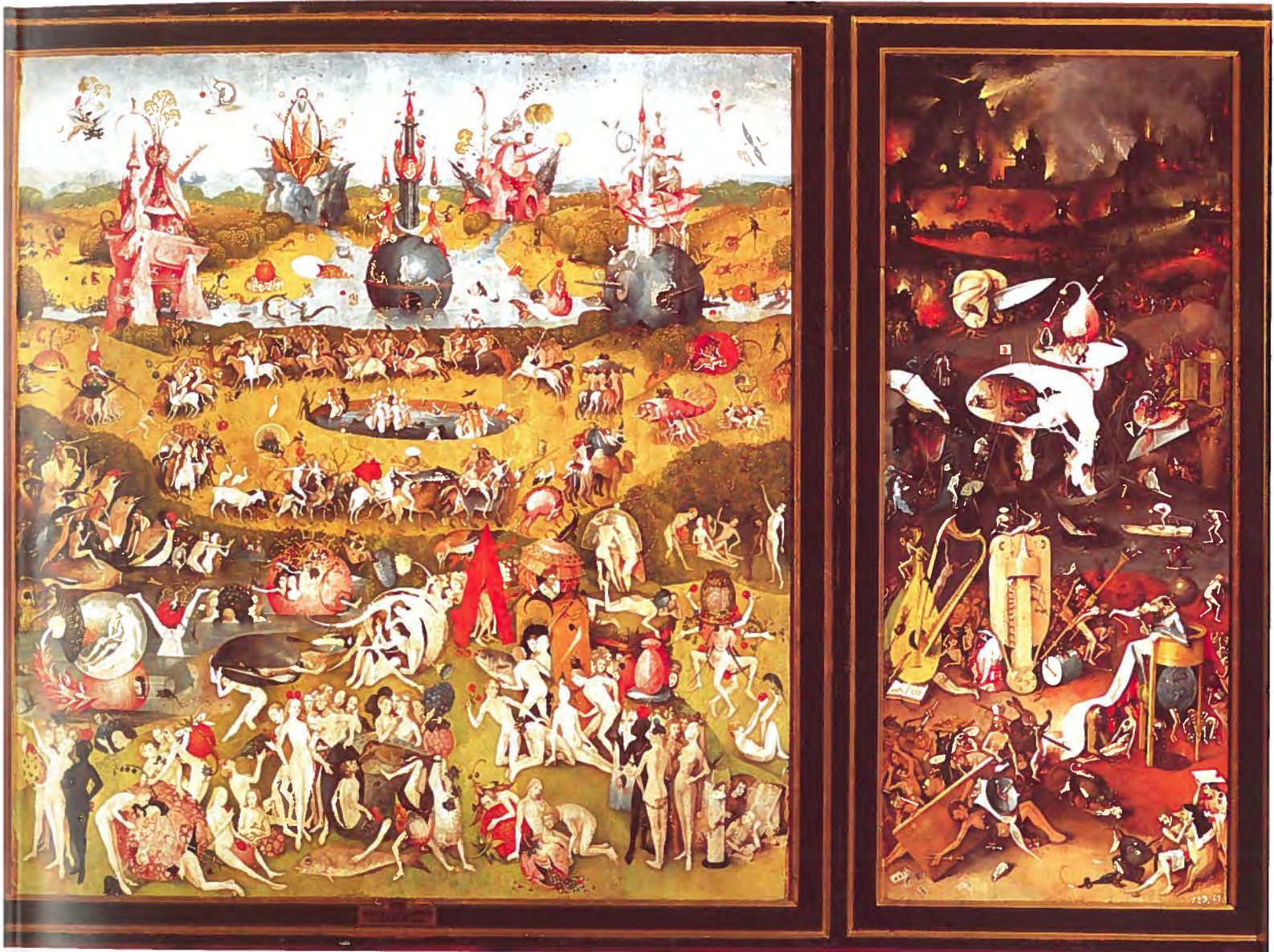
When closed, the two wings of the triptych show in bird's-eye view *The creation of the world*. They open to show, on the left, Adam waking to see (with pronounced interest) the newly created Eve; in the middle, the Garden of Delights, with a lake at the top with a bulb-based fantasy in the middle, which some have seen as a parody of the Fountain of Life at the centre of the van Eycks' Ghent altarpiece; on the right, Hell with no hint of Heaven. Even in Adam's Garden of Paradise, a cat is disposing of a mouse, and the ritual frolics of the Garden of Delights itself are unremittably ominous.

The meaning of it all is by no means clear. Some of the symbolism seems fairly intelligible even now – for instance, the recurring giant soft fruits, strawberries, raspberries, as a symbol of carnal appetite – and other details presumably had particular associations for

Bosch's contemporaries. But though scholars have succeeded in penetrating the meaning of many objects in earlier Netherlandish painting, in the *Garden of Delights* the profusion of people, animals and things – real, legendary or the product of the artist's own fertile imagination – is baffling. The suggestion that the *Garden of Delights* is the visual manifesto of an heretical creed has been abandoned, not least because one of Bosch's greatest admirers was the ultra-Catholic Philip II of Spain. Psycho-analytical interpretation might seem more appropriate, but has not yielded definite results. Bosch's imagery had an immediate appeal to the Surrealists and their followers, but their hindsight is of little help in determining what meaning it had for Bosch.

However, virtually all we know of the man himself is the unsettling impact of his imagery. He worked in his native town of s'Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) apparently quite prosperously and comfortably: unlike van der Goes he was not an unusual citizen. Bosch's other compositions are not so unusual, though still unorthodox. In such paintings as *The Crowning with thorns* the evil physiognomies, exaggerating the earthiness of peasants' faces in earlier Netherlandish painting, are even comparable with some of Leonardo da Vinci's caricatures. There are hints of Bosch's strangeness in the usually charming paintings of Geertgen tot Sint Jans (Little Gerald of the Order of St John; active c. 1480-90) or in those of the so-called Master of the Virgo inter Virgines (active c. 1470-1500). Certain of Bosch's effects – notably the landscape elements in his work – are echoed in the work of Patinir of Metsys (see p. 160) and even the magic of Bruegel, though different, is not unrelated. However, the twentieth century's interest in Bosch is perhaps chiefly a reflection of its own interest in the Unconscious.





BOSCH (left)
The Garden of Earthly Delights, right panel, detail
In the rest of the painting the subject matter is extraordinary, but the technique conventional, even archaic. Such a sinister night, lit by terrifying eruptions, had not been seen before, and inspired imitations.

GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS (below) *Christ as the Man of Sorrows*, c. 1490
Geertgen is perhaps better known for painting one of the earliest night-scenes, a touching *Nativity*. But here his theme of man's inhumanity is a parallel to the gloomy expectations of Bosch, and cries penitence.



THE MASTER OF THE VIRGO INTER VIRGINES (above)
The Annunciation, c. 1495
This anonymous master painted probably in Delft. His figures are somewhat wooden and his pictures joyless, though sometimes harshly expressive. It is this pessimism that offers some parallel to Bosch.

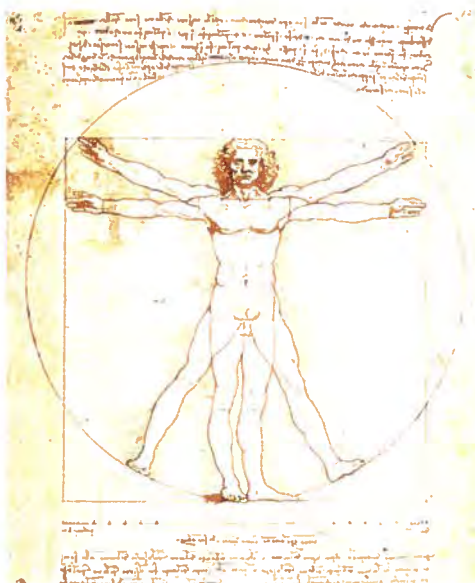
BOSCH (below)
The Crowning with thorns, undated
The tormentors represent the four "humours" – phlegmatic, melancholic, sanguine and choleric. The picture seems related to Geertgen's *Christ*, but the symbolism and the enigma are peculiar to Bosch.



The High Renaissance 1: Florence and Rome

It is still generally accepted that the High Renaissance was both a peak and a watershed in the history of European civilization, and that the Christian era can be divided essentially into pre-Renaissance and post-Renaissance, into medieval and modern. The early Renaissance had been a gradual revolution affecting not only the visual arts but literature, technology and the sciences as well; its consummation and climax, its point of no return, came in the brief moment of the High Renaissance in the early sixteenth century.

Vasari, in his *Lives of the Artists* (1550, revised 1568), formulated the art historical tradition that traces a path from Giotto, who began the break away from Byzantine and Gothic, through the early Renaissance and its prophets Masaccio and Donatello to the summits stormed by Michelangelo. The twentieth century has since discovered a fully realized perfection in Piero della Francesca, but perhaps the quintessential figure of the early Renaissance was Leon Battista Alberti. He was a poet, musician, scholar, mathematician and athlete, a painter, sculptor and architect – the prototype of the “universal man”. His treatises conceived the arts as based on reason



LEONARDO
“*Vitruvian Man*”, c. 1490
The Roman architect Vitruvius had described how the human body could be

the basis for a system of proportions. Leonardo's diagram reconciling circle and square is one image of High Renaissance harmony.

and human reality, and encouraged the scientific study of structure – whether in perspective or in anatomy – so that even religious themes were set forth in realistic terms. However, the attempt of the Dominican priest Savonarola, between 1494 and 1498, to build in Florence a new Jerusalem is a reflection of the continuity of religious belief and its prime claim.

Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, the three great figures whose names often stand for the whole High Renaissance, are discussed in the following pages. They were all grounded in the Florentine tradition, but during the High Renaissance Rome became quite suddenly the main centre of the arts in Italy, barring only Venice. The ambitions of the fifteenth-century popes, such as Nicholas V, had been hampered by lack of political control, and, despite its classical sites and its libraries, Rome had been artistically provincial. Visiting artists, however, such as Fra Angelico, Piero della Francesca, his accomplished follower Melozzo da Forlì (1438–94) and then many more, had painted there. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the papacy had established a temporal power, and Pope Julius II, elected in 1503, could dream of reviving the



MELOZZO DA FORLÌ (left)
Sixtus IV ordering his nephew Palatina to reorganize the Vatican library, 1475–77
The crisp outlines and the relatively flat, unmodulated colour belong to the early Renaissance. The tallest cardinal near the centre is the future Pope Julius II.

PINTORICCHIO (right)
Susannah and the Elders, in the Borgia apartments in the Vatican, c. 1492–94
The gilt gesso relief was inspired by similar work in Nero's Golden House; so also was the elaborate geometric ceiling design. Pintoricchio's work was light, pretty and detailed.



LEONARDO (below)
The Last Supper, c. 1495
It is said that even before Leonardo had finished it the painting had begun to decay. Leonardo departed from the usual fresco techniques to experiment with oil, probably because he wished to work up all the parts together, and so link the individual expressions and gestures of the apostles into one common drama. Vasari's anecdotes suggest that the artist spent rather more time pondering over the work than painting it; beautiful drawings survive to witness Leonardo's perfectionist preparation.



ANDREA SANSOVINO
(left) *The baptism of Christ, 1502–05*
The graceful, almost nude marble Christ stands in a classical *contrapposto* –

the direction of the head balancing that of the legs – and conforms to a canon of classical proportions. Commissioned for Florence Baptistery and set

above Ghiberti's Paradise doors, the group was left unfinished in 1505 when Sansovino was called to Rome. It was completed by Vincenzo Danti (1530–76).



prestige of ancient Rome, and began to rebuild St Peter's, the central church of Christendom, in monumental classical style.

Artists' study of the Antique had become more penetrating, and just at this time excavation yielded important examples of classical sculpture and painting – the *Laocoön*, “*The Torso Belvedere*”, “*The Apollo Belvedere*” (see pp. 41, 46) and the paintings and stuccowork of the Golden House of Nero. Though still of the early Renaissance, Pintoricchio (c. 1454–1513), who had trained under Perugino a little earlier than Raphael, painted “grotesques” inspired by the remains of the Golden House for the apartments of Pope Alexander VI. These were a precedent for Raphael's Stanze (see p. 137) and even for Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling (see p. 134).

High Renaissance art is far from being all of a piece, and yet its qualities of grace, balance and restraint are quite distinct beside the generally hard and dry manner of the late fifteenth century. Artists not only emulated but surpassed antique models, as the early career of Michelangelo (see p. 132) specifically demonstrates; but even the works of less titanic figures, such as *The baptism of Christ* by

Andrea Sansovino (c. 1467–1529) for the Baptistery in Florence, display as confidently as Michelangelo's *David* the full assimilation of classical form. The High Renaissance occupied, however, an extremely brief period, coinciding roughly with the working career of Raphael, from his arrival in Florence in 1504 to his death in 1520. It was certainly over by 1527, which brought the shock of northern mercenaries sacking Rome. Yet it had been announced in *The Last Supper* painted in Milan by Leonardo in about 1495, and virtually from the beginning its classic resolutions of early Renaissance preoccupations suggest the fresh departures of the future.

The High Renaissance may be said to open with a flurry of activity just after the turn of the century in Florence, where Leonardo painted *The Battle of Anghiari*, known only through copies, and the *Mona Lisa* (see over), and also set forth crucial compositional problems – the pyramidal group and the *tondo*, or circular, form – explored by both Michelangelo and Raphael. Perhaps its most perfect resolution is Raphael's “*Madonna della Sedia*” (The Virgin enthroned) of 1516–17. Raphael's portrait of Baldassare Castiglione of about the same date,

which still reflects the *Mona Lisa*, also demonstrates the extremely rapid development that occurred within the High Renaissance. Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael may each exemplify that classic balance, restraint and harmony claimed as characteristic of the High Renaissance, but none of them can be contained within such a formula.

Briefly together in Florence, these three artists soon left for Rome but Fra Bartolommeo (1472/75–1517) and Andrea del Sarto (see p. 164) continued working there – painters of the first rank by the standards of any other age. At the same time in Venice the great masters Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione and the young Titian were demonstrating the triumph of colour in painting (see pp. 138ff).

The High Renaissance established the fact in Italy that the artist was no longer an artisan but an independent creator, the equal of the poet, the intellectual and the humanist courtier – all of which he might be as well. His fame and distinction depended not only on his craft and skill but on his *invenzione* (invention, imagination), by which he was enabled to undertake and carry off stupendous projects. The concept of the artist as genius was born.

AFTER LEONARDO (below)
The Battle of Anghiari,
detail, 1503–06
Leonardo's cartoon for a
painting in the Town Hall
to celebrate the victories
of republican Florence is

now lost, but Rubens' copy
of its central part reveals
that it intended to convey
swift, fierce movement in a
complex, close-knit design,
with a particular emphasis
on the warriors' grimaces.



LEONARDO (left)
*The Virgin and Child
with a cat*, c. 1478–81
Leonardo's drawings show
him “thinking on paper”
as artists had never done
before – this is not careful
study but free experiment,
an attempt to solve purely
theoretical compositional
problems in an early trial
of the pyramidal theme.

MICHELANGELO (right)
The Pitti Madonna,
1504–05
Replying to the challenge
of Leonardo's *Madonnas*,
Michelangelo made three
tondi between 1501 and
1505, two in marble, one a
painting. Like Leonardo's,
his poses are contrived and
often sharply foreshortened.



RAPHAEL
“*The Madonna della Sedia*”
(The Virgin enthroned),
c. 1516–17
Raphael's composition is a
perfect balance of curving
forms in a round frame,

stabilized by the discreet
upright of the throne arm.
It is also an equilibrium
of harmonious colours, not
rich and glowing like those
of the Venetians, but full
and subtly satisfying.



RAPHAEL (left)
Baldassare Castiglione,
c. 1516
The clear gaze and muted
colours create warmth and
an alert dignity without
affectation, setting a new
standard in portraiture.
In his famous *Book of the
Courtier* Castiglione hints
at his esteem for Raphael
beyond all other artists.

FRA BARTOLOMMEO
The Entombment, 1515
The refinement, softness
and pure colours are typical
of the Dominican's mature
work. He was influenced by
Leonardo, but his figures
lack Leonardo's mystery,
being more sculptural and
monumental. There is an
emotional strain, recalling
Savonarola's preaching.

Leonardo da Vinci



LEONARDO (above)
Self-portrait, c. 1512
Vasari once described the artist, here aged about 60: "In appearance he was striking and handsome;

his magnificent presence brought comfort to the most troubled soul". He was a musician of famed skill, a lover of animals – "Nature's own miracle".



VERROCCHIO AND LEONARDO (above) *The baptism of Christ*, c. 1472
The graceful angel kneeling in profile, and also his finely modelled robe, the tuft of grass beneath and the landscape above, are attributed to the young Leonardo. He adds to Florentine lucidity a new spiritual element in the pensive head. His master Verrocchio's work by contrast seems brittle, without fluidity or ease.



LEONARDO (left)
Landscape, 1473
The pen-and-ink drawing of the Arno valley above Florence is Leonardo's earliest signed and dated work, with an inscription written from right to left. His interest in geography is apparent as well as his pre-occupation with movement: lines suggest swaying trees, and the sweeping strokes foreshadow the pantheism of the later *Deluge* sketches.



LEONARDO (left)
The Adoration of the Magi, 1481
Leonardo worked from dark to light, building up in oils – a new medium and a new technique in Italy. The almost monochrome underpaint reveals his methods. He created form by tonal blending "without lines or borders in the manner of smoke" – his famous *sfumato* technique. An elaborate perspective preparatory drawing has survived, but even there the mathematical grid is laden with creatures apparently of fantasy, full of inner life.

LEONARDO (below)
Ginevra de' Benci, c. 1474?
The background juniper, in Italian *ginepro*, is the emblem of the poetess. There is a suggestion of her veiled thoughts, of what Leonardo was to call the "motions of the mind"; a sombre, misty riverscape behind echoes the mystery of her heavy-lidded eyes.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was both prophet and arch-exponent of the High Renaissance. The oldest of its three supreme masters, he was nearly 50 when Michelangelo and the precocious Raphael entered their mature careers, but in his paintings of the 1480s and 1490s he had already absorbed and even surpassed the attainments of his contemporaries and, with an extraordinary intellectual grasp matched by an unfaltering skill of hand, he then passed far beyond them – indeed into fields apparently remote from art.

Leonardo's first master was Verrocchio (see p. 115), in whose workshop he learned all the techniques the Florentine fifteenth century could teach him. His first known work, which he painted as an assistant, is the left-hand angel in Verrocchio's *Baptism* of about 1472. Verrocchio, it is said, was so impressed by the intimations of his pupil's genius that he gave up painting.

By 1472 Leonardo was enrolled in the Guild of Painters and was able to accept independent commissions. His concern to convey emotion through subtleties of expression meticulously observed is clearly evident in the early portrait, *Ginevra de' Benci*, perhaps of 1474. There is

again a strong sense of atmosphere in the unfinished *Adoration of the Magi* of 1481, in which many themes that will recur are seen for the first time – in particular his *sfumato* – no clear edge defines the contours – also the structure, created by the disposition and massing of the figures, linked by movement and gesture. The intensive preparation, the multiplication of preliminary sketches, was no less characteristic of Leonardo. Never before had so much of the artist's effort been devoted to the development of the idea, the process of invention. As a result the number of his drawings is immense but his pictures, though highly refined and novel, are relatively few, and often remained uncompleted.

By 1483 Leonardo was working for Lodovico Sforza il Moro in Milan. He seems to have announced himself primarily as a military engineer but also as an architect and sculptor. An equestrian statue got no further than a huge clay model, destroyed, for which, however, numerous drawings survive. *The Virgin of the rocks* was commissioned in 1483 (a second and later version was produced with an assistant's help). The pyramidal group of figures centred on the Madonna, set in a fantastic landscape

illuminated by a mysterious twilight, was to prove a recurrent source of inspiration, especially for Fra Bartolommeo's and Raphael's *Madonnas*. Around 1495 Leonardo embarked on another famous project, *The Last Supper* (illustrated on preceding page): this, though now a ruin, was one of the most influential paintings of the Renaissance. It conveys the psychological drama of a moment of crisis – something never expressed in the more rigid treatment of the subject by earlier painters.

When Milan fell to the French in 1499 Leonardo returned to Florence via Mantua and Venice. Between 1500 and 1508 he produced three major works that have haunted the imagination of posterity – the now vanished fresco of *The Battle of Anghiari* in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence; the *Mona Lisa*; and *The Virgin and Child with St Anne*. Copies of the central part of Leonardo's cartoon for the *Battle of Anghiari* survive (see preceding page); these, and preparatory studies, witness his concern both for anatomical accuracy and for expressiveness – in the warriors' faces and in the pent-up energy of the horses and men. The *Mona Lisa*, begun in 1503 and taken by Leonardo to France, has been claimed as the

first modern portrait. The consummate technical skill with which tones and colour are merged into volume and the mysterious individuality evoked were unparalleled. The surviving versions of *The Virgin and Child with St Anne* are all unfinished, but they fully demonstrate Leonardo's search for complex and perfect balance in composition, and the unfailing ingenuity he brought to it, which amazed his contemporaries.

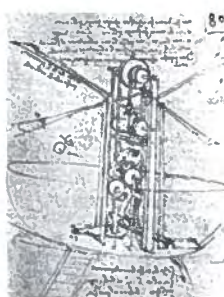
Leonardo's last years were restless. He produced fewer paintings but continued to be active in his many fields – in Milan again in 1508. Some sculptural projects are recorded, but no authenticated sculpture by Leonardo survives, and he never built a building, though from an early age he produced theoretical architectural plans and elevations. Then in 1513 he left for Rome, where he seems to have devoted himself chiefly to scientific experiments. His dissections, for instance, gave him an unprecedented grasp of anatomy, and led him to discuss the circulation of blood long before Harvey described its true workings. In 1516 he left for France, where he was the honoured guest of Francis I until his death at the age of 67 in 1519.

Vasari records Leonardo's intellectual curiosity, but his notebooks, virtually unknown to his contemporaries, have revealed to the modern world his astonishing observations and the full scope of his inventive genius. He was quite unlike his contemporaries in his relative indifference to the authority of classical scholarship, to philosophy and to poetry – he started always from what he saw – but he has become the archetype of "*l'uomo universale*", the universal man in whom all human knowledge was embodied. He also, like Michelangelo, provided a model for the concept of genius – not least by his fiercely independent, restless style of life; even by the fact that he was born illegitimate. Claiming the pre-eminence of his preferred art, painting, over the others, he argued that the painter's mind was endowed with a creative capacity which brought him closer to the mind of God. His reputation in his life-time was immense, and it was acknowledged visibly not only in the work of the foremost painters of the time in Florence – Fra Bartolommeo, Andrea del Sarto and, above all, Raphael – but also in Milan and northern Italy – by Correggio in Parma, and by Giorgione in Venice.



LEONARDO (above)
The Virgin of the Rocks,
c. 1483-85
Strangeness – a nebulous metaphysical, even divine quality – is conveyed by the mysterious light and the quiet expressions of the Virgin and the angel.

LEONARDO (below)
The Virgin and Child with St Anne, c. 1495
The cartoon, in black chalk heightened with white, is one of several variations on a pyramidal composition.



LEONARDO (right)
Flying machine, c. 1486-90
Years spent studying the flight of birds inspired Leonardo's anticipations of a helicopter. The attempt at flight is typical of his ambitiousness and absolute confidence in his powers.

LEONARDO (right)
Mona Lisa, c. 1503-06
The critic Pater expressed a common awe: "All the thoughts and experiences of the world have etched and moulded there".



LEONARDO (right)
Anatomical drawing:
Sexual intercourse,
c. 1492-94
Dissections made possible a knowledge of anatomy unrivalled in Leonardo's time. Limitless curiosity and sure draughtsmanship yielded scores of studies. The script is in mirror-writing – an unusual but logical consequence of the artist's left-handedness.



Michelangelo Buonarroti



Michelangelo Buonarroti
The artist's troubled, even battered face reflects a life-long struggle with colossal projects, and the sense of

failure that recurs in his letters and poetry of often tormented piety. His hand is painted in the shape of the hand of his own *David*.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) was the most sought-after artist in the sixteenth century, and for posterity the outstanding example of an artistic genius. His tumultuous career, with its perpetual struggles and its passionate commitment to art, was to become the master pattern for the Romantic artist.

In 1488, at the age of 13, Michelangelo was apprenticed as a painter to Domenico Ghirlandai in Florence. He moved after less than a year to the somewhat mysterious "academy" set up in the Casino Mediceo by Lorenzo il Magnifico, where he could study "antique and good statues" and could meet the sophisticated humanists and *literati* of the Medici circle. The Neoplatonic thought current amongst them seems to underlie not only his poetry but much of his painting and sculpture as well.

Following Lorenzo's death, and the brief rule of the priest Savonarola, whose ascetic religion and republican ideals both influenced the young man deeply, Michelangelo left Florence in 1496 for Rome. His reputation, established by the sale of a *Sleeping Cupid* (now lost) as a genuine antique, was sealed by the Vatican *Pietà*, completed in 1499. In its exquisite finish, its flawless classicism, and its evocation

of the human in the divine and the divine in the human, the *Pietà* is indeed a consummation of fifteenth-century art. The perfection of the two figures is informed both by an expert knowledge of anatomy (based on dissections) and by the Neoplatonic theory that the beauty of the body is an expression of its spirit.

Returning, famous, to Florence in 1501, Michelangelo was commissioned by the new republican government to carve a colossal *David*, symbol of resistance and independence. This was the first full statement of Michelangelo's heroic style, and of his inimitable and characteristic *terribilità* (awesome-ness). He was also engaged to paint a fresco in the Palazzo Vecchio in rivalry to Leonardo, next to his *Battle of Anghiari* - *The Battle of Cascina*. The fresco was never painted but the cartoon (now lost), with its convulsive nude soldiers, fascinated artists in Florence.

In 1505 Michelangelo was summoned by the new Pope, Julius II, to Rome and entrusted with an immense sculptural project, the Pope's mausoleum. Although only three of the 40 life-size or larger figures of the early designs were executed - the formidable *Moses* and the unfinished "*Struggling slave*" and "*Dying*



MICHELANGELO (above)
The Vatican Pietà, 1499
Christian emotion never has been more perfectly united with classical form. Michelangelo never reached such flawless finish again.



MICHELANGELO (right)
David, 1501-04
The more than life-size *David* is heroically clear-eyed, finely proportioned, and characteristically has both tension and languor.

MICHELANGELO (left)
Study for *Leda*, c. 1530?
The subject, the rape of Leda by Jupiter as a swan, could not be more sensual; and yet the head is so pure.



MICHELANGELO (left)
Tityus, 1532
The giant Tityus fed upon by a vulture was a symbol perhaps of the torture of sensual love - as opposed to heavenly love. It was drawn to give to one of his beloved.

MICHELANGELO (below)
"*Dying slave*", 1513-16
Probably once representing the grief of the world at the passing of Julius II, the suffering figure seems now to feel Michelangelo's and all human torment.



MICHELANGELO (above)
Moses, 1513-16
The severe, massive figure fits uneasily into its final resting place, a mockery of the original, grand scheme. Its strange proportions were determined by its intended position, high up from the ground. In concept, it owes much to Donatello, who had pioneered the Renaissance monumental seated figure.



slave" – the commission dominated most of Michelangelo's life. In 1508 he was transferred by Julius to the Sistine Chapel ceiling, but the constantly aborted history of the tomb, "The Tragedy of the Tomb", ended only in 1547 – some 40 years and five revised contracts later. The final, disproportionately truncated version is in S. Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.

The Sistine Chapel ceiling (see over) was to prove Michelangelo's most celebrated work, but he was always to maintain that he was primarily a sculptor, and, contrary to Leonardo's view, affirmed the superiority of sculpture over painting "as the sun is to the moon". By sculpture, he said, he meant "taking away", that is, carving rather than modelling, as if releasing the image from within the stone. All through his career the unfinished creatures recur, struggling for freedom as if imprisoned in the stone – like man, according to Neoplatonic doctrine, imprisoned in his body.

After the death of Julius II in 1513, Michelangelo could work on the tomb undiverted for a while, but the new Pope, the Medici Leo X, soon engaged him on the façade of S. Lorenzo in Florence. Here was a still better opportunity to harmonize architecture and sculpture in one

design, but it, too, aborted, although Michelangelo was able to fulfil some of his architectural and sculptural ambitions in the Library and the New Sacristy, or Medici Chapel, of S. Lorenzo. The Medici Chapel fell not far short of being completed: two of the Medici tombs intended for the Chapel were installed, and for the third Michelangelo had carved his last great *Madonna* (unfinished; not shown) when he left Florence for ever in 1534.

Arrived in Rome, Michelangelo undertook for the new Pope, Paul III, *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel. Far from being an extension of the ceiling, this was an entirely novel statement. Between the two projects the stability of Italy had been shown to be pitifully fragile by the Sack of Rome in 1527; the buoyant Neoplatonic Christianity of the early humanists had been overtaken by papal impotence and error and the rise of Protestantism. The mood of *The Last Judgment* is sombre; the vengeful naked Christ is not a figure of consolation, and even the Saved struggle painfully towards Salvation. The colour likewise is sombre; the figures are thick-waisted and heavily muscular, and very forcefully modelled. Michelangelo's last paintings

were frescos in the Cappella Paolina just beside the Sistine Chapel, completed in 1550, when he was 75 years old; but *The conversion of Paul* and *The crucifixion of St Peter* are disturbing visions of undiminished dynamism.

Michelangelo's crowning achievement, however, was architectural – he was appointed architect to St Peter's in 1546. He continued in his last years to write poetry, renouncing in the moving late sonnets the world and even his art; he made remarkable drawings expressing his profound, now often pessimistic, religious feeling; and he carved the two extraordinary, haunting and pathetic late *Pietàs*, one "*The Rondanini Pietà*" in Milan, on which he was working six days before his death.

For his contemporaries the emotionally charged, heroic male nudes of the Sistine Chapel, or the spiralling, exquisitely contorted figures like the marble *Victory* (see p. 164), were more significant, but it is Michelangelo's unfinished, unresolved creations that have especially interested the twentieth century. After Michelangelo, the aesthetic focus becomes not simply the created art object, but the inextricable relationship of the artist's personality and his work.



MICHELANGELO (above)
The tomb of Giuliano de' Medici in the Medici Chapel, S. Lorenzo, 1534. Giuliano, with head alert, ready to rise, embodies the Active Principle; on the opposite side (not shown) Lorenzo embodies the Contemplative Principle – a Neoplatonic allegory. The immensely powerful figures of Day and Night, precarious on their sarcophagus, seem to be alien beings of the Unconscious.

MICHELANGELO (right)
The Last Judgment, detail, on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, 1534-41. At the summit of a wall filled with struggling nude figures rising and falling (many have had the nudity overpainted), Christ curses the Damned. With his left hand he much less clearly beckons the Saved, and he seems also to point to his wounds as in the gesture of the Man of Sorrows. It is in strong contrast to the ceiling of 25 years earlier: the nudes have lost their beauty, but doubled their power, their *terribilità*. The great example of the Grand Manner, Vasari called it.

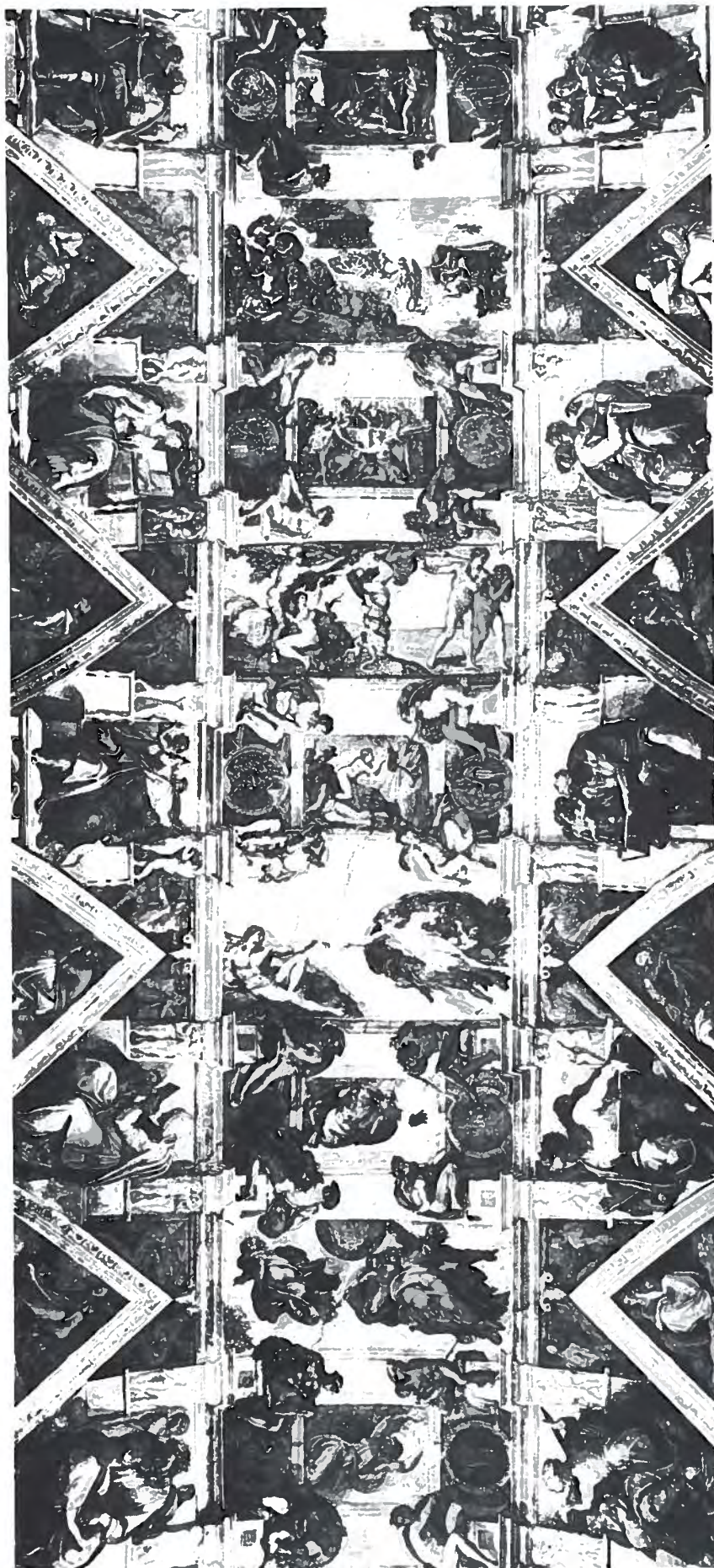


MICHELANGELO (right)
The crucifixion of St Peter, 1546-50. Upside down on the cross, St Peter twists round with disturbing contortionism to stare fiercely out at the spectator. He is surrounded by elemental forms that are no longer lit, as before, by potential divinity. The isolated groups cluster round an unsettling vortex, seeming to float without solid edges – as veiled as the unfinished sculptures.

MICHELANGELO (below)
"*The Rondanini Pietà*", c. 1555-64. Mother and Son merge in a rough unfinished sculpture of a rarefied beauty and almost Expressionist power. Reworked and in process of transformation – the artist had destroyed one Christ – the attenuated new beginning has formal parallels in Western art no earlier than this century. Michelangelo was doggedly working on the stone within a few days of his death.



Michelangelo: The Sistine Chapel Ceiling



MICHELANGELO

(left) The Sistine Chapel ceiling, 1508-12

The narrative is contained within the long central strip of the barrel vault. It consists of nine scenes from Genesis, three for *The creation of the world*, three for *The creation of Adam* (detail, right), *The creation of Eve* and *The Fall*, and three for *The story of Noah*. The last scene, *The drunkenness of Noah*, above the entrance, shows man in weakness but implies his redemption. Along the sides are figures illustrating the indissoluble concordance of Old and New Testaments, the Old foreshadowing the New: *The ancestors of Christ* listed in St Matthew's Gospel, and pagan *Sybils* and Hebrew *Prophets*, who foretold Christ's coming, in the triangular spandrels of the vault. Separating the nine central scenes are the famous *Ignudi* (male nudes), whose meaning is unclear. Perhaps, though wingless, they are angels, but their vivid force far exceeds the needs of their function, to support fictive medallions and sprays of oak (emblem of Julius II's family); they culminate the Renaissance adaptation of classical modes to Christian use.



(left) The interior of the Sistine Chapel
When Michelangelo painted the ceiling there were two frescos and an altarpiece by Perugino at the end, and windows like those down the sides. These, and two lunettes of Michelangelo's own ceiling, were removed when he came to paint *The Last Judgment*. In 1519 tapestries by Raphael were hung round the lower walls.

(below) *The Libyan Sibyl*
The huge Sibyl, painted after the break of 1510, is in the more monumental, later style. Her figure is an idealization synthesizing the beauty of both sexes.





(left) *Ignudo*

The *Ignudi* can be interpreted as a series of formal variations on the classical "*Belevedere Torso*" (see p. 46). They are also an expression of Michelangelo's individual genius – almost art for art's sake; in this and in their strain, thrust and counter-thrust of pose, they were an inspiration for succeeding generations of Mannerist artists.

(below) *The prophet Jonah* Vasari called it the peak of genius in this supreme work that Michelangelo could paint on a forward-sloping surface a figure that apparently falls backwards.



The Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, begun by Pope Sixtus IV in 1473, was and is a place of worship, but it is also the setting for certain extraordinary functions – notably the conclave of cardinals for the election of a new pope. The decorations of the 1480s – frescos by Perugino, Signorelli, Botticelli and others girdling the walls – had illustrated the basis of papal authority in the Old and New Testaments. When he commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling in 1508 Pope Julius II probably wished to assert not only the Christian faith and his role as its leader, but also papal independence from such temporal powers as Louis XII of France, with whom he was embattled. Once entrusted to Michelangelo, however, the scheme became one primarily of Michelangelo's devising.

The commission to paint the ceiling came to Michelangelo at a point when he was obsessed with the design for Julius II's tomb, that is, with sculptural problems, and at first he seems to have fiercely resented the imposition. Julius II was an impatient and demanding patron, while Michelangelo's temperament was often neurotic or moody. In a poem written in 1510 Michelangelo bemoaned his lot – "I am not in a good place, and I'm no painter". But in the event the ceiling was to prove a more satisfactory project than the tomb.

The vast area of the Chapel ceiling, 38.5 × 14 metres (118 × 46 ft), took four years to paint, and was unveiled in part in August 1511 and completely on October 31 1512. It was Michelangelo's first major exercise in fresco, for the *Battle of Cascina* project had never passed the cartoon stage. After un-

satisfactory trials with assistants he locked himself away in the Chapel, and virtually single-handed, on dizzy scaffolding of his own design, worked slowly across the expanse of the ceiling, through the days and months, often in acute discomfort. It was an heroic feat never to be surpassed by himself or another.

The extraordinary programme of the ceiling evolved from very simple first ideas – figures of the twelve apostles in an ornamental setting. But once the project had seized hold of his imagination, Michelangelo emended and aggrandized the first conception beyond recognition, though he must have discussed his ideas with learned churchmen – the Vatican was certainly not lacking in theological expertise. Formally, the imagery used clearly reflects the sculptor's frustration: the figures of the *Sibyls* and *Prophets* are variations on the theme of the great statue *Moses* for the tomb of Julius II; the famous *Ignudi* (nudes) likewise take up the mood of the so-called "*Slaves*" intended for the tomb. Michelangelo's style evolved as he progressed from the entrance to the Chapel, with its complex *Story of Noah*, towards the altar wall, and, especially after the break of 1510 when the scaffolding was removed, he simplified the compositions and form, reduced the details, and made the images ever bolder and more dynamic. One of the first images Michelangelo painted when he resumed work in early 1511 was the most famous scene in the Chapel, its climax, *The creation of Adam*, with its electric charge passing from the outstretched hand of God to the hand of the awakening Adam – an unsurpassed image of the most profound human mystery.

Raphael



RAPHAEL
Self-portrait, detail of
"The School of Athens"
Raphael looks out (from a
group of astronomers) with

modesty and calm – clear,
untroubled. His courtesy
was a rival to his artistry;
and both, in Vasari's words,
"vanquished the world".

If the name of Raphael is synonymous with the "classical" in High Renaissance art, that is partly because his genius was essentially one of strengthening and refining rather than of revolutionary innovation. In his compliance with his patrons' wishes he resembled an early Renaissance artist more closely than Leonardo or Michelangelo, and in contrast to their moody and formidable personalities he was renowned for his affable and gracious charm.

Raffaello Sanzio (1483–1520) was born in Urbino, the son of a court painter, Giovanni Santi. He was working with Perugino at Perugia by 1500. His early independent work is closely related to Perugino's: elements of that grace that marks his whole career were due to Perugino, and the subtle elegance of his figures and the sweetness of his female faces. But he soon outstripped his master: in his early masterpiece, *The marriage of the Virgin*, so close to Perugino's fresco *Christ handing the Keys to St Peter* (see p. 116), his power of integrating graceful figures into a rhythmic, harmonious unity is already fully developed.

In 1504 Raphael arrived in Florence, where the work of Leonardo and Michelangelo came as a revelation to him. Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*

and *Battle of Anghiari* fresco influenced him crucially, yet Raphael proved, as he would time and time again, that his ability to adapt from others what was necessary to his own vision and to reject what was incompatible with it was faultless. Now began the series of *Madonnas*, whose charm, matchlessly evoking the divine within tender humanity, has captured popular imagination ever since. In composition, Raphael's early *Madonnas* relate closely to the pyramidal structures evolved by Leonardo (see p. 129), but the complexity and contrivance of Leonardo is resolved into a perfectly balanced harmony; the enigmatic expression of Leonardo's figures yields to an untroubled radiance; in place of fantastic lunar settings, a serenely placid landscape unfolds.

In his portraits, too, Raphael was influenced by Leonardo, but he retained his own clarity of definition and a strikingly direct apprehension of character. In the portrait of Agnolo Doni the half-length pose, the counterpoint between head and body and the expressive placing of the hands are clearly from Leonardo. There is some trace of Michelangelo in the works Raphael painted before he left Florence, but the full impact of Michelangelo came later.



RAPHAEL (above)
The marriage of the Virgin, 1504
Firmly signed and dated by Raphael when he was 21, the picture demonstrates a reconciliation of abstract symmetry with the movement and drama of human life – one defining aspect of High Renaissance art. Figures, architecture and atmospheric perspective have poised, solid control.



RAPHAEL (left)
Agnolo Doni, 1505
The main elements of the pose derive from the *Mona Lisa*, but the mood is now masculine, and is Raphael's – with almost no *sfumato*.

RAPHAEL (below)
"The Sistine Madonna", 1512
The grandest of Raphael's long series of Madonnas, the human yet visionary Virgin walks on air as if on

earth. Originally in the apse of S. Sisto in Rome (hence its name), the altarpiece perhaps deliberately rivalled Byzantine mosaics in the splendour of its colour, its composition, its presence.



RAPHAEL (right)
"La Belle Jardinière"
(The Madonna and Child with St John), c. 1506
The Virgin's features still recall Perugino's *Virgins*; and the series of *Madonnas* Raphael made in Florence (being mostly small, for private devotion) have a domestic intimacy lost in the later ones in Rome. The physical movement of the figures is wonderfully united with the compositional lines of direction.



Within four years Raphael had achieved success in Florence and his fame had travelled. By the autumn of 1508 he was in Rome and was entrusted by Pope Julius II with the decoration of the Stanze, the new papal apartments, an enormous commission for the 26-year-old artist. It was nevertheless a triumph. The first room, the *Stanza della Segnatura*, was completed by 1511; its two larger frescos, "*The School of Athens*" and "*Disputa*" (Disputation over the Sacrament; not shown), are a consummation of High Renaissance principles. They stand for the intellectual reconciliation of Christianity and classical antiquity: the Eucharist, one of the central Christian mysteries, is represented on the one hand, on the other an encyclopaedic illustration of classical philosophy, centred on the figures of Plato and Aristotle. Both frescos are miracles of harmony, of movement within strict symmetry, of the marriage of the real and the ideal. In the later Stanze Raphael moved away from the serene perfection of the *Segnatura* and in a sense the climax of the High Renaissance had been reached and passed.

While Raphael was at work on the first Stanza, Michelangelo was locked from sight

not far away painting the Sistine Chapel ceiling. It is in the later Stanze that the impact of his work is clearly felt, though Raphael could assimilate even Michelangelo's influence without in the least compromising his own genius. The dominant fresco of the second Stanza, *The expulsion of Heliodorus* (1511-13), is full of tempestuous movement – anticipating aspects of Mannerist, even of Baroque art. There are dramatic contrasts of light and dark, the colours are richer and stronger – perhaps Raphael had learnt something of Venetian colourism from Sebastian del Piombo (see p. 146), who had just arrived in Rome.

Enormous demands were now placed on Raphael, and much of his work, notably in the third Stanza, was carried out by assistants (led by Giulio Romano) following his designs. Many of his designs were engraved in his lifetime, and by this means his influence spread far beyond Rome. Under the new Pope, Leo X, he held an important position in the papal court, besides combining the careers of painter, architect and archaeologist: he initiated the first comprehensive survey of the antiquities of Rome. The High Renaissance obsession with the Antique governed several

of Raphael's most important commissions – decorative schemes in the Vatican *Loggie* (not shown), inspired by the antique paintings discovered in the Golden House of Nero, and in the Villa Farnesina. In the Farnesina the fresco of *The triumph of Galatea*, entirely from Raphael's hand, is outstanding – effortlessly perfect, radiantly fresh. Its intricately balanced composition frames in Galatea the supreme example of the figure-of-eight pose.

From this intensely active period date some of Raphael's greatest masterpieces – "*The Sistine Madonna*", with its exquisite simplicity of design and supremely idealized Mother and Child, painted with the softest *sfumato*; "*The Madonna della Sedia*" (The Madonna enthroned, see p. 129); several portraits, notably that of Castiglione (illustrated on p. 129). In the cartoons for the tapestries (not shown) ordered by Leo X for the Sistine Chapel, he achieved a classic majesty and grandeur yet more vigorous than before. When he died, suddenly, at the age of 37, he left unfinished one of his greatest easel-paintings, *The Transfiguration*. His death was felt as a public calamity; he had become the embodiment of an ideal which seemed to die with him.



RAPHAEL (above)
"*The School of Athens*"
in the *Stanza della Segnatura*, 1509-11
The perfect structure of reason built by the antique philosophers is symbolized by the architecture – which echoes the plans for the new St Peter's. This has been described as the first "history" painting, a model for countless subsequent "histories". Michelangelo must have influenced the seated foreground thinker.



RAPHAEL (above)
The expulsion of Heliodorus, 1511-13
Heliodorus, attempting to steal temple treasures, was thwarted by a miraculous horse and rider (which owe much to Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari*). For Julius II, borne on a litter to the left, anyone who threatened papal temporal power was a Heliodorus. The effect is most dramatic upon entering the room – the fresco is revealed from left to right.



RAPHAEL (right)
The triumph of Galatea, c. 1513
Surrounding Galatea are riotous pagan creatures, tritons, hippocampi and cupids – classical but also sensual. Even the paddles on Galatea's shell-boat are a recondite classical allusion, referring to the paddle-boats recorded in Roman reliefs.



RAPHAEL (left)
Two apostles, study for *The Transfiguration*, 1520
The study for two figures looking on with amazed expressions reveals Raphael's superb draughtsmanship, and the care and discipline in all he undertook – his art was never "carried away". The proto-Mannerist work itself is shown on p. 164.

Giovanni Bellini: The S. Zaccaria Altarpiece





GIOVANNI BELLINI (above)
The Madonna and Child,
 c. 1465-70

Giovanni's early *Virgins* often have a distinctly waxy texture; ideal images, they have a precisely sculptured form, an almost geometric neatness. The light is still hard and dry; the breath of air which relaxes his later work has not yet arrived.

GIOVANNI BELLINI (right)
 The S. Giobbe altarpiece,
 c. 1490

The painted architecture correlated with the real altar, probably designed by the architect of S. Giobbe, one of the first Venetian Renaissance churches. The space is an extension of the spectator's world – and to be seen from below.



GIORGIONE (right)
"The Castelfranco Madonna", c. 1504
 Giorgione's only altarpiece, painted for his native town of Castelfranco, is so dated because it seems similar to the S. Zaccaria altarpiece, and it seems to confirm that Giorgione at first worked in Bellini's studio. The strange proportions, however, with the Madonna so high, and the moodiness, are Giorgione's own (see over).

GIOVANNI BELLINI (above)
"The Madonna of the Meadow", c. 1501
 The supernatural is hinted at both in symbolic details – the stork battling with the serpent, beneath the eagle in the dry tree; the monk in his white robe – and, above all, in the serene calm.

GIOVANNI BELLINI (left)
 The S. Zaccaria altarpiece:
The Virgin and Child with saints, 1505

child becomes apparent. The slightly melancholic mood could be that of a woman consumed with wonder at the miracle of birth, but also apprehensive, since the infant in her lap is a hostage to fortune; yet simultaneously the image is divine. Divinity is indicated not so much by the halo (not always present) or by the hands joined together in prayer, as by that heavenly radiance and solemnity with which Bellini imbued his women. Often, when the Child is recumbent, there is a haunting foreshadowing of the *Pietà*, of the dead Christ supported by his mother. Bellini developed and enriched the still charm of his *Madonnas* throughout his career, and in the very late ones, such as "*The Madonna of the Meadow*", the image of the Madonna is merged convincingly into one of the most beautiful of Giovanni's landscapes, serene in the cool light of spring, with the little village clear-cut on the rise beyond. The Mother of God is brought into direct relationship with day-to-day life.

Bellini's sequence of more monumentally scaled *sacre conversazioni* began with one, now lost, painted about 1475, related to a famous one by Antonello da Messina painted in Venice about the same time. From the fragments of this work, and from Bellini's surviving S. Giobbe altarpiece of about 1490, it can be deduced that the architectural frame was conceived as integral with the painting, thus tying the image bodily into the structure and presence of the church as a whole. In the S. Giobbe altarpiece, the sense of space, the relative relaxation of the figures, the glowing, translucent colour all speak of Antonello's Netherlandish-oriented vision, and probably of his technique. The composition, however, is a little busy, even claustrophobic (it is the only one of Bellini's compositions entirely enclosed in an interior). The gain achieved through simplification in the S. Zaccaria altarpiece is subtle but substantial.

Here the five figures are almost life-size and the viewpoint is higher, the spectator closer, while there is a hint of landscape and open air at each side. The Virgin is seated, with the Child blessing, amongst attendant saints – St Peter with his key, St Catherine with her martyr's palm, St Lucy, and St Jerome with his open book. The draperies and the heads are softly modelled in the fall of a unifying light (the head of St Jerome, in its pensive meditation, seems already tinged by the mood of the young Giorgione, whose "*Castelfranco Madonna*" is thought to have been finished in the previous year). The colours glow in a rich harmony, and the serene symmetry and balance of proportions exist in a silence that somehow is full of music – the music indicated by the angel with the viol on the step of the Madonna's throne. The figures, as in most of Bellini's mature work, have an ample ease both monumental and peaceful.

Bellini's painting is already of the High Renaissance. The composition unites in harmony the primarily Florentine concern for the logical, even mathematical, control of space and proportion with the typically Netherlandish interest in the rendering of light, while there is more than a promise of the revolutionary colourism with which Bellini's pupils and followers were to startle the world.

Dürer and Grünewald

In the Germanic territories of the Holy Roman Empire, under the rule of the first two Hapsburg Emperors, Maximilian and Charles V, the first half of the sixteenth century was a period of great economic growth matched by a swift cultural expansion. Great universities were flourishing at Heidelberg, Wittenberg, Vienna; Basel soon rivalled Venice as a centre for printing. The Reformation, gathering its impetus after Martin Luther had nailed his 95 *Theses* on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg in 1517, did not at first stifle the magnificent outburst of creative activity, even though it was to split Europe in two, and to oppose Catholic and Protestant in often bloody violence. Maximilian, Charles V and his son Philip II of Spain were all informed, discriminating and active patrons of the arts, and Renaissance conceptions of princely splendour likewise impelled Francis I of France, Henry VIII of England, and German princelings to active patronage.

In south Germany, Nuremberg was a major trading centre between east and west, rich, beautiful, highly cosmopolitan, permeated by humanist ideas and learning from Italy. There was born Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), son of a

prosperous goldsmith. His early training was in drawing, woodcutting and printing, which were to remain his primary media throughout his career – he was the first truly major artist so to emphasize them. He was the first, and greatest, northern exponent of Renaissance ideals in the visual arts, although he never lost his northern individuality, and his obsession with line. He visited Venice twice, in 1494-95 and 1505-07; he travelled as far as Bologna, but perhaps never reached Florence or Rome. His fame was broadcast through his engravings, and artists in Italy were soon drawing on them for ideas. In Venice he knew and admired above all the aged Giovanni Bellini who, fascinated by Dürer's technique of drawing with the brush, reciprocated Dürer's esteem.

Dürer has been called "the Leonardo of the North", though his scientific investigations were limited compared with Leonardo's. Leonardo was never assailed by the religious anxieties that eventually converted Dürer to Protestantism, but in appetite for life, in fertility of invention and expression, they are comparable. Dürer's visual curiosity extended to the whole of nature – animals, people, costume; in extraordinarily vivid watercolours

he noted effects of weather in topographical landscapes or the minute natural details of a piece of turf. Introvert no less than extrovert, he left the earliest sequence of self-portraits that qualify as deliberate autobiography. In the very grand *Self-portrait* of 1498, after his first Italian visit, he used an Italian formula, and, though the rhythms are linear, un-Italian, his pose might seem to derive from the *Mona Lisa* (see p. 131); however, this, one of the earliest portraits to show both hands of the sitter, predates Leonardo's masterpiece. It has been said that Dürer, in his absorption with himself in many guises – as a child of 13; totally naked; even as the Man of Sorrows – was his own *Mona Lisa*. Vanity is not absent. Though patronized by princes such as the Elector of Saxony from 1496 and granted a pension by the Emperor Maximilian himself in 1515, he seems never to have been quite content with his status, compared with the artist in Italy. So he wrote from Venice to a friend: "Here I am a gentleman, at home a parasite". Yet when he journeyed in the Netherlands in 1520 he was received as a great master.

Dürer's commissioned portraits show how skilfully he was able to incorporate Venetian



DÜRER (left)
The piece of turf, 1503
Dürer reproduces the wild profusion of grasses and flowers with loving care, all the more astonishing for its lack of precedent. Everything is green, and he differentiates the plants with the subtlest variations in tone.

DÜRER (right)
A young Venetian woman, 1505
Though only lightly painted and probably unfinished, the figure stands brightly out against the dark foil of the background. The sense of lively communication is typical of Dürer's portraits.



DÜRER (above)
Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1526
Dürer's largest portrait engraving is not entirely successful, judging by Holbein's portrait of the same sitter (see p. 157). It was probably based on a medal which Erasmus gave for the purpose, though in 1520 Dürer had met the scholar in person. Great care is taken for the light.



DÜRER (above)
The Adoration of the Magi, 1504
Dürer's starting point was northern, a scheme in essence like Hugo van der Goes' Monforte altarpiece

(see p. 304). On to this he grafted Italianate gesture, grouping, colour, subsuming them into his own style. This is thought to be the central panel of a folding altarpiece, with lost wings.



DÜRER (left)
The Adoration of the Trinity, 1511
Especially the Virgin in *The Adoration of the Magi* was distinctively northern, in features, in proportions. In this vast, comprehensive statement Dürer achieves a more thoroughgoing blend, a magnificent synthesis of the northern and southern visions, orchestrating with Leonardo's coherence his huge crowd of individuals.

DÜRER (below)
Self-portrait, 1498
The foppish, elegant effect
is consciously sought. By
portraying himself gowned

as a gentleman, Dürer states
his claim to an intellectual
and social parity with aristo-
crats – a prince of the arts,
no mere humble craftsman.



breadth of light and colour without sacrificing the precision of his drawing; he also made several magnificent portrait engravings. His paintings did not always match the achievement of his finest prints (see over), but the brilliance, the virtuosity of his *Adoration of the Magi* (1504) more than holds its own in the challenging context of the Uffizi. In *The Adoration of the Trinity*, 1511, he painted a grandiose vision of St Augustine's *City of God*, the Trinity suspended in the heavens amongst the airborne host of saints and martyrs, but with a delightfully detailed, tranquil landscape on earth beneath. The artist stands in one corner with a tablet proclaiming his authorship. Unquestionably, however, Dürer's supreme masterpiece in painting is the two great panels known as "*The Four Apostles*" (actually John and Peter, Mark and Paul).

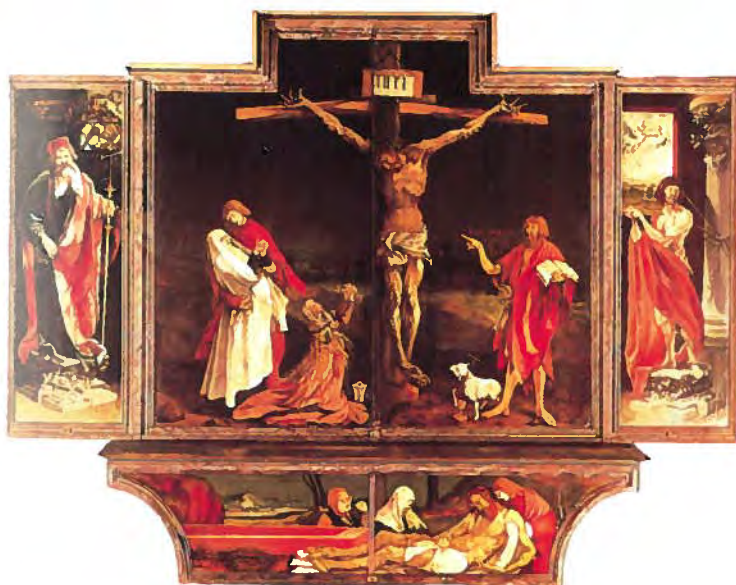
In originality and in expression, Dürer is surpassed by his compatriot, generally known as Grünewald. His real name was Mathis Gothardt-Neithardt (c.1475-1528). Though he was famous in his time, holding high office as painter, architect and engineer to the Prince-Bishop of Mainz, his life and his personality remain obscure. Said to have led "a

melancholy and secluded existence", he depicted only religious subjects, while just 30-odd drawings and a score of paintings survive. In them, the intensity of emotion, and the expressionist means of conveying it, shock the onlooker as does no other painting in Western art, not even by Goya, until the violent assault of the Expressionists in the twentieth century.

Grünewald's religious sympathies were apparently with the Reformers; they reflected anyway a profound and perhaps mystical spiritual commitment. His subjects mostly relate to Christ's Passion, and his work is summed up in one composite masterpiece (which includes nine of his 20 known paintings), the Isenheim altarpiece, a folding altarpiece with two sets of wings, completed in 1515 for the church of the hospital of St Anthony at Isenheim, near Colmar. The outer wings, when closed, reveal the famous *Crucifixion*, with a gigantic, lacerated corpse of Christ. These wings open to reveal an enchanting, lyrical celebration of *The Virgin and Child*, counterbalanced on the right by an extraordinary *Resurrection*. The kernel of the altarpiece is a wooden shrine with St Anthony enthroned, flanked with two further wings.

GRÜNEWALD (left and right)
The Isenheim altarpiece,
1515

The altarpiece had three distinct functions: closed, it served as a plague altar, reminding the afflicted of the sufferings of Christ, which *The Crucifixion* (left) depicts with a ruthlessness never seen before. This is realism, not naturalism: consistency of neither scale nor proportion is observed; the Lamb bleeds into the chalice; and the Baptist, though historically dead at the time of the Crucifixion, is present, and points with one hugely elongated finger at the crucified Christ. The image is complemented by two fixed wings, with SS. Anthony and Sebastian (patrons of the sick and of plague victims respectively) and a predella below with a *Dead Christ*, which was a model for a host of works, not least Holbein's famous *Christ in Basel* (see p. 146). With the outer wings open, the altarpiece proclaims the essential Christian message of hope and Resurrection; it was opened for Mass on Sundays. The two sets of wings from the altarpiece are now shown separately; *The Annunciation* and *The Resurrection* (top right) are on the reverse of *The Crucifixion*. The amazing Christ in the *Resurrection* soars in a crackling flame, dissolving into iridescence. Last, with the inner wings open, the altarpiece was a focus of the celebration for the feast of St Anthony. One of the wings (right), *St Anthony assailed by demons*, is a conception of tormented violence, with overtones of Bosch's work.



DÜRER (left and right)
"*The Four Apostles*", 1526
These majestic figures were
intended as the wings of an
altarpiece of the Italian
type, a *sacra conversazione*.
It was never finished, since
Nuremberg Reformed
while it was in progress.
The saints have been inter-
preted as personifications
of the four temperaments –
choleric and melancholic,
sanguine and phlegmatic –
while the inscriptions spell
out Dürer's message to the
faithful of the new religion:
hold fast to the Word and
distrust false prophets. In
the apostles' monumental
yet individualized grandeur
northern particularism is
married to the Italian
tradition of figure drawing,
stemming from Masaccio.



Dürer: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

In the Book of Revelation, when the Lamb opened the first four seals of the prophecy of the Last Judgment, there rode forth four horsemen one after the other. One rider came with a bow, on a white horse, riding out to conquer; one with a great sword on a red horse, to unleash destruction; one with a pair of scales, on a black horse; and finally, Death on a pale horse, and Hell following with him, riding to kill in famine and pestilence.

Such movement, in almost audible thunder, had never been expressed in the woodcut medium before; in terms both of technique and of inspired imagination it has never been surpassed since. Much as Dürer loved experiment in all media, it was through prints, throughout his career, that he established his independence and broadcast his art. Through them, he could reach huge audiences, whether popular or sophisticated, literate or illiterate.

The Apocalypse appeared first in 1498, in a German edition and in a Latin one; a second issue in 1511 had a Latin text. The theme answered the mood of the times – a widespread religious disquiet which was to culminate in the Reformation and split of the Church. A prophecy, that the world would come to an end

in the year 1500, was generally believed and, for some, the Pope was not Christ's representative on earth but the Anti-Christ of the Book of Revelation. The message, though, as set out by Dürer, was not entirely one of doom. In *The angels staying the four winds*, the elect are ordinary people with whom the reader could identify.

Dürer's book was the first published by an artist entirely under his own auspices. Earlier illuminated Apocalypses had generally been differently arranged – with full page illustrations distributed through the book, or smaller ones inserted in the text, or with pages consisting of tiers of images explained by captions. Dürer reserved the front of the page for the print, and had the text on the back. The subject matter, with its scope for visionary fantasy, obviously fired his imagination, but the medium, while it encourages expression in linear terms, allows little tonal modulation and is inherently a vehicle for bold, not very subtle, effect. Earlier artists had relied on colour to complete the effect; Dürer achieved a satisfying equivalent of colour in black and white.

Dürer continued to use woodcut, and developed his technique to a remarkable pitch of

virtuosity, as in "*The Great Passion*" and *The life of the Virgin*, published also as books, in 1511. In copper engraving, however, he achieved a mastery of modulation in tone which really does make colour superfluous. In the famous print of *Adam and Eve*, 1504, this is applied to Italianate and classical themes. Nevertheless, his northern naturalism is vividly present in the drawing of flora and fauna, for all that these, too, have symbolic meaning. Both his mastery of technique and the richness of his learning, combined with an endlessly fertile invention, reached their peak in the three great single plates of 1513-14, *The knight*, *Death and the devil* (not shown), *St Jerome* (not shown), and *Melancholia I*. These, with their fantastic wealth of detail brought together in consummately harmonious compositions, can be read almost as humanist tracts. The *Knight* is an allegory of the Christian warrior, *St Jerome* of a Christian scholar, and *Melancholia I* a meditation on the process of creation, full of recondite allusion.

Dürer also engraved several portraits (see preceding page) and illustrated three theoretical works, including the important *Four Books on Human Proportion* (1528).

DÜRER (right)
The Apocalypse: The angels staying the four winds, 1498
When the seals had been broken and the horsemen had ridden out, spreading terror, four angels were deputed to hold back the winds while the elect were marked with God's seal – interpreted as the Host.



DÜRER (below)
"*The Great Passion*";
Christ carrying the Cross,
1511
Dürer believed one of the chief functions of art was to represent the Passion. The figure of Christ, the movement of his head, is expressive and pitiable.



DÜRER (left)
The Apocalypse: The Whore of Babylon, 1498
The Whore is an exact copy of a drawing of a Venetian lady Dürer made in 1495. She sits on a beast with seven heads and ten horns, and conversing with her are the kings of the earth and also merchants – all the rich, powerful and worldly. Their oncoming destruction is apparent behind them, in the exploding sky.

DÜRER (below)
Adam and Eve, 1504
Both figures are based on antique sculptures – Adam on "*The Apollo Belvedere*" (see p. 41). Eve rather freely on a *Venus* – and are constructed according to canons of proportion. Every detail has meaning: the branch Adam holds may refer to the Tree of Life; the four animals may represent the four humours in their original harmony.



DÜRER (left)
Melancholia I, 1514
According to the ancients, a melancholic was earnest, a man of intellectual bent; the present meaning of the word came later. The print encompasses this duality:

the Comet of Saturn is in the sky: a planet thought to have a depressing effect on the intellect, Saturn was also associated with mathematics, taken as the basis of all learning – hence the mathematical accessories.



DÜRER

The Apocalypse: The four horsemen, 1498

Dürer condenses the text of the Revelation of St John in all the Apocalypse woodcuts, but nowhere with such

effect as in *The horsemen*. Disregarding the mass of humanity under their hoofs, all four stare out into the distance, forming a chain across the sheet, which contributes to the sense

of movement in the whole. This is reinforced by the contrast of light and dark, and the linear agitation of the fluttering saddlecloths and other garments. Earlier German art had

nothing to compare with Dürer's impression of pandemonium. The seething line is typical of Dürer's early woodcuts; the absence of colour signals its great technical accomplishment.

Painting in Germany before the Reformation

Germany, a congeries of more than 100 autonomous political units under the nominal rule of the Holy Roman Emperor – some 30 principalities ruled by Electors; some 50 ecclesiastical territories ruled by Prince-Bishops; some 60 self-governing towns – was flourishing vigorously in the years before the turmoils of the Reformation. Its industries were expanding and prospering; the Fuggers, bankers in Augsburg, had destroyed the monopoly of the Italian finance houses, and the northern humanists had assimilated and were even advancing upon the achievements of Italian letters. The new universities and the printed word consolidated the spread of learning, and, in the sphere of art, the printed image – woodcuts and metal engravings – intensified and accelerated the influence of new styles and novel imagery. Through engravings, the art of the Italian Renaissance became the common heritage of all Europe.

The traffic was by no means all one way. The best known and most prolific of the Italian engravers, Marcantonio Raimondi (c. 1480-1527/34; not shown) had forged Dürer prints in Venice before moving to Rome and becoming the chief disseminator of Raphael and of

the works of antiquity. As a boy in Florence Michelangelo had copied an engraving of *The temptation of St Anthony* by Martin Schongauer (died 1491), one of the first artists to raise engraving beyond the level of the popular print. Trained as a goldsmith, Schongauer worked in Colmar, where Dürer arrived too late to study with him in 1492. Schongauer's painting was fairly traditional; his engravings, however, had an original dramatic force and attracted wide attention. Dürer, as we have seen, subsequently developed both the technique and the potential audience of prints.

Dürer's genius, so copious in invention, so brilliant in technique, tends to overshadow all others of his generation in Germany – with the exception of Grünewald. But admirable talents existed besides these two, such as Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), who spent most of his life in Wittenberg, where he was court painter to the Elector. He was a friend of Luther – he produced the most famous portrait by which posterity knows him – and an early adherent of the Reformed faith, though he continued to work occasionally on Catholic religious commissions. At the outset of his career, in Vienna about 1500, his landscape



CRANACH
Martin Luther, 1521
Cranach painted several portraits of Luther as a

new religious hero in the early 1520s. At that time a division of Christendom was not yet irrevocable.

SCHONGAUER (right)
"Noli Me Tangere"
(Christ with Mary Magdalen), after 1471
The basis of Schongauer's style was Rogier van der Weyden, reworked in his own softer idiom, recalling Lochner; but this is drawn with the hard outlines of an engraving. There is no chiaroscuro in the mass of meticulous, linear detail.



SCHONGAUER (below)
The temptation of St Anthony, c. 1470
Engravings and woodcuts were at first run off in large quantities and sold at religious festivals and fairs. *St Anthony* is above all didactic, a fearsome warning against the sins of the flesh. While there is sculptural modelling, the saint and demons drawn in such exuberant detail float free in a nebulous space, unnaturalistically.



CRANACH (right)
Adam and Eve, 1526
Cranach's insistence on an unfashionably Gothic style may signify his wish to adhere to northern values, free from Italian decadence.



PACHER (below)
The Four Doctors of the Church, c. 1483
Four doves in virtuoso foreshortening swoop over (from left to right) SS. Jerome, Augustine, Gregory and Ambrose. The harsh modelling of the faces, the perspective and the cut-off figure of Trajan in the foreground repentant before St Gregory (in a dream) recall Mantegna; but the nervous, sinuous poses and contorted hands, not to mention the rich canopies, are Gothic. The modelling of the faces can also be compared with Pacher's painted sculpture; this is anyway a synthesis of outstanding success.



settings had parallels with the "Danube school", and his early portraits have a genial amplitude matching Dürer's. Later, in Wittenberg, aided by a large workshop that included his two sons, he began the prolific production of the kind of painting most generally associated with his name – nudes in landscapes, with biblical or mythological titles (virtually interchangeable) – *Adam and Eve*, *Apollo and Diana*, and so on. Hints of Dürer or of classical antiquity sometimes emerge, but his personal brand of erotic imagery, slightly fey, sinuous and at the same time somehow angular, with his figures looking a little like actors in an amateur charade, is unmistakable. His later portraits became comparatively formal; he was apparently responsible for the first life-size full-length portraits, heralding centuries of state effigies. His printmaking technique is coarse beside Dürer's, but he was the leading image-maker for the Reformation.

Cranach was, perhaps deliberately, a belated Gothic painter, and other artists continued or developed late Gothic traditions more or less unadulterated. The Austrian Michael Pacher (active c. 1465–98) remained relatively immune to Italian influence as a

sculptor (see p. 158): as a painter, he transposed Mantegna's perspective effects and rich classical detail into a superb Gothic equivalent. Several artists in Cologne maintained a fifteenth-century idiom well into the sixteenth century: the most accomplished of them, the Master of the St Bartholomew altarpiece (active c. 1470–1510), had been trained in the Netherlands and practised a charming version of the style of Rogier van der Weyden. A number of painters, who are known for convenience under the label "the Danube school", though they did not cohere as a group, shared an obsession with the wooded scenery of the Tyrolean region and developed an original vision of landscape, unparalleled in Italy. In power of imagination, the finest of them was Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480–1538), working in Regensburg in Bavaria. The twentieth century might read his work as "mood landscape"; obviously related to the watercolours Dürer had made on his trips to Italy, it even anticipates some of the effects of Ruisdael and nineteenth-century Romantic landscapists. In his little *St George and the dragon*, the landscape is the focus of interest; saint and dragon are entirely subservient. Altdorfer's masterpiece, how-

ever, is surely his *Battle of Alexander and Darius on the Issus*, with its dizzy illusion of sky and earth as tumultuously involved in the conflict as the multitudinous armies.

Hans Burgkmair (1473–1531), the major artist resident in Augsburg at the beginning of the sixteenth century, shows the impact of his visit to north Italy about 1505 very obviously; he was a prolific portraitist and painter of altarpieces, but also a virtuoso in the technique of the chiaroscuro woodcut, and his image of *Hans Baungartner*, 1512, is one of the finest woodcut portraits ever made. Hans Baldung Grien (1484/5–1545), who had likewise visited Italy, settled in Strasbourg in 1509; working in many media, he came nearest to Dürer (whom he had known in Nuremberg) in talent and versatility. His most original works, however, were mythological or allegorical paintings, idiosyncratic in their range of colour, which sometimes achieve a macabre intensity. The characterization of his nudes owes something to Cranach, but their structure is more classical. Yet the complete reconciliation of the Italian Renaissance with northern line was not to be achieved until the next generation, by Hans Holbein the Younger.



THE MASTER OF THE ST BARTHOLOMEW ALTARPIECE (above) The St Bartholomew altarpiece, central panel, c. 1505–10. St Bartholomew is in the

centre. The figures are fine examples of the late Gothic style – attenuated, with fragile, twisting fingers, heart-shaped faces and richly embroidered robes.

ALTDORFER (below) *The battle of Alexander and Darius on the Issus*, 1529. The concave roll of the land, bringing the horizon up the picture towards the spectator, is unorthodox, though the bird's-eye view can be paralleled in Bosch

or Patenier. The cartouche, and inscriptions within the painting, display a chief interest in the numerical odds against Alexander and the number of dead: painted for a duke of Bavaria, it is a precursor of the scenarios of classical history that lent lustre to Baroque palaces.



ALTDORFER (left) *St George and the dragon*, 1510. There are no arbitrary crags, no orderly lines of hills and trees receding to the horizon – the usual landscape conventions are gone. Instead, glimmers of light seep through the trees that bristle over the panel (the painting is in fact on parchment, pasted on to wood, so like a miniature).



BALDUNG GRIEN (right) *Death and the Maiden*, 1517. Baldung Grien returned to this theme several times, progressively refining and simplifying the image to a horrid immediacy – placing the Maiden's sensuous pale purity against Death's dark, scrawny, protoplasmic decay. The theme of lurking death had been banished in Italy by the Renaissance, but in the north kept its fervour.



BURGKMAIR (left) *Hans Baungartner*, 1512. The classical arch framing the background – perhaps, too, his melancholy gaze – serves to indicate that the sitter is a scholar and a humanist. The modelling is bold and free but the detail is of great finesse; the print was made from three blocks, each one inked in a different shade of violet.



Holbein: The Ambassadors



HOLBEIN (above and left) "The Ambassadors", 1533 This is one of the earliest portraits to show two men full-length, life-size. They are as close to real life as the artist could make them – illusionistic in every particular, the picture is a replica of an instant. It was perhaps placed (at the top of a great stair?) where it could be seen either from straight on or obliquely – the angle at which the skull takes on its true shape (detail, left). When it is so seen, the two men blur, and eternal death overtakes all.



HOLBEIN (above) *The dead Christ*, 1521 Though clearly influenced by Grünewald's *Christ* in the predella panel of the Isenheim altarpiece (see p.

151). Holbein depicts the body of Christ rigid in death with an exactitude that deprives the image of all spiritual comfort: the tomb imprisons the body

in its *rigor mortis*. Before this painting, Dostoevsky cried: "This picture could rob a man of his faith". It perhaps belonged to a lost altar with *The Deposition*.

The men represented are French, Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve, Bishop of Lavaur, but Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543) painted their portrait in 1533 in London, where Dinteville was on a diplomatic mission to Henry VIII of England. Shown life-size, full-length, the two are depicted with exact realism down to the details of their very opulent costumes. The green damask curtain behind and the inlaid marble floor (based on one in Westminster Abbey) are equally scrupulously portrayed, while in the centre, on a two-tiered table, is displayed an elaborate still life – on top, instruments of science and astronomy; below, more earthly interests – a terrestrial globe, an arithmetical textbook, a lute, but also an open hymnal (the text is Luther's revised version). The composition seems to be a Reformed version of the traditional *sacra conversazione*, in which the still life, rather than the Madonna, is the focus of the two figures' intellectual and spiritual commitment. At the same time, in their paired placement, and impassive stillness, the figures are like "supporters" in a massive coat of arms.

Closer inspection, however, reveals an underlying disquiet: the minute badge in Dinteville's cap is a skull; a small crucifix is almost hidden away at the top left; a string of the lute is broken. Most strikingly, but also most enigmatically, the yellowish smear tilted across the foreground reveals itself when seen at an acute angle from the left below (or from the right above) as a skull, distorted by a mathematically exact trick of perspective. And the central still life is also a vanity, a *memento mori*. Dinteville's age is given, on his dagger, as 29; Selve's, on his book, as 25; dials indicate the time to be 10.30 am, the date April 11th; the two men are in the prime of life and health, of material and intellectual accomplishment. But the reality of the stated moment, the instantaneity, is undermined by the omens of mortality, above all by the added dimension of the distorted skull, which the sitters cannot see, and all their science cannot understand. This ambiguous picture, realized with scientific precision and consummate art, combining monumental realism with complex symbolism, is one of the most ambitious and successful achievements of Renaissance art.

Holbein's own name is, literally, a synonym for a skull, and his obsession with human mortality lasted throughout his career, from even earlier than his woodcut designs for a *Dance of Death* (not shown) about 1525. He was born in Augsburg and trained by his father Hans the Elder; he was fully established in Basel by 1520, and there came to know, through the printer Frobenius, a remarkable humanist circle including Erasmus. His early work reflects many influences and was in many media – portraits, designs for engravings, altarpieces, large-scale mural decorations – but common to all was his astonishing technical virtuosity. His *Dead Christ*, in its starkness, may be influenced by Grünewald's expressionism, but its detached, exact observation has a very different effect. A probable visit (or visits) to northern Italy was more fundamental; some paintings seem to acknowledge Leonardo's example very closely, but in his *Madonna and Child with the Meyer family* he



HOLBEIN (above)
The Virgin and Child with the Meyer family, c. 1528
Between 1528 and the death of Meyer in 1531, a portrait of the patron's second wife was added. The Virgin with her lively Child perhaps reflects local sculpture.

HOLBEIN (below)
Sir Thomas More, 1527
Holbein developed to a perfect realism the type of humanist portrait Massys (see p. 160) had taken up. The expressive, sensitively modelled hands are typical of Holbein's minute skill.



HOLBEIN (left)
Jane Seymour, preliminary drawing, c. 1535
Apart from a few details of dress, the finished portrait closely copies the drawing, indicating that, for Holbein, the basis of art lay above all in precision of outline.

HOLBEIN (right)
Henry VIII, 1542
In an image originated by Holbein, and repeated endlessly by copyists, the figure of the King already shows signs of an advanced obesity, skilfully hidden under a bell-shaped surcoat.

fused the principles of both Leonardo and Raphael with northern literalness into a magisterially monumental image. No one, not even Dürer, had achieved such a synthesis.

After an initial visit to London (1526-28) he finally settled there in 1532, and from about 1536 until his premature death from the plague in 1543 he was court painter to Henry VIII. His personality and his personal convictions remain elusive, but he was clearly sympathetic to the Reformation, even though the shrinking of religious patronage in the Reformed climate of Basel was certainly a strong reason for his move to England. On his first visit, he became attached to the circle of Sir Thomas More, Erasmus' humanist friend: his portrait of More is one of the most gravely humane portraits of the whole Renaissance, and his group of More's family – now lost, but known from a preliminary drawing (not shown) sent to Erasmus – was one of the first "conversation pieces". Like "*The Ambassadors*", it turns a traditional religious format to secular ends.

Soon after his arrival in London for the second time, Holbein painted some superb portraits of members of the German Steelyard, a merchant community. His painted portraits depended on studies from the life made with the aid of some form of perspective aid, such as a *camera obscura*, but the resultant drawings, of which a series has miraculously survived, show no trace of mechanical dependence; they include some of the most delicate but sure reflections of the human face ever made, captured within a contour line quick with life. Holbein established a tradition and standard of quality in miniature to which English practitioners constantly referred, especially the greatest Elizabethan miniaturist, Nicholas Hilliard (see p. 206). From his drawings Holbein could project the images without any loss of quality to any scale – he is most famous for his awesome straddling life-size image of the King. In his state portraiture the static, linear quality became more marked, and he achieved images of cool, aloof splendour that were perhaps matched but not surpassed by Bronzino.



Sculpture in Germany: Late Gothic and Italianate

In the half-century before the Reformation the German-speaking lands produced remarkable sculpture in considerable quantity. Despite sculptors' increasing awareness of the achievements of Italian masters, through prints and also through first-hand reports by visitors to Italy, sculpture north of the Alps always preserved an individual flavour, and the influence of Claus Sluter was enduring. Sculpture was chiefly employed upon altarpieces, and generally conceived within the late Gothic tradition – in intricate, busy, tightly boxed set pieces, with elaborate fretted and pinnaced canopies; free-standing figures were rare, with the exception of the Virgin and Child. There was, however, a tendency towards heightened realism and expressive handling.

One of the first to adopt a more naturalistic style, emulating Sluter, was Nicolaus Gerhaerts (active 1462–73), who may have come from Leyden in the Netherlands, but whose known work is all in Germany – he seems to have ended up in the 1470s at the court of Emperor Frederick III in Vienna. His ability to draw out the character of a figure in stone – witness the atmospheric individuality of his so-called *Self-portrait* (c. 1467) at Strasbourg –

had a wide influence on German sculptors of the next generation. Michael Pacher, active slightly later in the Tyrol, produced one of the earliest surviving and best-preserved late Gothic altarpieces (the losses, dismemberments and discolorations have been enormous) for the isolated pilgrimage church of St Wolfgang. Typical is its towering magnificence, interlocking with the architecture of the choir, though Pacher's lavish use of gold is unusual. Pacher also painted (see p. 154).

Pacher's near-contemporary Veit Stoss (c. 1450–1533) was one of the first to follow Gerhaerts' lead, and to move away from the Gothic spectacular towards a greater emphasis on the individual figure. He left his native town near Nuremberg in 1477, and for 20 years worked in Poland, where his principal commission was the altarpiece at St Mary's, Cracow. This, unlike Pacher's masterpiece, has a relatively simple structure – no spires, no surmounting crucifix, no flanking figures or panel paintings. The central scene is bounded by a great arch that lets air into the whole, though most of the figures are still densely massed along the bottom. On his return to Nuremberg in 1496, Stoss achieved an almost

classical clarity of form – his *St Roch* (not shown) in a church in Florence was admired by Vasari as “a miracle in wood” – then moved about 1507 to an even more emotionally charged expression – though still monumental – which perhaps finds its closest parallel in High Baroque sculpture.

Towards the end of his career Stoss had left his sculpture unpainted, but the first German sculptor known to have delivered his work bare, “true to its materials”, is Tilman Riemenschneider (died 1531). Riemenschneider worked very successfully, with a large workshop, at Würzburg, where he was somewhat detached from the mainstream. He delighted still in the elaborate traceries of late Gothic, but experimented with unusual shapes and convolutions, and broke with tradition in designing altarpieces without hinging wings. His sculpture shows the most sensitive and delicate sureness in controlling form and expression.

Stoss was not the only master to practise with great virtuosity in Nuremberg. The stonecarver Adam Kraft (c. 1460–1508) produced vividly naturalistic figures still in a recognizably Gothic context, as in his *Tabernacle* at St Lorenz in Nuremberg. This is an

GERHAERTS (below)

“Self-portrait”, c. 1467

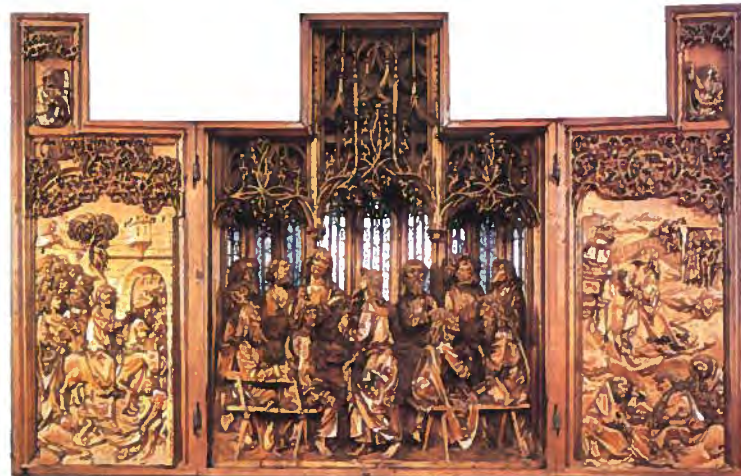
The figure seems to feel some private emotion; face, hands, pose and garments together express an inner drama – just like Sluter's *pleurants* (see p. 90). The figure was probably once placed high up, and leaned illusionistically on a sill.



PACHER

The high altar of St Wolfgang: (far left) with the outer wings open; (left) with the inner wings open, the central tableau: *The coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1471–81

Sculptures and paintings, overlapping and alternating, make up a carefully wrought harmony, linking together the parts of the altar, and the altar to the architecture. There is clear evidence of Italian influence (notably Mantegna's) in the painting (not by Pacher's own hand), but none in the sculpture, unless it is in the skilful grouping of *The coronation*. This, revealed behind the massive wings, seems to be perfumed in rich gold; yet the complex intricacy of the drapery, and above all the canopy, is offset by a simple realism in the faces of the saints, the Virgin, even God.



STOSS (right)

The high altar at St Mary's, Cracow: *The death of the Virgin*, 1477–89. The blue background and dividing bands of tracery serve to set out action and figures more clearly. Here the language of gesture and drapery has been recharged; over the Virgin in the altar's centre a towering apostle reaches out wringing hands.

RIEMENSCHNEIDER (left)

The altar at St Jakob, Rothenburg: *The Entry into Jerusalem; the Last Supper; the Agony in the garden*, 1501–05. Riemenschneider's figures have a dreamy quietude, for all the cracking bustle of drapery. He delights in the limewood's worked surface.



enormous free-standing shrine housing several ranks of life-size figures, arranged in almost conversational groups and seeming to overflow into the church. The Vischer family of bronze-workers, headed by Peter the Elder (c. 1460-1529), worked on the Shrine of St Sebaldus from 1488 to 1519, in which time what had begun as a Gothic project much like Adam Kraft's had been combined with sometimes pronouncedly Italianate features. Peter the Elder had a collection of "old Frankish" art – perhaps including Gallo-Roman pieces – and he sent his two sons, Peter and Hermann, who assisted him, to be trained in Italy.

The demand for elaborately carved altarpieces fell away sharply during the 1520s – due not so much to Italian influence as to the impact of the Reformation. A more secular mode became fashionable. In Augsburg, the great banking dynasty of the Fuggers commissioned Sebastian Loscher (c. 1480/5-1548) to decorate their private chapel. Loscher had had first-hand experience of Italian sculpture, and his *putti* once ornamenting the choir-stalls have no religious connotation and are entirely up to date with the High Renaissance. Elsewhere Conrad Meit (died 1550/1), who came



MEIT (above)
Judith with the head of Holofernes, 1510-15
The modelling is firm and economic; colour is used sparingly; the glow of the alabaster is made to suggest the bloom of nubile flesh. The Italianate style has conquered, and is mastered.

KRAFT (left)
The Tabernacle at St Lorenz, detail, 1493-96
The whole structure is a towering Gothic complexity, in which the life-size figures are realistically carved.

from the Middle Rhine region but worked for 20 years for the Regent of the Netherlands, produced small bronze and alabaster figures, precious, sensual, and closely observed. His little *Judith with the head of Holofernes*, an ornament for the cabinet or *studiolo* of a sophisticated patron, bears comparison with anything of its kind in Italy. Meit also worked in a monumental vein, on the spectacular effigies of the Regent's family at Notre-Dame-de-Brou at Bourges (not shown). These were stone figures smoothly and gently rendered with little detail and no agitation, though richly dressed and adorned with jewellery.

The full adoption of Italian principles can be seen in the work of Peter Flötner (c. 1495-1546), working in Nuremberg. His masterpiece, the bronze Apollo Fountain of 1532, is conceived without any trace of Gothic – or of Mannerism. It is very pure and classical, the delicate, superbly balanced and finished form contrasting with the elaborate movement of detail in the pedestal. However, the greatest sculptor of the mid-sixteenth century, though born in the north, in Flanders, did not work there: Giambologna became the supreme Mannerist virtuoso in Italy (see p. 168).



STOSS (above)
The Virgin and Child, c. 1520

It seems right to call the work of Stoss' last years "personal"; though he was widely honoured, he was unsettled, quarrelsome, lonely. The Virgin's draperies loop, cascade, twist, crumple and swirl upwards to the energetic, wriggling Child.

THE VISCHER FAMILY (right) The Shrine of St Sebaldus, 1488-1519
The standard of finish and unity of style are unusually high; and the clarity of the complex whole remarkable. The Italianate figures – sphinxes, mermaids, *putti* – are most in evidence in the lower parts of the Shrine.



LOSCHER (above)
Fragments from the Fugger chapel in Augsburg: *Putti*, 1515

Not only the forms but the sculptural principles are Italianate: these figures are in interacting movement, recalling *The three Graces*. Apparently, however, there is nothing comparable in Italy at this date to this complex of free-standing babes playing in space – though it is suggested in the work of Donatello.



FLOTNER (left)
The Apollo Fountain, 1532
Before this work Flötner had visited Italy twice. He was himself an engraver and woodcutter, and here the design is taken from an engraving, one by Jacopo de' Barbari (died 1516?), one of the first Italian artists to seek and find patronage in the north.

Netherlandish and French Painting

By the end of the fifteenth century in the Netherlands the impetus of original exploration and invention stemming from the work of the van Eycks, van der Weyden and van der Goes faded, and the new generation turned to the all-pervading example of Italian art. Just as the great northern humanists, Erasmus or Thomas More, drew on Renaissance learning, so, too, the artists drew on Italian motifs and the Italian revival of classical antiquity. The "Italian journey" became almost obligatory.

However, among the many artists imitating, borrowing from or creating in the manner of Renaissance art, no genius emerged of the stature of a Dürer or a Holbein, who could integrate a full understanding of its underlying principles with the native northern tradition. Jan Gossaert, known as Mabuse (c.1478-1533), who worked in Antwerp and for Burgundian patrons, started in a tradition close to Hugo van der Goes, but after an Italian journey in 1508 he began to feature Italianate motifs – classical architecture, classicizing poses – amidst his always teeming detail. He is said to have been the first artist in the Netherlands to paint classical subjects with nude figures. Something of the charm of his earlier

style is carried over into later works such as the Malvagna triptych, but here the Italianate music-making *putti* consort rather oddly with the sweetly Netherlandish Virgin, and even more oddly with the elaborate intricacies of the Gothic shrine in which she sits. Mabuse was perhaps most successful in his portraiture, which is direct and charming.

His main rival in Flanders was Bernard van Orley (c.1488-1541), who worked prolifically in Brussels for the Regents of the Netherlands, producing altarpieces, portraits and designs for tapestries and stained glass. He is supposed to have visited Italy, and he certainly responded to the Italian-oriented, sophisticated taste of his patrons, but again his unpretentious portraits are his best work.

Quentin Massys (1464/5-1530) in Antwerp is the most sympathetic and sensitive artist of this generation in the Netherlands. Italian impact is once again strong (though it is not certain that Massys ever went to Italy) and the influence of Leonardo is apparent, especially in his altarpieces. But he also developed a vivid portraiture that is almost genre – or vice versa. His enchanting study of *A banker and his wife* (1514) is probably genre, with moralizing

intent. The still life is described with a loving finesse, down to the convex mirror, which is presumably symbolic. The whole picture has the conviction of a real event, and seems as much a portrait as his *Egidius* of 1517. Here the scholar is shown in his setting (the idea derives doubtless from traditional representations of St Jerome in his study) – a marvellously alert and human likeness. Joos van Cleve (c.1490-1540; not shown), Massys' contemporary in Antwerp, was in demand for a more formal and official style, in state portraiture.

In his altarpieces, Massys sometimes collaborated with Joachim Patenier (c.1485-1524), who painted the landscapes. He was a master of the bird's-eye-view panorama, and one of the first to practise landscape for its own sake – the biblical figures are important, but are usually so small as to be almost invisible. Visionary crags and mountains characterize not only Patenier's but most Netherlandish landscape backgrounds until the dawn of the great naturalistic era of the seventeenth century – with the great exception of Bruegel (see over), who stands virtually alone in the Netherlands in the next generation.

The most vigorous painting in the sixteenth



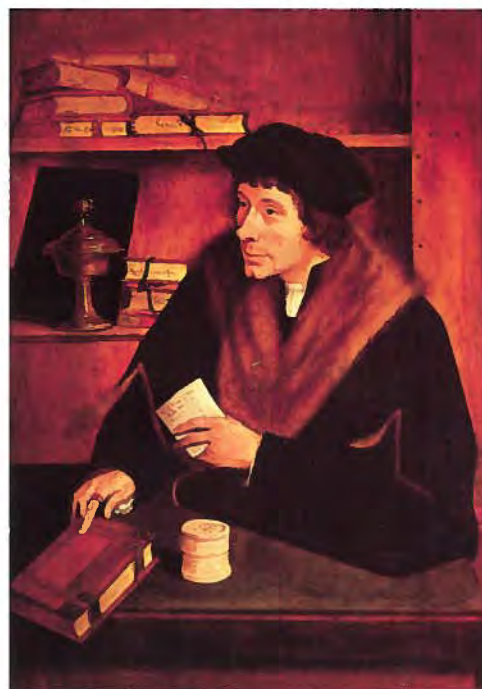
MABUSE (left)
The Malvagna triptych: The Virgin and Child, and saints, 1510-15
Transalpine Europe had always had closer links with northern Italy than with Tuscany or Rome, and even though Mabuse painted this after he had accompanied a Burgundian embassy to the Pope, Ferrarese painting seems his chief inspiration.

VAN ORLEY (right)
Georges de Zelle, 1519
The Brussels physician was about to marry. The linked hands, of the sitter and on the panel behind, signify union; the N is his wife's initial; the monogram abbreviates "eternity".



MASSYS (above)
A banker and his wife, 1514
The wife is distracted from her devotional book by the clink and glitter of the coins her husband counts; other details, too (of which the symbolism is

now obscure), set spiritual against earthly treasure. Significantly for the future, Massys introduces a new psychological realism (in Christus' comparable *St Eligius* (see p. 303) there is nothing of the kind).



MASSYS (left)
Egidius (Peter Giles), 1517
Egidius was on one half, Erasmus on the other, of a diptych commissioned as a gift for Thomas More, their friend and fellow-humanist.

PATENIER (above)
The Flight into Egypt, undated
The Holy Family escape Herod's ire along a snaky path in (despite its artificial crags) a homely landscape.

century was in Flanders rather than in Holland: activity shifted from Bruges and Ghent to Antwerp, expanding as its deep-water port responded to commerce from the New World, and Brussels. A very puritan version of Protestantism had taken hold in Holland, and the outlook for religious art was bleak (indeed there was iconoclasm). Jan van Scorel (1495-1562) produced sophisticated, cosmopolitan work in Utrecht from 1524, after travels that had taken him to Nuremberg (where he met Dürer), Carinthia, Venice and Jerusalem before an extensive stay in Rome. His first-hand knowledge of Italian art was wider than that of any contemporary. He developed a rapid, fluent technique, with a delicate feeling for light and glowing colour. The delightful *Mary Magdalen* in Amsterdam shows him at his best, entirely himself, having absorbed the experience of his travels into his own vision. In other examples his differing references jostle less happily. Van Scorel's portraits are again his most satisfactory work: he could be both sensitive and very tender. A follower of his, Marten van Heemskerck (1498-1574), spent several years in Rome, and is important not only as a leading exponent of later, northern

Mannerism but also as a topographical recorder of sixteenth-century Rome.

Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533), based in that city, was a remarkably sensitive and delicate colourist, and possibly the first artist in the Netherlands to produce self-portraits. But his greatest achievement was in printmaking: in his engravings he followed very much in Dürer's footsteps, and could rival him in virtuosity. His genre scenes not only provided a starting-point for seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish genre, but may also have been drawn upon by Caravaggio.

In France, that great patron Francis I attracted to Fontainebleau not only Italian but also Netherlandish artists (including Joos van Cleve), and the next generation of native French painters (the so-called second school of Fontainebleau) mingled the elegance of one tradition with the detailed realism of the other, though the sculptors reflected predominantly Italian example (see p. 167). The best fusion was achieved by François Clouet (c. 1510?-72), the scion of a long dynasty of artists, and an unattributed *Three minions* shows the blend of Netherlandish and Italian elements assimilated into a highly polished Mannerism.

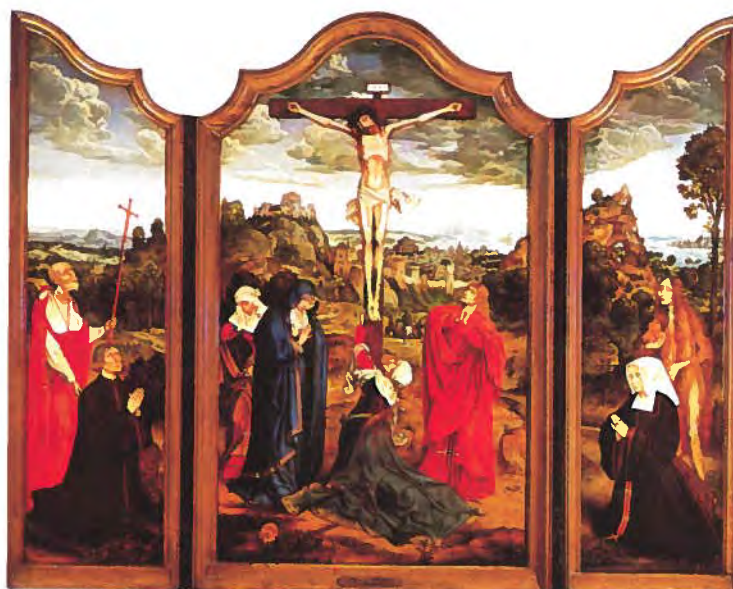


CLOUET
A lady in her bath, c. 1550?
The Italian influence on Netherlandish portraiture was in turn absorbed by the French court painters. According to tradition,

Diane de Poitiers, mistress to two French kings, was the sitter. The scheme – a nude in a definite context, now obscure – is much like that of Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (see p. 145).

MASSYS AND PATENIER
(right) *The Crucifixion; saints and donors*, c. 1520-30

Massys and his workshop, deliberately reverting to native tradition, have here "modernized" Campin and van der Weyden, and the figures' archaic gestures stand out vividly against Patenier's richly rolling panorama. Massys' sons continued his production.



VAN SCOREL (below)

Mary Magdalen, c. 1540
More a portrait with the attributes of a saint than a devotional image, van Scorel's picture shows the impact of his travels. Against a Mediterranean sky the Magdalen wears a striped silk mantle and pearls such as a Venetian courtesan might display.



VAN HEEMSKERCK
Self-portrait beside the Colosseum, 1533
The artist turns proudly to the spectator in a vivid

image of the relationship of northern artists to Rome, then and for years to come. He recorded buildings and statuary, old and also new.



VAN LEYDEN (above)
The engagement, c. 1520-30
Dramatic frontal lighting and strong horizontal axes set up an almost abstract pattern of light and dark areas, indicating a graphic bias. This is very early for pure genre subjects.

FONTAINEBLEAU SCHOOL
(below) *Three minions*, c. 1580-89
The impeccably groomed courtiers of Henri III exemplify the very high finish and rather mannered sophistication of the second school of Fontainebleau.



Bruegel: August, or the Corn Harvest

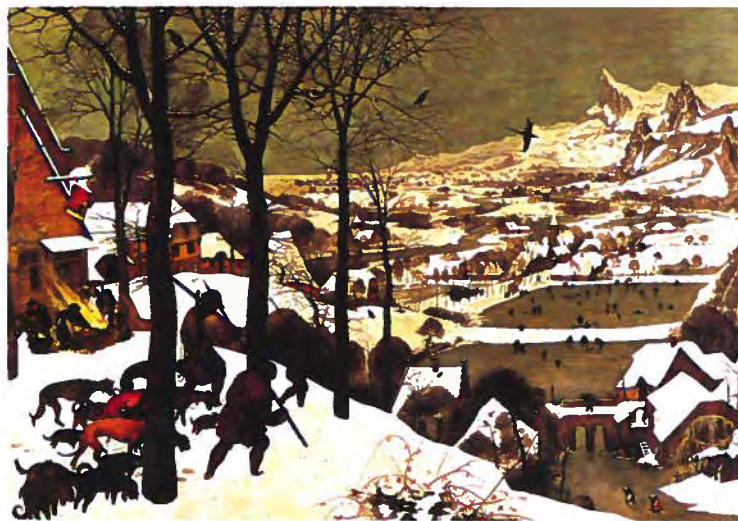
Pieter Bruegel (c. 1525-69) worked in Antwerp and then in Brussels, but early in his career travelled extensively in France and Italy, between about 1551 and 1553. Unlike almost all his northern contemporaries, he took from Italian art virtually none of the surface trimmings, though he surely developed in Italy his sense of space, his organization of majestic compositions in depth and the density of his human figures – though very different in effect, his broadly conceived peasant figures have a physical gravity like those of Giotto. From his journey through the Alps, however, he drew one enduring inspiration – mountains: views from the heights are recurrent in his work.

The most important early influence on Bruegel in Flanders was clearly the work of Bosch. This is apparent not only in the many designs that he made for engravings, but also even in quite late paintings. Many of his pictures illustrate proverbs and parables, most of them depicting humans as creatures of appetite subservient to the whims of nature or to their own folly. Bruegel's religious subjects are usually set in a contemporary context, almost submerged in the ebb and flow of everyday life about them; so in *The procession to Calvary* the spectator has to search amongst the teeming throng across the panoramic landscape, to discern Christ. Nor are his religious characters idealized: indeed, in the London *Adoration of the Magi*, not only Joseph but the three kings are portrayed much like the shepherds and attendant soldiers – in fairly brutish terms. Bruegel's grimmest works, such as *The triumph of Death* (not shown) with its serried legions of skeletons, date from around 1562, during the Spanish persecution of a large Protestant minority in Antwerp. Bruegel removed that same year to Brussels, but his own

BRUEGEL (right)
August (The corn harvest),
1565

This is probably the first picture in the history of art to transcribe the heat of high summer into paint. A group of peasants take a midday break in the shade of a tree, eating, drinking – one is sprawled in sleep. Others are still at work, scything, stacking the corn, carrying sheaves. Through trees on the brow of the slope is glimpsed the village church; in the valley below, close to a farm, other small figures are at work in the fields. Beyond, the landscape melts shimmering away for miles; land and the watery expanse of the estuary merge in haze into the opaque sky. The working figures move with a torpid sluggishness. A man arriving from a path through the dense, shoulder-high corn, bearing liquid refreshment – the sweat that trickles down his chest is not visible but it seems to be there. The extraordinary colours, the dominating hot yellow and green, reverberate through the picture.

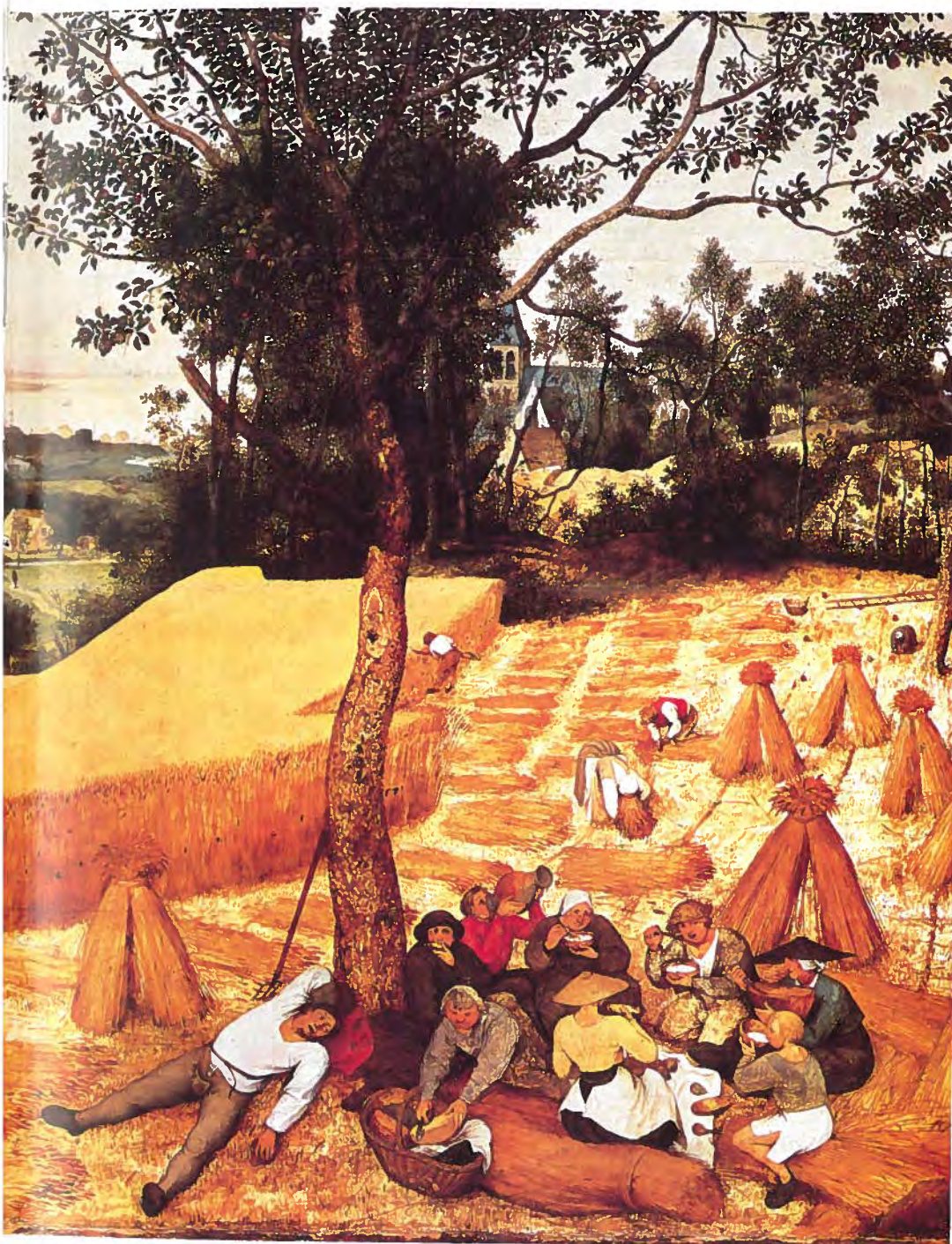
BRUEGEL (below)
January (The hunters in the snow), 1565
If *August* is heat itself, then *January*, in its whites, greys and blacks, is the very rigour of iron winter.



AERTSEN (left)
Christ in the house of Martha and Mary, 1559
Interposing huge piles of food and flowers between the observer and the central scene, Aertsen anticipated pure still life, seen for itself.

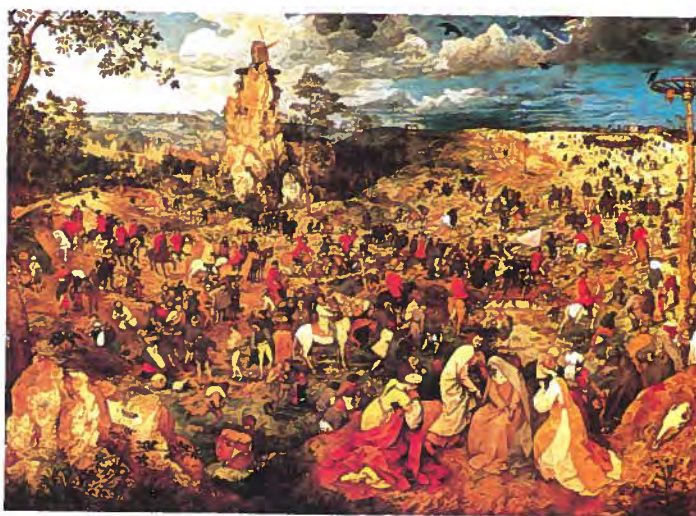
BRUEGEL (right)
The peasant wedding, c. 1567
Drawings of peasants from the life underlie the incisive characterization and detail.





BRUEGEL (right)
*The procession to
Calvary*, 1564

The crowded panorama is full of telling episodes condemning human folly – the moralism of Bruegel's engravings transferred to a religious setting. As an example of hypocrisy, his wife attempts to detain Simon of Cyrene, called to assist the fallen Christ, although a crucifix hangs at her belt. There are also topical references, and the Roman soldiers wear the uniform of the "Habits Rouges" who kept order in Flanders for the Spanish. *The triumph of Death* is in composition quite similar, teeming with corpses hung in attitudes of agony.



political or religious convictions are not clear; in Brussels the Spanish President of the Council of State, Cardinal Granvella, was an important patron. Despite his nickname, "Peasant Bruegel", Bruegel was a man of culture and discrimination, and a close friend of the great geographer Ortelius.

Quintessential in Bruegel's work is his "close-up" masterpiece of peasant life, *The peasant wedding*. Here composition, wit, and acute observation are superbly fused. Echoes of religious themes may linger – the Feast at Cana, even the Last Supper – but Bruegel's work is entirely of this world. His supreme achievement is *The Months of the Year*, a series painted in 1565 for the villa in Brussels of his patron Nicolaes Jonghelinck; there are five survivors, astonishing in their range of mood, of which the most famous are *August (The corn harvest)* and *January (The hunters in the snow)*. Their predecessors are the brilliant miniatures of the changing months by the Limbourgs, in which any religious significance was already peripheral, though the theme of annual rebirth and change always had astrological relevance and allegorical undertones of good and evil, light and dark, life and death. Bruegel's peasants, however, squat, tenacious and unlovely, work the world for survival. Food, its getting and its consuming, is one of Bruegel's preoccupations; no one has surpassed the sensitivity and skill with which he evokes the beauty of the earth that provides. His true subject is Nature herself, with man an integral part of her growth, decay and rebirth.

Bruegel's compositions were repeated by his son Pieter II, but the only painter to deal with similar subjects with originality and more than average competence was Pieter Aertsen (1508-75), working in Antwerp and Amsterdam.

BRUEGEL (below)
The Adoration of the Magi,
1564

There are perhaps traces of Schongauer and of Italian influence in the grouping of figures, but the grimacing

onlookers themselves are a clear reference back to those of Bosch (see p. 99). The view of humanity is not kind; nor is it didactically moralistic; Bruegel's realism can be monumental, serene.



THE BAROQUE ERA

The division between the Renaissance and Baroque periods is a fairly recent convention of historians, and Baroque art represents an expansion and development of Renaissance art, rather than a radical transformation of its principles. Italy continued to be the goal and inspiration of many artists throughout Europe, not only because of the great monuments of the past, but also because artists such as Caravaggio, Annibale Carracci and Bernini had made Rome the most vital artistic centre in Europe. Louis XIV's summons of Bernini to Paris in 1665 and the rejection of the latter's plans for the Louvre are, however, events symbolic of the new order in which France was gradually to assume leadership artistically as well as politically. Baroque art was often used for propaganda purposes, whether for church or state, and Louis's enormous palace at Versailles is one of the most complete examples of the Baroque ideal of the union of all the arts, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the orchestration of architecture and landscape, painting and sculpture, furniture and metalwork into one splendid whole.

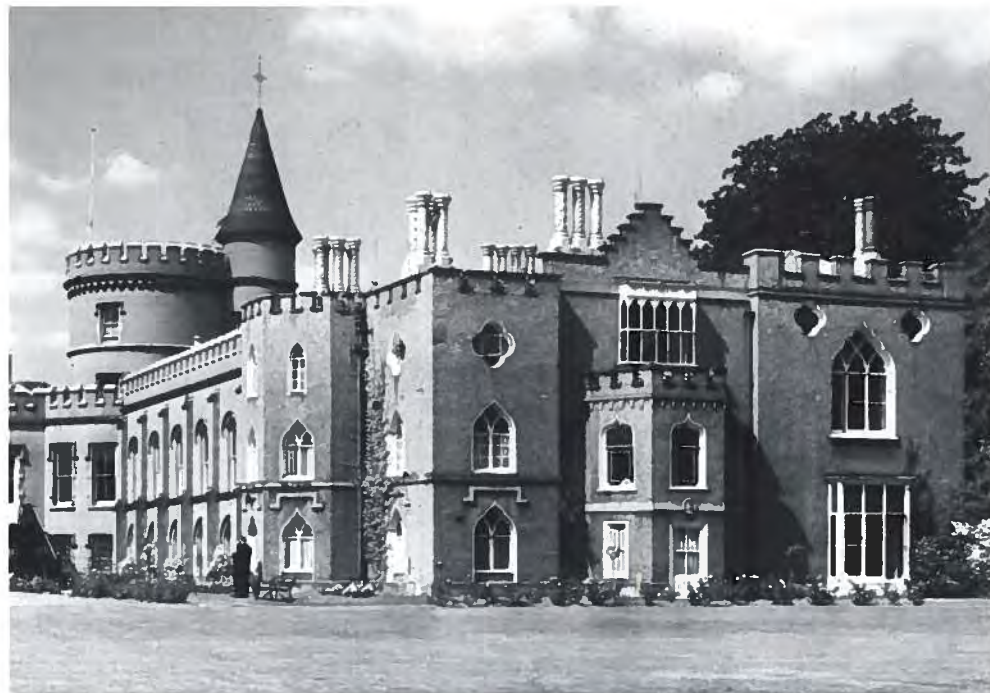
Though such unity is one characteristic of the Baroque, art also showed remarkable diversity during the seventeenth century and flourished in very different social and political circumstances. For both Spain and Holland this was a Golden Age in the arts, but whereas conditions in Spain represent a continuance of old values, with patronage almost entirely in the hands of the Church and court, in Holland art was no longer the preserve of the rich and powerful, but appealed also to the prosperous middle classes, who collected paintings suit-

able to the modest size and pretensions of their houses. Holland's Golden Age coincided with the birth of political independence and the growth of economic prosperity, but Spain at the same time was declining from its pre-eminent position in world affairs, and its great national school of painting and sculpture was perhaps a belated expression of its former glories. In terms of its importance for the future, the democratization of art in Holland is one of the most significant aspects of seventeenth-century culture. Virtually the whole fabric of Dutch life became the subject matter of artists, and genres such as landscape and still life were virtually instituted during this period. A great deal of space has been given to Dutch art, reflecting not merely the presence of some outstanding painters, but the extraordinary proliferation of minor masters of superb quality.

The change from Baroque to Rococo, the arrival of the eighteenth century, brought gradual modulations of mood and tempo. The scope of art remained essentially the same, though its scale was usually less grand, sited as much in the private house as in the palace, with the small porcelain figure perhaps more typical an expression of the taste of the time than the heroic marble statue. Secular art, and the portable easel-painting, continued to increase in importance, and showed unmistakably the impact of ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, and of the first seeds that would blossom, or erupt, in the French Revolution. In the nineteenth century there would be a definite change of direction – something much closer to a break in tradition.

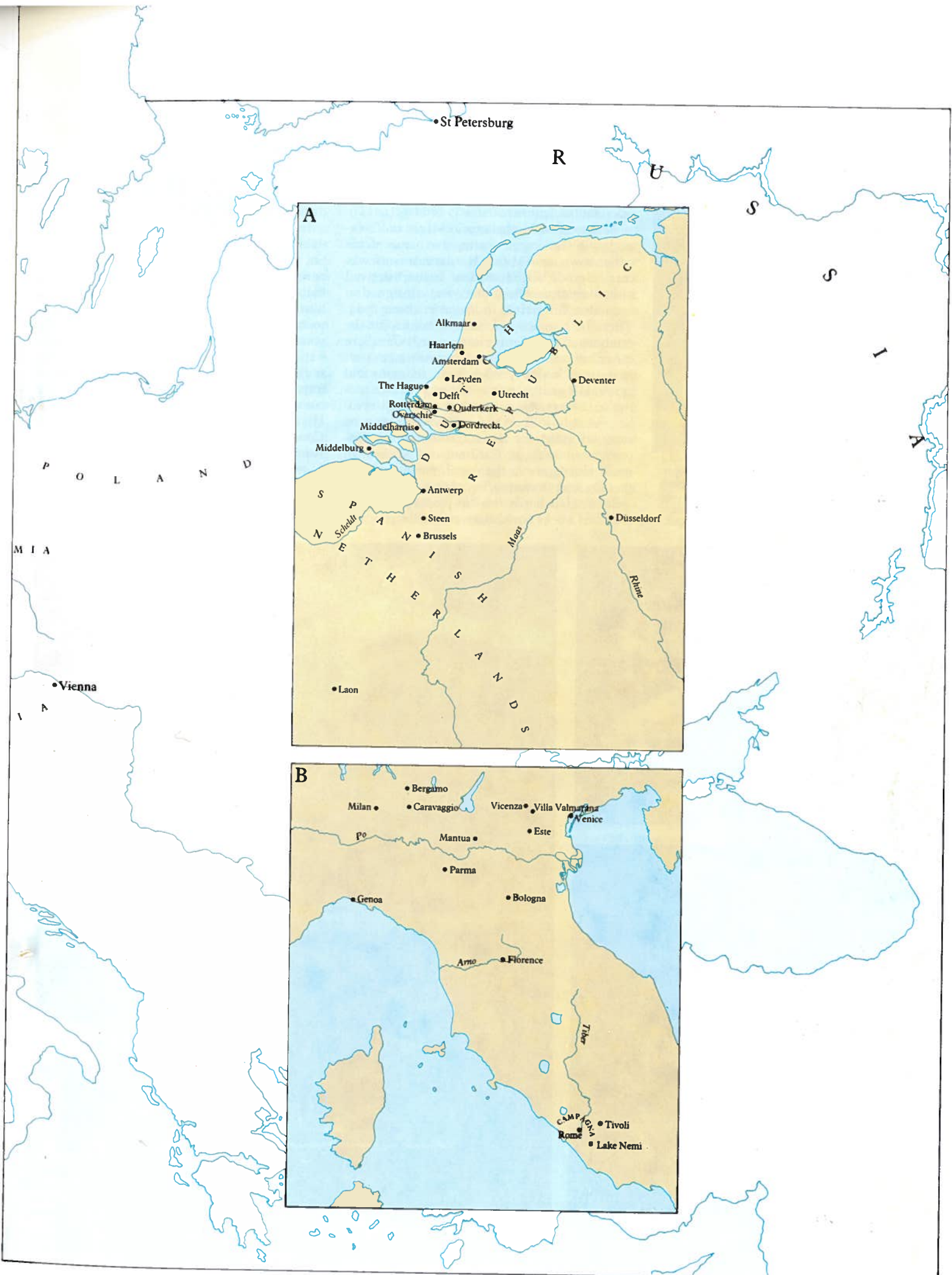
VERSAILLES, FRANCE (left)
The *Galerie des Glaces*,
begun 1678

TWICKENHAM, ENGLAND
(right) Strawberry Hill,
begun 1747



Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries





Michelangelo da Caravaggio



CARAVAGGIO
Boy bitten by a lizard,
c. 1596-1600
This subtly foreshortened
study of the physiognomy

of fright was perhaps not
ordered, but sold painted.
Caravaggio probably used
himself as a model, but
made the figure younger.

With Caravaggio (1571-1610), a new type of artist appeared on the European scene. It had been foreshadowed in Michelangelo, but the idea that artistic genius is autonomous, and almost necessarily in opposition to authority and convention, is embodied not only in Caravaggio's painting but in the drama of his brief and violent life.

He was born Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio – Caravaggio being the name of his native town near Milan. His earliest work was certainly northern Italian in feeling (derived ultimately from Giorgione), and continued so even after his arrival in Rome in about 1593. There he began by painting still lifes for the established late Mannerist painter Il Cavaliere d'Arpino, and still life plays a prominent part in most of his early work, both religious and genre. His genre scenes – not mere grotesques but situations observed with a novelist's eye – he probably sold on the open market, but he soon attracted the attention of wealthy patrons, men such as Cardinal del Monte, an important figure in the papal management of the Counter-Reformation, but a hedonist as well. For such patrons he painted not only religious works but also a series of Bacchic and

narcissistic youths with unmistakably erotic overtones. In these early works the essentials of his revolutionary style are already clear – the realism of his characters; the sharply defined, rich and vivid colours, especially of stuffs; and the harsh light from a single source by which his compositions, for all their earthiness and detail, are consolidated into monumentality.

In his brief career in Rome – a mere 13 years – this epoch-making style was fully developed. So, too, was his picturesque and obstreperous personality. "He would swagger about . . . with his sword at his side, with a servant following him, from one ball court to another, ever ready to engage in a fight or an argument, with the result that it is most awkward to get on with him" – so noted a visiting painter from the north, van Mander. Before 1600 he received important commissions, but few of them were completed without major rows and rejections. His first public work, three pictures for the Contarelli Chapel in S. Luigi dei Francesi, Rome, was obtained through Cardinal del Monte. Painting here on a new scale, Caravaggio ran into technical difficulties, and there was considerable revision and repainting, while his original altarpiece for the Chapel, *St*

CARAVAGGIO (right)
St John the Baptist,
1597-98

This is primarily erotic, a picture of a naked youth, and the ostensible subject can be identified only from the ram, with a fleece worn by John the Baptist in the desert. Caravaggio often used famous works as models in his series of such youths: here *St John's* pose recalls *Dawn* on Michelangelo's tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici (see p. 133). As in other early works, the highly contrived design and studied lighting effects give the painting the air of a virtuoso performance.



CARAVAGGIO (above)
The fortune teller,
c. 1594-95

Caravaggio's almost life-size genre subjects are few, but famous. Their direct and naturalistic approach was widely imitated, but their psychological sensitivity was seldom matched. Con-

temporaries described these genre works as being "in the manner of Giorgione". Caravaggio, from the north, owed much to northern masters such as Moretto of Brescia and Savoldo (see p. 149) and their followers, who could provide some precedent for his genre and his lighting.



CARAVAGGIO (above)
The Supper at Emmaus,
c. 1596-1600

The moment is the sudden recognition by two pilgrims that the stranger who has joined them is the risen Christ. Caravaggio's own is the intensified drama, which includes even the basket of fruit that is about to fall from the table.



CARAVAGGIO (left)
The Supper at Emmaus,
c. 1605-06

The restrained, impulsive tension of Caravaggio's later treatment contrasts with the drama of the first version. The shooting arm of the right-hand disciple, for instance, has been replaced by a clenched grip. The light picks out a few details with a greater calculation.

Matthew and the angel, was rejected by the clergy ostensibly because St Matthew looked too proletarian. The Chapel was completed only in 1602, after Caravaggio had undertaken new work in S. Maria del Popolo (see over).

The scale, force and revolutionary treatment of the famous *Calling of St Matthew* in the Contarelli Chapel shows his vision fully mature, even before he was 30. Matthew sits at the customs seat, amidst a group of gaudily plumaged, aggressively limbed layabouts, in a contemporary Roman tavern. Christ appears on the right, only his face and hand visible – the hand, beckoning and claiming Matthew, deliberately echoing the creative hand of God the Father in Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling. Matthew, interrupted, looks sharply up, his hand indicating as clearly as words: "What, me?" A comparable directness – an invitation almost to participate in the action – invigorates the first *Supper at Emmaus*: the disciple's hand, foreshortened violently, is flung almost out of the picture, as if to seize hold of the onlooker.

Several of Caravaggio's large altarpieces painted in Rome were fiercely criticized. In some the clergy objected to the naturalistic dirty linen and feet; everywhere to the lack of

idealization; in *The death of the Virgin*, to the swollen Virgin herself, said to have been modelled on a drowned whore pulled out of the Tiber. Nevertheless, individual patrons, cardinals and lay aristocrats alike, recognized Caravaggio's genius and bought his work as eagerly as they bought the Carracci's (see p. 184), whose classicism seems radically opposed to it. But Caravaggio, the spontaneous innovator – he seems to have worked without drawings directly on to the canvas – was in fact on good terms with Annibale Carracci, and much of the power of his work stems from a profound assimilation of High Renaissance tradition, Roman and Venetian.

Caravaggio's career in Rome was punctuated by sharp and sometimes bloody clashes, documented in police files. He was imprisoned twice in 1605, and had also to leave Rome for a month after wounding a lawyer. In 1603 a resonant libel action had been brought against him by a fellow-painter, Giovanni Baglione (who later became Caravaggio's biographer). In May 1606 came the climax, when Caravaggio, enraged by an opponent in a game of tennis, stabbed and killed him. He fled to Naples, and then on to Malta in 1607. In Malta,

his initial welcome, with commissions and installation as a Knight of the Order of St John, was followed, the next year, by an assault on a judge, imprisonment, escape and flight to Sicily. Thence back to Naples in 1609, where he was badly wounded, perhaps in a vendetta attack. He died in 1610 of malaria, aged 38.

His later works, religious compositions a little larger than life scale, are very dark and simplified in detail and in colour. Beside the clangour of his earlier works, they seem to be meditations in formidable silence, as if they were the work of a far older painter, brooding on the threshold of death.

Caravaggio's nature was not such as to form around him a faithful school of followers, but his spreading influence on European art is incalculable. In Italy, the Carracci pupils Reni and Guercino reflected him in various ways; on the Dutch Utrecht school his impact was decisive. These, however, adopted chiefly his method of lighting or superficial mannerisms. The essence of his vision was better understood by the more original artists of the age, by Ribera and Velazquez in Spain, by La Tour and the Le Nain brothers in France and – above all – by Rembrandt in Holland.



CARAVAGGIO (right)
The death of the Virgin,
1605-06
The softened light lingers,
suspending the mourners
in a cold, grieving dawn. St
John, behind the Virgin's
head, Mary Magdalen and
the grouping of the heads
show a debt to classicism;
the diagonal arrangement
will be typically Baroque.

CARAVAGGIO (below)
*The Resurrection of
Lazarus*, 1609
The works Caravaggio
painted after he had fled
from Malta show signs of
haste, and are not well
preserved. But the pity
and terror of their compo-
sition still shine through
their blackened state.



CARAVAGGIO (left)
St Matthew and the angel
(1st version), c. 1599
Caravaggio's first public
work was taken off the wall
by the priests, who felt
that "the figure . . . did not
look like a saint, sitting
with crossed legs and with
his feet crudely exposed to
the people". But through
this very indecorum the
Christian message emerges
clearly with new vigour.
They may have objected
really to the suggestive
proximity of the angel.

CARAVAGGIO (above)
The calling of St Matthew,
c. 1597-99
The principal of the Roman
Academy, Zuccaro, could not
understand the acclaim
this picture instantly earned:
in its realism he saw only
imitation of Giorgione. In
fact Caravaggio's sources
for the Bohemian group
were northern genre works:
and here the psychological
penetration of Caravaggio's
genre is brilliantly adapted
to the narrative purpose of
this religious painting.



Caravaggio: The Conversion of St Paul

In July 1600 the papal treasurer Tiberio Cerasi acquired, for his resting place, a chapel in S. Maria del Popolo, Rome, and shortly afterwards commissioned the two outstanding (but very different) painters in Rome to decorate it: Annibale Carracci to paint the altarpiece and Michelangelo da Caravaggio to provide two paintings for the side-walls.

Caravaggio's subjects were the conversion of St Paul and the crucifixion of St Peter. His first versions were not satisfactory – whether to the client or to himself is not known; the second versions were paid for in November 1601. The Carracci altarpiece, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, had probably been finished before then, likewise the ceiling decoration, painted to Annibale's design by an assistant. The St Paul subject was already fairly popular, the St Peter one less so, but they are the two subjects of Michelangelo's last paintings, in the Cappella Paolina in the Vatican, which must have been in Caravaggio's mind, though his solutions are very different.

The large difference reflects not only Caravaggio's profoundly personal view of the world but also the shifting attitude, within the Catholic Church, to the function of religious painting and consequently its style. Faced with the division of Europe between primarily Protestant north and primarily Catholic south, the Catholic Church had reasserted its doctrines and against the Reformation proclaimed the Counter-Reformation: the rigour of the Inquisition was only one aspect of a movement of self-examination, of confirmation of faith and of positive propaganda. This new and active fervour was fuelled by direct and personal appeal to the faithful through the arts; Caravaggio strengthened the meaning of St Peter's martyrdom and St Paul's conversion by telling their stories in contemporary idiom and down-to-earth detail – even if the staid clergy felt he pushed realism too far.

The conversion of St Paul could represent a man tripped over backwards in a stable, but even before the viewer recognizes the subject he is aware of the electric potency of a supernatural event in this mundane image. Like Michelangelo, Caravaggio has chosen the moment when Saul was flung to the ground blinded, as if by lightning, and accused by God: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" But there is in the Caravaggio none of the supporting cast of airborne Christ and angels present in the Michelangelo. The bucketing steed has become a rather heavy hack, and the agitated crowd is replaced by one solitary baffled groom, an old peasant with a varicose vein; these two have heard nothing. The source of light is not shown; but the violent, even awkward foreshortening of the figure hurled down expresses an impact of huge energy, and the outflung arms embroil the whole in the vortex of a blinding miracle.

For contemporaries, this must have been a stunning vision. Formally, Caravaggio has exploited already known methods – even more dramatic foreshortening occurs for example in Mantegna and Tintoretto. But the overall assault on the beholder's emotions in such concentration was unparalleled. The courtly elegance of the still prevailing Mannerist style seems both esoteric and effete in contrast.

CARAVAGGIO (below)

The crucifixion of St Peter, 1600-01

No earlier painter had made the focus of this subject so emphatically the action and effort of raising the cross. St Peter

appears the more helpless – an ordinary, perplexed, suffering old man, though still robust and dignified. The composition seems more effective from an oblique viewpoint, from outside the chapel.



ANNIBALE CARRACCI (above) *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1600-01

The Carracci altarpiece is flanked by the two Caravaggios; the artists worked in their studios probably without close knowledge of each other's designs. Neither was likely to compromise for the sake

of the other, anyway, even though in many respects *in situ* their pictures clash. Annibale's forms are pale-coloured in a serene, diffuse light, against Caravaggio's luminous browns and blacks. Yet in both the figures are life-size, solidly modelled, and crowded against the frame.



DÜRER (above)

"*The Large Horse*", 1505 Engravings by northern artists were an inspiration for Caravaggio's own vision of common-life realism. Dürer's stolid animal was perhaps the prototype of the nag in the *Conversion*.

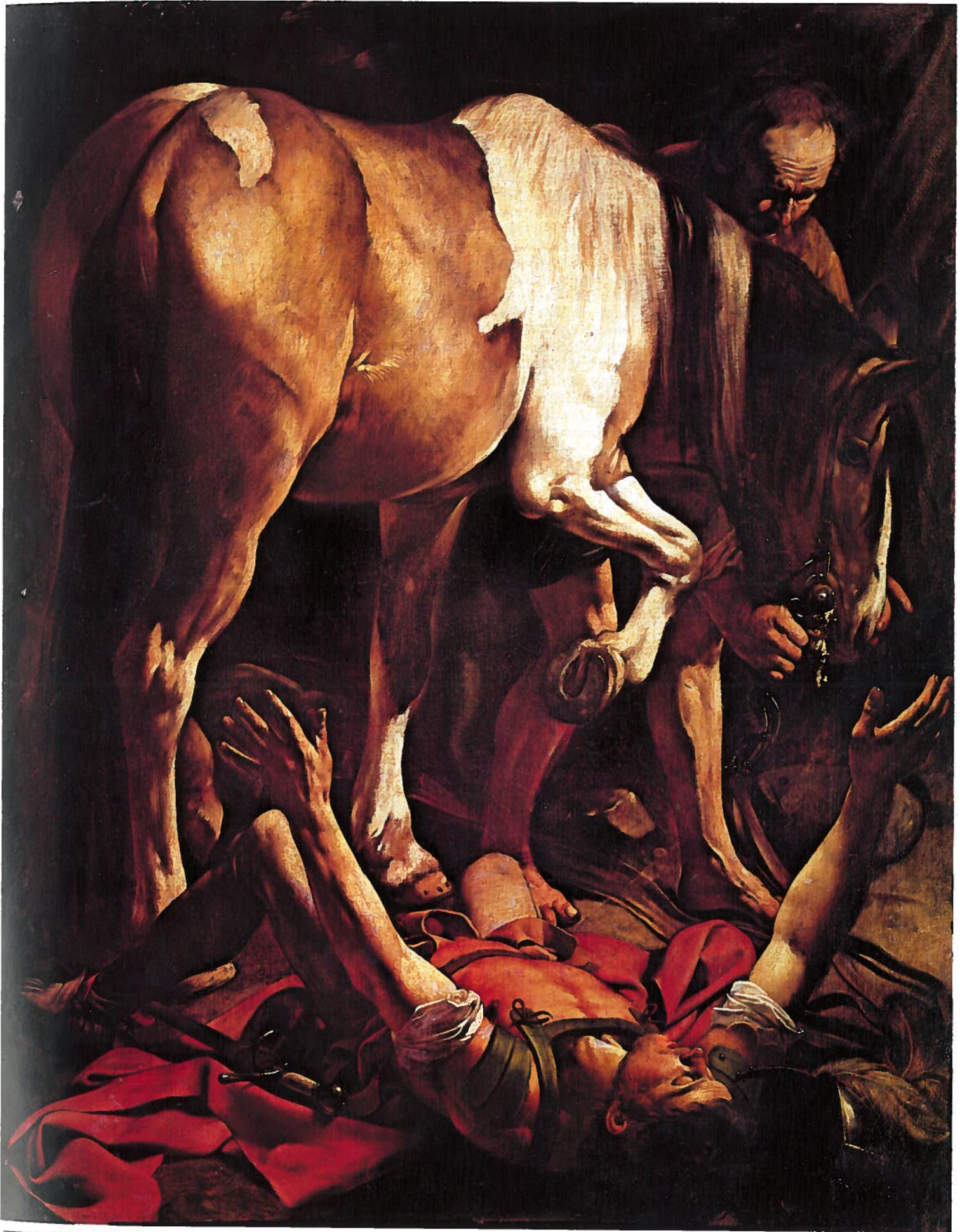


CARAVAGGIO (right) *The conversion of St Paul*, 1600-01

The picture is a masterpiece of simple, forcefully stark, concentrated drama. The unbalanced composition, in which the massive, unmoved figure of the horse fills almost the entire canvas, makes all the more emphatic the prostrate Saul's shock. He falls back thunder-struck almost out of the picture frame, involving the viewer as a witness.

MANTEGNA (right)

The dead Christ, c. 1490 Mantegna's picture is an early precedent for the use in the *Conversion* of extreme foreshortening for emotional effect.



The Carracci and their Pupils

While Caravaggio's dramatic realism was to be one seminal constituent of Baroque painting, the vigorous and equally radical return to High Renaissance principles initiated by the Carracci family in Bologna was to be another – and in Italy the more important. The Carracci drew their inspiration not only from Raphael but also from the Venetians, excluding neither the grandeur of Michelangelo nor the tenderness of Correggio. Like Caravaggio, they were in reaction to the artificialities of the Mannerist style, but they attempted reform and, unlike Caravaggio, they wholeheartedly espoused the traditional practice of *disegno*, the elaborate analysis and resolution of a composition by means of drawings.

The Carracci designated their studio in Bologna a teaching academy about 1585. Their attempt to combine the best elements of previous masters produced a codification of "classicism", in which ideal forms, reprieved from Mannerist distortion, were clearly organized according to the demands of the subject, placed in correct perspective, structured by firm lines of direction and enlivened by resonant colour. Their "academic" programme inevitably repelled many critics of the nine-

teenth century, who saw the Carracci and those who followed them as deadhanded imitators, even plagiarists, boring offenders against the cardinal Romantic virtue of originality and the inspiration of genius. The renewed appreciation of their classical revival is comparatively recent.

The three Carracci were Ludovico (1555-1619) and his cousins, Agostino (1557-1602) and his younger brother Annibale (1560-1609). Though they shared much, they are clearly distinguishable artistic personalities. Agostino, the intellectual and the teacher, probably the principal motivator of the academy and a disseminator of Renaissance designs by able engravings after Old Masters, was less of a painter, though his altarpiece at Bologna, *The last communion of St Jerome*, was famous. The eldest, Ludovico, remained based all his life in Bologna. In his early work, full of colour and movement, a Venetian feeling predominates, but his later work is paler, more refined – sometimes sentimental.

Annibale was the major artist among the three. His fame during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rested on his decorations for the Farnese Palace in Rome (see over), and

ANNIBALE CARRACCI
Pietà, c. 1599-1600
Annibale Carracci and Caravaggio were both Counter-Reformation artists and sometimes had the same patrons: their works, otherwise distinct, share a clear, monumental

expression of immediate impact. Annibale's art intentionally reflects Raphael, Michelangelo and the Antique; this is a more softly idealized version of Sebastiano del Piombo's *Pietà* in Viterbo (see p. 146).



ANNIBALE CARRACCI (below)
The butcher's shop, c. 1582
Probably painted as a studio exercise, this is even more "low-life" than Caravaggio's genre scenes. Quite possibly it satirically represents the Carracci's own academy. For all their high ideals they did not lack humour.



AGOSTINO CARRACCI
(left) *Annibale Carracci*, late 1580s
In their different ways, the Carracci were as self-consciously artistic as Caravaggio: this portrait miniature has a certain romantic idealization. It seems also to presage Annibale's sad decline.



AGOSTINO CARRACCI
(above) *The last communion of St Jerome*, 1593-94
The firm verticals, the undulating, frieze-like horizontal grouping and the lines of direction forming a central triangle declare this work a classicist manifesto. It had wide influence, not least on Poussin.

LUDOVICO CARRACCI
(above) *The Madonna and Child with saints*, c. 1590
The subject matter is clearly and hierarchically organized, composed with academic correctness but sweetened by a light touch and bright, gentle colours.



ANNIBALE CARRACCI (left)
Landscape with the Flight into Egypt, c. 1604
The landscapes painted by Annibale in Bologna show strong northern influence. In the later landscapes painted in Rome, such as this one, he evolved a lasting formula of "classical" landscape – a vista conjured along recessing diagonals of castles, trees, winding rivers and hilltop towns.



ANNIBALE CARRACCI (left)
A prisoner, early 1590s
This, one of the many fine drawings by the Carracci, is probably a copy after a *St Sebastian* by Titian; and it is also probably a preliminary drawing for an unfinished *Samson in prison*. The Carracci often adapted motifs in this way from Renaissance masters; their vigour and feeling were unimpaired by such deliberate eclecticism.

in the nineteenth century was denied on the same evidence. While his formal style shows a consistent development, the sensitivity of his technique was matched by a very flexible attitude to subject matter. Early on there were exercises in realistic genre, unprecedented in Italy, such as the life-size *Butcher's shop*; brisk drawings that are perhaps the earliest true caricatures; and many delightful "straight" portraits. Further, Annibale developed (from early experiments by Veronese or the Bassani) a new art of landscape; this was influenced when he was in Rome by Flemish artists resident there, and also by the fragments of antique frescos newly revealed. In Annibale's landscapes Nature, freshly observed and gravely ordered, reflects the solemnity of the events portrayed in it. Not only his pupil Domenichino but Claude and Poussin were to acknowledge Annibale's example in different ways in their own work.

Annibale had visited Venice and Parma (where he saw Correggio's work) in the mid-1580s. A remark from a letter of his, about Correggio, illustrates sharply a main and enduring concern in his own work. "I like this straightforwardness and this purity that is

not reality and yet is lifelike and natural, not artificial or forced." In Bologna, he painted a series of large altarpieces, developing a sure ability in monumental composition, in the interrelating of large forms; he also acquired admirable fresco techniques in the decoration of various Bolognese houses. By 1595, when he was summoned to Rome, he was fully equipped for work in the Farnese Palace. The impact of Rome simplified his compositions and rendered his forms more massive – in this alone resembling Caravaggio's. His late work, overshadowed by attacks of melancholia, is darkly expressive and emotional.

Annibale brought from Bologna to work with him in Rome a sequence of superbly gifted younger artists, notably Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri, 1581-1641); Giovanni Lanfranco (1582-1647); and Guido Reni (1575-1642). Domenichino developed his own version of classicism, rather dry and correct but sometimes of great charm, as in his Raphaelesque *St Cecilia* cycle in S. Luigi dei Francesi, and he also carried on the Carracci interest in landscape. Lanfranco, who came originally from Parma, developed a much freer and more painterly style, which proved more

popular and which his rival Domenichino was compelled to emulate. Lanfranco's *Virgin in glory* in the dome of S. Andrea della Valle, Rome, ascending like a paean to the open lantern, both followed up Correggio and indicated the way the High Baroque would explode masonry with simulated heavens.

Guido Reni's work shows both a slightly unexciting restraint and an ability to charm; his later work, such as *Atalanta and Hippomenes* (c. 1620), became subtly but markedly simplified. His studio's large output of cloying *Virgins* led to an unjust devaluation of his ability until recently.

The younger Guercino (Gianfrancesco Barbieri, 1591-1666) never worked with Annibale, but was much influenced by Ludovico: his early paintings in Bologna were attractively vivid, and soon reinforced by a rather Caravaggesque light and shade. In Rome, his *Aurora* of 1623, on the ceiling of the Casino Ludovisi, is a masterpiece of illusionist perspective. His boldness of conception was, however, to be followed up by others. His later work in fresco and oils is much more conventional, though the brilliance of his drawings was undimmed throughout his career.



LANFRANCO (above)
The Virgin in glory,
1625-27
The groups of figures, on ascending layers of clouds, are illusionistically painted *di sotto in su* (foreshortened from below), not yet overflowing the vault as they were to do later, in the decorations of the developed High Baroque.



GUIDO RENI (above)
Atalanta and Hippomenes,
c. 1620
Hippomenes won his race against speedy Atalanta by

dropping three golden apples, which she stopped to pick up. Their flowing movements are opposed in a softened chiaroscuro.



GUERCINO (below)
Profile head of a man,
after 1630
This sketch from the life, typical of the Carracci circle, displays a wry observation containing an element of caricature.



DOMENICHINO (above)
The martyrdom of St Cecilia, 1611-14
Eloquently posed figures clothed in harmonious,

light colours act out an elegant classical drama. Such frescos may charm or may seem insipid; they influenced Poussin.



GUERCINO (right)
Aurora, 1621-23
The chariot and horses resemble a similar *Aurora* by Reni, but the addition of towering illusionistic piers – illusionistically ruined at one end – makes a more impressive ceiling.

Annibale Carracci: The Farnese Gallery

The Gallery of the Palazzo Farnese is the last of the three great classic decorations in Rome, following Raphael's Stanze in the Vatican and Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. The Palazzo is a building of much grandeur, the creation of a succession of famous architects, including Michelangelo and Giacomo della Porta, who built the Gallery, with its three tall windows overlooking the garden to the Tiber beyond, in 1573. The palace was the Rome headquarters of the great patrician dynasty of the Farnese, used by various members of the family, including the very young Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, who summoned Annibale Carracci from Bologna in 1595.

Annibale's first decorations were in Odoardo's study, the Camerino (1595-96, not shown). Painting began in the Gallery about 1597, and the frescos of the vault were finished in 1600. Annibale's brother Agostino played some part in these, but the overall design and the bulk of the work were Annibale's. The Gallery has noble dimensions – 20 metres (66 ft) long by 6.5 metres (21 ft) wide, its coved and vaulted ceiling ten metres (32 ft) high. Its function, which conditioned Annibale's design, was both for receptions and for the display of classical statuary in the Farnese collection (now in Naples).

The programme – subject matter and storyline – of the decoration was probably provided by Odoardo's learned librarian, Fulvio Orsini, in consultation with the painter. The preliminary workings were exhaustive, involving more than one thousand drawings. The theme – odd for a cardinal, however youthful, but natural enough for lay members of the family – is pagan, profane and erotic: scenes taken from classical mythology to illustrate the power of love, the exalted but very physical love of the gods – even if some discern a deeper Christian message of Divine Love pervading the whole. The scenes are not linked in any continuous narrative progression, but echo and respond to one another in form and composition.

The idea of opening up an enclosed space by means of illusionist painting was already well developed, and Annibale had several examples before him in Bologna. But he chose the system



ANNIBALE CARRACCI (above) The Farnese Gallery: *The loves of the gods*, 1597-1600. Everything above the cornice is painted, even the frames of the pictures. At the end Polyphemus hurls a rock at Acis, whom he had caught in the arms of his love Galatea. Other panels illustrate similar stories, culled from Ovid.

(below) View of the inner wall of the Farnese Gallery. The figures of the ceiling were a foil to the classical sculpture originally set in niches below, as Giovanni Volpato's engraving shows. Over the central door is Domenichino's *Virgin and unicorn*, painted, like the other wall panels, a little after the vault (c. 1604-08).



RAPHAEL (below) The ceiling of the Villa Farnesina loggia, detail: *The marriage of Cupid and Psyche*, 1518. Raphael's loggia in the Vatican and his ceiling in the Farnesina (across the Tiber from the Farnese Palace, and visible from its windows) were important precedents for Annibale, in both their style and their compartmented scheme. Raphael's vision of pagan deity, executed perhaps wholly by his assistants, clearly inspired Annibale.

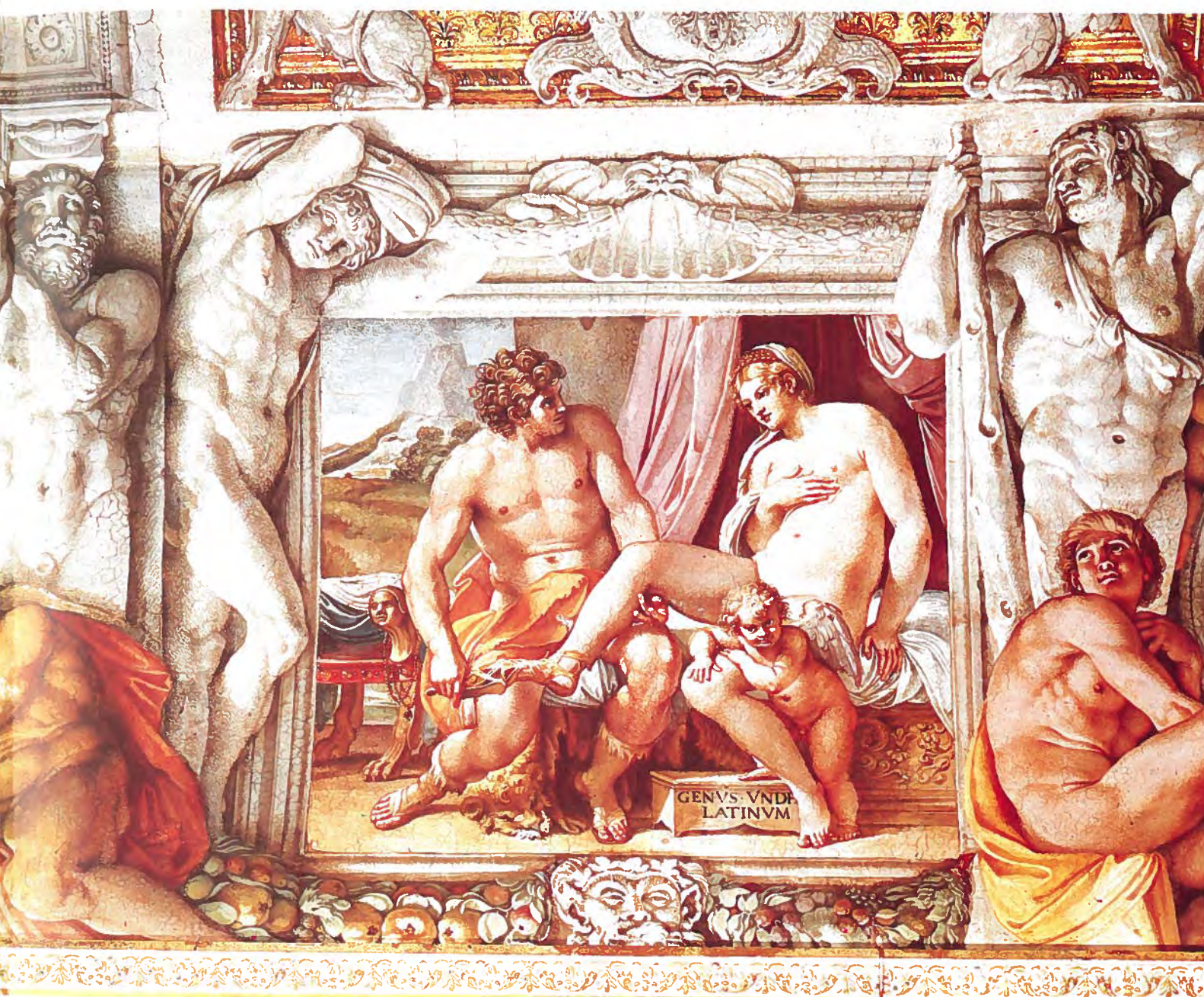


AGOSTINO CARRACCI Cartoon for *Glaucus and Scylla* on the inner wall of the Farnese Gallery, c. 1597-99. Though Annibale no doubt

sketched the preliminary design, the scale cartoon is the work of his brother and assistant Agostino. Conception and pose are magnificently robust, and

the triton blowing a conch in the (modified) painting probably inspired Bernini, who must have visited the Gallery; he used the motif in his *Neptune* (see over).





ANNIBALE CARRACCI (above)
The Farnese Gallery,
detail: *Venus and Anchises*,
1597-1600
From the union of Venus
and Anchises was born the
founder of Rome, Aeneas,
as the inscription on the
footstool, a quotation from
Virgil's *Aeneid*, indicates.
Surrounding the pair are
illusionistic stone "Atlas

figures" and busts called
"terms" – both classical
architectural ornaments.
In front of them, in vivid
contrast, are illusionistic
fleshy figures, based on the
Ignudi of Michelangelo's
Sistine ceiling. Further
details reproduce yet other
textures, and the illusion
of planes lapping and over-
lapping is very successful.

ANNIBALE CARRACCI (left)
*The triumph of Bacchus
and Ariadne*, 1597-1600
The *Triumph* is the centre-
piece of the ceiling and
of the whole Gallery. The
idealized forms are derived
from Raphael, though their
heaviness and musculature

echo Michelangelo; the
reclining goddess filling
out the right-hand bottom
corner comes from Titian's
Andrians (see p. 145). This
classicist formula still has
energy, a disciplined rich-
ness and – despite lengthy
preparation – real warmth.

The High Baroque in Rome

"Baroque" is a description applied, often loosely, to most European art in the seventeenth century and on into the early eighteenth; but its variations, from Caravaggio to Poussin, from Rubens to Rembrandt, from its service to Catholicism to its use by the Protestant north, may seem at times to have little in common. If essentially it was a realist reaction against the artificiality of the Mannerist style, at the same time astonishing techniques of illusionism and exuberant movement were developed, especially in Rome.

Its greatest practitioners were all-rounders, to whom narrow specialization in any one art would have been an unacceptable limitation. It found its fullest expression in the persons of Bernini in Italy and Rubens (fundamentally influenced by his Italian stay) in the north: both supreme representatives of an aristocracy of genius, moving as equals amongst aristocrats of blood and rank. The latter, however, were also their patrons, and in Rome the period saw the sharpening of rivalries between the great family dynasties, Farnese, Borghese, Barberini, who were aware of the prestige and glamour that artists could provide for them. That awareness was to be brought to massive

fruition in the absolutism of Louis XIV in France; employing armies of artists to celebrate at Versailles and elsewhere his invincible, all-conquering radiance, the Sun King needed (like Francis I shortly before) the best, wherever they might come from. He therefore brought to Paris in 1665 even Bernini, the maestro whose name is almost synonymous with the purest peak of the whole movement, the so-called High Baroque of Rome.

Son of a sculptor (Pietro) of considerable talent himself, Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) was a prodigy, enjoying papal patronage by the time he was 17. The reigning pope was Paul V, a Borghese, and before Bernini was 25 he had a series of remarkable sculptures behind him, all Borghese commissions. In them his development progressed rapidly, absorbing earlier influences (Michelangelo, Giambologna, the Antique) into a highly personal style, expressed with spectacular virtuosity. The fluent coherence of his *Neptune and Triton* of 1620 is already far from Mannerist tension; in the *Apollo and Daphne* of 1622-24 he has abandoned the multiple viewpoint of Giambologna and the figures are presented in a limited view, as if they were figures in a

painting. In the *Apollo* an appreciation of the Carracci, of Reni, even, in its vivid naturalism, of Caravaggio, is clear. His characters are seen at the most expressive moment – Daphne as she turns from woman to tree, then *David* (1623) at the moment of hurling the stone, compelling the spectator to complete the action with his own imagination, and so implicating him emotionally. So, too, in the portrait busts – often the most formal and pompous of modes – his sitters can be caught not only in movement but in speech to an unseen companion. In his bust of *Costanza Buonarelli* (c. 1635) – an intimate study of a friend, indeed mistress – he created a type of unpretentious, vividly naturalistic sculpted portraiture not to be found again till Houdon in the late eighteenth century.

In 1629 Bernini became architect to St Peter's, and from then on the great spectaculars, exploiting all kinds of techniques and materials, began. Between the Barberini Pope Urban VIII's death in 1644 and the election of Alexander VII in 1655 he was out of favour, though always busy, and his place at the Vatican was taken by Alessandro Algardi (1595-1654; not shown), an extremely pro-

BERNINI (right)
Neptune and Triton, 1620
Bernini's art was founded from his earliest years on superb craftsmanship. He daringly contorts this single piece of marble to the limits of its strength, creating a rich variety of textures – in flying drapery, in straining musculature, or in Neptune's waterlogged, wind-blown hair.



BERNINI (below)
Cathedra Petri (St Peter's Chair), 1656-66
Set beneath the dove of the Holy Spirit in the midst of gilded rays and a riot of angels, the huge papal throne closes the vista down the vast nave of St Peter's. The Four Doctors of the Church sustain the papal chair; their drapery is animated

by a violent turbulence, as if the Holy Spirit were a wind rushing through the church, transporting the onlooker to another sphere. Using bronze, marble, stucco, stained glass and light itself, the *Cathedra* is architectural sculpture, both mystical and highly theatrical, propagandizing the awesome majesty of the pope's divine mission.



BERNINI (left)
Apollo and Daphne, 1622-24
The statue was originally set in a niche opposite the door to a room, to obtain impact upon entrance. Though his statues were never coloured, Bernini achieved an astonishing illusionism; nobody had previously represented Daphne's metamorphosis as such a convincingly organic process. The delicacy (for instance, of the leaves) and the contrast between flesh, bark, hair and drapery are amazing.

BERNINI (above)
David, 1623
The *David* shows the same interest in momentary facial expression, typical of the Baroque, as Caravaggio in his *Boy bitten by a lizard* (see p. 180) or Rembrandt in some early self-portraits (see p. 281). Commanding the viewer's gaze from a predetermined angle, *David* is conceived not simply as a work of art, but as an object dominating its surrounding space.



ficient but deliberately less exuberant sculptor. During this period Bernini's most complex display of bravura, the Cornaro Chapel, was completed (see over).

After 1655 he orchestrated his most important creation, the *Cathedra Petri*, his setting for St Peter's Chair in the apse of St Peter's – a sun-burst of imagery. His 1665 visit to France, to design an enlarged Louvre, was not a success – French taste resented the imposition of Italian forms – although from it came one of the most splendid of all royal busts, that of Louis XIV. His last years were busy with the

creation of the great colonnade of St Peter's Piazza, but perhaps his most delightful contributions to the Roman scene were his fountains, such as *The four rivers* in the Piazza Navona, where he brought even water into play as an integral element of his sculptural vision. Bernini was always of boundless energy, not only sculptor and architect but dramatist, wit (terrible in his wrath), a brilliant painter and caricaturist (he executed several dashing self-portraits – though painting was for him more a private pleasure).

The leading painter of the High Baroque in

Rome was Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669), a protégé of the Barberini. His early work, in the 1620s, develops the Bolognese traditions in easel-paintings and in fresco with a comparable range of religious and mythological subject matter. But these paintings, monumental in composition and gesture (almost matching Poussin), are free in movement and handling. In the 1630s he completed a most astonishing *tour de force* with his great allegorical ceiling in the Barberini Palace: extending the illusionistic examples set by artists such as Lanfranco and Guercino, he opened the space to the heavens with levitating figures apparently soaring not only up but down into the confines of the room itself. In Florence he carried out decorations of equal brilliance and meanwhile, as an architect, he designed churches in Rome of a remarkable individuality.

In Rome, Pietro's painting was not immediately influential, many patrons preferring the comparative sobriety of his classicizing rival, Andrea Sacchi (1599-1661; not shown), but its implications were to be developed further by Pozzo in the 1690s (see p. 234), and by the great Austrian and south German Rococo decorators of the eighteenth century.

The Piazza and Basilica of St Peter's, Rome
Bernini began the great Piazza, his most famous work of architecture, in 1656 and completed it in 1667. It crowns and conjoins into coherence two centuries of building, and extends imposingly like two great arms to embrace the faithful. Its design is complex, but its effect simple and direct. The engraving is by Francesco Piranesi, 1772.



PIETRO DA CORTONA
Allegory of divine Providence and Barberini power, 1633-39
Pietro's ceiling is set in an architectural frame like that used by the Carracci in the Farnese Gallery, but is united in one composition, opens up greater illusionist

space and is animated by upward and downward movement. Dominant is the figure of Providence, who gestures towards the wreath containing bees, the Barberini emblem.



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BERNINI (above)
Louis XIV, 1665
In old age Bernini's brilliance in handling textures was undiminished, exuberant, but also finely calculated in its effect – to create in marble an ideal of absolute monarchy.



BERNINI (above)
The four rivers, detail, 1646-51
Bernini's picturesque allegory of the world's fresh water – the four rivers represent the four continents then known – is one of the landmarks of Rome, continuing the papal reorganization of the city round focal points. It complements the sculptural architecture of S. Agnese, by Francesco Borromini (1599-1667), behind.



BERNINI (left)
Costanza Buonarelli, c. 1635
In the 1630s Bernini produced a series of portrait busts which for vividness can be compared only with rapid sketches. The surface is in fact painstakingly cut to serve an unusually precise and clearly conceived expression.

Bernini: The Cornaro Chapel

The Cornaro Chapel, in S. Maria della Vittoria in Rome, is the fullest expression of the diverse talents of which Bernini's extraordinary genius was composed. Commissioned by the Venetian Cardinal Federigo Còrnaro, it occupied some (but incredibly by no means all) of the energies of Bernini and his collaborators in the seven years between 1645 and 1652.

Its assorted elements – sculpture in various materials, painting and architecture – consort in inseparable concert; though music may seem to be the one form of art lacking, a musical analogy comes to mind. It is akin to a great concerto, in which the soloist is not only the conductor but also the composer and the producer of the whole spectacle. In fact the only part carried out by Bernini's own hand is the central group, St Theresa in her ecstasy (it is perhaps the most celebrated individual achievement in all Baroque sculpture). The rest, with that genius for delegation that also was Bernini's, was carried out by a team of collaborators, stuccoists, marble-cutters and painters, working faithfully to the master's carefully conceived design.

The whole is best seen, and designed to be seen, as a picture or scene on the stage, from a fixed point directly in front of the chapel. It consists of St Theresa's vision, the climax and centre of the action, attended and discussed by members of the Cornaro family in the "boxes" at the sides. The focus of light on St Theresa – real light, from a concealed window above, shafted down simulated light-rays of bronze behind – kindles her being in the moment of supreme ecstasy, expressed physically with such conviction that it seems almost sexual. It is in fact an exact translation into marble of the saint's account of her "transverberation", the vision of a smiling angel piercing her heart with a golden spear. "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." The effect of the swooning figure, the head fallen back with eyes blinded under half-closed lids, lips half-open – a spiritual orgasm – is strengthened by the brilliant agitation of the drapery, equally infected by the intensity of her agonized rapture. The whole composition is held in breathtaking balance by the dizzy equipoise of the two figures of saint and angel, almost in a rocking movement.

The vivid conviction of the whole springs from Bernini's personal identification with the beliefs of Counter-Reformation Catholicism in its maturity, especially as propagated by the Jesuit orders. The devout – and Bernini himself – practised the daily repetition of the spiritual exercises of the founder of the Jesuits, St Ignatius of Loyola, which were intended to intensify awareness of all-pervading, omnipotent Divine Love. Many of these exercises required their practitioners to imagine, as precisely and as physically, even as painfully as they could, the sufferings and experience of Christ and the saints. Art such as Bernini's, representing the saints in mystical ecstasy as an example to which the faithful could aspire in their own prayer, was similarly concerned to reveal spirituality through external means.



BERNINI

The Cornaro Chapel, S. Maria della Vittoria, 1647-52

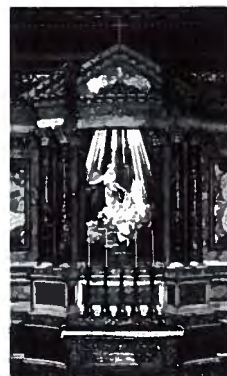
The diagram (left) shows the architectural frame in which the Cornaro family, in "boxes" at the sides, witness St Theresa's

ecstasy. She is placed at the centre over the altar, in a richly decorated open tabernacle – open both to the viewer in front and to the heavenly hosts above. St Theresa's ecstasy, her communion with an angel, is the Cornaros' vision,

brought to the viewer in the church by courtesy of the Cornaro family. Shown below (marked white in the diagram) are the painted and stuccoed vault, the two "boxes", the tabernacle and also the skeletons inlaid in the floor before the altar.



(above) The vault
The painting and stucco represent subject angels adoring the Holy Spirit. Thence the angel who strikes St Theresa has descended, blasting like a thunderbolt the pediment beneath which the saint swoons ecstatic (below).



(above and above far right) The Cornaro family Federigo, the patron, is shown discreetly at the far (right-hand) end of the west "box". The others, deceased at the time of the commission, talk or read about St Theresa. The illusionistic reliefs behind them open space to the side like a transept, as if their Chapel were a self-contained church.



(left) Skeletons Inlaid (intarsia) marble skeletons are placed left and right in the floor in front of the altar. A recurring feature, almost a signature, in Bernini's work, such skeletons perhaps symbolize both the ubiquity of death and its impotence (on the floor beneath the viewer's feet) against the power of faith (shown by the Cornaro).

The "supporting cast" for the *St Theresa* is composed of painting – the vault of the chapel's ceiling dissolved in a glory of cloud-borne heavenly hosts; of architecture, cunningly articulated to give the illusion of a larger space, to create a "stage" projecting, even bulging out, under the impact of the angel's arrival; of sculpture, in the watching figures and in the reliefs flanking the tabernacle; and of what are prosaically described as the "applied arts", here never more richly or ingeniously applied in variety of material and texture, providing chords of colour to sustain the lucent pallor of saint and angel – bronze, richly

veined marble and marble intarsia (the skeletons inlaid in the pavements – here, as elsewhere in Bernini's imagery, not content to lie still but dancing almost a jig).

Orchestrated in superb harmony, the diverse elements in the Cornaro Chapel combine to produce the supreme synthesis of Bernini's sculptural career – a work that was to be a wonder of the world for a century and a half. Then for austere Neoclassic dogma it became more than suspect, notorious as the most outrageous example of Baroque excess, only to be reassessed and triumphantly reinstated for twentieth-century eyes.



BERNINI

Vision of the ecstasy of St. Theresa, 1647-52

Bernini transmogrifies glittering white marble to express a purely psychological, indeed a mystical, experience. St Theresa's hanging foot and hand, her entirely fluid and boneless form, her ebbing drapery, convey her utter surrender to her transport. The little angel's melting smile and iron-tipped spear speak of its bittersweet agony.

The climax of the Cornaro Chapel's composition, St Theresa is the kernel of its message: through prayer and faith real experience of God in this life is possible.

Landscape Painting in Italy

Ideal landscape is sited in Italy, though its finest exponents, Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorraine (1600-82) were French. Its origins are to be found in those serene depictions of landscape by the great Venetian painters of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione and the young Titian. The essential stimulus, however, is surely Giorgione's, in works such as *The tempest* (see p. 140), in which the landscape has an importance equal to that of the enigmatic figures within it. The Venetian paintings in turn reflected an Arcadian mood first appearing in literature: it is already discernible in Boccaccio's fourteenth-century stories, but was widely popularized in the humanist Jacopo Sannazzaro's poem *Arcadia*, fully published in 1504; these sources echo classical precedents, particularly Virgil's *Eclogues*.

The Arcadian vision seems to have been especially fostered by the reaction of northern genius to the enchantment of Italy – an intoxication particularly with that lucid Italian light in which the world seems to take on a preordained clarity. This special quality of perennial, perfected calm already suffuses the topographical views of the Fleming Paul Bril

(1554-1626), who arrived in Rome about 1575 and stayed until his death. The Frankfurt-born Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610) was also irresistibly drawn to the magnet of Rome. He is a fascinating figure: his intense interest in light, due surely to some extent to contact with Caravaggio, was inherited in Holland by the pioneering landscapist Seghers and by Rembrandt, while in Italy his etchings and small paintings markedly influenced his fellow northerners. He produced landscapes of a brooding, spiritual quality unknown before. However, his most perfectly concentrated works are his night scenes; the revelation of a suffusing daylight in all its moods was the achievement of the Frenchmen Claude and Poussin.

Both these painters – but Poussin more than Claude – owed something also to the landscape paintings of their predecessors in Italy, such as Annibale Carracci and Domenichino. But neither of these had realized the poetic mood and elegiac feeling that the two French expatriates working in Rome were able to evoke. Landscapes are only a part of Poussin's magnificent achievement (see preceding page), but all his work is constructed on the same principles – an almost crystalline ordering of the

visible world. In Poussin's landscapes allusions to specific places are rare; instead, with their distant temples, cities and towers, they present an ideal classical past of pristine perfection, precisely contrived – the dominant horizontal elements in the countryside are almost always balanced by vertical buildings in strongly defined, almost abstract masses. While the landscapes are often majestically large in relation to the small human figures that people them, it is the humans who tell the story and infect nature with their mood. Poussin never painted pure landscapes – even *Summer*, in his late series *The Four Seasons*, which seems to be a straightforward rural scene, tells the biblical story of Boaz and Ruth. In *The burial of Phocion* the wonderful stately recession of space, through winding paths articulated by travellers and trees, past peaceful waters to the central tomb, the splendid temples, the serene hilltop town – this all seems the perfect setting for the Stoic fortitude and principle of the statesman Phocion, first condemned for treason, then posthumously honoured with a public statue by his fellow-citizens. Human virtue is matched by the solemn harmony of nature.



ELSHEIMER (above)
Rest on the Flight into Egypt, 1609
Elsheimer died young, mourned by Rubens and other artist friends.

He anticipated Claude in his sensitivity to the moods of nature, and in the accuracy with which he recorded light effects (on a miniature scale).



PAUL BRIL (above)
Landscape with hunting scene and the Baths of Titus, c. 1620?
Although he painted the Roman countryside as a rather harsh, Mannerist panorama, Bril conveyed the noble grandeur of ruins in a tranquil atmosphere. His genre figures may now seem no less ideal than nymphs, gods and heroes.

POUSSIN (right)
Summer, or Ruth and Boaz, 1660-64
Summer is given meaning by the story of Ruth and Boaz, symbolizing the marriage of Christ and the Church. The corn is threshed in the antique way with horses, whose grouping echoes a relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome, drawn by Poussin.



POUSSIN (above)
The burial of Phocion, 1648
This is one of Poussin's great Stoic landscapes. The statesman Phocion, who had earned dislike for his moral severity, was condemned to death on false charges and his corpse carried out by hirelings to ignominious burial. Poussin re-creates not simply a classical golden past, but a calm landscape of moral order, of glorious austerity. The overall setting is inspired by the hills of Rome; the details are based on reconstructions of ancient Roman ruins by the 16th-century architect Palladio.



CLAUDE (above)
Tree, c. 1650

The painter Sandrart relates that Claude often rose well before dawn to make an excursion into the countryside round Rome, where he sketched until nightfall, often in company with his friend Poussin.

CLAUDE (below)
Ulysses returning Chryseis to her father, 1644

The subject, an episode from Homer, has no narrative importance: it is a peg on which Claude hangs an idyllic classical reverie, a memory of the Bay of Naples transmuted.



CLAUDE (above)
Self-portrait, after 1644
This drawing is prefixed to Claude's *Liber Veritatis*, a unique private record of sketches of nearly all the paintings that left his studio. It was compiled perhaps in an attempt to establish his authorship, since he had imitators; it is typically modest.



SALVATOR ROSA (above)
Landscape with a bridge, c. 1640
Like many of his time, the wit Horace Walpole, in the Alps in 1739, saw Rosa as a Romantic: "Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings – Salvator Rosa!"

GASPARD DUGHET (below)
View near Albano, c. 1630-40
Dughet made many more romantic variations on his brother-in-law Poussin's mythological landscapes. Finest are his rustic scenes such as this, a parallel in Italy to Dutch landscape.



CLAUDE (right)

Egeria mourning over Numa, 1669
According to Ovid, Egeria, while wandering distraught through the countryside in mourning for her husband, Numa, disturbed the rites of the goddess Diana by Lake Nemi, near Rome; she subsequently turned into a spring. Out of this rather sinister tale, and the inspiration of Lake Nemi itself, Claude has created a haunting lyricism, a kind of classical dream-garden. In the landscape there are references to the estates of the Colonna family, for whom the work was made; later, Henry Hoare was to design the landscaping of Stourhead (see p. 255) on Claudean models – with just such a temple as the round one depicted here.



Art in Flanders

Even before the death of Bruegel in 1569, the Netherlands had been rent by vicious fighting which continued for nearly 50 years. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, the territory had been divided into the Dutch Republic (including Holland) in the north and the Spanish Netherlands (including Flanders) in the south, and the art of the now quieted communities reached new heights.

Seventeenth-century painting in Flanders and in Holland is remarkable not only for its quality but also for its quantity, especially considering the smallness of each area; each was essentially different in character. The art of the fiercely independent Protestant Dutch was supported mainly by a prosperous merchant class, and much concerned with secular subjects; the art of Flanders, which remained under the Catholic Hapsburgs, was oriented to the court (both in Flanders and in Spain) and the Church of the Counter-Reformation. Flemish art reached its zenith rather earlier than Dutch art, but was shorter-lived, and did not produce so various and copious a harvest in almost every branch of art. In Flanders a single exuberant genius, Peter Paul Rubens (see over), was the presiding eminence and main



VAN DYCK (above)
Marquessa Caterina, c. 1625
The shimmering, tender Baroque style van Dyck evolved in his Genoese portraits depended on the use of crusts and glazes of pigment, which he learned from the great Venetian painters. Stately, refined, faithfully characterized, his portraiture soon rivalled Rubens' in its influence.



RUBENS AND "VELVET" BRUEGHEL (left)
The Virgin and Child in a garland, c. 1620
Brueghel's garland frames Rubens' Virgin, evoking a symbolic enclosed garden. His highly finished flowers contrast with Rubens' more broadly painted figures.



SNYDERS (above)
The fruit-seller, before 1636
Snijders was one of the first to concentrate on still-life and animal painting. He developed a particular interest in the handling of light reflected on objects, infusing fruit with a tempting succulence. He favoured quite large, complicated arrangements.



PAUL DE VOS
The stag hunt, c. 1630-40
Like Snijders, his teacher and brother-in-law, Paul de Vos was a specialist in both still lifes and hunting scenes. In both artists there was a development towards

greater drama and Baroque movement: in this late work the hounds arrow in on the upward-straining stag in a forceful composition made up of colliding diagonals. Rubens admired de Vos: he had four paintings by him.

CORNELIS DE VOS (right)
The artist and his family, 1621
Meticulous, factual portraiture made Cornelis very popular with burghers of Antwerp. His style depends on that of Rubens, also borrowing from the palette of the young van Dyck, but he lacks the sensitivity of either Rubens or van Dyck; beside them he seems rather linear and dry. He painted altarpieces, too, and some Baroque historical pictures in the manner of Rubens.

driving force, and on his death the decline of Flemish painting was almost instantaneous.

To some degree the earlier Netherlandish passion for naturalism, and the astute observation found in Bruegel's work, persisted. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, its best-known exponents worked abroad, providing specialist skills in still life or landscape for decorative projects in Italy – for instance the Brill brothers in Rome (see p. 196). The production of small genre and still-life paintings continued throughout the period in Flanders, but with few exceptions they do not compare in quality with the great output of religious and courtly painting.

Rubens' studio, the power-house of Flemish painting, was established in Antwerp by about 1612. His huge practice employed not only younger pupils and assistants, but distinguished artists of his own generation working in collaboration. Jan I Brueghel (1568-1625), younger son of Pieter Bruegel and known as "Velvet" Brueghel, specialized in still life and in extensive landscapes peopled with small genre or mythological figures. Jan seems a somewhat improbable ally for Rubens, and his collaboration, mainly in bowering Rubens'



Madonnas with flowers, stemmed perhaps from close personal friendship rather than shared artistic feeling. Frans Snyders (1579-1657), having trained with Bruegel's elder son, Pieter the Younger, became closely linked with Rubens' studio after returning from Italy in 1609. A specialist in still life and animal and hunting scenes, he supplied these elements where needed in many of Rubens' compositions, and later in Jordaens'. The energy of Rubens' painting opened up Snyders' style and his scale; even his still lifes can be infused with violent movement, and are sometimes invaded by predatory animals which seem to have escaped from his vigorous and frequently ferocious hunting scenes. Closely linked to Snyders was his brother-in-law Paul de Vos (1596-1678), also an animal painter; Paul's brother Cornelis de Vos (1584-1651) was mainly occupied with relatively staid burgher portraits, but also worked for Rubens at times.

Rubens' studio was not so much a teaching academy as a production team, and his two most celebrated associates, Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678) and Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), though of a younger generation, were not really pupils. Jordaens, who never visited

Italy, was an Antwerp man and stayed there all his life, working with Rubens from about 1618 until the master's death, mainly as a figure painter. From his Mannerist beginnings he grew into a robust, Rubensian style and by about 1635 was developing it very much in his own way. Although on Rubens' death he took over the great artist's last commission, the extensive decorations of Philip IV's hunting lodge near Madrid, it was about then that he turned to Calvinism, and the most interesting works of his later career are his genre scenes.

Van Dyck, a precocious genius, was with Rubens little more than two years (about 1618-20), although the older master's style affected his own indelibly. By his twenty-first year he was already ripe for independence; a first foray into England in 1620-21 was followed by an extensive sojourn in Italy, mainly in Genoa but with trips through the rest of the country to study and copy the Venetian masters – Tintoretto, Veronese, above all his abiding inspiration, Titian. His livelihood derived in great part from portraiture, and in his series of court portraits of the Genoese aristocracy he established a style of characterization that was to persist all over Europe for more than two

centuries: in his visions of tall and aloof, yet relaxed, elegance, he showed the most subtle ability to marry a precise physical likeness into compositions of fluent and elaborate Baroque splendour. His genius was, so to speak, the feminine aspect of Rubens': although, particularly in his early work, he could be so close to Rubens as to be confused with him, his more delicate sensibility soon became apparent – the moon to Rubens' sun. There was not room for both of them in Flanders, and after a brief second Flemish period (1628-32), he took up Charles I's invitation to come to London (see p. 206), and remained based there until his premature death in 1641. He was certainly then investigating the possibilities of a return to Europe in the place of Rubens, who had died the year before.

Two outstanding painters who were not directly connected with Rubens were Adriaen Brouwer, who worked for much of his brief career in Haarlem (see p. 226), and David Teniers the Younger, whose genre paintings, for which he is best known, were much influenced by Brouwer. Teniers, however, was also court painter to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, the Spanish Viceroy in Brussels.



JORDAENS (above)
The riding academy, c. 1635
Jordaens' oil-sketch of a rider with Mercury and Mars was one design for a

series of tapestries. In scale and in allegorical content it was a typical courtly commission, like Rubens' Médicis cycle (see over).



JORDAENS
The king drinks, c. 1645
The "king" was a figure of Flemish folklore, associated with the Epiphany and its feasting. Such an earthy subject was quite foreign to

Rubens, although the rich fleshiness and even some of the facial types derive from him. Jordaens' bloated merriment seems a sort of genre pastiche of Rubens' voluptuous Bacchanalia.



TENIERS (left)
The country fair, c. 1650
Teniers' best and most characteristic genre works are outdoor scenes filled with tiny figures carousing in a *kermis*, or festival. He produced at least a dozen variations on this scene, and many more like it.

TENIERS (below)
The picture gallery of the Archduke Leopold, c. 1650
The taste of the Archduke (seen in black) for Venetian painting is evident. Such crowded hanging was the norm until the 20th century.



Peter Paul Rubens



RUBENS (above)
Self-portrait, c. 1639
Rubens was international in scope as no artist had been before him. He wrote: "I regard all the world as my country, and I believe I should be welcome everywhere". A correspondent

of scholars and confident of crowned heads, he used his status to propagate the values of humanism, peace and Italianate civilization. A sensual appetite for life was moderated by sincere religious feeling in the spirit of the Jesuit revival.



RUBENS (above)
The Duke of Lerma, 1603
Rubens swivelled Titian's profile equestrian portrait of Charles V (see p. 143) through 90° so that Lerma seems to break through the picture surface towards the onlooker. The composition is determined by diagonals receding into depth and by rhythmic curves. The horse is a superb animal: the English and the Dutch depicted horses, but never such splendid creatures as Rubens' or van Dyck's.

RUBENS (right)
Self-portrait with Isabella Brandt, c. 1609
Rubens' marriage portrait is just the sort of picture any gentleman in Antwerp might have commissioned – highly finished, proper and discreet. He and Isabella sit in a honeysuckle bower, a symbol of their conjugal bliss. The tenderness of the portrait is restrained by a poised elegance that is a world away from the young Rembrandt's *Self-portrait with Saskia* (see p. 218).

As Bernini is the supreme representative of Baroque in Italy, so Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) is the commanding figure of Baroque in the north – indeed his influence was further-reaching and more enduring than Bernini's. Trained by Flemish Mannerists who are now virtually forgotten, Rubens, more than most artists of the past, developed his style by assiduous copying: he set out for Italy in 1600, and by the time of his return to Flanders in 1608 had absorbed, with remarkable industry, both the heritage of the Antique and of the Renaissance and the art of his contemporaries, Caravaggio and the Carracci. Co-ordinating northern and southern tradition, he emerged in the first decade of the century with a new vision, dazzling to patrons and artists alike.

The fame and prestige Rubens acquired in his own lifetime was the equal of Titian's: he was an artist prince, the peer of monarchs in style, culture and deportment. His collection of art rivalled that of the great patrons of the time. He was both painter and supremely efficient impresario; both polished courtier and ambassador of peace between warring states. The energy and exuberance of his art resounded through the age and beyond it.

Rubens' crucial formative period began in his twenty-third year, when he arrived in Italy. He became painter to the Duke of Mantua, at whose court he put the finishing touches to his artistic education and courtiership (he had already served as a page when an adolescent in Antwerp). He visited Spain for the first time in 1603, and succeeded in fascinating the Duke of Lerma, later to be Philip IV's Chancellor. His equestrian portrait of Lerma, in which much of his mature style is already clear, was inspired by Titian's portrait, still in Spain, of *Charles V at Mühlberg* (see p. 143). With Baroque illusionism, Lerma advances, life-size and magnificent, out of the picture. Returning to Italy, Rubens continued to study – especially Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto – with detailed and critical care, building up a reference library of hundreds of copies.

Back in Antwerp, he was appointed court painter to the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella in 1609, and in the same year married Isabella Brandt. Confidently launched on a tide of enduring prosperity, Rubens built himself a spectacular house and garden (still to be seen in Antwerp) in the Italian style: he pined for Italy and was already preparing *The*



RUBENS (above)
The horrors of war, 1638
Rubens himself explained his allegory, painted for the Duke of Tuscany: "That lugubrious matron clad in black (on the left) ... is unhappy Europe, afflicted for so many years by rapine, outrage and misery". In vain Venus tries to restrain Mars; in his train come Pestilence and Famine. Rubens' dynamic style can carry off so large a theme.



RUBENS (right)
Hélène Fourment in a fur wrap, c. 1638
Of all Rubens' portraits of his youthful second wife, this is the most intimate – playful, sensuous, erotic – that classic gesture of modesty, the arm across the breasts, becomes here a gesture of exposure.



Palaces of Genoa, published in 1622, as propaganda to displace the continuing Gothic style of architecture in the north. Even before the Archduke died in 1621, the Infanta came increasingly to rely on Rubens, as confidant and as adviser in her political difficulties.

After about 1615, Rubens' early vigorous but somewhat dark-toned style gave way to a clearer palette, and he achieved in such works as *The rape of the daughters of Leucippus* that radiance and abundance of colour that is the essence and delight of his painting. Numerous large and important commissions – notably *The descent from the Cross* (see over) and a series of 39 ceiling paintings (destroyed by fire in 1718) for the church of St Charles Borromeo – culminated in his best-known surviving series, *The life of Marie de Médicis*, for the Luxembourg Palace in Paris. On his journey to France he was already representing the Infanta Isabella; after a second visit to Spain in 1628, he visited England primarily as an ambassador charged to negotiate peace, but he also agreed to paint a series of canvases for the ceiling of the King's new Banqueting House.

The scale of his commissions, matching the scale of the Baroque palaces and churches for

which they were destined, precluded the possibility that Rubens could carry them out single-handed. He had begun to organize his studio almost as soon as he had returned from Italy. He put together a team of collaborators – many of them already or later to be considerable painters in their own right – and determined his prices by the amount of his own work present in the finished object. Although he usually “pulled together” his assistants' work in the final stages, nowadays his preliminary drawings and oil-sketches sometimes seem more compelling than the finished works, which are highly contrived, though often freely and dashing painted. In Rubens' day it was the other way round, however: the conventions of the courts and the ceremonial of the Counter-Reformation Church demanded pomp and circumstance, and a “suspension of disbelief” that people will usually only accord now to performances of Grand Opera. The speed and sureness with which he transcribed his first, free thoughts on to paper is amazing, and the small-scale oil-studies on panel, often virtually monochrome, in which he decided the balance of tones and established the dominant rhythms and accents of the final

composition, have unprecedented vigour.

Rubens had been temporarily shattered by the death of Isabella Brandt in 1626, and the failure of his negotiations in England disillusioned him with statecraft. On his return to Antwerp he made repeated attempts to retire, so as to paint to please himself and to enjoy life with his second wife, Hélène Fourment. He painted Hélène frequently – in mythological or religious roles, or in frankly sensuous portraits (she was 16 when he married her in 1630, and he was 53). On his country estate, the Château de Steen, he painted boldly colouristic landscapes, glimpses of a wonderfully rich and varied nature, sometimes combined with visions of disporting nudes. Though he was wealthy enough not to need to sell another picture, he could never escape the embroilments of the Spanish court, and when he died in 1640 he was engaged on a series requiring 112 paintings for Philip IV's hunting lodge.

Rubens successfully disseminated his art by means of engravings, doing his best to control both their quality and his copyright. His heritage remained vital for two centuries to come, influencing artists as diverse as Watteau, Gainsborough, Delacroix and Renoir.



RUBENS (left)
The rape of the daughters of Leucippus, c. 1618
The abduction by Castor and Pollux of Hilaria and her sister Phoebe calls out Rubens' full armoury: hard tawny muscles of men on opulent white female flesh; rearing horses; a gleaming cuirass. It is also a superb composition of interlocking curves, unfolding gestures.



RUBENS (left)
The Luxembourg Palace cycle: *Marie de Médicis lands at Marseilles*, 1622-25
The 24 paintings of the cycle describe the life of Marie, wife of Henri IV of France, in epic terms. By investing the prosaic events of Maria's career with dramatic splendour Rubens made his reputation as Europe's foremost court painter. Though he painted on groundwork provided by his assistants, Rubens' own bravura and spontaneity are unflaggingly displayed – a sign, among other things, of the efficiency with which he organized his studio. Fame sounds a clarion call as the Queen, arriving from Florence, is welcomed by the allegorical figure of France. Below, voluptuous naiads and hearty sea-gods rise up to celebrate it.



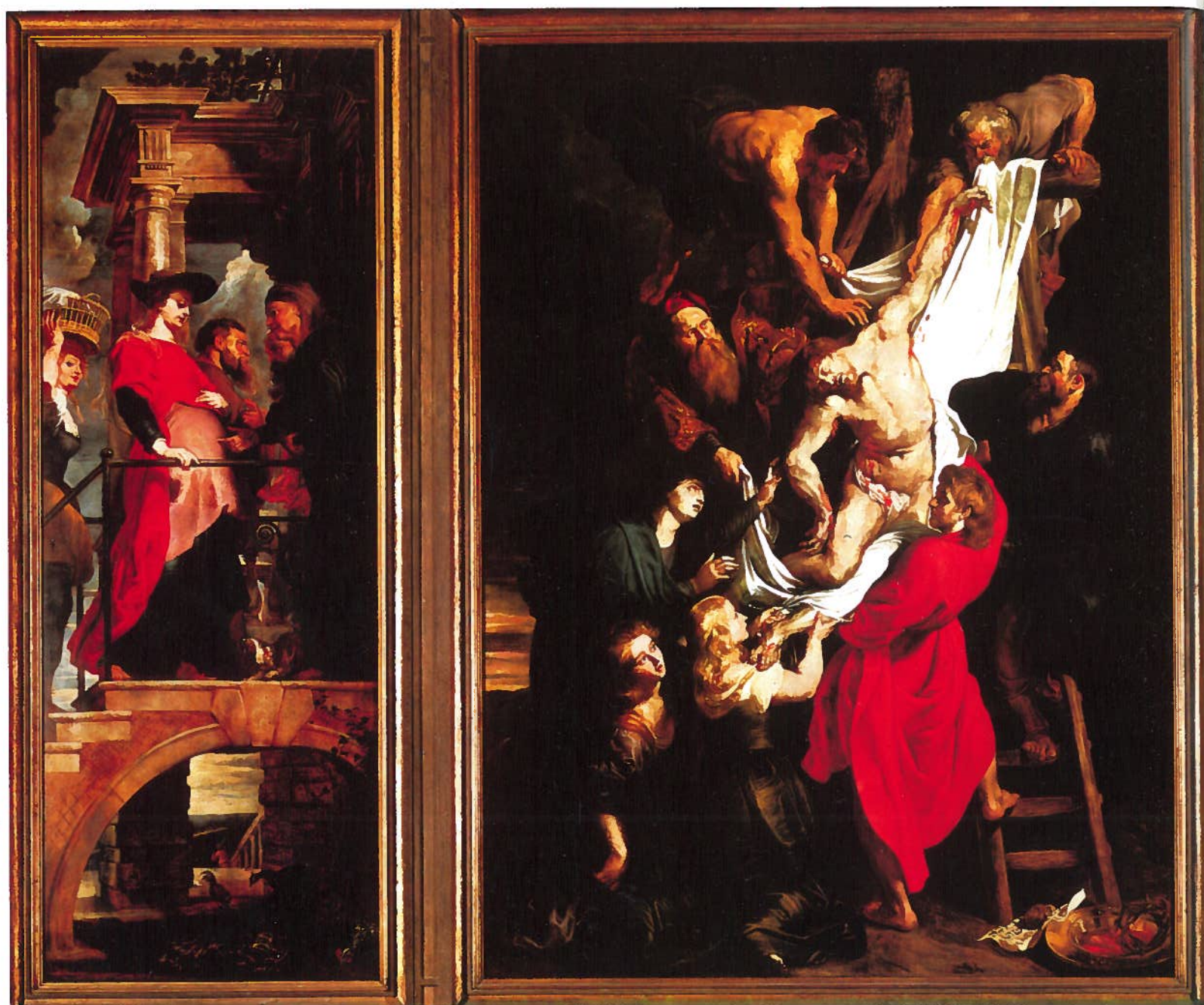
RUBENS (above)
The ceiling of the Banqueting House in London: *The apotheosis of James I*, 1629-34

The nine canvases of the ceiling uphold the divine right of monarchy in a scheme adapted from ceiling frescos in Italian churches.

RUBENS (below)
The Château de Steen, c. 1636
Rubens' own mansion, the small castle surrounded by farms and orchards, is on the left, and it has been hazarded that the hunter in the foreground is a self-portrait. Rubens' lyrical landscapes lead the eye to and fro over a nature almost in movement. The lighting, and the sultry impasto of the sky, anticipate Turner.



Rubens: The Descent from the Cross



In the early phases of Rubens' career, after his return from Italy in 1608, two masterpieces are supreme. Both are large altarpieces, both now hanging in Antwerp Cathedral, but they were not painted as a pair. The first, *The raising of the Cross*, painted in 1610-11, was commissioned for the church of St Walburga in Antwerp, now demolished; the second, *The Descent from the Cross*, completed in 1614, was always intended for Antwerp Cathedral. Although Rubens had been appointed (in 1609) court painter to the Viceroy of the Netherlands, these commissions came not from that quarter, but from the merchant classes.

The Descent established Rubens then and there as the greatest painter in northern Europe but, though it was less well received, the muscular and emotional turmoil of *The raising* is closer to the subsequent trend of Rubens' work. In its original form, *The raising* had an old-fashioned, complex framework involving not only closing wings but predella

panels below, and God the Father with angels above. The central triptych, to which it was reduced in the eighteenth century, was far from old-fashioned. It was emphatically Baroque, and violent in action, treatment and expression – in the straining muscles of the men heaving up the Cross, in the deep, thrusting diagonals of the composition, in the anguish of the crucified figure. The two wings extend the action and the emotion: on the left, the Virgin and St John look on in a group of horrified women and children; on the right, a mounted Roman officer controls the preparations for the two thieves' execution. On the outer panels were four saints connected with the original church.

In contrast, *The Descent* appears calm and classical. Now the agony is past; the mood is of the most profound sorrow, almost elegiac in the superbly controlled decline of the dead Christ's body down the diagonal white fall of the winding-sheet, caressed by the eloquent

hands that guide it. The design is unforgettable, reused by Rembrandt and many others.

The subjects of the two wings are complementary in theme to the central panel, but do not extend the action as do those of *The raising*. *The Visitation* and *The Presentation in the Temple* on the inner surface of the wings, and a colossal *St Christopher* and a *Hermit* carrying a lantern, the light of the world, on the outer panels, are all linked by the Greek meaning of Christopher, "Christ-bearing", the patron saint of the commissioning guild.

The Descent from the Cross was a not uncommon subject both in northern and Italian painting, though Rubens' interpretation is influenced most clearly by the Italians – works by Caravaggio and the sixteenth-century painters Daniele da Volterra and Il Cigoli all provided ideas for Rubens' composition. Many of the working stages towards *The Descent from the Cross* survive, and illustrate Rubens' methods clearly – first drawings di-

RUBENS: (left) *The Descent from the Cross*, 1611–14RUBENS (above)
The raising of the Cross,
1610–11

The realism of the action, the lighting and the solidity of the bodies show the influence of Caravaggio, but Rubens has introduced passion and bravura, and exaggerated everything – the paint itself seems now to shimmer and vibrate.

DANIELE DA VOLTERRA
(right) *The Descent from the Cross*, begun 1541

The scale and spectacle of Daniele's painting had early showed the trend of Counter-Reformation taste. Rubens preserved the strong diagonals, but reworked the composition to achieve greater unity and dramatic coherence.

RUBENS (above)
Drawing of the *Laocoön*,
c. 1606

Rubens' sketches of the works of art he had seen in Italy were an abiding inspiration – he used them rather as Rembrandt used his hundreds of drawings from the life. Rubens was a superb draughtsman, and often infused his drawings with greater vividness than the original (p. 46) had.

RUBENS (right)
Copy after Caravaggio's
The Entombment, c. 1605,
reworked c. 1613

When he reworked the copy of Caravaggio he had made in Italy, Rubens probably had in mind the design of his own *Descent*. He has heightened the luminosity of Christ's white body, and introduced more sorrowful feeling into Caravaggio's rather aggressive realism.



rected towards a resolution of the composition; then an oil-study, sometimes very fully worked out, as is that for *The Descent* (this was probably submitted to the client for preliminary approval); then a reference back to detailed chalk studies from the life; and finally the execution of the full-scale painting itself. The imagery is rich in references not only to Italian masters but also to classical motifs – St Christopher clearly echoes “*The Farnese Hercules*” (see p. 41) with his club, while the pose of the dead Christ reflects closely (in reverse) that of the late Hellenistic statue of *Laocoön*.

When Rubens' pictures were finished, the studio often produced replicas, and through engravings the design was broadcast to a far wider audience. From an engraving of *The Descent*, Gainsborough – to take an example – made a free copy in oils, and then, fascinated by its formal rhythms, transposed it into the merry bucolic group on the cart in *The harvest wagon* (not shown), one of his best landscapes.

Rembrandt van Rijn



REMBRANDT (above)
*Self-portrait in studio
attire, c. 1650-60*
More than 50 pupils once
in Rembrandt's studio have

been identified by name; and
they disseminated his style.
His art was highly personal,
but Rembrandt apparently
needed constantly to teach.



REMBRANDT (left)
Balaam, 1626
Balaam's ass halted at the
sight of an angel Balaam
could not see. Rembrandt's
composition exaggerates
an earlier one by Lastman.
The richly cloaked Balaam
typifies Rembrandt's love
of ostentatious paintwork.

REMBRANDT (right)
The blinding of Samson, 1636
This is perhaps the most
"Baroque" picture Rem-
brandt ever painted, prob-
ably emulating the searing
drama of the Rubensian
style favoured at courts.
The horror is extreme,
and so is the use of all the
illusionistic, dramatic and
violent devices dear to
Baroque art. It may have
been painted as a gift for
Constantijn Huyghens: he
greatly admired Rubens.



Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606-69) is almost a separate dimension in Dutch art. His influence was felt in nearly every branch of it, and has recurred inexhaustibly in the history of art ever since. Though the broad outlines of his life are known, there are few informative details: Rembrandt himself, however, charted the moods of his career with extraordinary frankness in an unprecedented series of more than 100 *Self-portraits* (see over).

Rembrandt's early work in Leyden reflects his first master, the Amsterdam painter Pieter Lastman (see p. 213). Through him he learnt the general principles of Italian Baroque painting, especially of Caravaggio, and also of Elsheimer, which had been filtered back to Holland by the Utrecht painters. It was perhaps also Lastman who inspired the young artist to aim for the highest values in painting, attainable, according to the opinion of that time, only in "history" painting (that is, in epic, mythological or religious works). Although Rembrandt in particular was to demonstrate that these values could be revealed in any branch of art, his obsession with moral themes endured throughout his career.

His early work is dramatic, with stressed

diagonals, sharp recessions, contrasts of light and shade (these are sometimes very fierce) and also hard, clear contours. His heroic characters, however, dressed in contemporary costume, sometimes as peasants, are even less idealized than Caravaggio's – even today some of his early pictures seem provocatively vulgar. For Rembrandt the Bible was a story of then, now and for ever: he was profoundly religious (in later life he became an adherent of a radical Protestant sect, the Mennonites) and his religion was profoundly rooted in real life. Rembrandt's insistence on truth – in nudes, genre, biblical scenes (often indistinguishable from genre scenes) and portraits – persisted throughout his life; his power to marry naturalism into majestic compositions of subtle design and sometimes transcendental power developed continuously. His naturalism was offset – maybe even deliberately counterpointed – by a delight in clothing groups or single figures in picturesque or romantic costume, or portraying them in dual roles, so that an epic subject, a saint or an historical figure, is also clearly a literal portrait.

By the 1630s, having moved to Amsterdam, the principal city of Holland, in 1631-32, Rem-



REMBRANDT (left)
*The anatomy lesson of
Dr Tulp, 1632*
Hals' group portraits are
clearly Baroque in an inter-
national sense, but *The
anatomy lesson* is really not:
it lacks a smoothly flowing
or united composition: each
figure is sharply individual
and there is latent tension
rather than overt violence.
In the company's fascinated
intentness on the corpse
there is a palpable unease,
almost an awareness of
their own mortality. This
is the first painting which
Rembrandt signed with his
full name, in keeping with
its importance. Already the
disposition of light and
shade is masterly, and is a
vital element of the drama.
Yet the face of every man
is also a precise portrait.



REMBRANDT (above)
*The Descent from the
Cross, 1633*
The large costumed figure
stresses the contemplative

mood Rembrandt sought.
He wrote that he wanted
his series to express "the
greatest and most natural
emotion" – not movement.



REMBRANDT (above)
*The return of the
Prodigal Son, 1636*
The etched line is febrile
with the reunion's emotion.

brandt had refined the construction of his compositions, and especially his handling of the half-tones between the extremes of light and dark, and was now fully competent to organize paintings of a monumental scale. The first of his great group portraits, *The anatomy lesson of Dr Tulp*, 1632, no doubt established his reputation in Amsterdam, investing what might have been a formal group with high drama. The drama is higher still in his *Blinding of Samson*. The scope of his patronage was expanding, and, through the leading connoisseur Constantijn Huyghens, Rembrandt obtained a commission from the Stadtholder, the ruler of federal Holland, for five large *Passion* scenes. The *Passion* scenes are more characteristic of the mature Rembrandt: the mood is both dramatic and yet sombrely reflective – his *Descent from the Cross* shows an awareness of Rubens' composition in Antwerp (see p. 204) but is entirely Rembrandt's own in feeling. Christ is no elegant, ideal figure, but a broken wreck of human flesh.

Rembrandt's most famous work, "*The Night Watch*", is also his largest – 3.5 × 4.5 metres (12 × 15 ft): finished in 1642, it marks both a climax and a turning point. Rembrandt

transposed the traditional Dutch Civic Guard group into a "history" composition of stupendous drama, colour, tonal contrast and movement. Characteristically Rembrandt's is the inexplicable element, the incandescent figure of the little girl. The year 1642, however, marked the beginning of the decline of Rembrandt's financial and fashionable fortunes, and perhaps too of his personal confidence and happiness (his wife Saskia died in this year). The mood in his painting becomes ever more sombre, more searching; the paint itself both richer and more troubled; the psychological intensity of his images more impressive and haunting. The 1640s and 1650s were his most productive period for etchings – some, such as the famous Hundred-Guilder Print, as rich and complex as his major paintings – and for drawn, painted and etched landscapes (see p. 220); during the same period he made hundreds of direct and forceful drawings (usually in a thick reed-pen), tautly structured yet almost throbbing with life.

In his last two decades Rembrandt tended to simplify his compositions, rejecting his earlier highly-strung Baroque for a more classical, more stable and enduring structure. His use of

paint and handling of light became ever richer and subtler. This light, charged with an intense spirituality, seems to come from within rather than from an external source. His portraits and self-portraits transcend the individual they so vividly and faithfully depict and become "intimations of the universal destiny of mankind". One of his greatest and most mysterious works, the picture known as "*The Jewish Bride*", is conventional enough in theme – it is perhaps simply a wedding portrait of two ordinary people – but it celebrates marriage as a sacrament, a dedication in mutual love at once human and divine; formally it echoes traditional depictions of the biblical Jacob and Rachel.

Rembrandt taught pupils all through his working life, and many of them, while with him, responded to Rembrandt's vision with work of remarkable quality. Some, such as Ferdinand Bol, remained in some degree loyal to that vision throughout their careers, and Aert de Gelder, almost his last pupil, continued painting works of distinction in his style into the eighteenth century. His most able pupil was Carel Fabritius, the vital link between Rembrandt and Vermeer (see p. 228).



REMBRANDT (left)
Nude on a mound, 1631
In this early etching the contrasts of light and shade are heavy but the mature Rembrandt's transfiguring light is absent. The nude is a true "Venus with garter-marks": his art was always realistic, but later not so rebelliously unidealistic.

REMBRANDT (right)
"The Night Watch" (The Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch), 1642
A pupil wrote in 1678: "It is so painter-like in thought, so dashing in movement, and so powerful" that the pictures hanging beside it seem "like playing cards".



REMBRANDT (above)
The Hundred-Guilder Print: Christ healing the sick, c. 1648-50
The etching, known by the very large price it fetched,

is most carefully worked. Rembrandt made use both of drawings from life and of Renaissance sources – notably engravings after Leonardo's *Last Supper*.

REMBRANDT (right)
"The Jewish Bride", c. 1665
The silence seems to echo; the light seems spiritual, emanating from the figures.



Rembrandt: The Self-Portrait at Kenwood

The main course of Rembrandt's life is fairly clear – his birth in Leyden in 1606; his early success (with pupils even in his twenty-first year) in his home town; in the 1630s, fashionable prosperity in Amsterdam; then the decline in popularity, the death of his wife Saskia in 1642; financial mismanagement, culminating in bankruptcy and the enforced sale of his superb art collection in 1656/57; the deaths of his common-law wife Hendrickje Stoffels in 1663 and of his only son Titus in 1668; his own death in 1669.

The recorded facts reveal little about one of the greatest artists in history, rivalled in scope of imagination and universal appeal perhaps only by Shakespeare. But the skeleton provided by the documents is endowed with both flesh and spirit by the sequence of *Self-portraits* – more than 100 drawings, etchings or paintings, ranging from his beginnings as an artist to the last year of his life. They constitute the most remarkable autobiography ever painted, and culminate in the searching self-interrogations of Rembrandt's last decade: amongst these the three-quarter-length portrait at Kenwood, London, is one of the most impressive and haunting.

In almost all the late *Self-portraits*, the demand that the spectator identify with the artist is irresistible: he looks at himself, searching; you look at him; he looks at you. In some of these portraits, Rembrandt is very much the Protestant, holding his human identity clear of the dark as if by sheer will-power – alone with himself, uncertain perhaps if man is made in the image of God but determined to find out. The search for identity is there even in the earliest portraits, though these are often clearly studies, exercises in capturing momentary expression. The Dresden double portrait with Saskia, of his brash middle years in Amsterdam, is also a brash image, Rembrandt exultant at his fortune and rather vulgarly unconcerned with the dignity of his station (compare Rubens' similar portrait, p. 202). The element of role-playing, as in the London National Gallery portrait, where he is posed and clad like a Titian portrait then believed to represent the prince of poets, Ariosto, persists almost to the end. But in one of the last of all (also in the London National Gallery) Rembrandt, hands folded, quietly resigned on the threshold of death – but in his paint still vital with life – records simply himself.



REMBRANDT (above)
Self-portrait drawing by a window, 1648
The pose and setting recall the many paintings and etchings Rembrandt made of scholars or of saints seated in a room by a window: in comparison and contrast the artist appears as an earnest, prosaic burgher – his hat completes the image.



REMBRANDT (left)
Self-portrait in Munich, detail, c. 1629
Like Caravaggio (see p. 180) Rembrandt wants to catch a momentary start in paint, and exploits sharp contrasts of light and shade to do so – but also introduces mystery.



REMBRANDT (right)
Self-portrait in Berlin, detail, 1634
The somewhat mysterious drama of the portrait (left) is retained; there is now more of a swagger: the boisterous youth yields to a romantic, but hardly less truculent, young man.



REMBRANDT
Self-portrait with Saskia, c. 1635
Of the bold self-conscious bravura there is no doubt; but beyond that the inter-

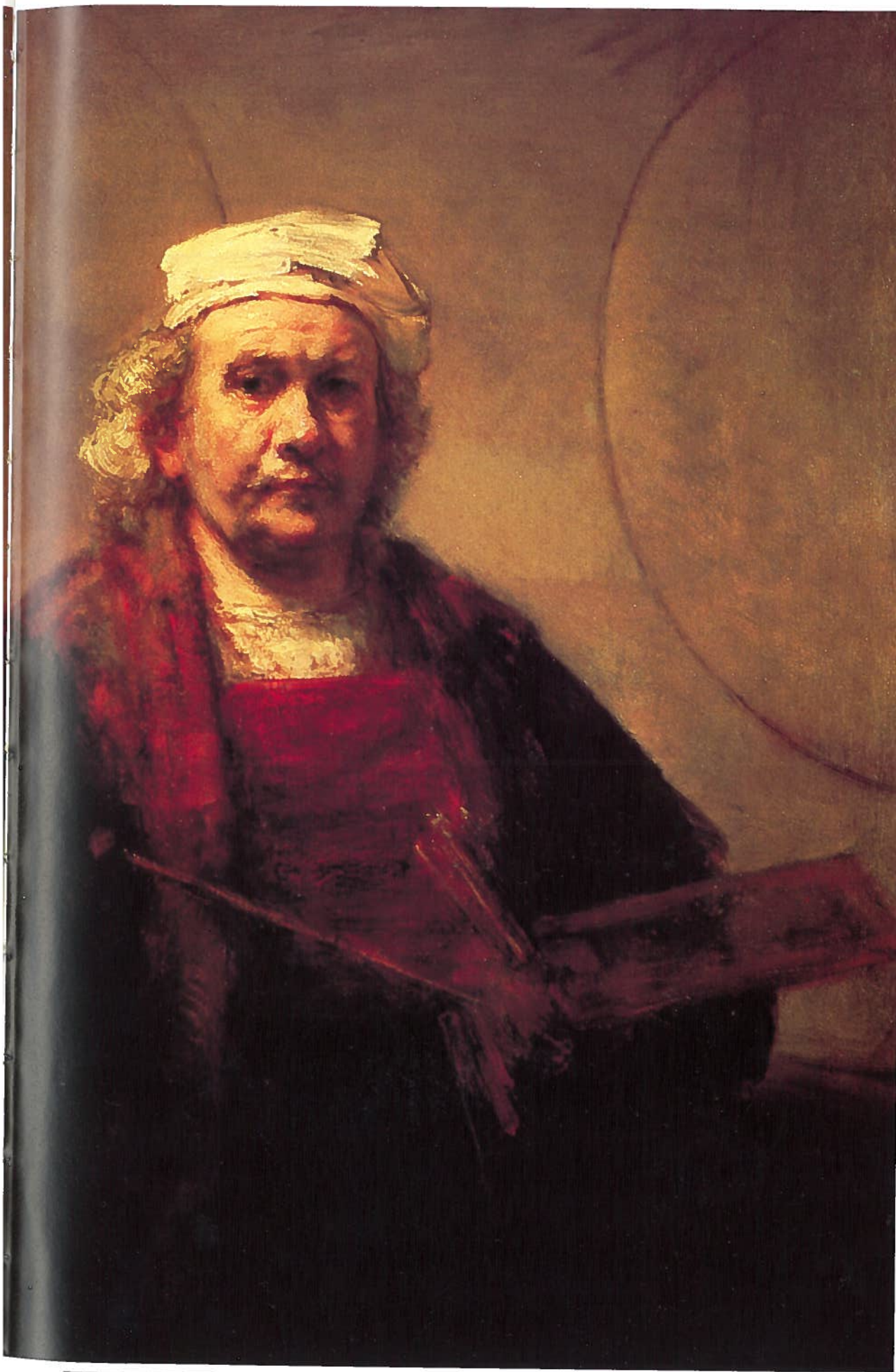
pretations vary: is there some unease? What does Saskia think of it all? The still life and raised glass recall genre tavern scenes, with a moral undertone.



REMBRANDT
Self-portrait after Titian's 'Ariosto', 1640
Both Titian's "Ariosto" and Raphael's *Castiglione* (see p. 337) had passed

through the Amsterdam sale-rooms in 1639. The more mature Rembrandt's interest in Renaissance art was increasing, and was to be reflected in his painting.

REMBRANDT (right)
Self-portrait at Kenwood, London, c. 1665
Against the predominant dark brown to red of the whole, the focus is on the lighter key of the face, the grey hair, the cap almost slashed on to the canvas. The face is old, seen without vanity or flattery. No one knows the meaning of the semicircles incised on the background: if they hint at a possible ideal order, the ruggedness of the face contradicts them sharply. There is paradox again in the rich fur of the robe and the workaday context. Tools of the trade are perfectly legible from a distance, but closely inspected become ambiguous. Seen closer still, they are like pure paint energized, and the hand holding them is just a brusque zigzag of paint dragged down, diminishing as the brush unloads. Rembrandt had no truck with the kind of art that conceals the art: he left his workings bare and one of his few remarks on record is a warning to connoisseurs not to expect high finish: "Don't poke your nose into the painting or the smell will kill you."



REMBRANDT
Self-portrait in Vienna,
detail, 1652

The later self-portraits are mostly frontal – the painter face to face with himself. Rembrandt by this time was painting probably more for himself than for clients or on commission.



REMBRANDT
Self-portrait in Cologne,
detail, c. 1669

The image is undeniably grotesque – Rembrandt as a genre old man. However, he peers from the shadows with a bruised grin: the vigour and freedom of the impasto asserts life.



REMBRANDT
Self-portrait in London,
detail, 1669

The lonely suffering of Rembrandt's last years (with Hendrickje dead, his son Titus dead, aged 27) is never more than hinted at even in his latest *Self-portraits*. Their dignity is powerful, utterly honest.

Dutch Landscape I

"Landscape" was originally a Dutch word, established in the late sixteenth century. By then, the particular talents of Netherlandish, and especially Flemish, artists in the painting of earth and sky, woods and water were widely recognized, though the northern bent for landscape was much older than that: it had already been apparent in the miniature illuminations of the Limbourg brothers at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and in the sixteenth century in the panoramic settings of Bruegel's works. Until the seventeenth century, however, landscape had generally remained a setting or a stage for religious or mythological events; it was particularly the Dutch who found in the landscape itself a sufficient story-line, even a heroic quality.

The emergence of landscape painting in Holland was part of the general Protestant withdrawal from religious art: a changed clientèle demanded from artists a different subject matter and new aesthetic values. Pictures of the land, the fatherland for which they had fought, naturally appealed to a people that had just achieved its independence, and the countryside was an integral part of the daily life they loved to record in all its aspects,

capturing its reflection indoors, stabilizing its impermanence, in small easel-paintings.

Within the highly talented output of the early Dutch landscape artists, two main moods can be distinguished. One was more naturalistic – in extreme form, topography, mapping exactly the features of a given place at a given time; the other was an ideal vision. Even the most naturalistic landscapes, however, were all painted indoors, though built up on the basis of drawings sketched on the spot. Dutch ideal landscape, generally called Italianate, is suffused with nostalgia for a golden Mediterranean light and a climate in which a gentler way of life might flourish; it is parallel in form to, and partly dependent on, the work of Annibale Carracci, Domenichino and Claude

(see p. 196), though usually less dreamy and artificial, peopled with more homely figures.

The discovery of the local landscape was sparked off by a Flemish influx – refugees from the fighting that ended in the capitulation of Antwerp to the Spanish in 1585. It took shape – like many other forms of Dutch painting – in Haarlem, where in 1585 settled Gillis van Coninxloo (1544-1607). His work in Antwerp (and elsewhere) had been fully Mannerist, showing a relish for landscape but using it as a stage-set for his figures. He followed his predecessors in adopting a high viewpoint, sometimes even approaching a bird's-eye view, with much more land than sky. In his later work, the figures became less important, and were almost lost in the fantastic wooded scenes that he

CONINXLOO (below)
The forest, c. 1600
Coninxloo's pictures were popular as "poetic visions of the primeval wilderness". His figures are costumed, as if acting in a play; the landscape, too, is fanciful, but trees and shrubs are observed naturalistically, and there is a deliberate play of light and shade.

SEGHERS (right)
Landscape, c. 1630
Unlike artists such as Coninxloo, Seghers built up his landscapes in tonal masses. These tonal masses are the whole composition: in a sense, the landscape is neither real nor imaginary; it represents only a mood. His etchings have similar effects of light and dark.



AVERCAMP (right)
Winter landscape, c. 1610
The high horizon is a sure mark of the picture's early date. The figures are disposed at careful intervals so as to lead the eye from detail to detail and back into space. Though the picture is thus artificially composed, the whites of ice and sky are convincingly wintry.



SAVERY (above)
Orpheus charming the animals, c. 1625
Savery's picture is more obviously Mannerist than Coninxloo's, though later. The trees, however, and the exotic animals are observed with even closer naturalism.

ESAIAS VAN DE VELDE (right)
The ferry-boat, 1622
Some of Esaias' landscapes are so full of figures and action that they could as well be called genre. Note that the tones lighten in the distance, as they do not in Avercamp's picture.



loved, though he kept to established conventions. His views were framed between two strong elements in the foreground (*repoussoirs*) and his colours proceeded in a standard formula from warmish browns in the foreground through shades of green into a bluish distance.

Coninxloo's followers included the Flemish-born Roelandt Savery (c.1576-1639) and David Vinckboons. The indigenous Dutch tradition, however, can be said to start with Hendrick Avercamp (1585-1634), probably a pupil of Coninxloo. Though still using many of the same conventions, Avercamp painted landscapes without a story, filled instead with the details of everyday life. He is most famous now for his winter landscapes, ice-covered rivers thronged with people, in which the hiss of skates on the ice and the voices sharp on the crisp air are almost audible. A far greater talent, indeed one of the original geniuses of the whole movement, was Hercules Seghers (1589/90-c.1635), who certainly trained under Coninxloo. He was born in Haarlem but worked also in Amsterdam and The Hague. His life is obscure – apparently much troubled – and his paintings are few. It was through his etchings, remarkable both in

technique and imagery, that he was mainly known, although Rembrandt owned no fewer than eight of his paintings. Seghers' view of the world was grand yet desolate, with figures and buildings subordinate to a sweeping panorama of plains and arid mountains – brooding, often hostile, and charged with awe. Despite the vast distances they convey, his paintings are small in scale, and in a very restricted palette.

Esaias van de Velde (c.1591-1630), from Amsterdam, was perhaps also a pupil of Coninxloo. His vision seems to have been more generally influential and was certainly much less disturbing than Seghers'. He became the leader of the Haarlem landscapists, delighting in the detail of outdoor life as had Coninxloo, but lowering the viewpoint and the horizon, and developing a method of atmospheric, or tonal, recession. In paintings such as *The ferry-boat* he established the main themes to be developed by the next generation. Pieter van Laer, who painted street-scenes and beggars in Rome, where he was known as Bamboccio (see p. 192), was also a product of Haarlem.

The Italianate painters developed from the example of the long-lived, prolific and versatile Abraham Bloemaert (1564-1651; not

shown) of Utrecht. His pupils, unlike him, all visited Italy, and came to see nature in terms of the sunny Roman Campagna, peopled with agreeably picturesque rustics and their animals. The likeness of the work of Jan Both (c.1618-52), of Cornelis van Poelenburgh (c.1586-1667) or of Breenbergh to Claude's is clear, though theirs lacks the variety and invention, and the superbly serene structure, of the Frenchman's art. The most successful of the Italianate landscapists was the prolific Nicolaes Berchem (1620-83); his work, devoid of the German Elsheimer (see p. 404), but his pleasurably and immediately digestible for generations of picture-lovers.

The Dutch landscapists who travelled to Italy had taken varying note of the miniatures of the German Elsheimer (see p. 196), but his work found a stronger echo in the painted landscapes of Rembrandt – almost doom-laden scenes (see p. 224) strongly influenced by Seghers. In his landscape etchings and drawings Rembrandt encompassed and surpassed the range of the specialists, above all in his elegiac meditations on the simplest of country views, transformed into breathing air by a miraculously economic use of line.

BOTH AND POELNBURGH (below) *Landscape with the Judgment of Paris*, undated. The landscape is Both's, the figures Poelenburgh's. The landscape is constructed by means other than those of "native" landscape, though detail is no less naturalistic.

BERCHEM (right) *The crab-fishers*, undated. There is no sense of the classical past in Berchem: even his ruins are haunted by cows, and picturesque rather than evocative. He could almost be described as a painter of rustic genre.



REMBRANDT (left) *Landscape with a village*, c. 1650. Rembrandt's ink-and-wash landscapes are like van Goyen's compositions (see over) reduced to a skeleton.

REMBRANDT (above) *"Six's Bridge"*, 1645. The etching needle shapes one tree, then another; then the firm outline of a bridge rail; two little figures, a far horizon, the mast of a boat.

The assurance and exact power of Rembrandt's line are stupendous. Though the traditional title is wrong, this is a topographical view, and the bridge and village have been identified.

Dutch Landscape 2: "Classic"

In the wake of the pioneers of Dutch naturalistic landscape, Seghers or Esaias van de Velde, the discovery of the Dutch countryside really began – its endless flatness, laced with water; its endless skies for ever changing in wind, sun and cloud. The prolific painter and draughtsman Jan van Goyen (1596–1656) was the most remarkable figure of the first generation, based in The Hague from 1631 till his death, but an insatiable traveller.

Following van de Velde, who taught him for a time, he developed still further the emphasis on landscape. He lowered the horizon, so that the vista is observed generally from eye-level, and the elements in it are very much the commonplace ones that a Dutchman would see as he went about his ordinary business. Though held in tension by a system of shallow diagonals, his compositions seem indefinitely extensible on either side, and their flat horizontals are emphasized by the proportions of the picture, usually much wider than it is tall. His palette is almost monochrome, containing no more than browns, thin greens and muted yellows, and the grey tones of an overcast northern day. The cloud formations in the dominant sky are used to establish a mood. His

views are often identifiable, the silhouettes of known towns, churches and windmills fretting the far horizon. This delight in the portraiture of places was soon extended, in the work of other painters, to include meticulous records of streets and towns, the façades of buildings, the interiors of churches.

Salomon van Ruysdael (c. 1600–70), uncle of the more famous Jacob, a contemporary of van Goyen, spent a very successful career entirely in Haarlem. His paintings of the 1630s, especially his views over broad sheets of water, could easily be mistaken for van Goyen's. Gradually, however, his work became less austere, his palette richer, his subject matter somewhat more animated: both life and weather seem more cheerful, and there are sometimes quite colourful effects in the sky. Aert van der Neer (c. 1603–77) used again a restricted palette for his famous moonlight scenes (not shown); also working in Haarlem was the most remarkable of those artists who specialized in townscape or architectural painting, Pieter Saenredam (1597–1665). He painted little else other than the whitewashed interiors of churches, brimming with pale light through clear windows, empty and silent. The

diminutive figures exist, it seems, solely to establish the soaring scale of the vaulted roofs.

Between about 1640 and 1670 Dutch landscape reached its full maturity, its so-called "classic" phase as distinct from the "tonal" phase exemplified in van Goyen's and Seghers' paintings. The "classic" phase in its various moods consolidated the naturalistic discoveries of the "native" Dutch observers, such as van de Velde and van Goyen, with a truly Baroque strength and richness. Painters such as Berchem had been captivated by the reflection of Italian sunlight and the picturesque detail of the Mediterranean scene; artists such as Cuyp and Ruysdael were more deeply influenced by the Italianate tradition.

Aelbert Cuyp (1620–91) of Dordrecht painted sky, land and water suffused by a golden light much more Italian than Dutch, but the light grips and harmonizes the whole landscape: it is an integral, essential and extremely beautiful element in his achievement. He seems never to have gone to Italy, only to have studied its reflection lingering in the work of his contemporaries who had been there. Yet there is no greater master of sublime serenity in visionary landscape than Cuyp, besides

VAN GOYEN (below)
View of the village of Overschie, c. 1645
The details are just like those of Esaias van de Velde (see preceding page). But here the sensation of

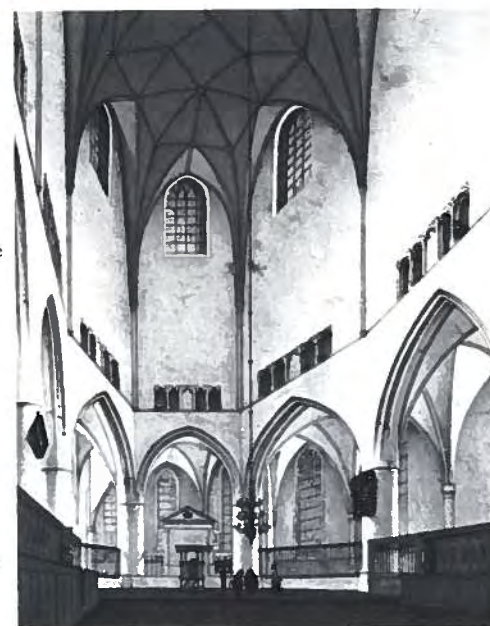
looking out over an artificially constructed stage has disappeared: diagonals (and the vertical spire) give the picture structure and, much more naturally, lend a subtler symmetry.

JACOB VAN RUYSDAEL (right) *View of Haarlem, 1660s*
The clouds are a powerful force, and strong contrasts of light and dark move over the face of the land.



SAENREDAM (right)
St Bavo, Haarlem, 1660
The view shows the choir, wholly austere except for its patterned vaulting. The picture is quite small, and with virtually no colour; but the perspective, and the modelling of convex and concave surfaces, are extremely subtle; the tonal modulations of the airy space are exquisitely controlled. There is a quiet intimacy. Another view by Saenredam is reproduced on p. 212.

SALOMON VAN RUYSDAEL (left) *View of a river, 1630s or early 1640s*
Salomon tended to paint a little more precisely than van Goyen, but could fix a gentle afternoon as freshly. He has none of the drama of his nephew Jacob (above). Note the subtle symmetry between the two uprights, the tree and the small sail.



Claude himself. But while Claude peopled his Roman Campagna with figures from classical mythology, the Dutchman achieved a no less mysterious transcendence with a mundane cast of cows, horses and his stolid compatriots. The composition is usually anchored on the figures, human or animal, in silhouette at one side of the foreground; the landscape winds, often across water, back deep into the distance under a paradisaical sky of late evening.

Cuyp's cows became, in the paintings of the young Paulus Potter (1625-54), the chief subject of the landscape, though the same cool golden light played about the variegated texture of their hides. Cuyp also loved to paint great sheets of water, with ships becalmed above their own reflections, and in this the Amsterdam painter Jan van de Cappelle (c. 1624-79) specialized. Van de Cappelle indeed could surpass even Cuyp in the magic of his dreams of sailing ships afloat like wraiths between sky and water, yet intricately and firmly structured by their lofty masts and sails and the dark horizontals of their hulls. Cuyp and van de Cappelle confined themselves to rivers or estuaries, but the two Willem van de Veldes went out to the open sea: Willem the

Younger (1633-1707) could achieve a majestic composition to rival in strength any by his contemporaries – as in his *Cannon shot*; later he and his father both migrated to England, and established marine painting there.

The greatest genius of Dutch landscape, unsurpassed in his power to endow it with the heroic significance till then thought commensurable only with religious or epic painting, was Jacob van Ruisdael. His "tragic" work is considered, in relation to his famous *Jewish cemetery*, in the next pages. But his mood could also be gently pastoral, taking pleasure in the movement of the landscape, the changing pattern of sun and shadow. Ruisdael had no standard formulae: his trees are individuals; so, too, are his clouds; the humid air of Holland seems to move amongst them. In this his one-time pupil Meindert Hobbema (1638-1709) could rival him in strength, though Hobbema employed a limited range of compositional devices, and his work in mass can seem monotonous. Yet each one on inspection proves as sharply observed, as freshly painted, as Ruisdael's. His paintings as a whole show a much more cheerful and optimistic temper – Ruisdael with sunshine.



WILLEM VAN DE VELDE
THE YOUNGER
The cannon shot, c. 1660
In the "classic" phase of
Dutch landscape painting

the objects or elements in the picture were certainly naturalistic; but, more than that, they were dynamically organized to striking effect.



CUYP (above)

View of a road near a river, mid-1650s

The colours are autumnal; it is peaceful early evening. If the light is Italianate, the structure – particularly the mountain on the right – is a development from Seghers' compositions.

POTTER (below)

Cows resting, 1649

Potter's light has not the quiet calm and airy repose of the great masters – his golden light is sometimes cloying. Yet he was both precocious and successful, and his smaller pictures are gloriously textured.



VAN DE CAPPELLE (above)

View of the mouth of the river Scheldt, c. 1650?

In contrast to others, van de Cappelle favoured firm central motifs. The middle-ground boats are solid, but sky and water dissolve all around into a haze, being unbounded by any sharp horizon and unfixed by any foreground mass. Another scene by van de Cappelle is illustrated on p. 212.

HOBBEMA (left)

The avenue at Middelhamnis, 1689

In the last three decades of the century, landscape – and other kinds of painting – declined in quality. Few artists kept that "classic" balance between naturalism and contrivance of Hobbema's late landscape.

Ruisdael: The Jewish Cemetery



JACOB VAN RUISDAEL
(above) *The Dresden Jewish cemetery, 1660s*
There are no figures, no animals: the tombs are the central characters; trees, buildings, sky, a stream and the changing light are the supporting cast. Each is charged with an animating, transfiguring atmosphere.



JACOB VAN RUISDAEL
(right) *The Detroit Jewish cemetery, 1660s*
In this version the mood seems warmer: the trees, for instance, are less stark; the desertion is not quite so absolute: there is a cottage amid the ruins, and two small, black-robed figures.



JACOB VAN RUISDAEL
Tombs in the Jewish cemetery at Ouderkerk, c. 1660
The positions of the tombs have been slightly altered in the paintings, but they retain their striking shapes.

So, too, the other elements were no doubt closely based on observation from life, though even the drawing has been organized into a composition – the birds in the sky, the placed trees.

The tragic drama of nature is felt in most of the paintings of Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/9-82), but only in the two versions of *The Jewish cemetery* is it so explicit, and the symbolism so overt. The strongest accents in the composition, in each case, are the tombs, painted "from the life", as is proved by two drawings and by the tombs themselves, still to be seen in the Jewish cemetery at Ouderkerk near Amsterdam. They catch the eye not only because of their near-central position, but because the light of the lowering sun picks them out and a tree almost points to them. Simultaneously amid the dark rain clouds kindles a rainbow – the age-old symbol of hope and Resurrection.

In both versions, the cluster of the tombs is identical, but otherwise the paintings vary considerably, in the whole and in the rest of the details. The surrounding landscapes, for all their vivid presence, are fantasies. Both versions are presumably of the 1660s, though which is the earlier is uncertain. The Dresden version is the more sombre, the rainbow more tentative, the ruined church a different building much further gone in decay, sunk deeper in oncoming night. (Note, however, how important in each version is the vertical accent of the ruined flank of the building, holding the light and stabilizing the whole composition.) As Constable was to observe, Ruisdael enveloped the most ordinary scenes with grandeur, and in his work as a whole – with its evocation of melancholy and its drama of light and shade – the Romantic movement would find a prophet of its own feelings towards Nature; Goethe, however, analysed a profounder poetry in this composition: "Even the tombs themselves, in their state of ruin, signify something more than the past: they are tombs of themselves".

Ruisdael developed that combination of realism and romanticism found in a greater or lesser degree in all his mature work from the example of his predecessors and contemporaries. His fascination with trees is reminiscent of the late Mannerist follower of Coninxloo, Savery; his ability to consolidate the facts of earth, foliage, water into classical compositions surely owed something to the Italian example filtered back to Holland chiefly by painters from Utrecht. His delight in mountainous spectacle, in crags and waterfalls alien to his native Dutch landscape, was formed perhaps by the Scandinavian visions of Allart van Everdingen (1621-75); in contrast, his panoramic sweeps of the true Dutch plains doubtless owed something to the great horizontal sweeps of Philips de Koninck (1619-88). Finally, his compulsive effect on the spectator's imagination demands comparison with Rembrandt. But, though in a few instances Ruisdael produced visions very close to some of Rembrandt's rare painted landscapes, no specific influence from Rembrandt can be seen. Ruisdael's technique, which derives much of its impact by marrying a broad, majestic massing of forms with a very detailed characterization of individual elements, could certainly be called Baroque; however, in realizing landscape as an equivalent of the tragic human condition, Ruisdael was profoundly original, and his empathy with the rhythm of transient and inexorable Nature is akin to that of Romantic poets such as Wordsworth.



EVERDINGEN (left)
A waterfall, 1650
Everdingen was probably taught by Savery, who had travelled in the Tyrol. He himself travelled to Scandinavia with a patron in 1640, and in the 1650s he introduced into his pictures the waterfalls and log huts he had sketched there.



KONINCK (below)
View over flat country, 1650s or 1660s
Typical of Koninck is the bisecting horizon: no house or church joins land and sky. The slightly raised viewpoint stresses the endlessness of the plain: and Ruisdael, too, was to exploit such an effect of panorama.



JACOB VAN RUISDAEL
(above) *Winter landscape, c. 1670*

Desolate figures tramp the frozen river in the freezing dusk. The river slants against an ominous counter-diagonal into a void: even in this homely scene there is a sense of the insignificance of man.

REMBRANDT (right)
The stone bridge, c. 1637
The lighting is not naturalistic: it erupts into the dark of the painting, and blanches the tree it strikes. It is a theoretical landscape, like those of Seghers, not a sublimation of natural landscape like, for instance, Ruisdael's picture (above).



Dutch Genre and Portraiture I

In the seventeenth century, genre – broadly, the painting of scenes from everyday life, even of the humblest kind – became separated out, like landscape or still life, as a subject in its own right. Secular, even low-life, subjects had been painted before, but in order to illustrate an allegory, a proverb or a moral. Caravaggio in Italy had painted still life or peasant characters as interesting in themselves or worthy of high art, but the emergence of Dutch genre was probably an independent development, for the favourite themes of the earliest Dutch genre painters can be traced back into previous Netherlandish religious and allegorical painting. In fact, there are probably moralizing undertones in many Dutch genre scenes that today seem to have no other subject than what they so realistically show.

Dutch genre, like Dutch landscape, made its most promising beginning in Haarlem, as an extension of the naturalism of Frans Hals' vivid portraiture. Its first subjects were what the Dutch called *Merry companies*, groups of drunken roisterers. Hals in his early career painted one or two such genre scenes, and Willem Buytewech (c.1591-1624), who worked closely with him for a time, popul-



BUYTEWECH
Merry company, c. 1617-20
The bearded man left of centre is the very one that Frans Hals also painted in his *Shrove-tide revellers* of about 1615 (not shown) – confirming links between

Buytewech and Hals and Hals' crucial influence in the emergence of Dutch genre. The picture perhaps represents the Five Senses, but the exaggerated stances of the figures show a clear attempt at vivid realism.



arized the *Merry company* set in an interior. However, though he was a prolific and elegant etcher and draughtsman, Buytewech's rare paintings seem stiff and studious beside Frans Hals' portraiture; so do those even of Frans' brother Dirck Hals (1591-1666). The *Merry company* theme was soon extended to include guardroom scenes or tavern scenes featuring soldiers. The specialists in this form, such as Willem Duyster in Amsterdam or Pieter Codde, also introduced light effects from the Utrecht Caravaggisti, as did Judith Leyster (1609-60). She, however, more closely than anyone else, could occasionally catch the spirit

BROUWER (right)
Peasants in an inn, c. 1627-31
The squat figures and their vividly caught expressions (surely showing Frans Hals' influence) are typical of Brouwer. His coarse figures are both reprehensible and laughable – for instance, the mother who nods off while her child howls – but each figure is an individual, and, as such, sympathetic. The detail is particular and rich, indicated with a swift and broad brush, related consummately to the whole. Glowing greys and browns set the atmosphere: tonal modulations are extremely sensitive. It was Brouwer's achievement to transform subject matter quite the reverse of ideal or beautiful into a major work of art.



DIRCK HALS (left)
A garden party, c. 1624
Dirck Hals' style is closer to Buytewech's than to his brother Frans'. Although these people are bourgeois, use of a landscape setting recalls the origins of the *Merry company* theme in 16th-century Netherlandish *kermis* pictures – peasants disporting themselves in an outdoor festival. Bruegel had painted such scenes, and the immigrant Flemish follower of Coninxloo (see p. 220), Vinckboons, was painting them in Holland by 1610. Teniers continued the tradition in Flanders.

LEYSTER (left)
The offer, c. 1635?
The man offers her gold, but the seamstress seems determined to preserve her virtue. The man's leer, and the woman's concentration on her task, are caught in a frozen moment with an art anticipating Vermeer's.

ADRIAEN VAN OSTADE
(right) Inside an inn, 1653
The room has shadowy depths into which creep patches of light, in a style learnt from Rembrandt. The figures are dumpy and are painted briskly and in movement, like Brouwer's, but this is a kind of respectable version of his low life.



scenes could be comic, but neither caricatured nor condescending. He painted his people, in their weaknesses and their passions, as one of them, and the known facts of his Bohemian life suggest a strong sympathy with them. Brouwer has always been "a painter's painter": Rubens, for instance, had 17 of his paintings and Rembrandt owned six paintings and many of his very free drawings, which clearly influenced Rembrandt's own drawing style.

Those who followed in Brouwer's wake included some artists of talent approaching genius and a remarkable number of unusual competence. Characteristic was the prolific Adriaen van Ostade (1610-85). Early on he showed not only Brouwer's influence but also Rembrandt's, but later moved towards a more picturesque but less vital version of low life, probably one that was more acceptable to an ever-widening clientèle. His brother Isaack (1621-49; not shown), who started along similar lines, later developed his own vision of landscape and genre combined. Gerrit Dou (1613-75), a pupil of Rembrandt in his early Leyden days, continued all his life to paint small, highly finished and increasingly cosy domesticities, often a single figure set in a

window. His example was followed by the prolific painter Gabriel Metsu (1629-97) and by Frans van Mieris the Elder (1635-81).

Nicholaes Maes (1634-93), one of the most talented of Rembrandt's later pupils, worked with distinction very much in his master's Amsterdam manner, but turned about 1660 to painting society portraits and metamorphosed his style into an international Baroque almost indistinguishable from that of English or French counterparts such as Lely or Bourdon. Throughout the seventeenth century, the demand by the Dutch for portraits was constant, and was answered by a whole range of extremely able portraitists. Their work, to be sure, was less disturbing than Rembrandt's shadowy psychological probings, and tended to concentrate on rich superficial textures of flesh and costume. At their best the best among them – Thomas de Keyser, Bartholomeus van der Helst (1613-70) – were of high quality.

The crowning splendour of Dutch genre painting was the Delft school (see over), but the Leyden-born Jan Steen (1626-79) is more generally representative of its final phase. The son of a brewer, his sympathies were somewhat akin to Brouwer's. He was briefly a publican

and brewer himself in Delft between 1654 and 1657, where he was doubtless aware of Vermeer, and he was in Haarlem between 1661 and 1670, where Frans Hals' art had a pronounced effect on his own. Steen's popular reputation rests on his vigorous, bustling portrayals of carousing gatherings, in which he himself, relaxed and unbuttoned, is sometimes a participant. His output, however, was much more varied, though not always of high quality – packed with detail and colour yet freely and rhythmically painted, and always psychologically coherent. He painted not only genre but also historical, biblical and allegorical pictures (he was a Catholic), and in his genre paintings the moralizing or allegorical element is more evident than in most of his contemporaries' pictures. He depicted his figures not only in contemporary costume with domestic props, but also in theatrical guise, as if they were enacting a scene from the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Many critics have compared Steen to Molière, and his control of production is indeed worthy of a great dramatist-actor-manager. The elegant lightness and wit of his late pictures have almost an accent of Rococo, suggesting that Watteau is not far off.



DOU AND REMBRANDT (left)
The blind Tobit and his wife Anna, c. 1630

The finish marks the work as Dou's, but the design, the chiaroscuro and the subject are more typical of Rembrandt. Rembrandt made many studies from the life but seldom painted genre; his biblical subjects, however, are often almost indistinguishable from it.



MIERIS THE ELDER (right)
Soap bubbles, 1663

The composition, a figure confronting the spectator from a window, had been popularized by Dou. Mieris has added even more detail, and hints of *vanitas* typical of still life (see p. 232).



METSU (above)
The hunter's gift, c. 1661-67
Metsu was probably taught by Dou, but his varied art reflects other influences often more strongly. The grace of the figures recalls Steen; the subject, though it is more politely and subtly mentioned, is once more the trial of a woman's virtue.



MAES (above)
Admiral Binkes, c. 1670-77
Later Dutch portraitists adopted Baroque devices, even if his attributes fail to energize the Admiral; perhaps the need for a good likeness inhibited fluency.



VAN DER HELST (above)
A young girl, 1645
The general run of Dutch portraiture – Rembrandt and Hals excepted – has a naive quality, though the likeness is probably exact and the stiffness often charming.



STEEN (left)
The doctor's visit, c. 1665
The bowl of charcoal on the floor contains an apron-string, burnt as a remedy for the girl's illness. The doctor will be of no better use, for she is sick of love; the picture above the bed indicates her passion. In his approach and in some of his devices Steen offered precedents for Hogarth.

Dutch Genre and Portraiture 2: Delft and Deventer

The brief harvest of genius between about 1654 and 1670 in the small town of Delft is an astonishing phenomenon in European painting; it can be compared in Dutch art only with the achievement of Rembrandt. Though it coincides with Rembrandt's last years, it is quite different in vision – in its classic poise, its restraint, its clarity. In Vermeer it produced the one artist in Holland who can equal Rembrandt's intimations of mystery and immortality – within a more restricted range.

There is in fact a link between Rembrandt and Vermeer, in the elusive personality of Carel Fabritius (1622–54). He was working with Rembrandt in the 1640s and was by far the most gifted of his pupils. By 1650 he was in Delft, but there he was tragically killed by an explosion in a gunpowder magazine in 1654. Very close to Rembrandt in his understanding of the possibilities of paint textures and tonal contrasts, in a sense he reversed Rembrandt's vision: he worked in darks against light, rather than in lights against a dark ground, his subjects becoming coolly luminous in a pervasive natural light. He also experimented with perspective effects – as in his topographically exact little *View of Delft*, 1652.

These two interests, in the reflections of cool light and in optics and illusionism, have an important place in the mature work of Jan Vermeer (1632–75), who owned at least three paintings by Fabritius. Further, Antony van Leeuwenhoek, an exploratory genius of the microscope and the science of optics, was Vermeer's fellow-citizen and exact contemporary, and ultimately his executor. Contemporary assessment of Vermeer is almost non-existent, and after his death he remained unrecognized for almost 200 years. His works are rare – doubtless he worked very slowly: only some 40 paintings by him are known, and no drawings that are certainly his at all. His very few early paintings are in the tradition and manner of the Utrecht Caravaggisti – religious or genre subjects relatively large in scale, for example *The procuress* of 1656. Even before 1660, however, his mature style was established – small-scale paintings, featuring one or two figures (most characteristically a single one) in a mildly lit, serene domestic interior. Some moral or allegorical significance, as well as a hint of narrative or latent drama, seems to persist: *A girl asleep at a table* is said to be drunk; *A woman weighing pearls*

possibly embodies a reflection on human vanity, her action paralleled in the picture of the Last Judgment hanging behind her.

Vermeer's greatness lies in his unique ability to invest the simplest pose or transient gesture of ordinary life with a monumental, spell-binding permanence. In his utterly calm, detached observation of domestic intimacy, he achieves a celebration of the simple marvel of human life unmatched before or since. Part of his achievement is the precise structure, the "architecture" of his compositions, and the subtle answering relationships between their component elements – the still life, the rich pattern and texture of materials, the modulation of light from an open window across the wall, of reflected light everywhere. The colour range is cool; a favourite colour chord is blue and yellow. The solidity of the forms is both intensified and offset by a highly original use of scattered highlights, virtually dots of light with a *pointillé* effect that makes the surface vibrant. The perspective is calculated so as to involve the spectator, compelling the eye back from the immediate foreground deep into the picture, but also suggesting that the picture extends forward into the spectator's own



FABRITIUS (left)

View of Delft, 1652

The panel was perhaps once a component of a peep-show box, in which the spectator looked through a tiny hole to see a painted scene in a three-dimensional illusion. The stringed instruments in the foreground hint at a *vanitas* theme (see p. 232).



VERMEER (right)

A girl asleep at a table, c. 1656

This is thought to be an early work because there is an emphasis on still life, as in *The procuress*; there is an opening into another room, probably derived from de Hoogh, seldom repeated by Vermeer; there seems to be strong moralizing though the import is not certain.

FABRITIUS (below)

A goldfinch, 1654

In Rembrandt's work, light plays suggestively about the forms; here the light strikes the form and is obstructed: there is no interpenetration. Fabritius uses Rembrandt's techniques to paint a more literal, more material truth.



VERMEER (above)

The procuress, 1656

The figures are crowded; there is little of the haunting stillness of Vermeer's maturity. Only one other of his pictures is dated, and this is a rare certainty in his development – it was painted when he was 24.

VERMEER (right)

A woman weighing pearls, c. 1665

The pearls are specks of light – an obvious instance of Vermeer's "pointillism"; the tiny sprinkled dots are usually apparent only on close inspection. Here is Vermeer's art fully mature.



space. The staging of his pictures owes something perhaps to experimentation with mirrors (though mirrors are seldom shown in his pictures); it is certainly an indication of the artist's special fascination with the techniques of perspective, most evident in *"The Artist's Studio"* (see over). Though the characteristic Vermeer is an interior, he brought the same qualities to two remarkable urban views, one, his *View of Delft*, unparalleled in Dutch landscape, the other a street scene, in which he handled the subject much as de Hoogh did.

Pieter de Hoogh (1629-84) of Rotterdam was in Delft from about 1653 until the early 1660s, and thereafter in Amsterdam. His early work consisted of low-life subjects – peasants, soldiers, tavern scenes; his later works show a falling-off in quality. His masterpieces – demonstrating Delft's catalytic artistic climate – almost all date from his decade there. In Delft he was surely aware of Vermeer, although it may well be that in some respects he anticipated Vermeer; both alike responded to the values and patronage of a secure and prosperous urban bourgeoisie. De Hoogh's compositions are usually rigidly constructed, sometimes almost geometrically organized: his

figures are housed firmly within the horizontal and verticals, within the rectangular definitions of his interiors or courtyards. Yet he is also the master of the "escape route" – of vistas leading from one enclosed space to another, rich with invitations to further exploration, suggesting a whole town of domestic interiors, the whole fabric of an urban society. He uses more figures than Vermeer, and very often children, in enchanting evocations of family contentment. His pictures are warmer in tone than Vermeer's, and lack Vermeer's supreme, magical intensity.

Comparable in quality and mood, though he did not work in Delft, is Gerard Terborch (1617-81). Terborch painted not only domestic interiors but also portraits, and finally settled after wide travel (perhaps in Rome, certainly in Spain and in London) in Deventer, a community even smaller than Delft. His pictures are a bewitching amalgam of highly subtle sophistication and a very direct and fresh grasp of character. His small-scale, almost miniature, portraits are like Velazquez in little; their decorum and gravity – even monumentality – are remarkable, not least in relation to their scale.

TERBORCH (below)
A boy picking fleas from a dog, c. 1655
Psychological delicacy and virtuosity in the painting of stuffs are the virtues of

Terborch's painting. Boy and dog are vividly observed, and the open book and hat beside add a context: he has returned from school and should be at his homework.



VERMEER (right)
View of Delft, c. 1660
Its bold colours, its quiet composition without any of the forceful diagonals and accentually placed figures usual in landscapes of the "classic" phase (see p. 222), above all the naturalism of its air and light set this painting apart. "Pointillé" dots mark glints of light, and all the horizontals and verticals seem to have been softened in the gentle air.



DE HOOGH (below)
The backgammon players, 1653
The subject and treatment are in the tradition of Duyster and Codde (see preceding page); there is no firm articulating framework of the kind typical of de Hoogh's Delft compositions.



TERBORCH (left)
Self-portrait, c. 1668
There is a sort of lively pomposity in the figure, pushing forward his bowed shoe and with arms akimbo beneath his cloak. The light on his lace front and long hair is beautifully handled. The picture is only about 60cm (28in) in height.

DE HOOGH (right)
A musical party, c. 1677
De Hoogh's later work is quite different in feeling: he leaves behind quiet women and their children, to show rather grander settings – here the "escape route" is more elaborate, and perhaps the most successful element.

DE HOOGH (above)
A man smoking, a woman drinking and a child in a courtyard, c. 1656
The static figures have

a quiet repose typical of de Hoogh's Delft period. The textures of things glitter with phosphorescent light a little like Vermeer's (left).



Vermeer: The Artist's Studio



VERMEER
"The Artist's Studio"
(The art of painting),
c. 1665-70

The subject matter is detailed with all Vermeer's firm modelling and luminous, cool serenity: a painter, seen from behind, is in the act of painting on the easel before him the figure of a young girl who stands in the gentle light of a window in the corner of the room. It is a rich and typically Dutch interior – the black and white marble pattern of the floor; the sumptuously textured curtains; the fine brass chandelier; a map of Holland on the wall – inhabited by an inimitable element, Vermeer's pervasive and all-creating light.

On inspection, however, several questions about the picture begin to arise. This is no ordinary working painter's studio, cluttered and untidy; the painter is dressed in a costume that is certainly not studio garb. His model's shoulders are clad in a rather indeterminate drapery; her head is wreathed with what seem to be laurels, and though she has the features of a typical Vermeer girl (a daughter perhaps) she is accoutred with a fine trumpet and a large tome (that will soon surely be uncomfortably heavy). She must represent either a Muse – the Muse of History, Clio – or Fame, both of

whom earlier artists had shown with these accessories. Vermeer painted other allegories, and his widow is known to have referred to this painting under the title *The art of painting*. But this work celebrates the triumph of the painter's art far more movingly and convincingly than any Baroque contrivance of allegorical females could ever do, partly just because Clio, or Fame, is also a simple Dutch girl, dressed up rather touchingly and awkwardly; the artist in the picture, however, has not yet started with her person, he is beginning on his canvas with the laurels of fame.

But then, how did Vermeer himself set about the painting we see? There is no evidence in this or in any other painting that he worked otherwise than *alla prima*, directly on to the canvas, without preliminary studies or drawings – and this in spite of the absolute certainty with which the very elaborate structure and detail of the picture is established. He could, however, have framed his composition on a two-dimensional surface – ready to trace as it were – by the ingenious disposition of two mirrors, one behind the artist, the other in

front, so placed as to include the image of his own back as he painted. If so, this is a self-portrait, characteristically rejecting any self-revelation. There is still some ambiguity about the exact scope of the painting, a query, for example, as to whether the foreground curtain and chair are inside or outside the main subject of the picture. There are also ambiguities in the significance of the subject matter – the map of Holland, for instance, so ostentatious on the wall, looks like an assertion of Dutch national pride, but is beyond doubt of the Dutch provinces under the old Spanish rule.

The painting is signed (though for long it was attributed to de Hoogh), and is thought to be late within Vermeer's mature period, somewhere between 1665 and 1670. Some elements restate established motifs: painters at work (and seen from behind), the transitional device of the foreground curtain drawn back between the picture and the spectator – these occur in Rembrandt or in masters such as Dou or Mieris. What is unique to Vermeer is the monumental whole into which they are bound – entirely credible and yet unfathomable.

VERMEER (below)
The head of a girl, c. 1666
Though the girl may well be Vermeer's daughter, it is an impersonal portrait.



It seems to have been made chiefly to experiment with a favourite colour contrast, or to explore a fascination with the behaviour of light.



VERMEER (left)
An allegory of Faith, c. 1669
This seems stilted. "The Artist's Studio" is instead really a genre picture of an artist painting an allegory: hence its greater success.

VERMEER (below)
Diana and her nymphs, c. 1654
The subject, like that of the *Allegory* (left), is essentially Italian; classical myths and theatrical allegories were not main Protestant themes.



REMBRANDT (right)
The artist in his studio, c. 1628-29
There is no high-flown allegory about this little genre work – it is hardly even a self-portrait. In Rembrandt's picture there is both a comic element and a debunking realism – the opposite of Vermeer's quiet, high seriousness.



VERMEER (left)
A soldier and a laughing girl, c. 1657
Both the Italianate subject and the composition of "The Artist's Studio" owe much to the Utrecht school – even if the Utrechtian device of silhouetting a foreground figure against the light in the picture is more bluntly used in this early work.



Dutch Still-Life Painting

The expression "still life", used to describe a category of painting, does not appear until about 1650, and then, significantly, in its Dutch form. It eventually became the habitual term for paintings of any kind of inanimate object – flowers, fruit, food of all kinds; tableware (from the grandest of gold or silver goblets to Venetian glass and Delft plates, or cutlery and the infinitely subtle white tones of nappery); books, manuscripts, musical instruments. Yet still-life elements have recurred in Western art since classical times, and Netherlandish artists especially had long delighted in dwelling with vivid, doting accuracy on such objects, though not of course as the prime subject of their illuminations or pictures. In the sixteenth century, however, artists such as Aertsen (see p. 162) had painted detailed kitchen interiors in which the still life predominates, while the nominal pretext for the painting – Christ with Mary and Martha, for instance – is merely glimpsed in the rear.

In earlier pictures still-life objects were often, perhaps generally, introduced for their symbolic value. These values underlie much seventeenth-century still-life painting in Holland – the *vanitas* theme, for instance, announ-

ced in its most obvious form by a skull, reminding the viewer of the transience of all things; or references to the Five Senses (which occur, too, in genre painting). But while the vanity of all pleasures of this world is acknowledged by the Dutch, the admonition *memento mori* (remember death) always goes hand in hand with the celebration – remember life – implicit in the act of painting itself. The enduring enchantment of still-life painting rests in the paradox that the ephemeral subject – the cut flower, the emptied glass, the frailty of the butterfly – is translated by the illusionistic skill of the painter into immortality.

In seventeenth-century Holland, painters, and whole families of painters, tended to specialize in one aspect of the art – in flower-pieces or in "breakfast" and the more elaborate and complex "banquet" pieces; in studies of game or of fish; or in more overtly symbolic variations on the *vanitas* theme. All these subjects embodied a particularly Dutch pleasure, nourished in a hugely successful commercial society, in sensuous materialism – but these bourgeois took as much delight in a spiral of lemon peel as in the splendour of gold or silver plate. Certainly the price of the

CLAESZ.
Breakfast piece, 1637
The objects are bound in a spell of light that joins them in an intimate unity. It preserves about

them a lingering aura – as if they had just been handled by someone. Their textures are delicately evoked and contrasted – this is no dry inventory!



AMBROSIUS BOSSCHAERT
THE ELDER (left)
A vase of flowers, c. 1620
Bosschaert habitually included flowers from all seasons in one picture, and often the very same bloom recurs from picture to picture. He must have worked from a portfolio of drawings rather than from the life.



CLAESZ. (left)
Still life, 1623
Numbers of symbolic references can be discovered in the objects shown. All Five Senses are present – touch in every object; sight particularly in the mirror; hearing in the musical instruments; smell in the stoppered and unstoppered jars; taste in the half-eaten food. There are also many *vanitas* references to the passing of Time – the long-lived tortoise, symbol of old age; the lamp wick; the watch; the half-empty glass that once was full and soon will be empty.



HEDA (left)
Breakfast piece, c. 1634
Claesz. and Heda painted similar delicately balanced compositions, and similar motifs. Heda's touch was slightly more meticulous, and his later works tended to be grander, like Kalf's.

DE HEEM (above)
Still life of books, c. 1625-29
Still lifes of books were a local speciality of Leyden, a university town; de Heem was there as a young man. Unlike others, he did not specialize in one type of

still life, and, could change his style: the quite emphatic chiaroscuro of this picture was a passing interest. In Antwerp he tried a more Baroque style, comparable to that of Snijders (see p. 200) but rather cooler, as befitted a Dutchman.

objects painted was never forgotten: even flowers might be more than a simple pleasure, for this was the period of the great Dutch tulip boom, when the bulb itself might well cost much more than a painting of it. Still-life painters were as highly esteemed as other painters, and fed a rich export market.

Foremost amongst the early flower-specialists was Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (1573-1621), born in Antwerp but working mainly in Middelburg. His characteristic compositions consist of a vase of flowers set centrally in a niche through which a landscape can be seen. Each flower is described, "spelled out", with exact and impartial literalness in an even light. His tradition was carried on by many painters (including his own three sons and his brother-in-law, Balthasar van der Ast), though the subject matter increasingly included insects, shells, lizards or toads. In step with the general development of Dutch painting, their compositions became more naturalistic, modelled in terms of light and shade, with the illusion of depth and air. Modern eyes, glutted with ubiquitous colour photographs, cannot realize the delighted astonishment that such illusionist reproductions of the

elements of everyday life evoked in contemporaries – especially perhaps those faithful portrait likenesses of food on a table, seen from a high viewpoint to get in as much as possible.

The ablest popularizers of the breakfast piece were Pieter Claesz. (1597/8-1661) and Willem Heda (1599-1680/2), both based mainly in Haarlem. Like their contemporary, van Goyen, working in landscape, they were able to distil drama out of unspectacular objects by the calculated interrelationships between the elements of their composition, and the subtlest transitions of tone. Theirs was a tonal rather than a colouristic painting.

Slightly younger, Jan de Heem (1606-83/4) won an international reputation in a variety of kinds of still life; working mainly in Antwerp from 1636, he had an instinctive affinity with Flemish Baroque exuberance, a delight in movement and colour. Later again, the outstanding figure in the so-called "classic" phase of Dutch still life (corresponding to the "classic" phase of landscape painting) was the wonderfully talented Willem Kalf (1619-93). Though he worked briefly (1642-46) in Paris, his career was mainly in Amsterdam. His luxurious paint – influenced surely by Rem-

brandt's chiaroscuro, but also by Vermeer's scintillating treatment of light – is matched by a new richness of subject matter – plate, glass, exotic pearly-gleaming nautilus shells – answering the taste of a wealthy, patrician rather than bourgeois clientèle. Luxury, however, is always controlled by the most delicate feeling for compositional unity.

Kalf's contemporary Abraham van Beyeren (1620/21-90) specialized rather in more sumptuous banquet pieces, crowded with incident and variety, yet subtle in colour harmonies. Van Beyeren also painted fish-pieces, though paintings of dead game are rare in Dutch art till late in the century (there are two by Rembrandt). A "moving" variant on still life was developed later in the century by artists such as Melchior de Hondecoeter (1636-95), who depicted domestic or exotic birds and animals. Flower-painting, however, was perhaps always the most popular, and remained popular until well into the eighteenth century, sustaining its quality in the hands of successive generations rather better than other branches of Dutch art; some of the later flower painters, such as the van Huysum family, fell little short of their predecessors in talent.



VAN BEYEREN (left)
Still life, undated
Van Beyeren's work seems a more modest, restrained version of the exuberant displays of the Flemish artists, or even de Heem.



REMBRANDT (right)
Self-portrait as a hunter, 1639
Rembrandt often ranged into subject matter other Dutch artists did not touch; it is not easy to ascertain the purpose of this picture. Rembrandt, of course, was a great master of the fall of light on texture.



KALF (left)
Still life, 1643
There is a new grandeur, lavishness and refinement in Kalf's painting. Goethe's comment on Kalf is famous: "One must see this ... in order to understand in what sense art is superior to Nature ... There is no question, at least there is none for me, that if I had to choose between the golden vessels or the picture, I would choose the picture".



JAN VAN HUYSUM (left)
A vase of flowers, c. 1710-20
Jan van Huysum (1682-1749) was the most highly paid flower painter of his day. The dewy freshness and harmony of his colours are delicious. His lighter touch and heightening key announce the Rococo era.

HONDECOETER
Cocks, hens and chicks, with other birds, c. 1668
Hondecoeter's interest in

texture, his nicely blended colours and his naturalism are praised; his fowls had an international reputation.

There is often in them an allegory – of the Nations of Europe at War, or here, more simply, Family Life.

Late Baroque in Italy

Baroque painting in the Grand Manner, in particular decorative painting in the churches and, to a lesser extent, in the great aristocratic palaces, had been practised in Italy throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, and it continued into the eighteenth. In central Italy it remained within the tradition established by Pietro da Cortona (see p. 189), and perhaps its main development was towards an ever-increasing virtuosity in illusionism, in dissolving solid domes and vaults into celestial visions spiralling up into endless heavens. In Rome, a spectacular climax was reached in the

Allegory of the missionary work of the Jesuits with which Fra Andrea Pozzo (1642–1709) exploded the nave vault in S. Ignazio in the early 1690s. In sculpture, the influence of Bernini remained paramount, and his emotive style was continued in the work of his former assistant Antonio Raggi (1624–86) and others. Raggi's carving and stuccowork, for instance in the church of Il Gesù at Rome, is of a brilliance and colour almost comparable to that of his master.

Rome remained the fountain-head of sculpture until well into the eighteenth century,

even though in painting its importance as a centre of ambitious decorative projects waned. Nevertheless in central Italy, in Rome, Florence and Bologna, the principles of classicism and *disegno* were sustained: painters such as Carlo Maratta (1625–1713) continued to model their figures firmly and solidly and to evolve their compositions by means of painstaking preliminary drawings. The tradition was to culminate in the relatively sober vision of the German-born Mengs (see p. 304), whose Neoclassical figure painting is often strikingly reminiscent of the Carracci.

The important developments in decorative painting occurred elsewhere – to the south, in Naples, blossoming artistically under foreign domination, and to the north, in Venice, which was clearly in decline as a commercial or political power, but, like Rome, was already drawing tourists irresistibly from all over Europe. In both Naples and Venice painters exulted in the rhetoric of the Grand Manner with a new freedom: for these artists the movement of the brush, conjuring aerial rhythms of line, in strokes of brilliant colour suffused in light, became predominant – more important than literal accuracy of drawing.



POZZO (left)
Allegory of the missionary work of the Jesuits, 1691–94
Padre Pozzo's ceiling for S. Ignazio, celebrating the developed strength of the Jesuit order, has crowded figures hurtling in a space deeper than any by Pietro da Cortona. Padre Pozzo's perspective, fully effective only from a single spot in the nave, was imitated in Germany and in Austria, where he settled in 1702.

GIORDANO (below)
Venus, Cupid and Mars, undated
One need only compare the Venus with a female nude by Annibale Carracci (see p. 187) to see how Giordano has infused the classicist tradition with the sensuality of Venetian art. Luca was consistent only in the zest with which he painted; he painted with great speed, being known as "Luca fa presto" (Luke quick-hand).



RAGGI
St Ignatius' Chapel, Il Gesù, 1683
Raggi's stucco sculptures, so rapturous in gesture, so turbulent in movement, set in such a rich setting, typify the increasingly decorative development of Bernini's union of all the arts revealed (see p. 190) in the Cornaro Chapel.



MARATTA (right)
The Virgin and Child with St Philip Neri, c. 1690
Maratta was the leading painter in Rome, and his prestige was enormous. He continued the classicizing trend of Andrea Sacchi, who taught him: his version of this subject is much more sober than that of the Neapolitan Solimena.



In Naples the prototype artist of the new fashion was Luca Giordano (1634-1705). Probably a pupil of Ribera, and therefore an heir to the Caravaggesque tradition, he became an endlessly inventive and prolific virtuoso in many styles, approaching each project as a problem to be solved by the application of whatever style might seem most fitting. Luca borrowed ideas impartially from the Venetians or from Pietro da Cortona, from Rembrandt or Dürer. He led a life typical of the leading late Baroque and Rococo artists, answering the calls of patronage wherever they might promise most richly; thus he worked in Naples, Madrid, Rome, Florence and Venice. His longest stay was in Madrid, where he was painter to the Spanish king for ten years from 1692, and where he decorated ceilings in the Escorial (not shown). He was succeeded in Naples by Francesco Solimena (1657-1747), who tended to revise Giordano's spirited manner back to a more sober reliance on academic drawing and composition, though his pictures were still often dashing painted.

In Venice the major exponent of the late Baroque style was Sebastiano Ricci (1659-1734). Early study in Bologna, Parma and

Rome established him in a tradition of relatively solid modelling, which he never entirely abandoned, but to it he brought a fluent bravura and a freedom of movement that he had learnt from older Venetian painters. He pitched his colour and tone ever higher in key, towards that magical luminosity and heady atmosphere for which Venetian eighteenth-century decorative painting soon became internationally renowned, above all in the work of Tiepolo (see over). In his verve, and his intelligent and wide-ranging eclecticism, he is the Venetian parallel to Luca Giordano, and like him was mobile, working in Milan, Vienna, Bergamo and Florence as well as in Venice. Quite late in life, for four years from 1712, he was in London with his nephew Marco Ricci (1676-1730), and then in Paris, where he met Watteau, and copied some of his paintings. He and Marco, often collaborating, answered the taste of Europeans on the "Grand Tour" of Italy for landscapes, and they were early practitioners of the *capriccio*, or "ruinscape".

The more classicistic strain in Venetian painting is better exemplified by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (1683-1753): he worked, in a

more staid and "academic" manner, not on grand decorations but mostly on altarpieces, and was firmly resident in Venice, where his large studio became an influential school. He, too, had been trained in Bologna, where the early work of Guercino made an impression on him, and he continued to rely on solid but dramatic modelling. His initially fairly sombre key (sometimes exploiting a Caravaggesque *chiaroscuro*) lightened in the 1730s. There was a large demand, especially from abroad, for his pastoral genre works (see p. 244).

In the eighteenth century foreign commissions, not only for genre and landscapes, not only for easel-pictures but also for ceiling paintings, became increasingly important for Italian artists. They provided the main market for Venetian painters in particular, and many of the most gifted were prepared to travel extensively to fulfil them. Like the Riccis, Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini (1675-1741; not shown) was peripatetic, working in Baroque palaces and country houses in England, Austria and Germany; so were Jacopo Amigoni (1682-1752) and others, all exporting a brilliant, hedonistic idiom of decoration, which often has clear affinities with French Rococo.

SEBASTIANO RICCI (right)
*Pope Paul III reconciles
Francis I with Charles V*,
1686-88
Reference to Titian's *Paul
III* (see p. 143) explains the
oddly Mannerist elongation.

SOLIMENA (below)
*The Virgin and Child with
St Philip Neri*, 1725-30
Solimena created majestic,
dramatically lit altarpieces,
influential and in demand
both in Naples and abroad.



PIAZZETTA (right)
*The Adoration of the
shepherds*, c. 1725
In an era that rejoiced in
bravura, Piazzetta's art was
intense and introspective.
His figures are quite firmly
modelled – in a style learned
not in Venice but in Bologna
– yet they are enlivened by
highly tactile dragged brush-
strokes. The flickering light
and shade are Caravaggesque,
but make the figures more
homely than monumental.



SEBASTIANO AND MARCO
RICCI (right)
*Allegorical tomb for the
Duke of Devonshire*, c. 1720
The Riccis' agglomerations
of items from the classical
past were a precedent for
the *capricci* of Canaletto or
Panini (see p. 254). This
was one of a series, orga-
nized by an impresario, Owen
McSwiny, of "tombs" for the
leading English Whigs – in
fact pastiches of well-known
antiquities combined with
gratifying allusions to the
coats of arms and achieve-
ments of the living patrons.

AMIGONI (below)
Venus and Adonis,
c. 1740-47
Amigoni's figures, clothed
in an aura of frailty, are
sweet and pure. There is
much that recalls Titian,
but the mood, and the high
key of colour, are Rococo.



Tiepolo: The Residenz at Würzburg

One of the most spectacular achievements of eighteenth-century art is the decorative ensemble of about 1750 in the Prince-Bishop's Palace, or Residenz, at Würzburg. It is the work of the great German architect Balthasar Neumann and the last of the great Venetian painters, Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770), and its two main elements are the staircase, or *Treppenhaus*, and the salon, or *Kaisersaal*.

In the *Kaisersaal* marble, gold, stucco and glass come together with the colour, light and fluency of Tiepolo's paint to achieve a masterpiece of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, that union of the arts that lacks only music to become opera. On the ceiling are painted incidents from the life of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, who had invested the Bishop of Würzburg in 1168 – almost in the Dark Ages. In Tiepolo's interpretation the action is transported into the sixteenth century, into the Venetian costume of Veronese, and has been rendered incandescent with light. The ceiling shows an exultant Apollo conducting across the heavens a triumphal chariot bearing Beatrice of Burgundy towards Frederick, her husband-to-be, who is enthroned on a steeply towering edifice on the other side, while Glory with a flaming torch hovers above. The *Treppenhaus*, with its complex iconography, *Olympus with the four quarters of the Earth*, is hardly less luminous.

Tiepolo's art in his maturity was the consummation of Baroque fresco, as complex and inventive as that of any of his predecessors, yet controlled and disposed with crystal clarity. The illusion in the *Kaisersaal* is complete – from the real, solid floor the eye travels up into the intricacies of art and so to the apparent dissolution both of the real and of art: the gilt stucco, now real, now a painted imitation indistinguishable from the real, melts into a heaven flooded with light and with an air that is almost breathable. Tiepolo's magic is most telling in the foreshortened horses that surge across the sky; their ancestors are to be found in Reni, Guercino (see p. 185) or Giordano, but only Tiepolo could inspire the spectator with a sense of almost interplanetary "lift-off". The glorious white creatures retain all their physical and massive presence, yet are superbly and triumphantly indifferent to gravity. In the frescos on the walls Tiepolo had less scope for such aerial heights of fantasy, and presented the scenes on stages revealed behind heavy curtains raised by angels; yet the quality of painting is equally high, and illusion interpenetrates reality equally deftly.

Tiepolo's earlier work had been influenced by the sculptural modelling and heavy chiaroscuro of his older contemporary Piazzetta, and was mostly in oil. Fresco, with the opportunity

for working over vast areas at great speed, released his genius, and for it he developed his characteristic high tonal key, within which he could make even his shadows glow with light. His frescos, whether religious or secular, are so joyfully radiant that to some nineteenth-century critics they seemed intolerably frivolous. There is no doubt, however, of Tiepolo's religious sincerity. Later in his life a strain of melancholy became stronger and his altarpieces could strike a grave and elegiac mood, for instance in the ashen blues of the *modello* for an altarpiece of *St Thecla* for the Cathedral at Este. Yet the overwhelming impact of his art is its heart-lifting colour and light.

At the end of his career, in the service of Charles III in Madrid, his aerial perspectives became even more free, his figures sporting in their heavens became as light as bubbles in champagne, but this climax was attended by indications that new fashions were on the way. His almost equally brilliant son and collaborator, Domenico, painting in fresco what was in fact genre at the Villa Valmarana (see p. 244), was by 1757 "burying the Grand Manner right under his father's vigilant eye", as the historian Wittkower has put it, and the end of Tiepolo's life in Madrid was clouded by lapse from favour, when the King came to prefer the Neoclassical manner of Mengs.

TIEPOLO (below)
Abraham visited by the angels, c. 1732
Even after Tiepolo had developed his light-filled fresco style, he retained a more sombre and emphatic approach (conditioned in part by the medium) in his large-scale canvases in oils.



TIEPOLO (left)
St Thecla delivering the city of Este from the plague, 1759
Instead of the typically Baroque drama of the early altarpieces, Tiepolo's late *modelli*, or prior sketches, for religious canvases show airy, shimmering brushwork. (He left the full-scale work to be done by assistants.) They are, however, more solemn than his frescos – in approach recognizably Counter-Reformation art.

TIEPOLO (right)
The banquet of Cleopatra and Anthony, detail of the Palazzo Labia ballroom, 1745-50
The greatest influence on Tiepolo was Veronese: his complex illusionism at the Villa Maser (see p. 379) and the animated spectacle of his famous vast *Banquet* pictures lie behind the Palazzo Labia frescos.



TIEPOLO (right)
Olympus with the four quarters of the Earth, detail of the ceiling of the *Treppenhaus*, Würzburg, 1752-53
Tiepolo exalts the four continents then known – Africa, Europe, America, Asia – in a cosmorama of races, costumes, flora and fauna, in which mythical and allegorical figures commingle with living persons. Apollo, in the middle, pays homage before the portrait of the Prince-Bishop. The group below, symbolizing Europe, includes the artist and his son Domenico.



TIEPOLO
America, in the *Treppenhaus*, Würzburg
On each of the four walls

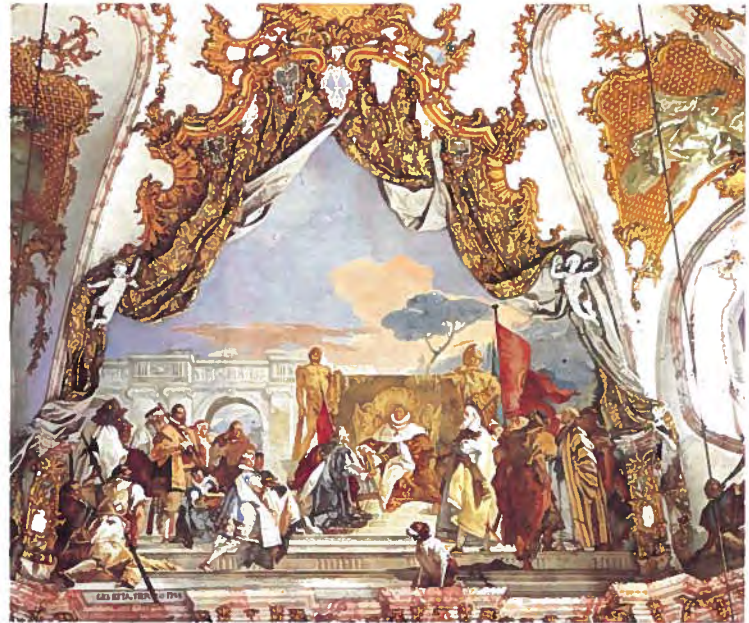
is represented a continent: this splendid woman in a feathered head-dress is the personification of America.



NEUMANN AND TIEPOLO
(above) The Kaisersaal in
the Residenz, Würzburg,
1751-52

TIEPOLO (below)
*Apollo leads Beatrice
to Barbarossa*, in the
Kaisersaal, Würzburg

TIEPOLO (right)
*The marriage of Beatrice
and Barbarossa*, in the
Kaisersaal, Würzburg



French and German Rococo

The word “Rococo” appears to derive from the French *rocaille*, perhaps in a kind of rhyming analogy with *barocco* (the Portuguese word for an irregular pearl, and arguably the source of the word “Baroque”). *Rocaille* means literally “rock work”, but Rococo has come to describe primarily a style of decoration exploiting irregular or at least asymmetrical forms, and shell, rock or plant motifs linked by C- and S-scrolls. This style of interior decoration developed in France in reaction to the grandiose formality of Louis XIV’s reign, and its roots were in the “grotesque” ornament of Italy and in the decorative tradition of the school of Fontainebleau, which had never entirely faded during the seventeenth century – it had been sustained by illustrators and especially perhaps by theatrical designers.

The dividing line between Baroque and Rococo is as difficult to establish as the exact moment when the surge of a wave breaks into its own spray. Rococo continues the movement of the Baroque, but tends to fragment it and to express itself on a smaller scale (even, at its most elegant, a miniature one); the surface becomes all-important; monumentality and pomp give way to relative informality, to

gaiety and often to frivolity. In painting and sculpture, these stylistic qualities are to be found with a correspondingly less solemn subject matter – characteristically Rococo are mandarins in spindly pagodas, cavorting monkeys and shepherds and shepherdesses in pastoral idylls. It coincides with a new current in French manners and morals, and embodies the sensitive and highly sophisticated feeling for the visual arts of a society that valued elegance and artifice and light-hearted wit. Although Watteau (see preceding page) is always called a Rococo artist and indeed has some essential characteristics of the style, his underlying seriousness of mood transcends it. The archetypal painter of the French Rococo was François Boucher (1703–70).

Boucher began his career making engravings of Watteau’s pictures, but during four years spent in Italy (1727–31) learnt much from Veronese and Tiepolo: though he was never to attempt the scale and sweep of the Grand Manner, his characteristic palette of light but rich pastel colours reflects Tiepolo’s impact. In France, his most steadfast patron was the highly influential royal mistress Madame de Pompadour, whom he portrayed

many times (see over). She induced him to extend his range to the designing of ambitious decorative schemes for the royal châteaux, and of spectacular stage productions; his resulting involvement with tapestry design brought him the directorship of the Gobelins factory, and in due course he became the King’s painter. In his pictures, he transformed classical mythology into scenes of erotic gallantry, copiously populated with nubile nudes (some of whom were recognizable to contemporaries as fashionable beauties of the court). His apparently effortless erotic charm is, however, based on a formidably sure draughtsmanship. If in mood and colour he was both repetitive and unfailingly artificial, his execution was always brilliant and his inventiveness inexhaustible. He perfectly answered the needs of the sophisticated society of Louis XV’s reign, even though after 1760 changing taste found him unserious and even immoral – the critic Diderot reluctantly admired his art as “*un vice si agréable*” (so delightfully wicked).

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) was briefly and not happily Chardin’s pupil, and then more aptly Boucher’s. Like Boucher, he saw Tiepolo’s work in Italy, and was a protégé



BOUCHER (left)
Vulcan presenting the arms of Aeneas to Venus, 1732
In the years up to about 1750 Boucher painted a large number of unheroic mythological pictures, all vigorous, erotic, poetic and decorative – they were in fact part of decorative schemes. In these qualities he is the intimate, informal equivalent of Tiepolo.



BOUCHER (right)
Diana bathing, 1742
The mythological settings eventually became no more than a pretext for painting gorgeous female nudes, set off, as here, by glowing draperies and a fine still life at bottom right.



FRAGONARD (left)
Music, or M. de la Bretèche, 1769
The inscription states that the picture was painted in one hour. It is a sketch, but the characterization is fully realized, and the light and shade finely gradated; in its bravura handling it recalls Frans Hals, whom Fragonard greatly admired.



FRAGONARD (right)
Women bathing, 1777
Painted *alla prima* in a blend of translucent thin washes and dense impasto, this picture by Fragonard recalls the brushwork and curvilinear composition of Rubens – see the nymphs in *The disembarkation of Marie de Médicis* (p. 411). In the emphatic bare bottom there is conscious prurience.

of Madame de Pompadour. His themes, in their erotic gaiety, often have much in common with Boucher's, and appealed to the same clientèle, but his style developed differently: more like Watteau, he responded to the colour and free handling of Rubens and to the verve of Frans Hals. Though his pictures are often full of creams and pinks, they are never merely pretty effervescences: the dash and fluent freedom of his brushwork find their nearest counterparts in Gainsborough and Goya, and there is usually an edge of prurience or satire. Like Boucher, he sometimes delighted in nostalgic landscapes, with or without ruins, which can seem precociously romantic in mood, like the landscapes and "ruinscapes" of his gifted friend Hubert Robert (1733-1808).

The French Rococo style was exported by itinerant French artists, but also, through engravings, by a new generation of virtuoso printmakers. It influenced all Europe – it was only in England that it was not so pervasive. In Germany, however, particularly Catholic south Germany, Rococo took its own distinct form. It flowered relatively late but continued longer, from about the second quarter of the century to its end, and it was religious rather



HUET (above)
The monkeys' salon, 1735
Christophe Huet (died 1759) was a master of the informal decorative scheme,

using to good effect the graceful and light-hearted arabesque, chinoiserie and *singerie* ("monkey-game") that typify Rococo décor.

than secular. Often, in its large scale and even massiveness, and particularly in its fascination with spatial complexities, it was very much within the framework of Baroque; many indigenous artists had been trained in Italy, or had visited it, while Italians from Padre Pozzo to Tiepolo had brought Italian Baroque north. There was also, not to be ignored, already a strong tradition of stucco decoration in south Germany, and an established delight in light, bright tonalities and colours.

These chief factors combined to produce an exuberant and heady hybrid, and especially brilliant concerts of the arts in the Catholic churches. Artists such as the Zimmermann brothers, Dominikus (1685-1766) and Johann Baptist (1680-1758), and the Asam brothers, Cosmas Damian (1686-1739) and Egid Quirin (1692-1750), produced interior spectacles unsurpassed in their kind anywhere. They introduced visual opera (even at times visual musical comedy) into the repertoire of church décor. The exhilarating, airy and spacious effects obtained, often in small churches, are usually combined with a sweet simplicity, and in the artful sophistication of the Asams there was remarkable religious sincerity.

ROBERT (right)

Felling trees at Versailles, 1778?

Robert had visited Italy with Fragonard, and his landscapes, with their ruins, frond-like trees and tiny figures, have an Italianate charm. Also a landscape gardener, he designed some of the parks at Versailles.



THE ASAM BROTHERS

(below) The altar of the church of Maria Victoria, Ingolstadt, 1734

The close derivation from Roman Baroque is clear, but here the brothers have chosen delicate colours in a high key rather than rich marbling or dramatic light. Every inch is decorated.



ST NICHOLAS MALA STRARIA, PRAGUE (below)
Detail of the upper nave, frescoed 1760-61

Swirling movement and an interplay of advancing and receding masses surround the delightfully posturing figures in the Jesuit church.



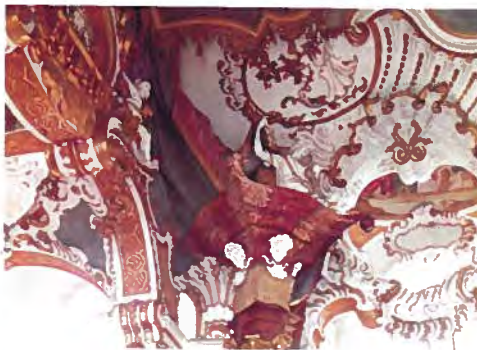
THE ASAM BROTHERS

(right) St John Nepomuk, 1733-46

The skilful relationship of sculpture to architecture creates a sense of spacious grandeur in this church, set on a tiny site next to Egid Quirin Asam's own house.



THE ZIMMERMANN BROTHERS
Detail of the ceiling of Die Wies, Bavaria, 1745-54



The church was stuccoed by Dominikus with luxuriant, colourful fronds and scrolls proliferating asymmetrically.

French Rococo 2: Portraiture and Sculpture

By the time that Louis XIV died, in 1715, after more than 70 years on the throne of France, the pomp and splendour of Versailles had become old-fashioned, though it was still the pattern for most European courts. During the Regency (1715-23) of the Duke of Orleans, Versailles virtually closed down and the boy-king Louis XV was housed in the Tuileries in Paris. An aristocratic taste succeeded the royal one: instead of the palace, the private house became the frame of culture. It was here that Rococo belonged, which, as we have seen, was primarily a style of interior decoration – even the frame of a work of art had an importance, often equal to that of the work itself. Mirrors were never long out of sight in this scheme of things; in them the self-conscious denizens of the salons could confirm their elegance, and naturally the portraitists flourished.

Two long-lived and superb professionals had become established in the previous reign, Rigaud, who had painted the aging Louis XIV (see p. 199) and Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746). Rigaud continued to paint the court, but Largillière's clientèle was as much middle-class as aristocratic, though the flourishing *haute bourgeoisie* aspired to an elegance hardly

less lavish; Largillière also painted sumptuous still lifes (see over). Although both artists answered the continuing demand for the formal "parade" portrait, their work shows the start of a clear movement away from the stupendous and magnificent towards the lively and informal. Their portraiture was always conditioned by the need of their clients to be seen at their best, but the gestures become less grandiose and robes, wigs and lace are more negligently agitated. The fashion for presenting sitters in allegorical terms – the females particularly, as the heroines or goddesses of some classical mythology, clothed in becoming (and sometimes rather scanty) fancy dress – continued to flourish. This element of role-playing, stemming especially from the Baroque portraiture of van Dyck, and prevailing also in Holland and England (Largillière had worked in Lely's studio), was well suited to the make-believe society of Louis XV's Paris; its level could vary from the realms of the gods to the Arcadian idyll of milkmaids and shepherdesses later aped by Marie Antoinette.

Following Largillière and Rigaud, the leading portraitist was Jean-Marc Nattier (1685-1766), endlessly in demand both in Parisian



THE MEISSEN FACTORY (above) *The concerto*, c. 1760
Rococo was as much a mood as a style, affecting all the arts; indeed the fragile grace of porcelain attracted sculptors rather more than noble marble. Advances in techniques of firing and enamelling made possible such rich, deep and exquisite colours.

NATTIER (below)
Mlle Manon Balletti, 1757
The lady was the daughter of a successful actress of the Italian company in Paris. Nattier has enclosed her in an enchanting purity, suggesting palpitating flesh within the subdued colours of the rose and her gown.



LARGILLIÈRE (right)
The painter with his wife and daughter, c. 1700
Despite his daughter's airs, his wife's prim face and his own haughty mien, there is an easy informality about Largillière's family portrait. The artist-gentleman sits with gun, hunter and brace.



DROUAIS (below)
Comte and Chevalier de Choiseul, 1756
The Dauphin's two sons are dressed as Savoyards in national costume (of velvet, with gold buttons), beside a hurdy-gurdy. The spirit and mood prefigure Marie Antoinette's, enacting the tasks of a milkmaid in the dairy she had at Versailles.

CARRIERA (right)
Self-portrait with an image of the artist's sister, 1709
In a quick, skilled hand, coloured chalks, or pastels, can be both decorative and spontaneous; it is a most direct medium, in which loose squiggles, melting planes and soft colours are characteristic. Rosalba has a pastel chalk in the holder between her fingers.



high society and at Louis XV's court. In keeping with the scale of the salon or boudoir, he painted mainly head-and-shoulders or half-length portraits, often in elaborately carved oval frames. In his pastel colouring, and a certain soft (though usually vivacious) sweetness of expression, he reflects the influence of the Venetian painter Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757). Though she spent most of her life in Venice, where she was much in vogue among tourists, a visit to Paris from 1719 to 1721 was extremely successful, and the mood of her both elegant and intimate portraiture was carried on by most of the successful French portraitists of the time. The prolific Louis Tocqué (1696-1772; not shown), Nattier's son-in-law, even exported the style eastwards in extended visits to Russia and Denmark. Both Tocqué and the younger François-Hubert Drouais (1727-75) were patronized by the Dauphin, and the quintessence of their "feminine" style is illustrated in a series of portraits of Madame de Pompadour, who was also painted many times by her protégé Boucher. This kind of portraiture was often most successful less than life-size, and even on an almost miniature scale.

The artist, however, who reflected most

brilliantly the alert wit and sensibility of educated Parisian society, who could match its intellectual as well as its fashionable sparkle, was Maurice-Quentin de La Tour (1704-88). Following Carriera, he worked in pastel, and perhaps has hardly been surpassed in his ability to catch the movement of life in each particular sitter's features and gesture.

In sculpture, there was a parallel movement away from the grandiose and the monumental style of the established Baroque. Even though the production of classic statuary – that white progeny of nymphs, heroes and deities peopling the gardens of Versailles – did not entirely cease, the Rococo taste for the small-scale soon expressed itself. Most characteristic, perhaps, are the animated, rhythmic groups produced by the booming porcelain factories – Sèvres, Meissen and many others. Established sculptors began to produce terracotta models for mass-production. The trend is clearly illustrated in the work of Etienne-Maurice Falconet (1716-91), who began in monumental, classicizing terms, but gradually tempered especially his smaller works with a softer charm, often introducing markedly erotic overtones – almost the three-dimensional

equivalent of Boucher's painting. His style is seen at its most purely Rococo in the figures he made for the Sèvres factory, where he was director of sculpture from 1757 to 1766. He never entirely lost his interest in the monumental, however, and his most famous work, the bronze of *Peter the Great*, in St Petersburg, is heroic in scale and mood.

The culmination of erotic Rococo figure sculpture comes with Claude Michel, known as Clodion (1738-1814). There is a remarkable virtuosity in his flesh-pink terracottas, and a sensuality as rich as Boucher's, but fermented by a dynamism that can be compared to Fragonard's verve in paint. The portraiture of Quentin de La Tour had its counterpart in the busts of Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne the Younger (1704-78; not shown) or of Louis-François Roubiliac (c. 1705-62), a Huguenot from Lyons who, from about 1732, worked in England (his bust of Hogarth is illustrated on p. 248). Roubiliac, too, worked for a porcelain factory, in Chelsea, but his most spectacular works are his splendidly animated funerary monuments, which, on a simpler and smaller scale, sustain the rhetoric of the tradition stemming from Bernini.



BOUCHER (above)
Mme de Pompadour, 1759
Boucher's brush enhanced the charms of the King's famous mistress in a series of ravishing portraits. He also decorated her rooms in the same sumptuously weightless manner, soon dubbed "style Pompadour".

FALCONET (right)
Peter the Great, 1766-68
In depicting the Tsar on a horse rearing dramatically on a rock, Falconet kept alive the Baroque tradition that Bernini had brought to Louis XIV's Paris, and to which the Empire would return. But he obtained no such commission in France. To set the horse rearing – diminishing its support – was a great technical feat.



QUENTIN DE LA TOUR
(left) *M. Claude Dupouch*, 1739
La Tour's pastel portrait of his drawing-master, leaning so casually on the back of an armchair, seems as instant as a snapshot, but also conveys a warm and sympathetic presence.

FALCONET (right)
Erigone, 1747
Falconet's nymph, a model for a porcelain figurine, has an animated softness and warmth, which Falconet (as he stated in numerous essays, published in 1781) found to be lacking in the sculpture of antiquity.



CLODION (right)
Bacchante, c. 1760
The classicism is clear in the pose and attributes of this small terracotta. But it is transformed by a finesse, a flowing grace, a smooth, elegant titillation.



ROUBILIAC (right)
Monument to Lady Elizabeth Nightingale, 1761
Vainly her husband tries to save Lady Elizabeth from Death, leaping from below like a jack-in-the-box. The idea is taken from Bernini's tomb of Pope Clement VII in St Peter's (not shown).



Genre and Still-life Painting

By the eighteenth century pictures of small to medium size, in handsome but not too large urban houses, had become a normal and integral part of interior decoration. Already in the late seventeenth century Netherlandish immigrants in England are recorded supplying landscapes and other subjects for lintels or mantels at a fixed price per foot. It was above all in Holland, with its prosperous, middle-class society, that painters had explored the subject matter suitable for this sort of picture – the prosaic aspects of everyday life, landscape, still life and genre scenes, often with some anecdotal interest.

Although the ever-growing market for paintings was answered mainly by exercises in the conventions established by the Dutch, in virtually all countries there was already present an indigenous tradition. In Italy, a taste for genre is already apparent in the late fifteenth-century paintings of Carpaccio. Caravaggio had raised genre to high art; later, the Bolognese painter Giuseppe Maria Crespi (1665–1747; not shown) had reduced even the most solemn biblical themes to the terms of peasant life, in humble, indeed sordid settings. Crespi's many pupils included the Venetians

Pietro Longhi (1702–85) and Giambattista Piazzetta (see p. 235), and even in his altarpieces, in the restraint of their colour and their rustic characterizations, Piazzetta seems nearer to genre than to Baroque exaltation. Throughout his career he also painted and made finished genre drawings, especially half-lengths and heads of peasant characters, which were widely popular, and about 1740 painted some highly evocative and mysterious pictures, hovering between allegory and genre.

Pietro Longhi, on the other hand, was the daily chronicler of incident and gossip in the pleasure-loving and carnival-going Venetian society of his time, and worked in a much more Dutch vein. His little paintings, haunted by black-swathed revellers in white-beaked masks, have a repertoire ranging from such trivia as a visit to the doctor to more exotic, headline-catching events – such as the visit to Venice of a rhinoceros. Then Giandomenico Tiepolo (1727–1804), the son and collaborator of the great Giambattista, raised genre to a grander scale in his frescos for the Villa Valmarana near Vicenza. Here, as in Longhi, there is no more than an occasional spice of satire, and their mood is almost mysterious,



DOMENICO TIEPOLO (above)
The winter promenade, 1757
In the 18th century the boundary between genre and "history" painting was slowly eroded; the process was completed in the 19th. Domenico's subjects – this is one of a pair representing Summer and Winter – were thought suitable only for the guest house of the Villa Valmarana. Delight in trivial details of everyday life is thinly disguised in an allegory of the Seasons.

PIAZZETTA (right)
The fortune-teller, 1740
The figures are portrayed with something of the ripe sentimentalism that made Murillo's *Urchins* popular. The clear suggestiveness of the figures' gestures is in accord with the Rococo love of tastefully prurient pictures of peasant girls in states of *déshabillé*.



TROOST (below)
The city garden, c. 1742
Troost is often compared to Hogarth, with whom he was exactly contemporary, but he lacks Hogarth's moral intention. This charming, highly finished painting, which combines a Rococo elegance with elements of traditional Dutch genre, is a tribute to a new concept of civilized, bourgeois living.



LONGHI (left)
The rhinoceros, 1751
Longhi's paintings have an airless quality, reflecting the claustrophobia of upper-class life in Venice – the "parade of appearances", as Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's librettist, called it. Manners and dress are described with unremitting decorousness.



LARGILLIERE (left)
Still life, c. 1690
Largillière was trained in the Flemish tradition under Lely in London, and the heaped-up sumptuousness, the rich textures, even the dog in movement beneath, all recall Flemish still life.

LOUDRY (right)
The white duck, 1753
The accuracy of natural detail reflects a growing scientific interest in the world, and in the late 18th century private menageries became popular. Oudry is best known for his still life with virtuoso surface effects, though his book illustrations are notable, and he had a successful career as a designer at the famous Gobelins factory.



strangely poised between the comic and the melancholic; his astonishingly original tumblers, clowns and other figures seem to foreshadow not only Goya but also early Picasso.

A host of painters in Holland pursued the themes set in the seventeenth century. Many were capable, but none was of great originality, with the exception perhaps of Cornelis Troost (1697-1750), who recorded little portrait and genre groups with a charming, somewhat Italianate, elegance. In France, Dutch and Flemish genre and still-life paintings were collected with avidity, and some French artists, such as Largillière, the portraitist (see preceding page), painted brilliant still lifes of dead game in a very Flemish manner. France produced the supreme master of still life, the painter who seems both to sum up and to transcend the achievements of his predecessors in Holland, Chardin (see over). Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755), a pupil of Largillière, early on developed a distinct style, depending little on the Netherlandish traditions – light and open, with a most subtle command of tone: he specialized in game pieces for the royal hunting lodges, and in the most delicate modulation of white on white.

It was in France, too, that genre themes with a moral sentiment found for a time an appreciative audience. The leading master was Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805). From 1755 on, he produced a long series of subject pictures, the nature of which is indicated by their titles (such as *The grandfather reading the Bible to his family*, or *The paralytic tended by his children*). In these he attempted to reconcile the values of genre with those of “history” or epic painting, while in mood he answered the “sensitivity” of the time – that ready compassion and eager emotional conscience characteristic of the 1760s and 1770s, of a society a generation away from revolution. Greuze’s “sensitivity”, his moralizing and sentimental didacticism, was exactly in key with the theories of the leading writer on art, Denis Diderot (1713-84), who diagnosed in Greuze “the painter of virtue and the saviour from moral degradation”. In a sense, Greuze reacted against the frivolities of the followers of Watteau, and his compositions, emphatic with meaningful gesture, paying homage to Poussin, foreshadow the Neoclassicism of David. Yet his single-figure studies of girls and children have a sometimes mawkish sweetness that is another aspect of

the erotic taste of the Rococo. His influence in Europe, propagated by engravings, was enormous, and inspired much of the sentimental genre of the nineteenth century.

Many of Greuze’s genre figures are portraits, and some qualities of genre could also be applied to portraiture, notably small-scale group portraiture. The “conversation piece”, in which the sitters are seen in their domestic setting, engaged in some leisurely pastime, was essentially a Dutch invention but became an English speciality, associated above all with William Hogarth (see p. 248). The conversation piece reflected pride in family and property, the secure status of a prosperous landed gentry and merchant class, and many artists exploited it in the eighteenth century. Arthur Devis (1711-87) is the “primitive” among them, preserving his rather doll-like sitters with awkward charm in a silvery silence; both Francis Hayman (1708-76) and the young Gainsborough (see p. 252) produced masterpieces in the genre. Hayman also painted bucolic allegories and scenes from the stage; Hogarth, however, was the restless, endlessly inventive master of genre, extending its capacity to story-telling and biting satire.



GREUZE (left)
The son punished, c. 1777
The over-emphatic effects may be due to Greuze's study of the theatre. The wicked son returns to find his father dying – as at the end of a play: one expects the actors to cease their posturing and take a bow.

DEVIS (below)
The James family, 1752
The figures are presented in quiet isolation before a landscape: this so-called conversation piece is an inventory of family and possessions, more Rococo than robust in the grand old tradition of Kneller.



GREUZE (left)
The broken pitcher, c. 1773
The artist's beautiful but heartless wife, Gabrielle Balbuty, posed for this unambiguous allegory of lost innocence. Greuze does not hesitate to titillate while mourning for her virtue.

HAYMAN (right)
The wrestling scene from Shakespeare's As You Like It, c. 1744
Figures and setting reflect the staging conventions of contemporary theatre. This is an early example of the later vogue for paintings and prints of episodes in plays.



Landscape: View-Painting and the Grand Tour

Landscape painting in its own right, established in the seventeenth century, persisted and ramified during the eighteenth, although the supreme example of the great Dutch masters was not to be taken much further until the early nineteenth century, by Constable. In topography, the major contribution came from Venice. The subject matter was urban rather than rural, but the stones of Venice, rising like a dream from the waters of the lagoon, are no ordinary urban prose. Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768) was the finest transcriber of its poetry on to canvas.

Canaletto began by painting views in a broad and dramatic style, very far from picture postcards. The masterpiece of this phase is *The stonemason's yard* of about 1730. The view is of S. Maria della Carità, now the Accademia, Venice's famous gallery. The focus, however, is more on the activity in the foreground; there is a feeling almost of genre. Canaletto's later, more familiar pictures show the Venetian scene more grandly; they are set pieces displaying her architectural splendours, drawn with the greatest accuracy but also, at their best, capturing the atmosphere of the city – her light, air, water and sky – in glorious harmony.

Venice had been for some time a magnet for tourism, and tourism of a grand and moneyed kind: the well-to-do of all northern Europe might spend two or three years of their youth on the Grand Tour, of which the prime goal was Italy, and in Italy Rome and then Venice. This steady stream provided the greater number of Canaletto's patrons, and when his clients could not come to him, because of war, he had to go to them – hence, probably, his sojourns in England, 1746-56, revealing London as radiant as Venice, in Venetian weather. In England, his work produced several competent imitators, while the peripatetic Bernardo Bellotto (1720-80; not shown), his very able nephew and pupil, exported his style to Germany, Austria and Poland.

Canaletto's equivalent in Rome was Giovanni Paolo Panini (c. 1692-1765), recording contemporary Rome and its ceremonial but also, for the fashionable, classically-minded tourist, its archaeology. He painted ruins in the same mood of inquisitive awe that set Gibbon to write *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He also popularized the *capriccio*, or "ruinscape", grouping several famous monuments of antiquity together in one compo-

TISCHBEIN (below)
Goethe in the Campagna,
1787

Goethe's *Italian Journeys*,
printed in 1816, is the best
account of a Grand Tour.



CANALETTO (left)
The stonemason's yard,
c. 1730
Warm, luminous tones
envelop the concentrated
detail; Canaletto's views
could be much drier later.
The picturesque ramshackle
and domestic disorder of the
foreground are a glimpse of
a working Venice "behind
the scenes", and could even
be compared with Cornelis
Troost's genre (see p. 244).



CANALETTO (right)
The Arch of Constantine,
Rome, 1742
Canaletto re-created the
scene from studies made
on an earlier visit to Rome:
five such views were bought
by the English consul in
Venice, Joseph Smith, his
chief patron. Smith was
the connection by which
Canaletto came to England.

PIRANESI (right)
*View of the Villa of
Maecenas at Tivoli*,
c. 1760-65
Piranesi's highly influential
Vedute di Roma (Views of
Rome) began to appear in
about 1748. Many of the
plates faithfully recorded
archaeological minutiae;
others evoke a Romantic

vision of departed Rome:
primeval ruins rear heroic
against the assaults of Time
and Nature; diminutive
troglodytes, refugees from
Arcadia, caper among them.
Piranesi defended Roman
art against the preference
given by Winckelmann to
the Greeks, stressing the
awe and grandeur of Rome.



PANINI (left)
The interior of St Peter's,
Rome, 1731
The tiny figures and the
dramatic viewpoint, ampli-
fying the grandeur of the
architecture, are typical
of Panini's views of ancient
and modern Rome, which
transform the eternal city
into a colossal stage-set.

PIRANESI (right)
Etching from the *Carceri
d'Invenzione* (Imaginary
prisons), c. 1745
Exploring a theme set by
earlier stage designers,
notably the Bibiena family,
Piranesi gave a Romantic
scope to his imagination,
using dizzying perspectives
to create haunting scenes.



sition, offering the tourist three or more for the price of one. The tourists were eager buyers and Panini's work was exported all over Europe. Canaletto also made *capricci*, sometimes of juxtaposed ruins, sometimes purely fanciful picturesque concoctions. Probably more influential than either, however, was Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78), whose etchings were best-sellers well into the next century. His dramatic use of light and shade is strikingly successful in his famous *Views of Rome*, but even more so in his fantastic and vertiginous *Carceri d'Invenzione* (Imaginary prisons), begun about 1745.

These found a ready response with the Romantics, but Piranesi was also a learned (though controversial) archaeologist and a seminal influence on the growth of Neoclassicism. His *Views* were the source from which cultivated Europeans, especially if they had not been to Rome, formed their image of the eternal city. The preoccupations of the visitors are crystallized in the portrait of the greatest of them all, Goethe, by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein (1751-1829). The poet is shown, half-reclining in contemplation, in the lowlands outside Rome, the Campagna:

here is antiquity, the fragment of a classical frieze trailing a grape-heavy vine of today.

Not only Grand Tourists but artists came to Rome; in fact artists swarmed to it, to stay for years at a time, sometimes for ever. Their studios formed part of the sightseers' round, and in them the Claudean tradition, the expatriate vision of an ideal Italy, was also sustained. Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-89) was for years in Rome, and, when he went back to France, applied a fairly pure version of Claude's style to a royal commission to paint the French ports. The Venetian painter Francesco Zuccarelli (1702-88; not shown) exported a more sentimental, Rococo variant to London, where he was more popular than his friend, the Welsh Richard Wilson (1713-82). After some years in Rome in the 1750s, Wilson applied classical principles, an austere and grave dignity, to British landscape, in classics of a kind not known before, accurate in the particular, but raising the particular to the ideal, the general. British patrons, however, preferred their landscapes to come from abroad, and their real contribution lay in their treatment of the landscape itself: a succession of highly gifted landscape gardeners trans-

posed damp English earth into visions of Arcadian pastoral – an ordering of nature based on classical principle, but inspiring a distinctly Romantic nostalgia.

British patronage failed likewise adequately to support the landscapes of Thomas Gainsborough. Gainsborough, who had early captured a Suffolk harvest countryside that one can almost smell (see preceding page), moved thence to a more Rococo sophistication, acknowledging Dutch example. In this he abandoned descriptive portraiture (referring a prospective patron to the topographical artist, Paul Sandby (1725-1809; not shown), a seminal watercolourist). Gainsborough's mature landscapes are almost the equivalent of musical improvisations; as a starting-point for the composition he might arrange sticks, stones and scraps of foliage on a table.

Gainsborough's rhythm and felicity of colour had in some degree a Venetian counterpart in the work of Francesco Guardi (1712-93). Not so successful as Canaletto's, Guardi's visions of Venice as a figment of dream materializing amidst the irradant mist and sky of the lagoon would find a more sympathetic response in eyes used to Impressionism.



VERNET (above)
View of the Bay of Naples, 1742
Low, flat, panoramic seashores had been painted by Salvator Rosa and others. Vernet's are freer in handling, lighter in tone, rather more atmospheric.



WILSON (right)
Snowdon, c. 1770
Wilson has interpreted the Welsh mountain and its crater-like lake in a mood of classical calm. He was active just before Britons discovered the Picturesque in their native landscape.



GAINSBOROUGH (above)
"Cornard Wood", c. 1748
The wood is probably not a real one; Gainsborough stressed that landscape

painting was a creative act. It can be compared both to Dutch and to French landscapes, but notable is the liveliness of the light.

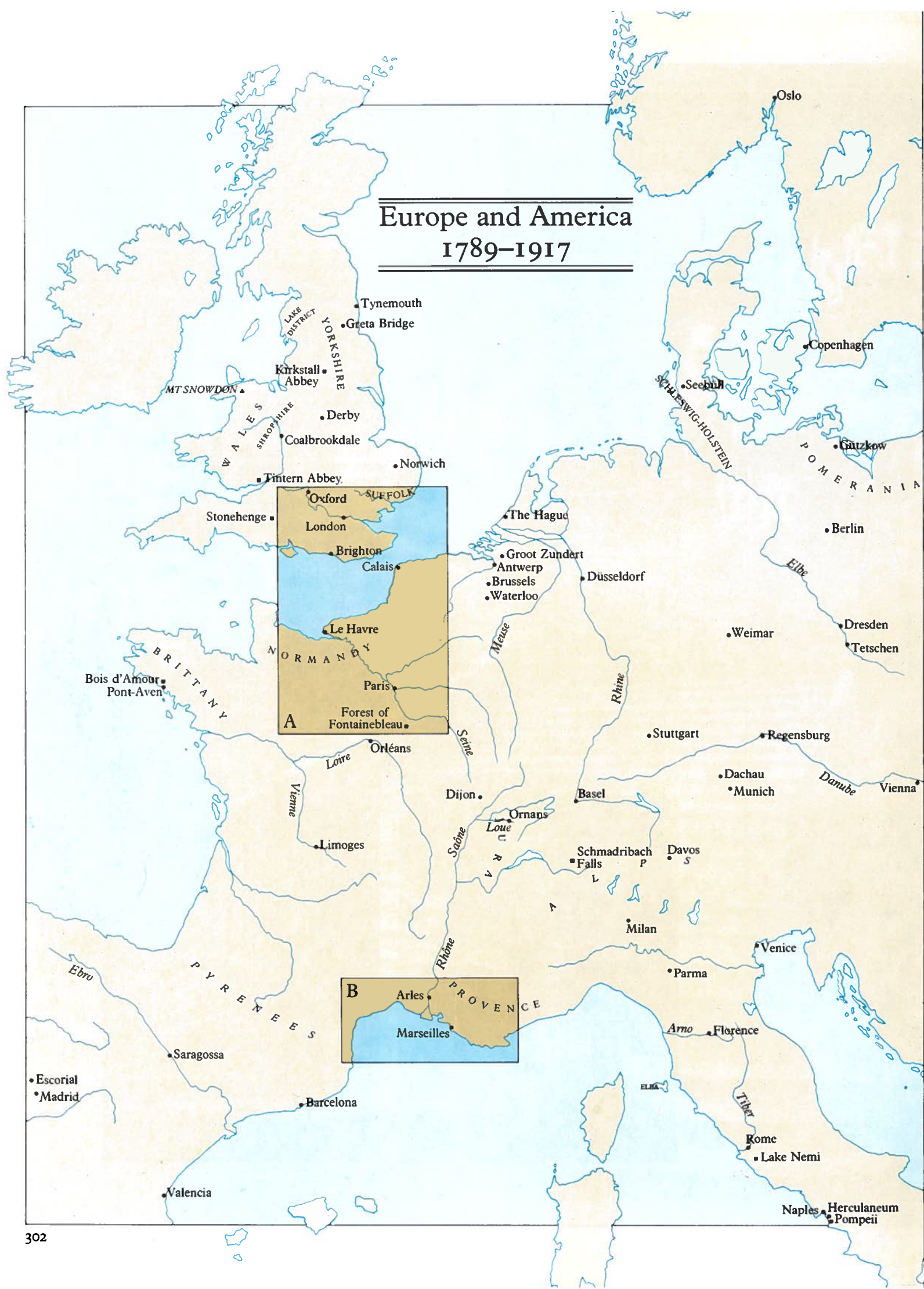


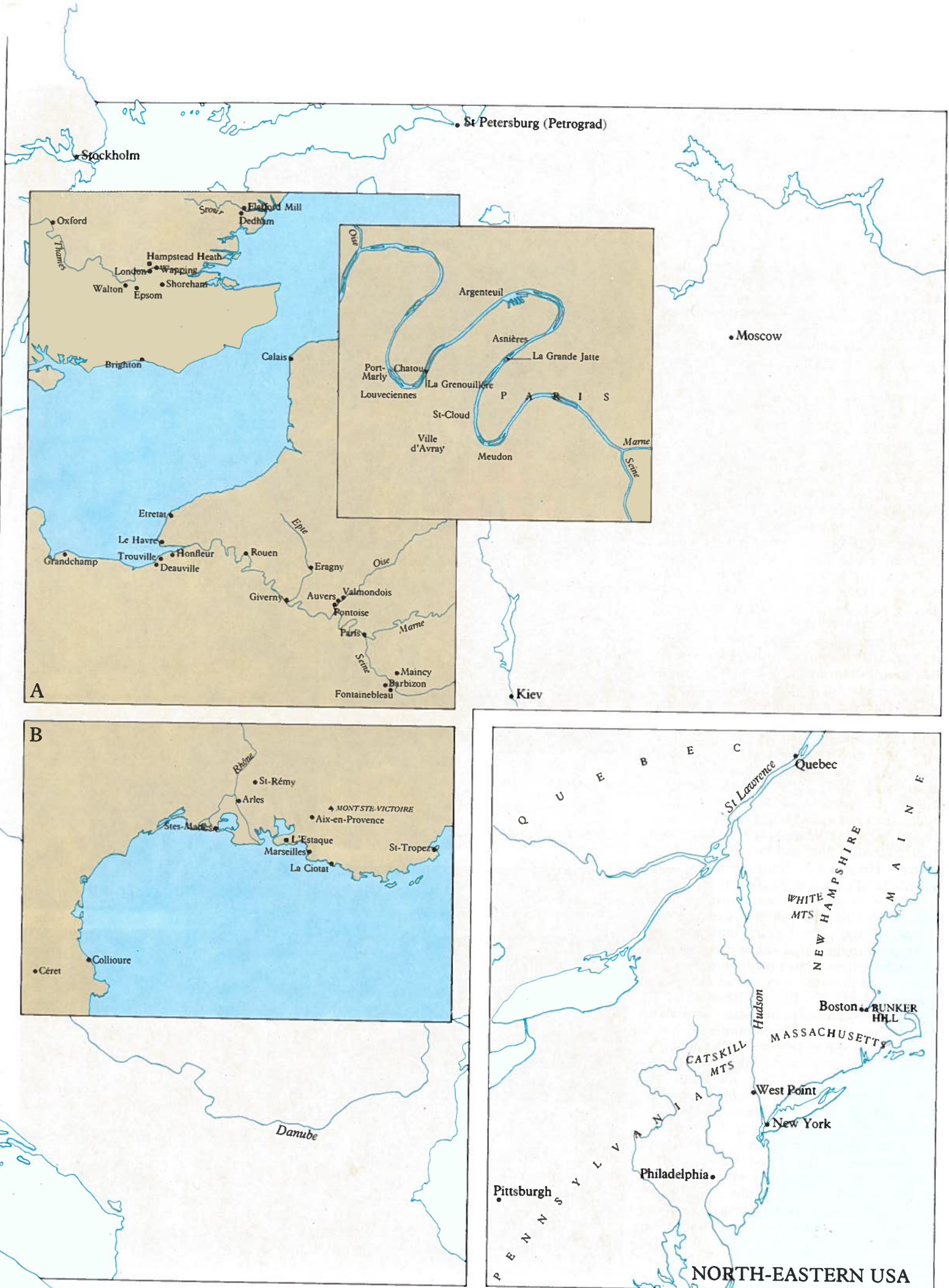
STOURHEAD, WILTSHIRE
View of the park
The temple is straight out of a Claude painting (see p. 197). The park was created in the mid-18th century by a banker with a good collection of Claudes.



GUARDI (right)
View of a canal, c. 1750
Guardi's sketchily painted, often rather low-life scenes of Venice are as delicate as Chinese landscapes. His choice of views, sometimes seemingly fragments, also anticipates Impressionism.

Europe and America 1789-1917





David: The Oath of the Horatii

The movement called “Neoclassicism” is discernible from about 1760, and it reached its climax in the paintings of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) and the sculptures (see p. 308) of Canova between about 1780 and 1800. Though reference back to the example of classical antiquity was nothing very novel, it had seldom been so wide-ranging and so detailed; Neoclassical artists sought anew the underlying principles of ancient art, and their motivation was often highly moral. Neoclassicism was perhaps the first movement in Western art to put theory before practice.

Knowledge of classical painting and furniture in particular had been greatly extended by the steady growth of excavations in Italy. In 1738 Herculaneum was discovered, Pompeii in 1748; and there was a wave of fashion for things classical, or classical-looking. Although it was later to embody a revulsion against the pretty frivolities of Rococo, early Neoclassicism handled its antique look with distinctly Rococo sentiment – for example in the paintings of David’s teacher Joseph Vieu (1716–1809). The immensely influential Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), the first of the great German art historians, was the prophet of the nobler lessons to be learnt from classical art. He found his ideal in Greek art as opposed to Roman, and diagnosed the essence of Greek beauty as “noble simplicity and serene grandeur”. His friend and fellow-German in Rome, Anton Raphael Mengs (1728–79), attempted to transpose Winckelmann’s theories into practice: his *Parnassus* of 1761, rejecting Baroque illusionism and colour, is laid across the ceiling as if it were a sculptured relief – simple and cold, if not quite noble and grand.

The Scotsman Gavin Hamilton (1723–98), who reached Rome in 1748, though a much lesser artist than Mengs (who was also a superb portraitist), was a seminal figure. He anticipated not only the style but the themes of Neoclassical painting, and in his illustrations of the *Iliad* and in his *Oath of Brutus* hit upon two of the central interests of Neoclassical art, heroic classical epic and moralizing classical history. His *Oath of Brutus* certainly influenced David’s *Oath of the Horatii*.

Though it was bred on Italian soil, the impact of Neoclassicism was most concentrated in France, where it came more and more to respond to the moral values expounded by the philosophers of the Enlightenment. Coinciding with the wide-ranging radicalism that culminated in the French Revolution, its mood was stoic, even puritanical; its emphasis was on civic virtue. The Revolution, when it came, endeavoured to base itself politically, ethically and culturally on republican Rome.

In Rome in 1775 David abandoned the influence of Boucher’s Rococo for classical art – not only the ancients but also Raphael and Poussin. He painted *The oath of the Horatii*, the archetypal picture of purist Neoclassicism, in Rome in 1784. David said that he owed the subject to the tragedian Corneille, the picture to Poussin, but his classic reduction to essentials was reached only after a long and arduous series of studies (the foot of one Horatius was reworked 20 times). The picture established not only David’s reputation but also the relevance of Neoclassicism to current issues.



POUSSIN (left)
Extreme Unction, 1644
Neoclassical painting was as much a return to the rigours of Poussin as to the lessons of ancient art, which Poussin had studied with care (see p. 195). In its language – gestures, composition, use of colour – Neoclassicism differed little, but it was more dramatic, more earnest, less complex.

VIEN (below)
The cupid seller, 1763
The subject is closely related to a wall-painting discovered in Herculaneum, but it was chosen no doubt as an allegory of sexual negotiation – its laxity and prettiness is pure Rococo.

GREUZE (below)
Septimius Severus reproaches Caracalla for seeking his death, 1769
Despite its classical detail,

its frieze-like composition, its motifs already unearthed from antique art by Poussin, Greuze’s picture failed. Its meaning was unclear.



MENGs (below)
Parnassus, 1760–61
Apollo and the Muses can be traced to antique prototypes, but they are seen through Raphael’s eyes. With supreme efficiency Mengs reached a carefully balanced composition and a minute finish, eschewing both passion and rhetoric.

HAMILTON (right)
The oath of Brutus, c. 1763
Because the son of King Tarquin had raped Lucretia, Brutus swore to expel despotism from Rome and create a republic. Earlier artists, following Ovid, had shown the rape; Hamilton, following the historian Livy, stresses moral action.





DAVID (above)

The oath of the Horatii,
1784

To settle the war between the two states, the three Horatii brothers of Rome engaged to fight the three Curatii of Alba. All died save one of the Horatii, who, returning to Rome, found his sister mourning one of the Curatii, to whom she had been betrothed. Infuriated, he killed her. David ignores the lurid and more spectacular possibilities of the story, and invents an undocumented moment – the swearing of an oath by the three brothers that they will dedicate their lives to their country. The masculine energy of the brothers and their father is contrasted with the ladies' tender compliance with fate; the brothers' untarnished devotion to duty is echoed in the clear, sharp morning light and in the simplicity, austerity of the composition.



DAVID (left)

The lictors bringing Brutus the bodies of his sons, 1789
Painted in the very year of the Revolution, David's picture was not specifically political propaganda, but it strikingly expresses the moral fervour that fuelled the Revolution and carried it to such lengths. Brutus had ordered the execution of his own sons because they had rebelled against the republic he had founded. His taut figure, seated with tightly crossed legs in the foreground, is a remarkable image of personal emotion screwed down by the sense of moral duty. (The hand pointing to his head is not only a reference to a pose common in classical art, but also indicates Reason ruling from the head). Another such masterpiece, of 1787, was *The death of Socrates*, where, too, action is less the subject than conscience and consequence.

Neoclassical Painting: The Grand Style

The pure intensity of David's painting in the 1780s was the distilled essence of Neoclassicism, but it did not last long. The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 at first provided an ideal climate of opinion; David was prominently active in politics and his art entirely in key with events. *The death of Marat*, 1793, is virtually a canonization of the great revolutionary – a Christian *Pietà* transposed into a secular mode. After the fall of Robespierre, in 1794, David was imprisoned twice, and in the second spell, in 1799, he began *The intervention of the Sabine women*, a subject which could be interpreted as a revulsion against the excesses of the Reign of Terror and the guillotine, and a plea for reconciliation. Formally, its composition was a new development, using Greek models and with a suggestion of sensuality new to his work (some of his own pupils condemned it as being Rococo!)

Napoleon was needed to bring the Revolutionary convulsion under control and harness it to constructive purpose, although this purpose proved very different from the original ideals. David's art, as much as others', became an overt celebration of the Napoleonic Empire. He recorded contemporary events,

sometimes on a vast scale – *The coronation of Napoleon* (1805-07; not shown) includes more than a hundred identifiable portraits. His style became increasingly theatrical and pompous – pageant painting, in the tradition of Veronese, but applied to the heroic events of his own time. In this he had been preceded by American painters working in England, Benjamin West (1738-1820) and John Singleton Copley (1738-1815). West's *Death of Wolfe*, 1771, was a documentary recording General Wolfe's heroic death at Quebec in 1759 – relatively small in scale, yet in the grand style, in modern terms and modern costume.

West's style was modelled most nearly on Poussin, Copley's on Rubens. Both were acknowledged as revolutionary, but neither took the American Revolution as a theme (indeed West became the favourite of George III and succeeded Reynolds as President of the British Royal Academy); that was left to West's pupil, John Trumbull (1756-1843), who had himself fought in the War of Independence. He produced the first cycle of Revolutionary paintings, beginning in 1786, and took them back to America with him in 1816. Like Copley's, Trumbull's style was in a Baroque tradition

DAVID

The death of Marat, 1793
Marat was assassinated in his bath by Charlotte Corday: he suffered from a skin disease, soothed by its medicated waters, and she, inflamed to murder by his radical pamphlets, gained access to him by

means of the letter he holds. David has reconstructed the scene with archaeological accuracy, but has reduced it to its bare essentials, investing it with the most delicate, tender tones; it is still tragic, and with all the emotive force of a Revolutionary slogan.



DAVID (left)

The intervention of the Sabine women, 1799

In David's pictures of the 1780s, women had grieved impotent in the shadows; here they burst to the fore. In the packed but frozen action, like a carved relief, there are innumerable references to earlier artists – Raphael, Poussin, Rubens, Lebrun – and Greek vases; it is a little incongruous.



TRUMBULL (right)

The death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill, 1786

The splash of colour is the prime means by which the ardour of the fighting is conveyed. Bunker Hill was the first major battle of the American Revolution.



WEST (above)

The death of Wolfe, 1771
Before David's *Death of Marat* West had already used a religious formula, *The Deposition*, to impart an aura of tragedy to an historical event. There are

even 12 colleagues round the dying General, like 12 apostles, but the Cherokee makes 13 (he is in the pose of *Mourners* traditional on grand tombs). Wolfe died in the capture of Quebec, which made Canada British.

STUART (above right)

George Washington, 1795
Stuart complained that as soon as Washington sat for him, "a vacuity spread over his countenance", and it cost him some difficulty to achieve this alertness.



COPLEY (right)

A boy with a squirrel (The artist's half-brother), 1765
Reynolds praised Copley's freshness but faulted his hard lines, cold colours and too particular detail; these the American later avoided.



rather than a Neoclassic one. Copley had staged his *Death of Chatham* (not shown) as a one-man show in London in 1781, outside the Academy – the one-man show was still a novelty, and Copley's example perhaps inspired David's one-man showing of his *Sabine women* in Paris in 1800.

Copley's early work in America, before 1774, had been almost entirely portraiture. He was self-taught, and his knowledge of the European tradition had been acquired largely through engravings, but his extraordinarily vivid portraits show an innate eye for character. In their clarity of contour and often trenchant simplicity, they both anticipate the Neoclassic vision and preserve something of the freshness of the primitive. In England, his style tended to yield to the more atmospheric quality of the English fashion. Another American, Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828), who had started with West in London in 1775, likewise (though openly contemptuous of the Grand Manner) veered more to the fashionable English portrait style, and took it back to America with him in 1793. His subsequent fame rests on his oft-repeated image of *George Washington*.

The greatest of the Neoclassical portrait

painters was beyond doubt David. His early portraits are astonishingly realistic, presaging the clear vision of his heroic classical subjects, but more relaxed. Direct portraiture continued all through his career, often of friends or professional men, but the supreme example of his more austere Neoclassic vision is the unfinished *Madame Récamier* of 1800, in which David's sheer painterliness is evident. The best example of his state portraiture is the finely dignified yet equally finely detailed whole-length of *Napoleon in his study*. It is in remarkable contrast to the heady, romantic atmospherics with which Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830; not shown) in England invested the great.

After the fall of Napoleon and the Restoration of the Bourbons in France, David became an exile in Brussels, where he died in 1825. He was a great teacher, and the ramification, modulation and eventual dilution of the Neoclassical style in painting was furthered mainly by his pupils. François-Pascal, Baron Gérard (1770-1837) was one of the most successful, both with portraits and with mythological "history" paintings, but softer, even sentimental in comparison. His portrait of

Madame Récamier is clear evidence of a more fussy and already almost mannered style. Gérard served both republic and Empire, and then switched without difficulty to propaganda for the restored monarchy. Anne-Louis Girodet (1767-1824) was more interesting, though David disapproved of his "poetic" tendencies; these, however, appealed to Napoleon. Although he was regarded in his lifetime as a leader of the classical school, the successor of David, he is also a precursor of Romanticism (with paintings such as *Ossian receiving the generals of the Republic*, 1802, not shown; or *Atala's entombment*, 1808). Napoleon also recognized Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823), who was not a pupil of David's, and his painting shows him an heir to Correggio rather than a Neoclassicist (David called him the Boucher of his day). The painter most successful in capturing the glamour of Napoleon in action was David's pupil and close friend Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros (see p. 326), whose high sentiment and drama established a tradition eagerly exploited by the Romantics. The true heir of David's Neoclassical style was Ingres (see p. 332), but the impact of his immensely long career came later.



DAVID (left)
Mme Récamier, 1800
The woman, the stand, the divan are arranged in space like abstract sculptures; and David, having organized and produced funerals and pageants in the Revolution, probably designed both the furniture and her gown.



GERARD (right)
Mme Récamier, 1802
Dissatisfied with David's too severe vision, removing her to the elevation of some dispassionate deity, Mme Récamier commissioned Gérard, who obliged with a portrait of ingratiating softness. It is more human, more affable, perhaps truer to the gentle, winning way of the leading hostess of the Directoire, but much less subtly individualized.



GIRODET (above)
Atala's entombment, 1808
The subject is taken from a novel by Chateaubriand. Atala had taken poison, as she was just about to break her vow of eternal chastity.



DAVID (right)
Napoleon in his study, 1812
The candles are low; the drafts of his legal code are on the table. The time is 4.13 a.m. Napoleon works while his subjects sleep.



PRUD'HON (above)
Justice and Divine Vengeance pursuing Crime, 1808
Prud'hon's allegory uses

Neoclassical models from Flaxman and Canova, but these are transformed by dramatic, emotive lighting.

Francisco de Goya



GOYA (above)
Los Caprichos, frontispiece: *Self-portrait*, 1798
The top hat cocked at a

jaunty angle suggests the dandy: the image was etched the year before Goya was made First Court Painter.

After the splendours of the seventeenth century – the art of Velázquez, Ribera, Zurbarán and Murillo – the Spanish seemed content to adopt current international styles without injecting much originality. Close connections with Italy were maintained through the Spanish dominion of Naples, and major Italian artists were imported by the Spanish court and the Church, the principal patrons. Luca Giordano, in Spain 1692–1702, deployed Baroque rhetoric across the ceilings of the Escorial; the Venetian Amigoni and the brilliant Neapolitan painter Giaquinto consolidated late Italian Baroque in Spain in decorations for the Palace of the Orient in Madrid after 1734. Both were appointed court painters, and helped in 1751–52 to set up the Academy of San Fernando, which did much to establish artistic standards and status in Spain. Giambattista Tiepolo worked in Spain from 1762 to 1770, and the Neoclassicist Anton Raffael Mengs came with Charles III from Naples in 1761. The French Rococo style had been acclimatized in Spain when the crown had passed in 1700 to the Bourbon grandson of Louis XIV, Philip V.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), in his beginnings, practised in most of these

varying traditions. Born and trained in Saragossa, then the second city in Spain, he was soon attracted to Madrid, the political and cultural capital under the centralizing policy of Charles III. He did not settle there, however, until 1773: his initial attempts to win a scholarship at the Academy failed, and in 1770–71 he was in Italy (notably in Rome and Parma). His first major commission was for a series of frescos for the church of Nuestra Señora del Pilar in Saragossa, which are fully Baroque, and already show the bold colours and free handling that were to characterize his later work. In Rome he had met Mengs, who in Spain secured him employment designing cartoons for tapestries to hang in the royal palaces. Some of these are as lightly frivolous as diversions by Domenico Tiepolo.

In Madrid from 1773, Goya rapidly became established as a designer of decorations, as a virtuoso of religious frescos and as a portraitist. He was prosperous, friendly with a liberal intellectual set, sympathetic to the ideas of the Enlightenment, but apparently unmoved by the storms of Revolution raging in France. He was a familiar in the highest circles, and became, according to a legend that



GOYA (above)
The dome of Nuestra Señora del Pilar, Saragossa: *The Virgin, Queen of martyrs*, detail, 1781
In speed and energy – he painted the entire ceiling in only four months – Goya

might have rivalled Luca Giordano. He had learnt his technique in Italy, and the conception and design echo Italian example – a double tier of figures rises in a vortex against skies no less luminous than Tiepolo's.

GOYA (below)
The sunshade, 1777
The couple pose with light, fashionable ease, almost dazzlingly smart – Rococo with an added verve. This was a cartoon for a tapestry in a royal dining-room.



GOYA (left)
The Duchess of Alba, 1797
The Duchess dresses as a *Maja* even in mourning: the gilt slippers, crimson sash and her coal-black eyebrows were all part of the fashion. Despite the skimpiness of the landscape and the anatomical awkwardness of her arms, the Duchess is a powerful figure, pointing allusively to no ordinary signature.

GOYA (below)
Nude maja, 1802–05
The two versions show the same girl in the same pose, clothed and unclothed. The Inquisition took them both in 1815 and judged both obscene. She is hardly less provocative in full dress, and clearly offers herself sexually. Her pose recalls the abandoned nude at the right of Titian's *Andrian Bacchanal* (see p. 145), then in the royal collection.



is by no means improbable, the lover of one of the grandest ladies in the land, the Duchess of Alba. The elegance of his several portraits of the Duchess may recall Gainsborough's fluency and lyricism, but their originality is startling even now. The portrait of 1797 shows the Duchess in widow's weeds, wearing rings inscribed *Alba* and *Goya*, pointing with one forefinger to the ground at her feet, where, if you look closely, is written *Goya Solo* (only Goya). The riddle is Goya's own indeed. The lady is imperious, haughty, and commands attention, almost crackling with static electricity. In 1799, after 13 years in the King's service, Goya was created First Court Painter, the highest artistic honour in Spain.

The variety of Goya's art in the years of his prime is inexhaustible. The famous pair of *Majas*, naked and clothed, of about 1802-05, are the most delightful, untroubled celebration of the erotic in all his work. *Maja* is untranslatable: it refers to the dandy cult of Madrid's new proletariat, who dressed with a gypsy flamboyance and an independent pride which it became fashionable on occasions for aristocrats to imitate. Goya drew on this source again for his *Two majas on a balcony*, where the

combination of beauty, coquetry and the sinister is unsurpassed.

Both versions of the *Maja* belonged to, and were possibly painted for, the all-powerful Manuel de Godoy, Prime Minister, Generalissimo of land and sea forces, and lover of the Queen. Goya painted him in 1801 in a design that is both unorthodox and grandly, even pompously, formal. Goya's independence, his disregard of the standard European portrait conventions, is evident again in his extraordinary life-size group, *Charles IV and his family* (1800). The royal family seems curiously gauche in the dazzling plumage of their brilliantly painted costumes – this is the most eccentric state portrait ever painted by an appointed painter to a crown. Although most observers have seen it as mordant satire, the King himself appears to have been pleased.

The problem of Goya's loyalties is a difficult one. During the French occupation, 1808-12, he painted the French dignitaries. When Madrid was liberated in 1812, he had almost finished an equestrian portrait of Joseph Bonaparte, on which he then substituted the head of the liberator, the Duke of Wellington. His superb and appalling vision of the mass-

acre by the French of Madrid citizens on May 3rd, 1808, painted in 1814, seems less a patriotic war memorial than an expression of rage at the horror of man's inhumanity; and towards the close of his long life, in 1824, when Spain was subjected to a repressive regime, he withdrew in self-imposed exile to France, where he died four years later.

The dichotomy in Goya's temperament, the black pessimism that produced the "Black Paintings", had emerged long before, but not in public. The glamorous world of the distinguished and the court seems to have ceased to intrigue him after 1802, when the Duchess of Alba died. Yet the event that is generally thought to have confirmed and released his obsession with the horrific is the severe illness that left him stone deaf in 1793. Devils had appeared in his work even previously, and *Los Caprichos* of 1799, even *The Disasters of War* (though that series was not published in Goya's lifetime) – etchings in which Goya's obsession with the macabre is clearly present – could still be accepted as social satire. The revelation of the "Black Paintings" and allied works such as *The colossus* (see over) of his later years did not come until well after his death.



GOYA (above)
Don Manuel de Godoy, 1801
The 35-year-old supremo leans back in a leisurely pose, gloriously attired, surrounded by the panoply of a military commander, against a dark sky that is seemingly about to erupt with the explosion of war. He seems formidably self-satisfied, gazing beyond the furled standard with an almost cruel delight at some private pleasure.



GOYA (above)
Charles IV and his family, 1800
Replying to Velázquez's "*Las Meninas*" see p. (210). Goya has included himself (dark) on the left; the Queen's uplifted jaw recalls the earlier Infanta's. There is a story that Goya refused to paint one of the princesses full-face as he found her impossibly plain.



GOYA (left)
Two majas on a balcony, c. 1800-14
Like the nude and clothed *Majas*, these girls exude confidence in their gaudy appeal, and flirt with the spectator across the iron balcony. Yet, though they disregard the shrouded men behind them, they are caged.



GOYA (left)
May 3rd, 1808, 1814
The Spanish insurgents are driven in a seemingly endless stream towards the pool of light and blood in front of the lethal phalanx of firing French soldiers.

Goya: The Colossus

GOYA

The Disasters of War:
(right) *This is how it is*;
(below) *This is worse*,
c. 1810-15

Goya's mixed technique of etching and aquatint produced the equivalent of a pen-and-wash drawing; by drawing the human body, dead or mutilated, in the unimpassioned idiom of Flaxman's illustrations to the classics, he intensified the horror. Certainly the war brought atrocities, but these etchings (first published after Goya's death) seem as much a reflection of a personal sensibility as anti-war propaganda.



GOYA (below right)
Los Caprichos, plate 43:
The sleep of Reason, 1799

A preliminary drawing has apparently direct echoes of Fuseli's *Nightmare* (see p. 311), but these do not persist in the etching. The table on which the figure rests is inscribed: *The sleep of Reason produces monsters*; and the message is defined in the subtitle: *Imagination abandoned by Reason produces impossible monsters; united with her, she is the mother of the arts*.

It is a visionary image; its subject is creativity, and in theme and import the image is quintessentially Romantic: reason is a vital control but the life-giving impulse is imagination, here breeding unchecked, with no hint that the sleeper will awake, and the monsters be dispelled. The sole fact alleviating the pessimism is that the artist, Goya, could realize and control this vision in such memorable form within the symmetry of a rectangle of paper.

GOYA (right)

The straw manikin, 1791-92
Even before his illness, and in public commissions, hints of his "black" imagination appear in Goya's art. *The straw manikin* was one of a series of cartoons for tapestries to be woven in the royal factory. Scenes of pastoral country life were required, and Goya shows women performing a ritual in a peasant festival. Yet the manikin looks like a human victim, and in the faces of the women there is something quirkily inhuman.



Goya painted *The colossus* (originally called *The giant*) in the years 1808-12, that is in the period when Spain took the full brunt of the Napoleonic Wars for the first time. Characteristically enigmatic and mysterious as the image is, there are grounds for thinking it as much a reflection on war as his famous etchings, *The Disasters of War*, the first of which date from about 1810. Lines from a poem by Juan Arriaza about the wars have been identified as a possible stimulus for Goya's image: "On a height above yonder cavernous amphitheatre a pale colossus rises, caught by the fiery light of the setting sun; the Pyrenees are a humble plinth for his gigantic limbs." *The colossus* may represent the emergent spirit of a defiant Spain against French invasion, but, if so, the people in the picture do not seem confident of success. A related mezzotint (not shown) of a giant seated solitary on a low horizon, brooding, dates from about the same period or rather later. Otherwise *The colossus* must speak for itself. The painting is not physically colossal (some 1.5 metres (5ft) high), but its impact certainly is, achieved by the dramatic clash of opposing scales and values. Probably, as in so much of Goya's work, it is more a general, non-partisan statement on the human condition, an allegory of human impotence.

In a famous plate in the series of etchings *Los Caprichos* (or *Phantasmagoria*, 1796-98), there is a similar clash of reality and surreality. The artist is seen slumped in sleep, and surely nightmare, with a host of bat-winged monsters battering at him. A grave illness in 1793 had left Goya virtually stone deaf; turned inwards by the consequent isolation upon the tumult of his own mind, he became increasingly obsessed with the spectres that thronged his imagination. *The Disasters of War*, in which the most appalling miseries and tortures that man can inflict on man are vividly and ruthlessly rendered, conveys not so much compassion or anger or patriotic fervour as an appalled fascination and a resigned horror: *This is how it is*, read several captions. But then the plate showing a man impaled on a splintered tree-trunk, his arms severed, has the laconic subscription: *This is worse*.

Goya's addiction to the abnormal and violent expressed itself elsewhere, in his scenes of asylums, of religious flagellants, of witchcraft. The accumulating agony and exhaustion of Goya's inner world are mirrored vividly in a late *Self-portrait* showing the artist in the arms of the doctor who nursed him during a second crucial illness in 1819, with omnipresent demonic figures hovering in the murk of the background. The last manifestation of his morbid obsessions was the famous "Black Paintings" Goya concocted to adorn the interiors of his own house on his retirement. To be condemned to live surrounded by these paintings would be a fearsome sentence, but Goya chose as it were to paper his house with them. Painted very broadly, often with the palette knife rather than the brush, in dark and sombre tones, they closely anticipate in their mood and hideous violence the savage pessimism of twentieth-century Expressionism. Goya's genius was recognized again in the age of Manet and Baudelaire, but his "Black Paintings" appeal specifically to our own.



GOYA (right)
Saturn, 1820
In the "Black Paintings" Goya realized in paint the unelucidated visions of his private infernal mythology on the walls of his living-rooms. He chose to paint in his dining-room Saturn devouring his offspring (a rare classical subject amid what baffled visitors described as *caprichos*).

GOYA (left)
Self-portrait with Dr Arrieta, 1820
Compassionate, but blind to Goya's demons, the doctor holds up the glass with a firm, supporting right arm (emphatically horizontal). Goya inscribed his gratitude on the painting and gave it to his doctor, but also made copies of it for himself.





GOYA

The colossus, 1808-12

The naked colossus is from one world, the scattering, running figures in the foreground belong to our puny planet (only a donkey is unmoved by the panic). Yet the

giant's threat is directed not overtly against the men and women below, but against a force, presumably on his own scale, out of view on the left. Superhuman forces engaged in their own titanic conflict disrupt and destroy

ordinary people's existence almost haphazardly. Painted in a very free technique, the giant looms upward phantom-like through cloud, while the fleeing men and animals are shaped more solidly in a swift impasto.

Romantic Landscape in Britain and America

Sir Joshua Reynolds had asserted firmly that landscape was a secondary form of art, inevitably subordinate to the painting of ideal or heroic subjects. Yet within 20 years of his death both Constable (see over) and Turner (see p. 320) were working irresistibly towards the establishment of landscape as the most characteristic achievement of English art.

The changing climate of thought and sentiment reflected the increasing popularity of "back-to-Nature" movements, and the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and of the English Lake poets. The growing fashion for Picturesque tourism, practising a conscious, often rather self-conscious, appreciation of the real countryside, went hand in hand with an increasing demand for paintings and engravings of it. Favourite sites for expeditions and sketchings were the "wilder" regions of Britain – the Lake District and the Welsh mountains – and ruins romantically situated on deserted moors or uninhabited hills.

Subject matter that is explicitly Romantic had been exploited by Wright of Derby – a delight in mysterious moonlight or in volcanic eruptions, even in incandescent visions of the factories of the Industrial Revolution. A

French immigrant, the brilliantly professional Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg (1740–1812) ranged, like Wright, from the Picturesque to the Sublime; in 1781 he exhibited his *Eidophusikon*, in which he mounted the drama of Nature on the stage – views of natural scenery subjected, by means of artificial lighting and sound effects, to varying effects of sun, storm and lightning. John Martin (1789–1854) developed a strong taste for spectacular melodrama, turning from sensitive landscapes in a traditional manner to apocalyptic visions of lurid plains, canyons and mountains, and gigantic temples of desolation; beneath, minute figures act out episodes from the Bible or from Milton. These explosions of the imagination became widely known in mezzotint.

Meanwhile, however, a relatively realistic tradition, depending directly on Netherlandish example, had persisted; it bore fruit in England at the close of the eighteenth century in the provincial Norwich school, headed by John Crome (1768–1821). His masterpiece, *The Poringland oak*, of about 1818, catches a local, rural subject with all the freshness of a Hobbema: unostentatious, positively ordinary, it seems in hindsight a staging-post to the

meditations of the Barbizon school. Crome's younger colleague John Sell Cotman (1782–1842) was of more obvious originality, a master who extracted simplified but bold patterns from the natural landscape.

Cotman's finest work was in watercolour, developing a tradition by then firmly rooted throughout the country, with a wide market in both the aristocratic and middle classes. By the end of the eighteenth century, some skill in draughtsmanship was part of a gentleman's education, and most of the professional watercolourists were also drawing-masters. Much of their work was topographical, but watercolour was also used by painters with aspirations to the Sublime, above all John Robert Cozens (1752–97). His father, Alexander Cozens (c. 1717–86; not shown), had insisted both on working from Nature and on the need for originality in composition. To teach the latter, he published a system based on the idea of elaborating a landscape design from random abstract blots (more or less as Leonardo da Vinci had once suggested). His son evolved, though still in the studio, dreaming visions of Italy or the Alps – Constable was to call him "the greatest genius that ever touched land-



LOUTHERBOURG (above)
Coalbrookdale by night, 1801
The "dark satanic mills" of industry were for a short time the objects of awe and Romantic wonder. Far from provoking dismay at their intrusion into a once lovely

valley, these Shropshire furnaces were found "sublime". Loutherbourg later described Coalbrookdale as "worthy of a visit from the admirer of romantic scenery" – an extension of the standard cliff and crag.



CROME (above)
The Poringland oak, c. 1818
Continuing traditions of landscape established by the Dutch, Crome chose a view without obvious drama. Nature herself is found to be a subject of intrinsic worth, honestly painted, not transformed, as by Wilson, into a Picturesque glory, nor infused with Romanticism.

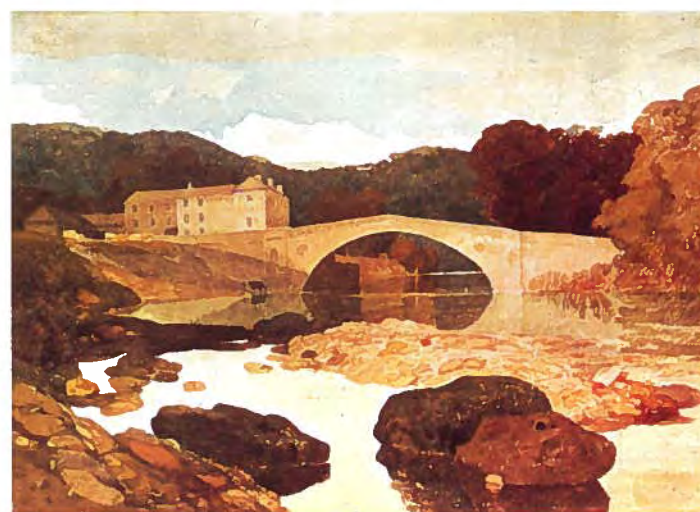


JOHN ROBERT COZENS (above)
Lake Nemi, c. 1778–79
A muted blue-grey tonality characterizes Cozens' Grand Tour watercolours, and a melancholy, thoroughly romantic atmosphere his image of the famous lake near Rome. He made exact topographical notations at the site and then perfected his painting in the studio.



MARTIN (above)
Joshua commanding the sun to stand still, 1816
Martin's paintings are in the tradition of Salvator Rosa, the heroic landscape overwhelming the figures.

They offered nothing new in the interpretation of Nature on canvas – they were primarily literary in inspiration – but fascinated a large public in England, France and America.



COTMAN (right)
Greta Bridge, 1805
From relatively simple views Cotman created watercolours of quiet dignity in a unique style, displaying a superb precision of brushwork and facility of design. By his own account, he studied colouring from Nature. He never excelled the masterpieces of his youth, painted on tours in northern Britain between 1803 and 1805.

scape" – "Cozens is all poetry". The brief-lived Thomas Girtin (1775-1802), the friend and fellow-student of Turner, made important technical innovations in watercolour, abandoning the usual practice of establishing the design initially in monochrome. He used a rough off-white paper, on which he spread brilliantly controlled washes, allied with what was at times stippling in pure colours. The result was a solidity and vibrancy that enabled watercolour to rival oil-painting.

The American vision of landscape took some time to shake European blinkers from its

eyes. Washington Allston (1779-1843) spent long periods in Europe, studying with Benjamin West from 1801 to 1808. A friend of the poet Coleridge, he took an essentially Romantic stance – he likened painting to music and sought to express subjective qualities of mood in landscape, and of personality in portraiture. John Martin's emphasis on the confrontation of the human with the divine influenced much of Allston's later landscape, but from his more subtly colouristic style he is often called "the American Titian".

A more specific attachment to the American

genius of the American place was sought by later painters associated with the "Hudson River school". The greatest of them, Thomas Cole (1801-48), observed that "the painter of American scenery has, indeed, privileges superior to any other; all Nature here is new to art". Although preconceived European formulae affected their approach, and some painters tended to introduce strong moral or didactic themes, the Hudson River school at times produced images of an intensity both new and startling – for instance Cole's *Sunny morning on the Hudson River* of about 1821. The most famous work of the leading theorist of the school, Asher B. Durand (1796-1886), *Kindred spirits*, depicts Cole communing with Nature on a ledge over a rocky torrent.

The Hudson River school approach persisted through the nineteenth century, though moving in general away (and happily so) from more grandiose, moralizing, themes towards pure landscape. Several painters developed a delightful variation, genre subjects in landscape, which often reflected the more idyllic side of the ever-advancing western frontier – for instance, *Fur traders descending the Missouri* by George Caleb Bingham (1811-79).

GIRTIN (right)

Kirkstall Abbey, c. 1800
The ruins of the Cistercian Abbey are not recorded in the interests of antiquarian topography, though Girtin has evoked the delicacy of the Gothic tracery and the crumble of old stonework. The Yorkshire countryside and its weather are the real subject of the watercolour. Girtin's expressive, broad handling fully realizes the Romantic potential of the landscape; his work was important in establishing the place of watercolour in British painting. Turner said: "If Tom Girtin had lived, I should have starved."



ALLSTON (left)

Moonlit landscape, 1819
The mood of a Gothic novel (Allston had once attempted to write one) seems to infect his subject. It is invested with haunting tensions, in a fascination for the effects of supernatural forces.

DURAND (right)

Kindred spirits, 1849
Admiring the scenery in a Catskill glen, the two men (Thomas Cole and the poet William Cullen Bryant) create a typically Romantic image, wanderers or solitary figures dwarfed by Nature. Durand's training as an engraver is evident in the unsoftened detail and hard linear technique of the work.



COLE (right)

Sunny morning on the Hudson River, c. 1827
One of the first artists in America to devote himself wholly to landscape, Cole travelled from New York along the Hudson in search of inspiring scenery. The European tradition shows in the use of sunlight to give life to the wooded hills, and in the *repoussoir*, the foreground focus of rock and tree, leading the eye into the distance towards the plain. The Hudson River painters also ranged into the Catskill Mountains of New York and the White Mountains of New Hampshire.



BINGHAM (above)
Fur traders descending the Missouri, 1845
The enchanted stillness of the river belies the wildness of the country, where the

traders bartered with the Indians for furs. There is a Chinese delicacy in the pale tones and the figures of the French trader and his half-breed son in their boat.

German and Scandinavian Romanticism

After the magnificent originality of Dürer, Holbein, Grünewald, no outstanding Germanic genius in painting or sculpture had emerged. The great German and Austrian Baroque and Rococo decorators had worked with brilliant virtuosity in an international tradition; the ablest German Neoclassical painter, Mengs, spent most of his working life in Italy and Spain. Nor, to begin with, was there an upsurge in the visual arts comparable to the astonishing Romantic literary activity in Germany. Goethe was established long before his death in 1832 as the presiding genius of European culture, and he was followed by remarkable writers in the Romantic spirit, such as Schiller, von Kleist, the mystic Novalis and Tieck, while the Schlegel brothers' Romantic philosophy was discussed throughout Europe. Napoleon's domination of Europe inspired by reaction a sense of common racial and cultural inheritance amongst German intellectuals, even though the diverse kingdoms and principalities of the German peoples were to remain fragmented for many years yet.

In the 1770s the young Goethe had emerged as the prophet of German Romanticism – in the violence, and colourful appeal to German

legend, of *Götz von Berlichingen*, in the introspective melancholy of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and in a panegyric of Gothic architecture. At this time Goethe identified art with "Nature", emphasizing the particular rather than the general, and the overriding importance of autonomous "genius", although he came later to feel that the emphasis on feeling over reason was becoming morbidly unbalanced. His involvement with the visual arts continued all his life, and he knew personally the painters Runge and Friedrich.

German Romanticism found its characteristic visual expression in three modes, which

often came together in a single work – landscape, overt symbolism, and nationalistic medievalism. In its visionary intensity it was closer to English than to French attitudes, but generally more dour in temper and more concerned with explicitly religious themes. The models from which Romantic landscape developed were provided by the established traditions of pastoral landscape, as is clear in *Northern lights*, about 1790, by Jens Juel (1745-1802), in which a conventional, even tame, formula is opened up on to a limitless ether. Juel taught at the Copenhagen Academy, where both Friedrich and Runge studied. The

FRIEDRICH (right)
Monk by the sea, 1809
Friedrich later removed two boats he had originally included in the landscape, in order to emphasize its starkness and spiritual isolation. On it von Kleist commented: "Because of its monotony and boundlessness, with nothing but the frame as foreground, one feels as if one's eyelids have been cut away" – in terror in the face of infinity.



JUEL (left)
Northern lights, c. 1790
Juel enjoyed a popular reputation for his scenes of the open air, somewhat in the spirit of Gainsborough. Here, however, the picture stimulates curiosity by its very enigma. Who is the man sitting by the gate? Where does the path lead? The gate, notably, is shut on the dissolving distance.



KOCH (left)
Schmadvibach waterfall, 1808-11
Earlier such a landscape would have been equated with a desert, but to Koch the elemental forces of Nature conveyed something of the heroic *terribilità* he admired in Michelangelo.

DAHL (above)
Clouds, 1825
The trees and spires rising into the sky are devoid of symbolic meaning. Dahl was interested in Nature only for its intrinsic beauty, and so was close in spirit to Constable; he developed the example notably of Ruisdael.



RUNGE (above)
Morning, 1808-09
Despite the enigmatic and slightly absurd imagery, the painting could stand as an illustration to Wordsworth's poem *Intimations*

of *Immortality*, conveying divine unity and rhythm in Nature. In the baby's eyes, every element seems "apparelled in celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream".

influential Anton Koch (1768-1839) at first produced classicizing ideal landscapes, echoing Poussin, which, though he retained a firm grasp of structural principles, he later invested with an emotional, Romantic feeling.

The outstanding interpreter of German Romantic landscape was Caspar David Friedrich. Born in Pomerania, he worked from 1798 in Dresden, but his temperament seemed always to retain the cold melancholy of Baltic shores. His landscapes are the purest expression in European Romantic art of the yearning of man for communion with Nature, even if their prevailing tragic sadness speaks of alienation, and ultimate solitude, in the attempt. The essence of Friedrich's message is summed up in his *Monk by the sea* of 1809: the solitary – it must be, doomed – figure is a small dark accent between the voids of land, sea and sky. There was some give and take between Friedrich and his friend, the Norwegian Johan Christian Dahl (1788-1857), but Dahl's interests were more in the naturalistic side of Romantic landscape. He was making detailed studies of cloud formations at the same time as Constable, in the 1820s, quite independently.

Friedrich's work is dense with symbolism

RUNGE (right)
Morning, from *The Phases of the Day*, 1803
The series of engravings appeared as *Die Zeiten* in 1805, indebted to the style of Flaxman, and to motifs culled from Bellini and early Renaissance art, but the meaning was new.

In sentiment they perhaps seem close to Blake, but Goethe compared these prints with the music of Beethoven, which "tries to embrace everything and in doing so always loses itself in the elemental, yet still with endless beauty in the particulars".



RUNGE (above)
The artist's parents and his children, 1806
The cool light mercilessly exposes the figures – the suspicious gaze of the old couple, stiffened by age, contrasts with the children's pure absorption with the bright flowers.

CORNELIUS (right)
Faust and Mephisto on the Brocken, c. 1811
The style owes much to Dürer. Romantic artists sought the imaginative and passionate in literature – Goethe's *Faust*, plays by Shakespeare, ancient epic – Homer, Virgil and Ossian.

(see over), but the symbolism of Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810) is even more overt. Runge, like Goethe, published a work on colour theory, but was also much influenced by the linear purity of Flaxman's illustrations. He died aged merely 33, leaving only fragmentary witness of his main ambitions. A mystic who might easily have become a Lutheran pastor, he had a virtually religious, all-embracing, dedication to art, and landscape was the only branch of art that could support its intensity, being for him a medium for the comprehensive representation of all the elements of life. He aimed ultimately at a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, incorporating all the arts – poetry, architecture and music. Of his major project, *The Four Phases of Day*, only one vast canvas (subsequently dismembered) was completed, *Morning*. In this the sharpness and delicacy of his vision are brilliantly clear. His portraits are perhaps his most successful surviving works: that of his parents, whose wooden vigour in the relentless light is contrasted with the dewy but also merciless innocence of the grandchildren, is one of the most extraordinary and monumental portraits of the early nineteenth century. In his engravings of *The Phases of the*



PFORR (above)
The entry of Emperor Rudolf of Hapsburg into Basel in 1273, 1808-10

This is one of the first large medieval history subjects, depicted in a consciously archaic style.



OVERBECK (above)
Italia and Germania, 1811-28
The physiognomies, dress and colours are based on Raphael. The landscape, too, is Italianate, save for a

Gothic church spire. The wreaths and idealization of the faces emphasize the eternal significance of the encounter. The artist used the composition of a Visitation for the embrace.

Friedrich: Man and Woman Gazing at the Moon

Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) has shown the man and woman from behind, beheld by us as they themselves behold the moon. Our own position is uncertain, since we see them from above; no stabilizing foreground links us. They are alone together, as almost all Friedrich's figures are alone, as if alienated, silent, their faces unseen. Beyond them, the moon rides remote in infinity.

The picture is replete with Friedrich's personal symbolic imagery. Thus, for him, the moon represents Christ. The pine trees (Christian faith on earth) are traversed by a stony path (the path of life) winding uphill (towards Christian redemption). The shattered and dying oak tree and the dolmen represent transience and paganism, while the dark abyss falling away to the right shows the way down to temptation and unbelief. However, the impact of the picture is far from being entirely dependent on the spelling out of its symbolism. The success of Friedrich's finest paintings rests on their vivid visual coherence, their credibility as real topographical sites.

The painting is a variation on a design which obsessed Friedrich throughout his career, and which had been established in the haunting solitudes of *Moonrise over the sea* of 1822, in which Friedrich repeats with only slight variations a version of 1819, *Two men contemplating the moon*; here the two men of the *Moonrise* are replaced by the artist himself and his wife. The theme reached its most complex elaboration in *The stages of life* of 1835.

All Friedrich's work is religious, the most astonishing example coming early in his career, *The Cross in the mountains* of 1808, known as the Tetschen altar. It was in fact used as an altarpiece, though it is a landscape, which caused controversy. The sun sets, the old order passes, its last gleams transmuted in the golden figure of Christ on the crucifix, while the rock symbolizes steadfast faith in Christ. The mood has a serene, even optimistic quality unusual in Friedrich's work. The famous *Abbey graveyard under snow*, with the gaunt Gothic choir rising in a snowy graveyard amongst shattered trees, is more typical. Terrifying in its bleak mystery, it is one of the most haunting images of European Romanticism.

Friedrich's predilection for Gothic forms has no doubt some nationalistic significance, and his work included positive references to the German struggle for freedom against Napoleon. But Friedrich's art was essentially non-topical, visionary. "The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him. If, however, he sees nothing within him, then he should also omit to paint what he sees before him".

In the 1812 painting of Friedrich by Georg Friedrich Kersting (1785-1847), the artist is seen in an austere empty studio, summoning up his picture from within himself rather than from outside. Friedrich was nevertheless a close and precise observer of Nature, as a great many drawings make clear. The detailed precision of his drawing reinforces his startling contrast of the mundane with the unearthly. His people may appear in frock-coat or dress and bonnet – dressed, as it were, for office or shopping – but poised on the brink confronting eternity. Usually his figures are unemphatic, often seen from behind. They are simply and exactly described, yet such is their still intensity that the effect is transcendental.

Friedrich's technique could seem somewhat dry; painterly virtuosity, the sensuous delight in the painter's materials, was always strictly subordinated to the image to be produced, in a style descriptive rather than expressive, so that he was for long condemned as a literary painter. Many of his paintings are of twilight or dusk or moonlight, but in fact he was a most subtle colourist. He lived out his life quietly in Dresden, and the considerable attention that his work had at first attracted dwindled, until at his death he was almost neglected – and so he remained until the 1890s, when the Symbolists rediscovered the formidable potency of his imagery. Indeed, echoes of Friedrich are to be found in the greatest of the northern Expressionists, Edvard Munch. Friedrich's art, in fact, was no less revolutionary than the very differently generated landscapes of Constable and Turner. The analogy of his art with Chinese landscape painting, though it cannot be pressed too far, is striking – the vision of man alone in the immensity of a natural world that is the symbol of an infinity beyond.



FRIEDRICH (above)
The Tetschen altar: The Cross on the mountains, 1808
Friedrich himself designed the gold frame. On the base, shafts of light around the eye of God echo the rays of the setting sun, while the wheat-ear and grapes refer to the Last Supper. The star above symbolizes both death and resurrection.

FRIEDRICH (below)
A dolmen near Gützkow, c. 1837
These prehistoric burial stones, stranded like wrecks in the sea of time, fascinated Friedrich: they suggested at once human transience and eternity. A dolmen occurs in the left foreground of *Man and woman gazing at the moon*.



FRIEDRICH (above)
Abbey graveyard under snow, 1810
The way in which the once Picturesque attractions of the Gothic past are raised into mystical symbolism is typically Romantic. The skeletal trees and the Gothic ruin endure against time in transcendental melancholy.

A German Romantic poet, Körner, had described a similar, earlier picture as a *Totenlandschaft* (a landscape of the dead). Indeed the monks appear to be carrying a bier into the "bare ruin'd choir" of the church. A mist completes the sense of sepulchral mystery and lost faith.



FRIEDRICH (left)
Moonrise over the sea, 1822
Though ostensibly closely observed and naturalistic, the canvas takes on a near-abstract appearance, with its vertical and horizontal axes and colour contrasts – the reddish browns of the land and the suffused bluish-purple sky. The sea without any horizon, a recurrent motif, suggests infinity and the unknown, against the familiar, homely silhouettes of the gazing townspeople.

FRIEDRICH (below): *Man and woman gazing at the moon*, c.1830-35

FRIEDRICH (left)
The stages of life, c. 1835
 This is perhaps the most personal of all Friedrich's images of transience. Sea and sky shine luminously, but soon after he painted them Friedrich had a stroke from which he never fully recovered. The painter is the old man confronting infinite spaces, while his children and grandchildren stand, sit or play close by.

KERSTING (right)
Caspar David Friedrich in his studio, 1812
 The painter has shuttered the lower part of his studio window, blocking out the world, the better to visualize his inner world as he broods over his canvas. The bars of the window form a Cross in the sky, like a delicate blessing.



French Romanticism

The figure who links French Neoclassicism with Romanticism is Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros (1771-1835), considered by David a wayward pupil, yet his favourite. David made over his studio and, he hoped, his principles to Gros when he went into exile after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. It had been Gros rather than David, in paintings such as *Napoleon on the battlefield at Eylau* (1808, not shown) or *The plague at Jaffa* (1804), who translated the heroic glamour, the legendary quality, of the Napoleonic era into paint. Gros's sense of drama infected his brushwork with a bravura much admired by the Romantics; by 1831, his huge *Napoleon at Eylau* could be identified by a Romantic critic as "the birth of the Romantic school". Although these compositions are in the grandiloquent classic tradition of "history" painting, the formidable and gruesome realism of the corpses in their foregrounds made a profound and lasting impression, especially when the Napoleonic triumph had turned to defeat. Gros's emotional instability, culminating in his suicide, is in key with one aspect of the Romantic temperament.

Not only his work, but the temperament and life-style of Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) –

not least his premature death, aged only 33 – make him an archetypal Romantic artist, in the example of Byron or Chatterton, Chénier or Keats. His first important painting, in the spirit of Gros, the dynamic portrait *An officer of the Chasseurs*, 1812, was offset by *The wounded cuirassier leaving the field*, painted in 1814 when Napoleon was in exile in Elba. Subdued in colour compared with the brilliance of the *Chasseur*, it is an image of defeat, but also of the glamour of death: it was found the more shocking because presented on an heroic scale, life-size. Géricault was obsessed throughout his brief life with images of violence. Horses provided him with one elemental example of power and speed, and in 1816-17, when he was in Rome (where the energy of Michelangelo's style had impressed him), he planned a colossal painting of the traditional race of riderless horses along the Corso; later, in England, he was to paint horses again, and his own death followed a riding accident.

His great masterpiece of 1819, *The raft of the Medusa*, has come to be seen as a manifesto of French Romanticism, much as David's *Oath of the Horatii* had been one of Neoclassicism. Here again, he treated an unheroic subject on

an heroic scale. The subject was topical, sensational, and open to political interpretation. The *Medusa* had been wrecked in 1816, a catastrophe ascribed, if on tenuous grounds, to Government incompetence. The survivors on the raft had endured the horrors of mutiny, exposure, starvation, even cannibalism. The moment chosen by Géricault was the terrible spurious dawn of hope, when a ship was sighted from the raft but passed without noticing. The composition, with its strong diagonal stresses, refers back to Baroque rather than to Neoclassical example, but the moulding of the figures is solidly founded on classical techniques and groupings. Though the theme is so intensely dramatic, even melodramatic, the figures in the finished painting have become idealized, perfect physiques, well-shaven and undisfigured by emaciation or sores; yet Géricault had painted studies for it from actual corpses, even severed limbs, with vivid objectivity. When first exhibited at the Salon, it seems initially to have been uncontroversial, and was even awarded a medal, but it had some *succès de scandale* later in London, and by 1847 the historian Michelet could see in it a comprehensive allegory of the troubles of



GROS (above)
The plague at Jaffa, 1804
Gros invests Napoleon with implicitly royal powers of healing and immunity when faced with plague-stricken troops during his Egyptian campaign. Postures from Italian religious painting, the ghastly realism of victims and the serenity of Napoleon are conjoined to effect his "canonization".

GERICAULT (right)
An officer of the Chasseurs, 1812
David had immortalized *Napoleon crossing the Alps* (not shown) in 1800, with his hero on a rearing horse against a scene of battle. Using a very similar pose, Géricault abandons the cult of personality and glorifies the sheer excitement of battle in the momentary stance of horse and rider, the energy of the paint, the vividness of colour.



GERICAULT (left)
A wounded cuirassier leaving the field, 1814
The vigorous movement of the horse is contrasted with the halting progress of the injured soldier, courageous even in defeat. This was a pendant to the *Officer of the Chasseurs*, and its sombre, apprehensive mood evokes the disillusion which followed Napoleon's fall from power in 1814.

DELACROIX (below)
The barque of Dante, 1822
Virgil is leading Dante into Limbo across the river Acheron, in which bodies of the damned are tossed. The corpses, composition and the Michelangesque quality of the figures recall *The raft of the Medusa*, although Delacroix's rich colours anticipate the trend of his later painting.



France. Géricault's last works were remarkable studies of mad men and women, painted as scientific case-studies for a psychiatrist friend, but intensely emotive.

When Géricault died in 1824, Delacroix, in his *Barque of Dante* of 1822, had already paid his tribute to *The raft of the Medusa*, and was emerging as the presiding genius of the Romantic movement (see over), though he would never have categorized himself as such. The emotive subject matter used by Delacroix – exotic and oriental themes, violent depictions of animals, historical stories from the Middle Ages as well as from antiquity, and also from

the poets of passion, Shakespeare, Tasso and Byron – these were all adopted by many other painters. Landscape, too, was a development especially congenial to the Romantic temperament (see p. 340). Paul Delaroche (1797-1856; not shown) became aligned with Delacroix more because of rows with the Salon and his medievalizing "romantic" subject matter than for his style; his flair for the psychological moment in narrative was weakened by sentimentality, but he was immensely popular.

Géricault produced a few small pieces of sculpture, bronzes of powerful expressive force that anticipate Rodin's quality, but

generally sculpture was not a medium that the Romantics found congenial or particularly suitable. François Rude (1784-1855), a loyal supporter of Napoleon, went into exile with David in 1815, until 1827. His ability to fuse Napoleonic classicism with Romantic fervour and drama is strikingly shown in his *Departure of the volunteers* ("The Marseillaise", 1835-36), for the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. (Napoleonic and Revolutionary themes, forbidden under Charles X, returned to favour after 1830 under Louis-Philippe). Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875), who had first trained as a painter under Gros, turned his attention to the popular Romantic theme of wild animals, although his technique, in a prolific output of vivid small bronzes, was naturalistic rather than expressively Romantic. The most remarkable Romantic sculpture of all is Rude's *Awakening of Napoleon*, 1845-47.

By that date, Romanticism in France was established, consolidated by the support of critics and theorists. Middle-of-the-road Salon artists drew copiously if superficially on its achievement. But by then Courbet (see p. 338) was already active in Paris.



GERICAULT (above)

The raft of the Medusa, 1819
The exceptional intensity of Géricault's researches for the *Medusa* resulted in his eventual nervous collapse. The horrible and unheroic ordeal of the victims is elevated by visual reference to Michelangelo and Caravaggio, but no facile moral emerges: Géricault sought veracity, a conscientiously unsparing view of men at the limits of endurance.

GERICAULT (right)

A kleptomaniac, 1822-23
Dr Georget at the Paris asylum commissioned a series of objective studies of the pathological mind, believing that every mental illness was registered in a specific facial expression. Restraint and compassion infuse Géricault's portrait: it captures the sense of the subject's individuality even while the sitter is alienated within his own obsession.



RUDE

The departure of the volunteers, 1833-36
Rude echoes both spirit and structure of Delacroix's *Liberty leading the People* (see over). Recalling the

heroism of the people who in 1792 had rallied to the Revolutionary cause, the vitality of the figures shows him realizing fully the dynamic possibilities of gesture and grouping.



RUDE (left)

The awakening of Napoleon, 1847
Rude liked David's blend of classicism and topical reference, though he here transforms it into a mystic archetype of French glory.

BARYE (above)

Jaguar devouring a crocodile, 1850
Many Romantics saw wild animals as metaphors of untrammelled freedom, their savagery expressing a primal urge in Nature.

Delacroix: The Death of Sardanapalus



The first painting Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) exhibited at the Salon in Paris was his *Barque of Dante* (1822; see preceding page), clearly influenced by Géricault and equally clearly in the Grand Tradition. Though it provoked some criticism it was bought for the royal collection. In 1824 he showed *The massacre at Chios*, which owed something to Gros's *Plague at Jaffa* (see preceding page); but while Gros had celebrated Napoleon serene in the midst of pestilence, Delacroix's *Chios* was a lament, or perhaps a celebration, of defeat. Although it was criticized for its "unfinished" quality, and its bold juxtaposition of colours seemed crude to contemporary taste, it was nevertheless bought by the state.

The death of Sardanapalus was a very different matter. It coincided in the Salon of 1827–28 with Ingres's *Apotheosis of Homer* (see p. 333)—confronting the Neoclassical principles of calm, clarity and nobility with dynamic bravura, colour, violence, exotic subject matter, sensual passion and morbid despair—a manifesto of extreme Romanticism. Delacroix

himself called it "an Asiatic feat of arms against David's Spartiate pastiche".

Sardanapalus is from Byron's drama of the same name. Byron's hero, though certainly of a voluptuous temperament, had in fact committed an heroic, self-sacrificial suicide, but Delacroix described him thus: "Besieged in his palace by insurgents . . . Reclining on a superb bed on top of a huge pyre Sardanapalus orders the eunuchs and palace officers to cut the throats of his women and his pages, and even of his favourite horses and dogs; none of the objects that have contributed to his pleasure must survive him." Hence, a self-indulgent, almost bored figure presiding impassively over a sensual abandon of destruction, in a clash of resonant colour and collapsing shapes.

Sardanapalus represents the climax of Delacroix's developing obsession with death and pessimism, and of his pictures of doomed heroic figures in despair and defeat; and his style was now fully evolved to deal with them—the movement of the paint itself, the chords of colour, being integral to the expression of the

artist's emotion. Delacroix clearly identified himself very closely with Sardanapalus; unlike Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (see preceding page) this is a work of personal fantasy, and ultimately remote from reality—no drop of blood obtrudes, for all its violence. Yet it is typical of Delacroix that the artist's involvement is balanced by a disciplined detachment, and the whirl of flesh and pleasure and colour spinning out from Sardanapalus is held within a controlled composition. But public reaction was violently hostile, and Delacroix himself had doubts, referring to the painting as his "retreat from Moscow" and keeping it thereafter unseen in his studio until his death.

In 1830 Revolution displaced the last of the Bourbon monarchs and installed the so-called "citizen-king" Louis-Philippe. Delacroix was a conservative in politics, a cool, impeccable dandy in society, and not one to participate on the barricades, but he painted the spirit of revolution, *Liberty leading the people*. The picture found favour: henceforward he was relatively secure in official patronage.

DELACROIX (left)
The death of Sardanapalus,
1827



DELACROIX (below)
The massacre at Chios, 1824
Byron, whom Delacroix admired, had passionately identified with the cause of enslaved Greece; and yet Delacroix shows an episode from the War of Liberation with a curious ambiguity: the Turks' indifference is as striking as the inertia of their victims. Fatalistic figures mostly recline in a fresh, brilliant landscape.



DELACROIX (left)
Still life with a lobster,
1827
The conjunction of still life and landscape is somewhat bizarre: exhibited in the Salon in the same year as *Sardanapalus*, it seems to intend another kind of antithesis to Neoclassical theory and practice. The tartan plaid among the disparate objects reflects Delacroix's current anglophilia: he had spent some months in England in 1825.



DELACROIX (right)
Baron Schwiter, 1826-30
Schwiter was a friend of Delacroix; the portrait suggests their intimacy, as "men of sensibility". Its nervousness and pensive elegance, and the freedom with which the brooding sky is painted, owe much to English influences, notably Thomas Lawrence.



His voyage to North Africa in 1832 has been likened to other artists' voyages to Italy. It provided him with a source, recorded in many sketchbooks, of exotic sensuous imagery and of glowing colour. Its impact is summarized in his small, famous and influential painting, *Women of Algiers*, a memory of a harem interior into which he had managed to gain entry, a vision of languor half-asleep in voluptuous, floating colour. Violence however, was still the theme of much of his later work, and in an impressive series of small-scale paintings he depicted horses, lions and tigers, symbols of power and passion, with a vigour and intensity rivalling Rubens. However, in his large official commissions, he moved away from his more Romantic obsessions. His aloof temperament had always made him suspicious of the publicity-conscious postures of militant Romanticism, and it may be that he is equally significant as the writer of the most elegantly styled and perspicacious journal in the history of art, and as the subject of an apologia by Baudelaire, as for the bulk of his paintings.



DELACROIX (above)
Liberty leading the people,
1830
Although Liberty is more than a frigid abstraction, and the People are workers, not the bourgeoisie who were in fact triumphant, this is more a patriotic than a specifically socialist work. If it is restrained in key and composition beside *Sardanapalus*, it epitomizes Romantic rebellion: personal protest has replaced David's corporate idealism.

DELACROIX
Women of Algiers, 1834
The surface is patterned in a close and intricate harmony of colour, suggesting a new attention to current theories on colour complementaries. The intensity of the almost abstract design enhances rather than dominates the mood of subdued eroticism. The Impressionists took note, and so did Matisse.

Academic Art in Europe

In the first half of the nineteenth century, most of Europe experienced a boom in the production of paintings; a new market opened up as patronage expanded from the top ranks of society to an increasingly large and prosperous urban bourgeois population. The art trade became widely and firmly established: through official exhibitions, through dealers, and especially through mass-produced prints (made possible by technical improvements in engraving processes), pictures reached an enormous clientèle. In sculpture (see p. 354), there was a corresponding demand for small-scale works for domestic settings, and a growing national and civic pride prompted ubiquitous municipal architectural sculpture and statues.

The training of the artists who produced this kind of art was based, almost throughout Europe, in the official academies. This orthodox professional stream of nineteenth-century art was dismissed almost completely by later critics (dazzled by successive progressive avantgardes), and only recently has its long overdue reassessment begun.

The principles of the academic tradition were rooted in the *disegno* of early Renaissance Florence – stressing the importance of draw-

ing, the defining contour of line; the detailed preliminary study; the subordinate role of colour; and the necessity both of classical balance and of “finish”. These principles had been upheld in the French Academy by a long line of painters from Lebrun to David. The highest themes were classical or Christian, and the noblest subject was the human form, to which a certain decorum of “nobly” expressive pose and gesture was appropriate. These principles persisted through the nineteenth century, but interiors, sentimental scenes of peasant life, views of exotic lands and customs, portraits, genre scenes in the Dutch mode – these were all also in great demand, painted again in a closely detailed manner.

The dominant figure of the academic, classical tradition was Ingres (see preceding page), whose name became almost synonymous with it, and the polarization between academic classicism and Romanticism was conveniently but too sweepingly summarized in the fierce antagonism (theoretical, practical and personal) of Ingres and Delacroix. In fact even Ingres’s classicism could be far from orthodox, and what we now call academic art was not the only kind to receive major official patronage –



INGRES (right)
“La Source” (The Spring),
1856
Ingres’s generalized nudes gave rise to the type called the *femme de l’Ecole*, which joined sensuality with dewy innocence. His allegorical figure triumphed in the Salon, fetching a ransom.



COUTURE (left)
The Romans of the Decadence, 1847
The moral of Couture’s highly-praised historical allegory on contemporary society was: “Crueller than arms, lust descended upon Rome and avenged the conquered world.”



FLANDRIN (right)
Theseus recognized by his father, 1838
The studied monumentality and high finish of the work echo Neoclassical example, but it lacks any deep-felt meaning or spirit.



GEROME (above)
The gladiators, c. 1859
With vehement gestures the crowd urge the victor to slay his opponent – a scene presumably calculated to arouse repugnance with a moralistic intention. The artist paid almost pedantic attention to archaeological

detail, and his real powers of draughtsmanship earned him the Prix de Rome, the highest accolade the Academy could bestow. His interest in the human figure, evident in these poses recalling the life class, led him eventually to concentrate on sculpture.

MEISSONIER (right)
Napoleon III at the Battle of Solferino, June 24th, 1859, 1863
Scarcely suggesting ultimate victory, the scene of battle is relatively realistic in its spirit. Meissonier used photography to study the movement of the horses.



Delacroix himself was far from unsuccessful – even though the stereotype of the unrecognized genius, the starving Bohemian painter embattled against a philistine public, dates from this period. Considerable fortunes could be made, especially through engravings, and Paris swarmed with artists. Its artistic vitality and the reputation of its training workshops, *ateliers*, run by most of the leading painters, made it the centre of European art, much as Rome had been in the eighteenth century. The highly romanticized reflection of Parisian art student life is to be found in Murger's *Scenes from Bohemian Life* (1849), which was the source of Puccini's famous opera *La Bohème*.

Typical of the middle generation of the academic painters was Thomas Couture (1815–79), though he was more eclectic than some. Couture's vast *Romans of the Decadence* (some 7.5 metres (25ft) wide), exhibited at the Salon in 1847, challenged the great Venetian decorative painters, Veronese or Tiepolo, but it also owes much in construction to Bolognese classicism. The archaeological detail is very accurately researched, and the overall mood, morbid and sensual, was no less in accord with mid-century bourgeois taste, conferring

respectability on a somewhat dubious subject. Not only the nude, but disguised scenes of torture, of female subjugation, were constant themes amongst Salon painters. Couture ran a famous *atelier*, and his students included Puvis de Chavannes, Fantin-Latour and Manet.

Many painters followed more closely in Ingres's path, notably Hippolyte-Jean Flandrin (1809–64), one of his pupils; his *Theseus recognized by his father*, 1838, represents the pure classicizing style, somewhat dry and arid, applied to the pure classical subject. Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), the most famous of the next generation, likewise exploited classical themes, for instance in his *Gladiators*, but now with realistic violence. Ernest Meissonier (1815–91) was a brilliant master of the small-scale costume or history piece, reducing the Napoleonic campaigns to miniature proportions painted with minute accuracy and great technical virtuosity. The name of Adolphe William Bouguereau (1825–1905; not shown) stands for the extremes of smooth gloss finish; Degas invented the word *bouguereauté* to describe such academic paintings. With Alexandre Cabanel (1823–89), Bouguereau dominated the Salon in the second half of the

century, and was influential in excluding from it all revolutionary work from Manet onwards.

The difficulty of containing artists within the opposing categories of academic or classical and Romantic is exemplified by the work of the extremely talented Théodore Chassériau (1819–56). Cherished pupil of Ingres, he nevertheless developed an expressively Romantic use of colour, stimulated by Algerian trips in 1840 and 1846. The short-lived Henri Regnault (1843–71) was acclaimed in the Salon for his colouristic skill; and elements of Romanticism influenced many of the middle-of-the-road academic artists (*'le juste milieu'*). The conflict between Romantic and classical tends to be overstressed, largely as a result of the violence of contemporary controversy.

In Britain, Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–96), President of the Royal Academy from 1878, preferred antique themes, but also travelled in the Levant and found inspiration there for his highly polished works, which had much in common with French, as with German, academicism. The ideal conventional art of late Victorian England is exemplified in the reconstructions of domestic Roman life by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912).

CHASSERIAU (below)
The toilet of Esther, 1841
The biblical heroine in this exquisitely coloured work is an Ingresque nude,

but the mood is exotic, orientalizing. It even seems to anticipate the approach of the Symbolists at the end of the century.



CABANEL (left)
The birth of Venus, 1863
The critic Zola denounced Venus (bought by Napoleon III) as made not of "flesh and blood – that would be indecent – but a kind of pink and white almond paste".

ALMA-TADEMA (below)
The Baths of Caracalla, 1899
Alma-Tadema's precise archaeological environs cloak his languorous ladies in nostalgia. He also evoked daily life in ancient Egypt.



LEIGHTON (left)
The Garden of the Hesperides, 1892
In a sophisticated tondo format, the artist evokes a paradise where daughters of Evening guard golden apples, symbolic of love.

REGNAULT (above)
Automedon with the horses of Achilles, 1868
Painted in Italy, this huge Neoclassic canvas attracted attention for its theatrical effect, bold conception and free, colouristic technique.



French Realism

The movement known as Realism in the arts was formulated with most consistency and authority in France, between about 1840 and 1880. Like the label "Romanticism", the movement from which Realism in part developed and which in part it superseded, "Realism" is applied to concerns far wider than those of an identifiable artistic style. By 1840 some of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution were becoming apparent, among them the concentration of vast populations in the great urban centres, in which proliferating slums new in their scale and density contrasted with the showy display of wealth by the successful classes. Inevitably such violent imbalances within the structure of society began to involve artists, thinkers and writers, who were themselves only part of surges of unrest that found relatively mild outlet in the French revolutions of 1830, but erupted all over Europe and especially in France in 1848 (the year Marx and Engels published their *Communist Manifesto*). Realism relates closely to the philosophical work of writers such as Comte, Fourier and Proudhon; of historians such as Michelet and Taine; of novelists from George Sand to Zola and the Goncourts. As Romantic

painting had seemed summarized in the work of Delacroix, so Courbet is the archetypal painter of Realism.

"Painting", claimed Courbet, "is an essentially *concrete* art, and can only consist of the presentation of *real and existing* things." Scenes from the past – classical, medieval, even Revolutionary or Napoleonic – were inadmissible. The emphasis on the present went hand in hand with the new permanence of the fleeting moment made possible by the techniques of photography, initiated by Daguerre about 1827 – photographs were already proving useful to Courbet for his painting by the 1850s. The most remarkable of the French nineteenth-century photographers was Félix Nadar (1820-1910), whose portraits, such as the famous one of Baudelaire, rival any portrait by a Realist painter not only in mere naturalism, but in monumentality and vividness – although in sheer size photography could not (yet) match the epic canvases on which Courbet and others painted scenes from working-class or peasant life, challenging the heroic dimensions of traditional "history" painting (see over).

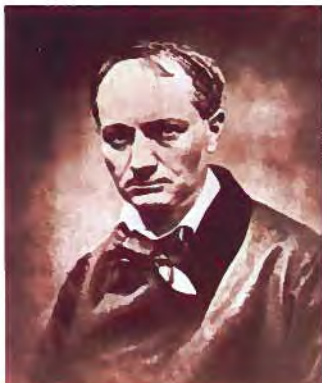
The most remarkable statement of the ideo-



DAUMIER
Nadar in a balloon, 1862
Nadar was the first man to photograph from a balloon.

The caption reads *Photography is elevated to the height of art; the craze sweeps the city below.*

NADAR (below)
Charles Baudelaire, c. 1863
Celebrities flocked to Nadar's Paris studio, even Baudelaire, though he had declared photography mere naturalism, the enemy of art.



GUYS (left)
Two ladies with muffs, c. 1875-80
Guys' art was a superior kind of journalism, with an amoral, sardonic delight in life's passing parade. These fashionable ladies represent the comfortable, gentle aspect of the Second Empire, as opposed to the poverty and villainy shown by Millet and Daumier.

DAUMIER (right)
The dream of the inventor of the needle-gun, 1866
Daumier greatly admired Goya's *Disasters of War* (see p. 314), but his image of a gleeful satanic boffin contemplating the efficacy of a new weapon adds a horribly modern dimension, briskly, humorously noted in a datelessly racy line.



DAUMIER (left)
Ratapail, c. 1850
It is hard to appreciate now what a strong denunciation of the Bonapartist regime this caricature appeared at the time. Daumier had been imprisoned briefly in 1832 for sedition, and so Mme Daumier kept the terracotta original carefully hidden in a lavatory, wrapped up in a straw bottle-cover.

DAUMIER (right)
Rue Transnonain, April 15th 1834, 1834
Daumier's stark lithograph depicted a recent outrage – innocent residents of a Paris tenement block had been killed in a police raid. Its unvarnished realism – it is just like a newspaper photograph – was such that the lithographic stone was confiscated by the state and most of the prints destroyed.



logy behind the Realist movement in painting came from Baudelaire, in a famous essay, *The Painter of Modern Life*. The "modern" (that is, post-Romantic) painter should be a faceless man in the crowd; a dandy, aloof and uncommitted, yet with the clear unprejudiced vision of a child. His subject matter should be drawn from contemporary life and fashion, and his medium should be swift, reflecting immediate impressions, and suitable for wide circulation.

This applied almost wholly to Daumier, and some of it fitted Courbet. Yet the painter Baudelaire chose to typify his thesis was Constantin Guys (1805-92), who was a minor artist by comparison. Honoré Daumier (1808-79) was one of the most original and profound figure painters in oil in the history of art, and a sculptor who foreshadowed Expressionism. His public reputation, however, rested for most of his life on his satirical caricatures, published in journals from 1824, and exploiting to the full the technical possibilities of lithography. His satire extended almost everywhere, but was most often political, directed against the absolute monarchy of Charles X, and then, after 1830, against Louis-Philippe, whom Daumier held to be a turncoat. After

Louis-Philippe had been toppled in 1848, Daumier's wary scepticism was not appeased by the new Republic or by the new Empire of Napoleon III. His crucial strength was his ability to extract from a topical situation a visual image that summarized an essential quality of human life.

Daumier's artistic stature was gradually acknowledged after 1848. Balzac compared him to Michelangelo, the younger generation saluted him and the aging Delacroix even copied his oils – sombre images often very pessimistic in atmosphere. His *Third-class carriage*, about 1862, shows working-class people in an entirely modern situation, unidealized yet monumental in their patient passivity. Contrariwise, he took one of the archetypal symbols of Romantic failure in European literature, Don Quixote, and, in a series of paintings (not shown), invested him with a strangely credible, eerie reality that no other illustrator of Cervantes has begun to approach. His dense yet vigorous paint reflects both Rubens and Rembrandt, and owes something to Delacroix, but its effect, of an image stirring within the paint, is unique.

About the time that Daumier started paint-

ing working-class subjects, in the mid-1840s, Jean-François Millet (1814-75) turned his attention to subjects drawn from the life of the peasantry. In his densely-worked oils, featuring a single peasant, or a small group, at work in a dimly defined, apparently infinite landscape, Millet created a rural, peasant version of heroic painting. As social comment this could be called reactionary or nostalgic, for Millet did not paint the new working class of the cities; to later generations his sentiment, for instance in his most famous picture, *The angelus*, has seemed, in fact, sentimental; the great power of his style, its monumental simplicity, its classical significance, are only now being reassessed.

The opposite of Millet's vision of the heroic countryside appeared in the horrific townscapes of the intense, even neurotic, Charles Meryon (1821-68), a rather isolated figure. Owing to colour blindness he worked in black-and-white: Victor Hugo praised his topographic etchings of Paris, as visions of the city as a staging-post to Hell. Gustave Doré (1832-83; not shown), better known for his illustrations to literary classics, also illustrated the slums in *London: A Pilgrimage*, 1872.



DAUMIER (left)
The third-class carriage,
c. 1862
The brushwork is almost grimy, strengthening the impression of dullness and the grinding poverty of the travellers. Without heroism or sentiment, each is firmly and clearly characterized. Painstakingly, Daumier sought perfection in several versions made of this scene.



MERYON (right)
The morgue, 1854
The harsh contrasts of light and shade combine with the scratchy line to conjure up a hauntingly claustrophobic setting for macabre, ant-like figures about their doomed business. Meryon's highly expressive townscapes are just as Romantic as Realist.



MILLET (left)
The sower, 1850
In 1848 the peasantry had rebelled, protesting exploitation and oppression, and Millet's first version of *The sower*, exhibited in that year, was denounced as socialist. In fact his intent was more to evoke the eternal, almost biblical unity of man and land.



MILLET (right)
The angelus, 1855-57
The religious element is now more explicit. The subject had also a personal meaning for Millet, since his beloved grandmother had always stopped, when the angelus was rung, to pray for "those poor dead". Warm colours of evening strengthen the sentiment, without vitiating Millet's firm draughtsmanship. In the 1860s Millet turned to pure landscape (see p. 341).

Courbet: The Artist's Studio

Gustave Courbet (1817-77) painted his huge *Artist's studio* (it is nearly six metres (20ft) wide) in 1854-55. He subtitled it *A real allegory, determining a phase of seven years in my artistic life* when it was first exhibited in his independent "Pavilion of Realism" at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1855. The critical reception was very mixed, but the 40 or so works displayed established Realism, or Courbet's personal vision of it, as a powerful movement that could not be ignored.

Courbet himself gave a long, detailed account of this painting, starting: "It is the moral and physical history of my studio." On the right are "all the shareholders, that is my friends the workers, the art collectors. On the left, the other world of trivialities – the common people, misery, poverty, wealth, the exploited, the exploiter; those who thrive on death". It is not clear either from the individual characterizations, or from Courbet's own description (intellectual rigour was never his *forte*), which represent good and which bad

in the left-hand group, but an acquaintance of Courbet's said that the seated huntsman with his dog and the farm labourers behind him stood for healthy country life. Others in the group included workers representing poverty and unemployment in the urban working classes; a destitute old republican of 1793 – all that was left of the heroic legend of Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire – a curé, an undertaker, and a pedlar hawking rubbish. The group on the right includes Courbet's loyal patron, Bruyas, the philosopher Proudhon, the writer Champfleury, and the poet and critic Baudelaire with open book. But the focus of the picture is the artist himself at work, attended by a superbly painted nude (Naked Truth), and a child (Innocence), though it is a landscape of his native Ornans region that is depicted on the easel.

The composition can be construed as a secularized *sacra conversazione* in triptych form; the plaster figure with adjacent skull, behind the canvas, appears to be a crucified



COURBET (above)
Self-portrait with a black dog, 1844

In this, Courbet's first accepted Salon picture, the subject – an informal figure in a rural setting – is in the tradition of van

Dyck and Gainsborough, but the self-assurance of the face, compounded by the low viewpoint, establishes the young man's individuality. This initiates a series of robust, extrovert *Self-Portraits* of some power.



Christ. It also invites comparison with that Neoclassical manifesto, Ingres's *Apotheosis of Homer* (see p. 333), but Courbet's central figure of artistic genius (himself) is set in the context of real people from contemporary life ("society at its best, its worst and its average . . . my way of seeing society in its interests and its passions"). The theme has been interpreted in terms of Fourierist socialism – a personal, concrete expression of an association of Capital, Labour and Talent, an ideal harmony of society. Yet the picture also expresses alienation in a way that Baudelaire himself might have approved: there is scarcely any communication between the three groups, or even between some figures in the groups. The artist in the centre is the hope of communication.

As "real allegory" the picture's internal contradictions baffled contemporaries. The people are all real, faithfully and vividly portrayed, but as an event the gathering is impossible, and even its setting, the walls of the studio, is vague and unidentified. The choice

of characters is also far from an adequate representation of contemporary society. However, it made an impression (Delacroix considered it "one of the most outstanding paintings of the times") and it has since continued to fascinate. Not least, it opens a doorway to modern art: here the artist is shown dominant at the centre of the world. In *The studio* not just the artist, but for the first time the "activity of creating art" becomes the subject. In Courbet's self-portraits and in his portraits of his friends, too, the artist as maker assumes heroic stature, even when surrounded by children, as is *Proudhon*.

Courbet had come to Paris from his native Ornans, in the mountainous Jura of France, in 1840. His early *Self-portrait with black dog* suggests his flamboyant and truculent character, though not his lifelong social and political commitment. Even though *The studio* was the last major work in which he tried to programme his political, social and moral ideals, he continued to participate in politics, taking a

prominent part in the Commune of 1871, until, following a brief imprisonment, he was forced into exile in Switzerland, where he died. His artistic and social sympathies are strikingly expressed in the unemotional but monumental *Stone-breakers* (1849; destroyed) – two men shown simply at their dehumanizing task. In the same year he also depicted a small-town funeral, *A burial at Ornans*, on an heroic scale. He always drew on the real, but with great variety and with a brilliantly broad and free style, often laying on with a palette-knife. Courbet's still lifes have a density, a weight of presence comparable with those of Chardin or, for that matter, of Cézanne. His nudes were of a veracity, sometimes unflattering but often also startlingly erotic, that many found offensive. *The bathers*, again a life-size genre subject, allegedly provoked Napoleon III to assault it with his riding whip at the Salon of 1853. Perhaps, however, his landscapes of the Jura (see over) are the best examples of the beauty, the rich, sombre colour, of his paint.

COURBET (left)
The artist's studio,
1854-55
Courbet's great manifesto rejects both academicism, represented by the dusty plaster figure, and Romanticism, symbolized by the plumed hat and the guitar. Champfleury, Baudelaire and Proudhon, who are shown in it, expressed dislike of the work, finding Courbet's vanity and the autobiographical tone of the painting distracting. It is in fact the true subject.



COURBET (left)
The stone-breakers, 1849
Courbet wrote to a friend: "I stopped to look at two men breaking stones on the road. It is rare to find an expression of such utter and complete misery; and at once I had an idea for a picture." It was neither expressionist nor sentimental, however.

COURBET
A burial at Ornans,
1849-50
All sorts of people from Courbet's native town posed for this vast canvas, a mirror of provincial life and death. The onlookers' grief, fear and indifference are dispassionately noted; the faces struck Parisian critics as shockingly ugly.



COURBET (left)
The bathers, 1853
The scandal of the 1853 Salon, *The bathers* attracted universal odium. It is an incongruous picture: even if the women are earthly mundane, their extravagant gestures are reminiscent of the nymphs and goddesses of 17th- and 18th-century art, but almost violent.

COURBET (above)
Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and his family, 1865
Proudhon's "thinker" pose and books indicate a larger reality than the man amidst his family (the portrait is set in 1853). Details such as his worn shoes and his daughters' toys enable the viewer to reconstruct the sitter's situation, though.

French Landscape: The Barbizon School

The art of landscape was relatively slow to become established in France; although in England Constable and Turner, in Germany Friedrich and also more modest German and Austrian naturalist painters had considerably broadened its scope, landscape in France at first remained firmly rooted in the tradition of Poussin – the ideal landscape, conceived as a stage for an heroic story. Landscape was officially accepted as a distinct category of art only in 1817, and its acclimatization dates really from about 1824, when the impact of Constable and of Bonington, shown that year in Paris, was sharply felt, though artists were

already preconditioned by a growing Romantic concern with the direct study of Nature.

This interest was matched by an increasing attention to the seventeenth-century Dutch painters, and was most fruitful in the remarkable but still underestimated work of Georges Michel (1763-1843). Rather isolated, and neglected by contemporary critics, his landscapes recall those of Rembrandt or Ruisdael, but he was one of the first to work in the open air, and his contention that a landscapist needed a mere four square miles to provide him with subject matter for a lifetime is close to Constable's discovery of the ordinary and everyday.

The brief-lived Richard Parkes Bonington (1802-28) is an important link between the English and French schools; though he was English-born, from the age of 15 he lived mainly in France, and was a friend of Delacroix. If his brilliantly handled genre scenes of medieval and oriental subjects owe much to French example, his landscapes in oil or in watercolour, especially when painted directly from the subject, have an immediacy of effect and brilliance of colour rivalling the native British tradition. He and Delacroix were in turn friends of Paul Huet (1803-69). Political activist on the barricades in the 1830s and, to begin with, dogmatically opposed to academicism, Huet briefly associated with the Barbizon painters, and ended as the so-to-speak official leader of Romantic landscape when Romanticism had become respectable. His output is of variable quality, but, working consistently in the open, he could usually retain spontaneity in his less formal pictures.

Barbizon is a village on the fringe of the Forest of Fontainebleau, where numerous painters worked and often lived, "led" by Théodore Rousseau (1812-67). Rousseau was certainly impressed by Constable, and based



ROUSSEAU (left)

A group of oaks near

Barbizon, 1852

A simple rustic view, with the spreading oaks elevated into a splendidly imposing image, a sense of sun and shade, the heavy peace of afternoon – what more could anyone want of landscape? Critics carped at the unconventional composition, the use of broad brushwork and often dense impasto.

BONINGTON (below)

View of Normandy? c. 1824

Bonington made several trips to Normandy between about 1820 and 1828, setting off on the open road, stick in hand and knapsack with painter's gear on his back. The fresh, light spontaneity of this painting is typical of his style; quite probably he painted it north of Paris in the countryside Michel also painted, with different effect.

MICHEL (right)

The storm, c. 1820-30
Michel dramatized the fields and heaths outside Paris with bold strokes of colour within a dark tonality. This is not a finished work but an *ébauche*, an oil-sketch in which the elements of the picture were "blocked out".



HUET (below)

Elms at St-Cloud, 1823

Huet shared the irritation of Academicians faced with "unfinished" works, though he esteemed spontaneity. Like Corot and Rousseau, he kept in the studio his studies, which can now be compared with the exhibited works of the Impressionists.



DAUBIGNY (right)

Snow scene: Valmondois, 1875

Snow scenes were an excuse for the almost abstract play of tones and colours, and were painted by Courbet and the Impressionists. By the 1870s Daubigny was commercially successful and respectable, but also friendly with Monet; as a member of the Salon jury, he gave the Impressionists what support he could.



his work on the close scrutiny and analysis of natural forms on site. He was in fact the ancestor of much academic landscape of the later nineteenth century, and accepted as such from about 1850, but in his early days (consistently rejected by the Salon between 1836 and 1848) he was known as "*le grand refusé*". His work shows him a master of stillness, though his imagination seems sometimes constrained by a rather dour naturalism.

The work of Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Pena (1807-76) was more immediately acceptable: he painted the Fontainebleau woods with a much freer (sometimes rather flashy) style, and established an enduring popularity. Charles-François Daubigny (1817-78) was, in an historical sense, perhaps more important than either Rousseau or Diaz, for he is the link between their naturalism and the development of Impressionism – he was criticized precisely for producing mere "impressions". He always worked directly from his subject, in which water and sky often played a large part (he used a boat as a floating studio). Early insistence on detail gradually yielded to a more free and open style, with which he achieved remarkable effects of light and atmosphere. In 1865 he was

with Courbet, Monet and Boudin at Trouville, and his influence on Monet was considerable; the spirit if not the technique of his later paintings is closely akin to that of the early Impressionists.

Rousseau and Daubigny had no great political involvement, unlike Courbet and Millet, whose work was far from being confined to pure landscape, and who are generally classified as Realists (see pp. 336 ff). The best of Courbet's landscapes (and the more directly and faithfully dependent on nature, the better they are) combine a material drama with a sense of massive formal structure that has not been surpassed; however, when he introduced emotional elements – animals – he could be almost as sentimental as Landseer. Millet was closely associated with Barbizon from 1849, but only in his latest work did pure landscape play the dominant role in his vision.

The greatest landscape painter of the mid-century presents a curious paradox of Romantic and classic values. Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875), amiable in person, unambitious, detached from politics, avoiding controversy, went his own admirable, independent way (in 1846, when he was awarded

the Légion d'Honneur, aged 50, he was still being subsidized financially by his father). Crucial to his development was his Italian sojourn, 1824-28, where it was not the awe-some aura of the Old Masters that impressed him, but the lucid light of the Italian countryside. There Corot worked directly from the subject, painting generally small-scale pictures, tuned as it were by his perfect tonal pitch, and harmonized by a sense of design as delicate as the finest balance. The crystal clarity of these idylls is partly the result of his technique: he used thinned, translucent paint applied almost in washes but with sharp precision. Back in France, he then developed a poetical type of landscape of an entirely different character, almost a Romantic variation on Rococo dreams of rustic but elegant figures in a silvery-green-grey haze of foliage; these, once extremely successful, were subsequently condemned out of hand, and are only now becoming seriously appreciated again for their painterly subtleties. In his later years, in certain figure paintings and portraits (not shown), Corot developed a power of sculptural modelling that surpasses even Courbet's, and is not to be found again till Cézanne.



COURBET (below)

The Loue valley in stormy weather, c. 1849

In 1849 Courbet spent the summer near Paris with Corot. He used light effects to define space, rather than the conventional structure of planes receding from a sharply defined foreground.

MILLET (above)

Spring, 1868-73

In Millet's late work the forces of Nature assume the epic quality that his labouring peasants once had. His later technique was looser, lighter, more colourful, perhaps under the influence of early Monet.



DIAZ DE LA PENA (left)

Gypsies going to a fair, 1844

For years a familiar figure

in and about Fontainebleau, Diaz painted richly dappled woodland scenes, bubbling with light and bright colour.



COROT (above)

The island of San Bartolomeo in Rome, 1825

Such fresh Italian studies, bathed in Mediterranean light, were, for Corot, raw material for more stately, if also very fine landscapes destined for the Salon.

COROT (below)

View of Avray, c. 1835-40

Here Corot animated one of his favourite views with little dabs of paint, in a way that looks forward to the fresh visions of Renoir. These pictures became the foundation of his reputation.



Edouard Manet

FANTIN-LATOURE (below)
Edouard Manet, 1867
 Fantin-Latour's almost photographic naturalism represents Manet as Zola described him – "a rather

pink complexion ... a quick and intelligent eye ... an expression of sensitiveness and energy". The portrait came to the Salon in a year when Manet was excluded.



Political revolutions rarely lead to the instant stability of the new regime, and the upheavals of 1848 and 1870 in France were no exception. The radical republicanism that toppled Louis-Philippe in 1848 led within three years to the *coup d'état* by Louis-Napoleon, who was established (by plebiscite) as Napoleon III of the Second Empire. His downfall in 1870, after catastrophic defeat by the Germans, was followed by the socialist, even anarchic, Commune in Paris before relative stability was achieved by the Third Republic. The Second Empire was nevertheless a period of brilliant opulence and artistic ferment.

The 1850s and 1860s contained a rich profusion of styles, practised by overlapping generations – Delacroix died only in 1863 and Ingres in 1867, while Courbet, born in 1819, was at the peak of his powers. The rising generation, born mostly in the 1830s, became notorious during the 1860s; pioneering the most fundamental revolution in the visual arts since the Renaissance, they were not yet acceptable to public or academic opinion.

Edouard Manet (1832-83) was early on considered the leader of the avantgarde, although he dissociated himself from formal

connection with the painters who became known as the Impressionists. Born of a well-to-do family, he was slightly older than they were, and the image he presented to the public all his life was that of the elegantly conventional man-about-town, just as he appears in the polite effigy by Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904). His art, on the other hand (when he emerged from Couture's *atelier*), flouted convention in both style and content.

If Courbet, most clearly in his *Studio* (see p. 338), had demonstrated the artist's sovereignty, showing the artist as hero in the act of re-creating the world, in Manet the germs are visible of that development by which the paint itself becomes the subject. From Realism he learned the importance of taking subjects from contemporary life and treating them on a life-size scale. However, he combined this approach with an audacious adaptation of traditional iconographic themes, sometimes even adopting the style of the Old Masters, especially the Spanish and the Venetians. His *Absinth drinker* of 1859 was rejected by the Salon, although *The guitarist* (not shown) of 1861 was a success; real confrontation came in 1863, when (following noisy controversy over



MANET (left)
The absinth drinker, 1858
 Manet's portrait of a local character, well known in the streets round the Louvre, was perhaps suggested by some verses in Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. It belongs to a genre created by Spanish painters in the 17th century, but its muted tones and lack of spatial definition were disliked by academics, and Manet's teacher, Couture.

MANET (right)
"Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe"
 (The picnic), 1863
 The *Déjeuner* is clearly in direct line of descent from "*Le Concert Champêtre*" in the Louvre (see p. 142) then given to Giorgione. Manet's reinterpretation answers Baudelaire's call to the painter to find the poetry in modern life, and the eternal in the transitory.



MANET (left)
Olympia, 1863
 The girl's direct glance and the hostile pose of her black cat implicate the viewer in a scene of *demi-mondaine* life. The jewels, ribbon and slippers, which provocatively enhance her nudity, and the black attendant all suggest that she is a young courtesan receiving one of her clients.

MANET (right)
 Oil-sketch for *The execution of Emperor Maximilian*, 1867
 The Mexican Emperor had been assisted by the French government, and his death shocked the French public. The soldiers wear uniforms like those of the French Army, but Manet's view is otherwise strictly detached.



the Salon's policy of acceptance and rejection), Napoleon III arranged a Salon des Refusés, an event sometimes still cited as the starting point of modern art. The *refusés* included Manet, Whistler, Pissarro, even Cézanne.

The major scandal was caused by Manet's "*Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*" (The picnic), in which Manet repeated with some exactness figures from a subject by Raphael engraved by Marcantonio. In the engraving (not shown) the three main figures were all nude, but Manet clad the two males in the dark jackets and trousers of 1863, leaving the female figure naked; her direct and unabashed gaze invites the spectator into the picture. The spectators of 1863 mostly rejected the invitation with rage and ridicule. But the manner of the painting was scarcely more acceptable than the subject matter, and upset even Courbet. Manet suppressed the traditional rendering of form in chiaroscuro, with modelling by gradation of tone, in favour of a method that seemed, at first, flat – in fact it caught the effect of unfiltered daylight, simplifying detail, sharpening silhouettes and kindling colour.

In the same year Manet painted his most famous picture, *Olympia*, though he did not

submit it to the Salon until 1865. Surprisingly it was accepted, but its reception by the public was extremely hostile. The subject matter, echoing – or perverting – the established tradition of recumbent nudes descending from Titian's "*Venus of Urbino*" (see p. 145) to Goya's *Nude maja* (see p. 312), was found obscene. (The fashionably acceptable version is represented by Cabanel's *Birth of Venus*, see p. 335) One critic called her "Manet's rancid Olympia". Here Manet even more markedly simplified and emboldened his handling, using no half-tones, but flat colour which he disposed, contrapuntally, in sharp contrasts. The delicate subtlety of the harmonies of blacks, greys, and whites was recognized only years later; what appeared as vulgar banality is now seen as a brilliant metamorphosis of a somewhat over-exploited subject.

From 1866 Manet had the support not only of Baudelaire, but of Zola, a positively pugnacious apologist. Meanwhile, his control of form developed following a visit to Spain, while both his compositions and his aloof, objective approach to his subject matter were influenced by Japanese prints, then just beginning to become popular, and by photo-

graphy. Typical is the portrait of *Zola*, which unites still life and vivid portraiture – the casual informality of the writer's working study transposed into a very intricate pictorial structure. In his *Execution of Maximilian* there may be an explicit political comment, but generally Manet's realism was apolitical; as Zola replied to the socialist requirements of Courbet's friend Proudhon, "The artist is at no-one's service and we refuse to enter yours".

In the 1870s Manet's frequent reliance on blacks and greys, on flattened silhouettes, was happily "aerated" by the influence of the Impressionists, though he refused to exhibit with them as a group. His colour key heightened; his handling of paint became lighter, looser and still more deft, and, though he hardly ever (being essentially an urban creature) painted landscape, much of his work became suffused with light, air and movement. His importance as a graphic artist is also considerable; he translated some of his own most important works into prints for wide publication, but also produced some vivid journalism, notably of the Siege of Paris – a black-and-white equivalent of his power of summary description in painting.



MANET (left)
Emile Zola, 1868
The Japanese *Samurai* print and painted screen, and the reproduction of a Velázquez (hidden by one of his own *Olympia*) are a tribute by Manet to the influences on his work.

MANET (right)
Argenteuil, 1874
At Argenteuil by the Seine with Monet in the summer of 1874, Manet became convinced of the value of *plein-air* painting, even though Impressionist interest in the transitory never affected his concern for structure.

MANET (below)
Chez Père Lathuille, 1879
The restaurant proprietor's son posed as an eager lover of the smart young woman. Manet's technique is freer than ever before – note the quick strokes on the hand.



MANET (right)
Civil War, 1871
During the 1870 Commune Manet saw corpses like this on the streets of Paris, and made a rapid drawing, the basis for his lithograph. The body of the soldier in the centre recalls an earlier work by Manet, *The dead Toreador* (not shown), but also Daumier's *Rue Transnonain* (see p. 336) and a long tradition going back to Mantegna and Grünewald. Here is another example of Manet charging old forms with sharp topical reference.



Impressionism 1: The Early Years

Paintings associated with the movement called Impressionism have become perhaps the most widely known, best loved and most easily assimilated pictures in the whole history of art – and delightful to live with, as the rich collectors of Europe and America discovered in the 1890s. The beginnings of Impressionism, however, were not auspicious. The Impressionists advanced in the first place from certain beach-heads established by the Romantics, by the Realists, especially Courbet and the Barbizon landscapists, and by Manet. They were committed to painting the world as they saw it – the world immediately around them, the modern world – that is, to realism, to naturalism, even to illusionism, though this was hardly recognizable as such at first to the public. Their Realist doctrine encouraged painting directly from the subject – if an open-air one, then out-of-doors. Yet concentration on the purely visible revealed an optical world composed of innumerable touches of colour, not necessarily encompassing or describing discrete, three-dimensional forms.

The Impressionist analysis could be undertaken in various ways. Monet and Sisley were more or less non-intellectual, attempting an

intuitive apprehension of the effects of light. Others sought a rational analysis of the sensation of vision, as did Pissarro (at certain stages) and especially Seurat, whose pointillism was supposedly scientifically based. A third approach was concerned more with the objects that comprise the visible world, and the separateness and interrelationship of these objects are a major consideration in Degas's figure studies, in Renoir's later work, and above all in Cézanne's.

The movement started to coalesce amongst a little group of fellow-students in Paris between 1859 and 1864 – Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Sisley and Bazille. They had common interests – Courbet, the Barbizon painters – and from about 1866 found in Edouard Manet a sympathetic elder. They also had in common the enthusiasm of youth, and an enemy, the orthodoxy of the academic Salon painters. However, they were sharply different personalities and were to develop along very different lines. They may initially have had some political affiliation, inevitably left-wing, but only Pissarro remained a committed and active socialist; their subject matter, however, was most often pleasure or pleasurable – people

enjoying themselves, landscapes enjoyable to look at, celebrated in lively high-keyed colour. The movement formally emerged only in 1874, when the Impressionists' work had been rejected wholesale by the Salon, and they formed the Limited Company of Painters, Sculptors and Engravers, which staged its own exhibition in the studio of the photographer Nadar. It was then that they were dubbed "Impressionists". Between 1874 and 1886 there were eight exhibitions by the group, though the only important member to exhibit at all of them was Pissarro, and already in the early 1880s there were doctrinal and technical dissensions.

The main immediate precursors of Impressionism were Eugène Boudin (1824-98) and Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819-91; not shown). Boudin's delightfully airy little paintings, especially his seashore scenes, were, like Jongkind's, in the Barbizon tradition, but had an added vivacity and sparkle of colour, Impressionistic in effect. Claude Monet was (with Sisley) probably the most single-minded of the Impressionists (see over); Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), while loyal throughout to their initial premises, was the most aware of the necessity of development, including reaction

BOUDIN (right)
The jetty at Deauville, 1865
Boudin encouraged the boy Monet at Le Havre, and initiated him (overcoming his first reluctance) into the art of painting in the open air. His fresh seascapes abandoned tradition in their informality and lack of structure. Seen always from a distance, and noted rather than studied, these fashionable strollers of the resort are unposed; they are momentarily arrested on the canvas, just like the clouds.



PISSARRO (right)
Red roofs, 1877
The rich colours and thick strokes of paint impart a striking brilliance, without compromising an essential structure. Pissarro was the most perseveringly analytic of the Impressionists, always experimenting in the use of pure colours to render light.



RENOIR (left)
At the inn of Mother Anthony, 1866
Renoir's first monumental group portrait was a tribute to Courbet and to tradition. His approach is Realistic, and academic in its concern for form and structure, but its informality, the careful tonal harmony and experimental brushwork, are new.

RENOIR (right)
Monet working in his garden, 1873
With his "rainbow palette" Renoir infused his often unremarkable subjects with light and warmth and the feeling of summer. Working together at Argenteuil, both he and Monet used tiny dabs of paint, making the picture shimmer, bringing out its surface in blossoming colour.



to new styles and influences. Pissarro's early admiration for Corot yielded to one for Courbet; in a period at Pontoise, 1866-69 (where he was the neighbour of the young Cézanne, and encouraged him), his landscapes reflected Courbet's rather sombre-toned naturalism, which proved unpopular, and he lived in great poverty. In the Franco-Prussian war Frédéric Bazille (1841-70) was killed; Pissarro and Monet took refuge in London, and Monet's example, together with the experience of Constable and Turner, led Pissarro to a lighter palette and a looser technique with which to interpret the creative play of light over the

physical world. Through the 1870s in France, he was almost the anchorman of the movement, with a stubborn, sometimes slow and even occasionally boring scrutiny of nature – "the most naturalist of them all", observed one critic in 1878.

Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), from a poor family in Limoges, started life as a porcelain painter, which surely fostered his delight in delicate linear brushwork (not really an Impressionist quality) and in the brilliance of high colour translucent over a pure white ground. He first worked beside Monet in 1864, but even his early *At the inn of Mother Anthony*

shows his reliance on the traditional example of the Old Masters – "It is in the museum that one learns to paint", he later said, which is almost heresy to Impressionism. He also, in the mid-1860s, digested Courbet's lessons of monumentality and modelling, especially of the nude. In 1869, with Monet again at La Grenouillère, and in the next few years, he came as close to classic Impressionism as he ever did. Yet he remained obstinately always non-doctrinaire: his paintings are primarily a sensuous response to the pleasure life offers.

Alfred Sisley (1839-99) was in a sense the narrowest of the major figures of Impressionism, from 1870 concentrating solely on landscape in a very light and airy manner, scintillating with pure colour. At times his work is very close to Monet's; he showed great tonal sensitivity, painting floods, snow, mist in subdued colour with delicate subtlety.

Berthe Morisot (1841-95), taught by Corot, married Manet's brother Eugène, and she perhaps influenced Manet towards working in the open air – opening out his style into Impressionistic fragmented colour. She exhibited landscapes and scenes from domestic life at all but one of the Impressionist exhibitions.



MONET (left)

Impression: Sunrise, 1872
This was the painting that earned the Impressionists their name. "What freedom, what ease of workmanship", wrote one sarcastic critic. The title acknowledges that the work is a sketch; Monet exhibited it since it caught as well as any reworking the effect he sought. The lack of "finish", or labour, to which the critics objected, made possible its instantaneity.

SISLEY (right)

Floods at Port-Marly, 1876

Sisley's series recording the heavy floods at Port-Marly on the Seine near Paris are perhaps his most successful works. His style matured slowly, influenced to the last perhaps by Corot; he gradually came to adopt techniques used by Monet and Renoir, applying colour in small areas – almost in a divisionistic way – working intuitively, without theory. There is nothing English in his art; he was born of English parents in Paris.



RENOIR (above)

Mme Charpentier and her children, 1878

Renoir's later career was successful, after he found a market in the late 1870s for his seductive portraits of women and children. He achieves movement, vivid life in bright colour; what matters the bland absence of critical characterization?

BAZILLE (left)

The artist's family, 1867

Bazille was a member of the nuclear Impressionist group, but his development was cut short by his death in war. Just as he had felt impelled to volunteer, so his portrait is formidably respectable; he was conscientiously Realist, and worked hard at it, made sketches in the open air, and also used photographs.



MORISOT (above)

The butterfly chase, 1874

Morisot seems to combine the dashing, varied strokes of Monet or Renoir with the more smoothly graded tones, and favourite silvery

greens, of her teacher Corot. This scene is typical of her informal, intimate glimpses of women and children – though many were interiors. Her subject matter, unlike Manet's, was unoffending.

Claude Monet



NADAR (above)
Claude Monet, 1899
Monet's patriarchal figure altered little in his last 25 years. At 84, visitors found him still robust – "an impression of rusticity dispelled as soon as he spoke: then one realized how great a spirit he was".

MONET (below)
The cart – snow-covered road at Honfleur, 1865
Jongkind often painted the one scene in different weathers. Jongkind's urge to precise observation and Courbet's vigorous style here combine to influence Monet's early technique.



Cézanne's famous summary of Claude Monet (1840-1926) contains an essential truth, applicable to Monet's work throughout his long career: "Monet is no more than an eye – but, my God, what an eye." His approach to his art was always pragmatic and intuitive, rather than based on scientific analysis; he was, however, endowed with a formidably stubborn stamina of purpose.

Monet was brought up in Le Havre, and his early awareness of open marine light may well have been a lasting influence, as his exposure to African sunlight during army service in Algiers, 1860-62, certainly was. In Le Havre Boudin (see preceding page) introduced the teenager to the possibilities of open-air painting, to the search for an equivalent in paint to the look and feel of moving light and air; a little later Jongkind, with his sensitivity to changing light and weather, opened his eyes still further.

In Paris, he became a student with the academician Gleyre, and in Gleyre's studio in 1859 his association with the future Impressionists – Renoir, Sisley, Pissarro – began. An early marked influence from Courbet – his use of strong earth colours, his broad, direct technique with the palette knife – yielded to

that of Manet; Monet's own "*Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*" (The picnic; not shown) and his *Ladies in the garden* of 1866 and 1867 are at once a salute and an extension to Manet's *Déjeuner* (see p. 342). They are woodland idylls really, but contemporary, non-mythical, and Realist – a sun-dappled, relaxed bourgeois picnic treated on the heroic scale, life-size, painted from nature – with the interest shifting markedly to the effects of light.

After 1867, and the mass rejection from the Salon of work by himself and his friends, he settled all the more obstinately into his independence, though he often had to live in great poverty. With Renoir at the riverside restaurant and bathing resort of La Grenouillère, painting in the open air, he pursued the interplay of light on restless water, working out for himself by experiment the way that the surface colour of objects and even shadows are modulated into a quite different appearance by reflected light and the neighbouring colours. He tried out techniques of fragmentary brushwork, using pure colours, especially primaries (red, yellow, blue) against their complementaries (green, violet, orange), laid on in short, broad strokes. He became fascinated with



MONET (left)
La Grenouillère, 1869
Of all the Impressionists, Monet and Renoir were the most interested in scenes of contemporary life, especially the unpretentious and lively gatherings of the Parisian working and middle classes. La Grenouillère, a resort on the Seine near Chatou, was a perfect subject and, painting there, the styles of the two artists came as close as they ever did. Both used fragmented brushstrokes and dots to render the river's shifting surface, but Monet's technique was the broader, with a vibrancy in which the movement both of the landscape and of the people in it is mirrored.

MONET (left)
Ladies in the garden, 1867
Monet's obsessive fidelity to appearances is revealed in the story that he dug a trench in his garden to hold his giant canvas, so he could work directly from nature. He painted it in several sessions from one model in various dresses and poses, but worked only in bright sunlight, in order to retain the unified impression of a brilliant summer's day.

MONET (right)
Gare St Lazare, 1877
Monet explores mainly the vaporous effects of steam and smoke within a light-filled but confined space. Touches of vivid colour, especially red, serve to bring forward more distant forms and to determine the relative positions of the objects in the opaque air.



atmospheric conditions, and painted mists and thaws in which mass and form almost dissolved, until light itself seemed to be the subject – the physical objects hardly more than the means by which light could conjure up its own shape. Traditional linear perspective vanished; the depth of the painting was established by the accuracy of the aerial perspective and the recession of the colours.

In 1870–71, Monet took refuge from the Franco-Prussian War in London, and there, though always critical of their work as a whole, took note of Constable's style and especially of Turner's, whose atmospheric concerns had anticipated his, although Turner had worked with different techniques and from different principles of colour. Back in Paris, Monet, with Pissarro, was the main instigator of the first independent Impressionist exhibition, and it was from one of his studies shown there, of a harbour sunrise (see preceding page), that critics coined the word "Impressionism", which has stuck ever since.

In 1877 Monet began his long series of studies, often repeated from the same spot, of a single motif, shown under different conditions and at different times of day. The *Gare St*

Lazare series was the first, continuing the Realist emphasis on themes from contemporary life (the poet and critic Gautier had called railway stations "the new cathedrals of humanity, the centres where all ways converge"). In another sense, however, it was a new departure in naturalism, an attempt at absolute loyalty to the ephemeral effect at a given moment. These series would eventually develop, in his final *Waterlilies*, into the equivalent of musical variations on a theme.

By 1880, Monet's personal relationships with the other Impressionists were beginning to fade, as both they and he increasingly developed their own divergent styles. Monet's work continued very bright in key, but increasingly he abstracted the interplay of colours from the forms on which light kindles them. During the 1880s he travelled extensively, sometimes using a travelling "canvas box": in the box a number of canvases was slotted, and he would move from one canvas to another as the day wore on and the light changed. But he began sometimes (a shift from absolute naturalism) to modify the image before him in the interests of creating a more satisfying colour structure – in this Seurat (see p. 358) may have

influenced him. His formal simplifications sometimes resemble Gauguin's or van Gogh's.

Monet's acceptance by the general public came very slowly – in the mid-1880s he was even attacked by the younger generation, including Seurat, and criticized by otherwise enlightened critics. But by 1890 he was at last developing a popular market, especially in the United States, and in some financial security settled in on that long sequence of thematic series – his *Haystacks*, his *Poplars*, his *Rouen Cathedral*; the magical interpretations of London mist over the Thames; and, for all of 20 years from about 1900 till his eyesight failed before his death in 1926, the continuing variations on the lilies in his own water-garden at Giverny. These marvellous and often enormous canvases increasingly became simply harmonious modulations of colour – an effect that was to be noted with admiration by many painters of the second half of the twentieth century. And yet, although Kandinsky hailed the work of his later years – particularly the *Haystack* series – as the inspiration of modern abstract painting, Monet remained to his death a figurative painter, for whom the objects of Nature were the ruling inspiration.

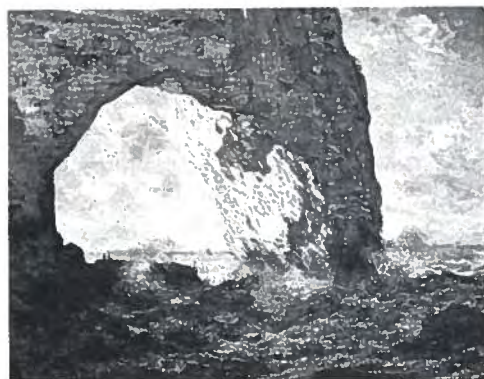


MONET (above)
Two haystacks, 1891
Repeated studies of one motif in varying daylight conditions was the logical result of Monet's life-long

concern with instantaneity. He moved from canvas to canvas, registering minute changes in the shimmering "envelope" of coloured light – here that of broad day.



MONET (above)
Two haystacks, 1891
Now approaching sunset dims the palette and blunts the contrasts in an overall red. Kandinsky, on seeing one of the *Haystack* series, suddenly became aware of "the unsuspected power of the palette, which surpassed all my dreams ... At the same time, unconsciously, the object was discredited as an indispensable element of the picture", he wrote.



MONET (above)
The cliff at Etretat, 1883
During the 1880s Monet returned to the Normandy and Brittany coast to paint seascapes unprecedented in force and movement. The

fury of the waves smacking through the narrow gap of a massive rock formation is captured in brushwork of a new breadth and freedom. But there is no trace of pantheistic Romanticism.



MONET (left)
The lilypond, after 1900
Though the growing formlessness of Monet's late works is partly explained by his failing vision, more significantly they represent the ultimate development of Impressionism into subjectivity. The recognizable features of the garden – the trees, banks and little Japanese bridge – dissolve in some of the richest, most poetic colour harmonies to be found in painting.

Impressionism 2: The Later Years

By the time of the last Impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1886, such coherence as the original Impressionists had ever had as a group had already largely disintegrated. The shock of novelty was being supplied by younger artists, such as Seurat, whose *La Grande Jatte* (see p. 358) was in the show. Pissarro exhibited some Seurat-influenced divisionist paintings; Monet and Renoir were absent. Degas, who had exhibited at five earlier shows, showed a sequence of pastels of nudes, or rather naked women (see over); yet, although Degas is associated with Impressionism, and he knew all the Impressionists well, it is difficult to call him one of them. He is more adequately described as a Realist (yet all the Impressionists would have claimed to be that). He was closest to Manet, in his insistence upon drawing and his respect for the Old Masters, and, though committed to contemporary subjects, he never worked in the open air or finished his figure studies in front of the model.

In 1886 van Gogh was in Paris; so was Toulouse-Lautrec; the American Mary Cassatt exhibited at the show. Gauguin was in Pont-Aven; both Pissarro and Cézanne had withdrawn from the fray, Pissarro to Eragny

PISSARRO (below)
A view from the artist's window, Eragny, 1888
Using Seurat's divisionist technique – but not his flat, summary forms or shallow

space – Pissarro sought to capture the reflections of strong daylight in mingled dots of colour. The result is a spare, rather dull and unevocative painting.



PISSARRO (left)
The potato harvest, 1886
In his correspondence with his son Lucien, which is full of intriguing sidelights on the Impressionist movement, Pissarro wrote: "It is only by drawing often, drawing everything, drawing incessantly that one fine day you find to your surprise you have rendered something in its true character." That reveals the artist, not the socialist or idealist. The need to sell work prompted his genre etchings, in which, perhaps, Pissarro's various talent forms a bridge from Millet's approach to that of Gauguin and the Nabis.

RENOIR (below)
Umbrellas, c. 1881-84
Renoir is surely best loved for his paintings of women

– the sugary, sensual beauty of his standard female face. Here both Impressionist and harder brushwork appear.



and Cézanne to his native Aix-en-Provence, pursuing his lonely course (see p. 360) in modest financial independence following his father's death. 1886 saw the end of Cézanne's friendship with Zola, whom he had known from a boy, with the publication of Zola's novel *L'Oeuvre*, which branded him as an interesting failure. It was interpreted by many as a critical obituary of Impressionism. The original group, whom Pissarro now called the "Romantic Impressionists", were beset by individual problems of style, while their personal relationships had degenerated into what van Gogh saw as "disastrous squabbles".

We have followed the career of the supreme painter of Impressionism, Claude Monet, to his death in 1926 (see preceding page). The later career of Camille Pissarro never compromised his persistent integrity, his faithfulness to his original ideals; but the flexibility of his imagination and his curiosity enabled him to take into account the discoveries of much younger colleagues (he had supported Cézanne, Gauguin and Seurat). Pissarro was sustained by an idealistic belief in the moral and social importance of art ("The most corrupt form of art is sentimental art, orange-blossom

PISSARRO (below)
The Boulevard Montmartre at night, 1897
Despairing of a "scientific" analysis of light, Pissarro reverted to an intuitive

approach, painting with the skill of his hand rather than the calculation of his brain. He caught surface effects, sensations of moving light, more successfully than ever.



RENOIR (left)
The bathers, c. 1884-87
The design derives from a 17th-century lead relief, *Nymphs bathing*, by Girardon, but since these women are presumably bathing at some notional resort, the subject is rendered contemporary. There is a marked conflict between the firm drawing of the foreground nudes and the more Impressionistic treatment of the background; Renoir was seeking, in his own Post-Impressionism, to reconcile them. His nudes are in the grand tradition of Rubens and Courbet, but already show a concern to simplify form and outline.

art which makes pale women swoon"). Technically and theoretically, he saw the point of Seurat's divisionist analysis of light, and tried it out for himself between 1884 and 1888, only to find that it was irreconcilable with other, older principles – spontaneity, instantaneity, all those "effects, so random and so admirable of Nature". Also, his eyesight began to give trouble, and he reverted to a development of his earlier style; his later urban views are quintessentially Impressionistic in style and choice of subject. He achieved some financial security only in the 1890s, but when he died in 1903 he was acknowledged as a great master both by the public and by artists as diverse as Gauguin and Cézanne.

Auguste Renoir also had shown dissatisfaction with Impressionism, and had already declined to exhibit with the Impressionists in 1884. His increasingly solid modelling owes much to a renewed appreciation of the Old Masters, and his later work emphasized, in varying degrees, a formal and monumental quality. His *Umbrellas*, finished in 1884, is a carefully judged, elaborate design, though distinctly contemporary in subject matter. Shortly afterwards, he turned his attention to

the classical and timeless theme of the nude, and his *Bathers* of about 1884-87 was built up in the traditional studio manner, through successive preliminary drawings and studies – the result is quite remote from Impressionist instantaneity. This again was not satisfactory, and, though he continued painting ample and luscious nudes, he reverted to a more colouristic style in the 1890s – perhaps influenced by the brilliance of light he had seen on his trips to North Africa. In his late paintings his colour warmed, becoming even garishly hot.

Towards the end of his life Renoir realized what seems to have been a dream of his youth, and he turned to sculpture. Crippled with arthritis well before his death in 1919, he "dictated" to an assistant some of the most simple, monumental nude sculptures known to art, and they had some influence on the development of twentieth-century sculpture.

After World War I, by the time Renoir and Monet died, Impressionism was almost forgotten amongst working painters, but in the early, exploratory years the Impressionists had notably enlarged the scope of art. They had revealed a world brilliant with light and shot through with colour, and followed through

Realist principles, so that virtually anything in the world was a justifiable subject for art. Monet had identified one of his prime aims as "instantaneity", the translation into paint of a particular subject at a particular time, in a particular condition of light or weather. On the way this was done, photography and Japanese prints had a definite effect. As techniques improved, the camera was beginning to be able to freeze, within the rectangle of the film, the motion of passing life. The snapshot effect was eagerly exploited – by Degas in particular, but by Renoir, too, even in his *Umbrellas* – bodies could be cut off within the frame, and mere fragments could make up a picture. Japanese prints showed how asymmetrical elements in a composition could achieve a similar snapshot effect, and for younger painters, above all Gauguin, how effective strong colours and boldly outlined shapes could be, when distributed across the surface with equal emphasis. Even in the most essentially Impressionist works, such as Monet's series *Rouen Cathedral*, objective sight became difficult to distinguish from subjective vision, and the image represented had to be accommodated to the pattern of the picture surface.



RENOIR (above)
Ambroise Vollard, 1908
Vollard, portrayed holding a statuette by Maillol, was a sharp businessman, and a connoisseur of some flair. He opened his gallery in the Rue Laffitte, Paris, in 1894 and became a major dealer in Impressionist paintings. His portrait by Cézanne or by Picasso (see p. 374) is of a quite different kind.



RENOIR (left)
The washerwoman, 1917
The similarity between the heavy form of Renoir's nude and the work of Maillol (see p. 355) is obvious; Maillol had commented (on Renoir's late paintings of equally massive nudes): "That's real sculpture."



GAUGUIN (right)
Harvest in Brittany, 1888
This is an Impressionist work, but already the design is based on bold, silhouetted shapes (reflecting probably the influence of Japanese prints); colour is applied as frankly as possible. In Brittany Gauguin found an ideal of "primitive" life, and more to paint than only "the real and existing".



MONET (above)
Rouen Cathedral: full sunlight, 1894
After his series of *Haystacks* and *Poplars*, Monet embarked on more than 20 canvases studying the west front of Rouen Cathedral at different times of day from morning to evening.

The intricate forms of the decorative Gothic stonework dissolve in the play of light, and the Cathedral seems to lurk only nebulously behind the clotted brushwork. In this reduction to the purely optical, Realism is fulfilled, and undermined: its limits were made obvious.

Seurat: La Grande Jatte



La Grande Jatte, named after a weekend resort on the banks of the Seine popular among Parisians, was begun in 1884 and finished in 1886, and exhibited in that year in the last Impressionist exhibition. Seurat's admission to the show, due largely, it seems, to Pissarro's championship, caused dissension among the original Impressionists. Indeed this picture is obviously at variance in very important points from the practice of Impressionism – so much so that subsequent historians distinguish the style evolved by Seurat with the label “Neo-Impressionism”. The interest in light, in colour created by light, and in a very high key of colour, is still dominant, but the technique is both more fragmented and more precisely (even at times mechanically) worked out. In its contemporary subject matter *La Grande Jatte* is still Realist, but the effect in sum and detail is as if the Impressionist vision had frozen: the sense of implicit movement, the feeling for ephemeral effects, are rejected in favour of a timeless, highly formalized, monumental quality. Realist in some aspects the image may be; it is in no sense naturalistic.

Georges Seurat (1859-1891) was a seemingly orthodox, docile student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, 1877-78, working a great deal in the Louvre, studying there intensely the masterpieces of traditional art from Greek classical sculpture to the Italian and northern Renaissance. However, he extracted his own conclusions from them, and was probably

already interested in theoretical writings on colour, such as those published by Michel-Eugène Chevreul and others, leading to the demonstration that juxtaposed colours mix in the human eye, and that the colour so mixed is purer than any pigments mixed on the palette. By 1881 Seurat had developed a highly original drawing technique in black crayon, extracting simplified and very solid figures by the subtle and exact control of tone. His early painting in colour always tended towards a similar simplification: even his small oil-studies, painted in the open, direct from the subject, moving gradually towards the lighter palette of the Impressionists, demonstrated his primary interest in an exactly articulated composition, plotted with equal emphasis across the picture plane, using simplified silhouetted shapes, and increasingly shallow space.

By 1883, he was developing the technique known as pointillism, a system of applying paint in isolated dots of pure colour. His first major work in this technique, on the grand scale of ambitious Salon pictures, “*Une Baignade, Asnières*” (A bathing scene at Asnières), was finished in 1884. The subject, urban recreation at the riverside, was an Impressionist one, and the innumerable preliminary studies likewise reflect Impressionist practice; but their integration into the whole was a studio process, and an austere call to order of the chaotic, multitudinous impressions with which nature assails the eye.

The exhibition of *Asnières* in 1884 and of *La Grande Jatte* in 1886 established Seurat as the spearhead of the new avantgarde. The exponents of Neo-Impressionism, Pointillism or Colour Divisionism were supported by critics such as Fénéon and the Belgian poet Verhaeren, but older Impressionists (with the exception of Pissarro) read *La Grande Jatte* as a counter-Impressionist manifesto.

For Seurat, “the purity of the element of the spectrum is the keystone of technique”, and he continued to work with tireless industry towards the perfection and simplification of his system until his premature death from an unidentified illness in 1891. He had continued to produce *grandes machines*, major exhibition pictures, extending his subject matter to further aspects of modern urban life, even adapting motifs from the abstracted imagery of posters and fashion plates, but always resolving his pictures into immobile patterns, even when his subject was the sea or his theme motion, as in his last big canvas, *The circus*. “I want”, he said, “to make modern people move about as if they were on the Parthenon frieze, in their most essential characteristics.”

Apart from his impact on Pissarro's style in the 1880s, Seurat's work inspired only one disciple of significance, the prolific Paul Signac (1863-1935), who remained to the end faithful to the divisionist principle and technique, although his vision was less subtle and more coarsely handled.

SEURAT (left)
La Grande Jatte, 1884–86
 Seurat's biographer, the critic Fénéon, described the picture: "It is four o'clock on Sunday afternoon in the dog-days. On the river the swift barks dart to and fro ... A Sunday population has come together at random, and from a delight in the fresh air ... Seurat has treated his figures in a summary or hieratic style, like a Puvis de Chavannes (see p. 368) gone modern."



SEURAT (right)
The yoked cart, 1883
 The rich colour and the seemingly casual design – cutting off the cart at the edge of the canvas – recall "pure" Impressionism. Seurat, however, achieves a still image purged of all superfluous detail, evoking a mood of calm expectancy.

SEURAT (below)
Seated boy with a straw hat, 1883–84
 Seurat liked to sketch in black crayon on thick white paper; its textured surface enabled him to achieve the fine tonal gradations which

characterize his atmospheric drawings. Sometimes, like this one, they were studies for larger pictures (this is the youth on the left in the *Asnières* canvas); yet they possess all the qualities of finished works of art.



SEURAT (above)
"Une Baignade, Asnières"
 (A bathing scene at Asnières), 1883–84
 Seurat's method was based on contemporary scientific theory, even if the separate dots of colour are not small enough to blend in the eye, as presumably he intended. (This was pointed out only some 40 years later.) But Seurat's "scientific" basis helped to justify his artistic aim, to capture on canvas the essence of appearances.

SEURAT (right)
The "Bec du Hoc" at Grandchamp, 1885
 The dynamic mass of cliff against calm sea and sky rears imposingly; Seurat's dots and strokes vibrate before the eye, enlivening the surface – much as the less regimented brushes of Monet or Renoir also did.



SIGNAC (above)
View of the marina at Marseilles, 1905
 Seurat's divisionism and deliberate arrangement of forms is here enlivened by vibrant "Fauve" colour

(Matisse was a friend). Signac had earlier painted working-class or industrial scenes, perhaps with implicit social comment; he was a professed anarchist. Seurat's politics were less definite.



SEURAT (above)
 Study for *The circus*, 1890
 Seurat was later influenced by the philosopher Henry, who proposed that certain analysable factors in a com-

position determined what emotional message it had: upward curves and leaping forms here signal gaiety. He sought "to do Poussin again", but from science.

Post-Impressionism I

The term "Post-Impressionism" was coined by the critic Roger Fry for the title of his exhibition in London in 1910-11, *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*. Cézanne, Gauguin, and van Gogh were strongly represented, also Seurat and Signac, but more thinly; in Fry's second "Post-Impressionist" show, 1912, the range extended even to Picasso and Braque. Though the term can be applied so loosely as to be almost meaningless except as a rough chronological indication, it has persisted. In fact, the major artists to whom it is generally applied shared only a stubborn, often belligerent, refusal to be like anyone else; each, in varying degree, was a loner, misfit or outcast, voluntary or involuntary, not only from the artistic orthodoxy of the time – the Paris Salon – but even from ordinary society. Yet all of them passed through Impressionism, and their mature paintings are developments from Impressionist beginnings.

The beginnings of Post-Impressionism date from the years when Impressionism, as a movement of artists with common theories, practice and sympathies, was disintegrating – that is, the mid-1880s. Within a few years, after seeing the 1891 Salon des Indépendants

in Paris, the Belgian poet Verhaeren was writing: "There is no longer any single school, there are scarcely any groups, and these few are constantly splitting. All their tendencies make me think of moving and kaleidoscopic geometric patterns, clashing at one moment only to unite at another, which now fuse and then separate and fly apart a little, but which all nevertheless revolve within the same circle, that of the new art." Within the new art, the sympathy of one master for another was not always obvious: Gauguin always revered Cézanne, but Cézanne thought Gauguin was no painter at all, and told van Gogh that he (van Gogh) was mad. Degas was intrigued by Gauguin's works and bought several, but Monet never took Gauguin seriously. Only Pissarro seemed genuinely and selflessly open to objective appreciation of honest explorations in all styles: in 1886 the first and greatest of the "primitives", Henri Rousseau le Douanier (see p. 388) had first exhibited and provoked huge hilarity – only Pissarro recognized the quality that the apparent naivety of drawing and the imagery concealed.

Subsequent historians have tended to distinguish two fundamental trends in Post-

Impressionism. The pursuit of formal values is seen as the basic concern of Seurat (see preceding page) and of Cézanne. They are claimed as the spiritual ancestors of several of the major explorations of the twentieth century, notably Cubism and much modern abstract art. By contrast, the revolutionary ways in which other artists realized form have been interpreted as means rather than ends, the ends being the most vivid expression possible of the artist's emotion: so such artists as Gauguin and van Gogh can be categorized as precursors not only of the Fauves, but of the whole Expressionist movement. One trend has been seen as moving towards the objective and the classical; the other towards the subjective – an intensification of Romanticism. Such interpretations must be viewed with caution – the Romantic qualities evident in Cézanne's early work, for example, are not expunged in his very last paintings: they are still there, though differently expressed, for they were an integral part of his temperament.

The "Post-Impressionists", as the epithet implies, were mostly of a younger generation than the founding fathers of Impressionism, and they revolted against their elders while

PISSARRO (right)
Paul Cézanne, 1874
Pissarro encouraged the young Cézanne, persuaded him to exhibit at the first Impressionist show (1874) and never lost confidence in him. He followed Manet's *Zola* (see p. 343) in posing his sitter with pictures relating to him, chiefly a caricature, top right, of Cézanne's early mentor, the great Courbet.



GAUGUIN (below)
l'incert van Gogh, 1888
Gauguin distorts colour to reflect Vincent's obsession with sunflowers, unbalancing the painter in relation to his canvas; he simplifies line, abandons modelling, makes an abstract pattern. His new art had evolved in early 1888 in Brittany, a few months before his visit to van Gogh in Provence.



VAN GOGH (left)
Self-portrait, 1888
Van Gogh had such a rage for Japanese art that he gave his strongly modelled self-image slanted eyes. Inspired by a custom of Japanese painters, he began exchanging portraits with colleagues. This picture, finished before he left for Arles, was dedicated "to my friend Paul Gauguin".

CEZANNE (below)
The rape, 1867
Cézanne's concern to use the brushwork itself as an element of the composition is apparent in his earliest paintings. At this time he used to send Zola poems which, like Zola's Realist novels, and like this picture, have melodramatic, violent themes – an urgent quest to penetrate the heart of life.



taking many of their discoveries for granted. The great exception was Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). Unlike his contemporaries, notably Monet, Renoir and Pissarro, he always had before him the prospect of financial stability, although his prosperous father kept him on a meagre allowance until his death in 1886, when Cézanne was already well advanced in middle age. His early style, deeply imprinted by both Delacroix and Courbet, was sometimes flagrantly Romantic, with sensational subject matter, for instance that of *The rape of 1867*, painted in a thick, often seemingly clumsy style. Associating in Paris with his old school-friend, Zola (admiring the Realism – almost brutalism – of Zola's novels), he suffered repeated rejection from the Salon in consort with the Impressionists. His portrait of the dwarf *Achille Empéaire* (1868-70), a grotesque subject treated with heroic emphasis, the paint applied thick and coarse, was not simply rejected but excited positive revulsion. This was what Cézanne later referred to as his *couillarde* (approximately, "gutsy") style, broadly painted with trenchant use of the palette-knife; it lightened under the influence of Pissarro especially. Cézanne worked with

him for periods at Pontoise and Auvers, and the impact of Impressionist practice is first visible in works such as "*La Maison du Pendu*" (The suicide's house) of 1872; but already here a very solid, almost diagrammatic sense of underlying structure, foretelling his later development, is perceptible. He returned to his native Provence for short periods in 1876 and 1878, and was there more permanently from 1883; following the death of his father, he was able to devote himself undistractedly to his endless battle with the intractable landscape that confronted him (see p. 366).

The 1880s were a watershed; it was then that

Western art was released from the representational concerns with which it had been preoccupied since the Renaissance. Of the pioneers of this modern art, van Gogh (see over) died in 1890, Seurat in 1891, the same year that Gauguin (see p. 364) left for Tahiti. Cézanne continued unsung until the new century. Each asserted in his own way the absolutism of his own personality. Twenty years later, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the great revolutionaries of modern art were to act on that independence to the point of taking the visible world to bits and reassembling it according to their own vision.



CEZANNE (left)
Achille Empéaire, 1868-70
Cézanne elected to present to the jury of the Salon of 1870 this huge portrait of a dwarf, just because it would certainly displease them; it was duly rejected. He was, it seems, in revolt against everything. The portrait has an alarming force in its contrasting colours, thick brushwork, and very subject.



CEZANNE (left)
The little bridge at Mamey, 1882-85
Cézanne's reconstruction – no longer an imitation – of what he saw was always based on a careful analysis of colour, light and shade. Unlike Gauguin, or van Gogh sometimes, he never abandoned the modelling of volume by tonal gradation, though his brushwork had also a purely surface value.

VAN GOGH (below)
Montmartre with windmills, 1887
Van Gogh's interpretation of Impressionism, which he had adopted just the year before, was entirely individual. In Paris he had admired Monet's brilliant brushwork, and Pissarro had led him to heighten his key. But only Vincent could give a placid view such urgency.

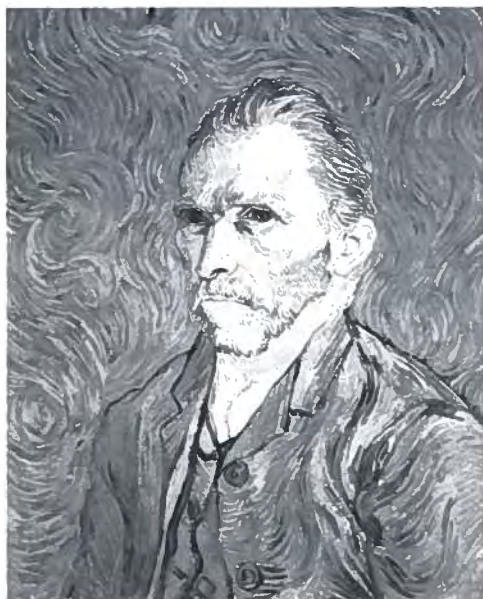


CEZANNE (left)
"La Maison du Pendu"
(The suicide's house), 1873
Under Pissarro's tutelage at Auvers, Cézanne briefly became a true Impressionist, conveying a vibrating light with much brighter colours.

VAN GOGH (right)
The bridge at La Grande Jatte, 1887
The thick strokes of the brush are undisguised and, with colour, give this work its underlying structure.



Vincent van Gogh



VAN GOGH (above)
Self-portrait, 1890
The intensity of expression, reinforced by the icy back-

ground of swirling strokes, is characteristic. This was painted only a few months before the artist's suicide.

In his short life Vincent van Gogh (1853-90) produced over 800 paintings and a comparable number of drawings; before his death he had sold in total two pictures. Yet he has become perhaps the most widely loved and reproduced painter in the history of Western art. In his posthumous fame the drama of his personal life plays an integral part – documented not only in his extraordinary autobiography in paint, his self-portraits, but in the running commentary contained in more than 700 vividly articulate letters, mostly to his devoted brother and supporter, Theo van Gogh.

He was born, in 1853, with dual affiliations, to religion and to art. His father was a parish priest at Groot Zundert in Holland; three of his uncles were art dealers. His first acquaintanceship with art was from the dealer's side, at The Hague and then for a spell in London. Dissatisfied, he started to train for the Church in 1876, only to realize that his radical view of Christianity was incompatible with orthodoxy. Living in great poverty, he began to draw seriously when he was 27, and so gradually realized his true, final and fatal vocation, to which he surrendered with the fervour of a convert; he had only ten years left to live.

The first five years (1880-85) of his new career were spent in Holland in painful self-training, in physical privation and constant emotional strain. From the beginning his subject matter was the earth and those who worked it; his social concern was crucial. In life, he acted on similar compassionate principles, even setting up house with a prostitute and her child. But while the message of his gospel in art and life was love, his temperament, ferociously independent and egocentric, made it impossible for him to sustain a close relationship with anyone, except Theo.

Vincent's work in Holland culminated in his masterpiece of 1885, *The potato eaters*, which is still traditional, though painted expressively dark in sombre greens, browns and blacks. In late 1885, he moved to Antwerp, and there discovered Rubens; his palette lightened, his touch became freer; and he also became fascinated by Japanese prints. Independently, he was beginning to discover that colour could have its own laws and meaning irrespective of the true colours of the subject matter. His letters reveal his longing to perfect his art, to establish new contacts and see the most modern painting. In February 1886 he arrived in



VAN GOGH (left)
The potato eaters, 1885
Van Gogh consciously used the colour of dirty potatoes and heavy, simplified forms so as to convey poverty. As a trainee missionary he had shared the peasants' misery. In seeking to express it as lucidly as he was able, he began to cross the bounds of conventional naturalism.

VAN GOGH (right)
Sunflowers, 1888
On his arrival in Provence in 1888 Vincent reacted to southern warmth and the sunny colours around him in joy. His dashing strokes of paint recall Impressionist techniques, but the twisted lines and the concentrated colours of the series are full of an original power.



VAN GOGH (right)
The night café, 1888
This is the little café in Arles where van Gogh and Gauguin drank together. It is a nightmare – the harsh lighting, giddy perspective and hunched, lonely looking patrons create the effect. The colour symbolism is attested in Vincent's own description of the work. "I have tried to express the idea that the café is a place where one can ruin oneself, go mad or commit a crime", he wrote. "I have tried to express as it were the powers of darkness in a low public house, by the use of soft Louis XV green and malachite contrasting with yellow-green and harsh blue-greens – and all this in an atmosphere like a devil's furnace of pale sulphur".



VAN GOGH (above)
Sailing boats coming ashore, 1888
The simple, bold lines of the boats at Stes-Maries, near Arles, rendered them very suitable subjects for paintings and sketches that

emulate Japanese prints. His careful arrangements of lines, shapes and patches of colour reflect Vincent's study of such prints – and he and Gauguin learnt from them not simply design, but bold, non-naturalistic hues.

Paris, and there the impact of the work of the Impressionists revolutionized his painting.

In February 1888, he went south, to Arles. He was still passionately concerned with the social responsibilities of art and the necessity of the modern artist's involvement in life and the whole of life. He envisaged at Arles the establishment of a sort of artists' commune, interlocking with the local community. Yet his own painting was becoming ever more personal and subjective, and even mystical. His famous *Sunflower* series was conceived as a symphony in yellow and blue: the colours sing (the musical analogy recurs in his letters). But he also conceived these pictures as Gothic rose windows, to be decorations of his new home, the intended sanctuary and cradle of a new way of art and artistic life. His co-founder of the commune he hoped was to be Gauguin, but Gauguin's brief stay ended in a violent quarrel, in Vincent's frustrated assault on Gauguin, followed by his mutilation of his own ear and the macabre gift of the bleeding fragment to a prostitute in a brothel. On recovery, van Gogh realized that he was on the brink of insanity – more than that, he had been over it at least once. In May, 1889, he with-

drew voluntarily to an asylum at St-Rémy, but there continued frantic production (some 150 paintings) for the next year. In May 1890, he moved again, living as the patient and guest of a remarkable physician and connoisseur, Paul Gachet, until, overwhelmed by a final crisis of despair, he shot himself on 29 July 1890.

In the south, van Gogh had soon abandoned objective, "scientific" analysis of colour according to Impressionist doctrine. He continued to use, in the Impressionist manner, touches of different colours alongside each other, but generally his brushwork became stronger and more rhythmic, and colour took on its own symbolic function. Thus in his *Night café*, he wrote, he used "colours not locally true from the point of view of the stereoscopic realist, but colour to suggest any emotion of an ardent temperament". The quality of paint, laid on thick and rough and violent, is no less telling than the use of colour. Yet he remained rooted in his subject matter, and one reason for his differences with Gauguin was his distrust of the latter's "abstraction". In "*La Berceuse*", his portrait of the postman's wife, Madame Roulin, the flat patterning is clearly influenced by Gauguin, and

later he had doubts about it for that very reason. As he painted it Vincent had come to think of it almost as a religious image, a *Madonna*, and as the focus of a polyptych surrounded by his sunflowers like candelabra. His idea was that "sailors, who are at once children and martyrs, seeing it in the cabin of their Icelandic fishing boat, would feel the old sense of being rocked come over them and remember their lullabies".

In the last year of his life, the whole Provençal landscape and its sun, moon and stars were caught up in the impassioned desperate swirl of his paint, and became molten. The image became a symbol of emotion ranging from despair to intoxicated exaltation.

Though he was virtually unknown when he died, the extent of van Gogh's achievement was revealed in a series of exhibitions in Europe and America during the next 25 years. The Fauves, the German Expressionists, all acknowledged him. Following the publication of his letters, he became a romantic hero of book and film, a stereotype – like Rimbaud – of the doomed artistic genius. Endless reproduction still seems unable to drain his drawings and paintings of their demonic vitality.

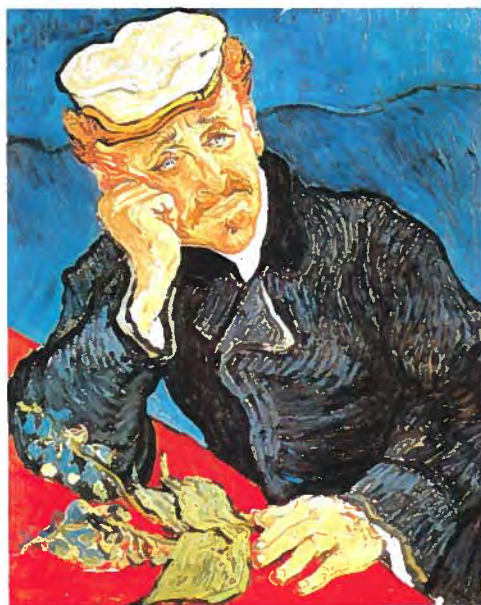
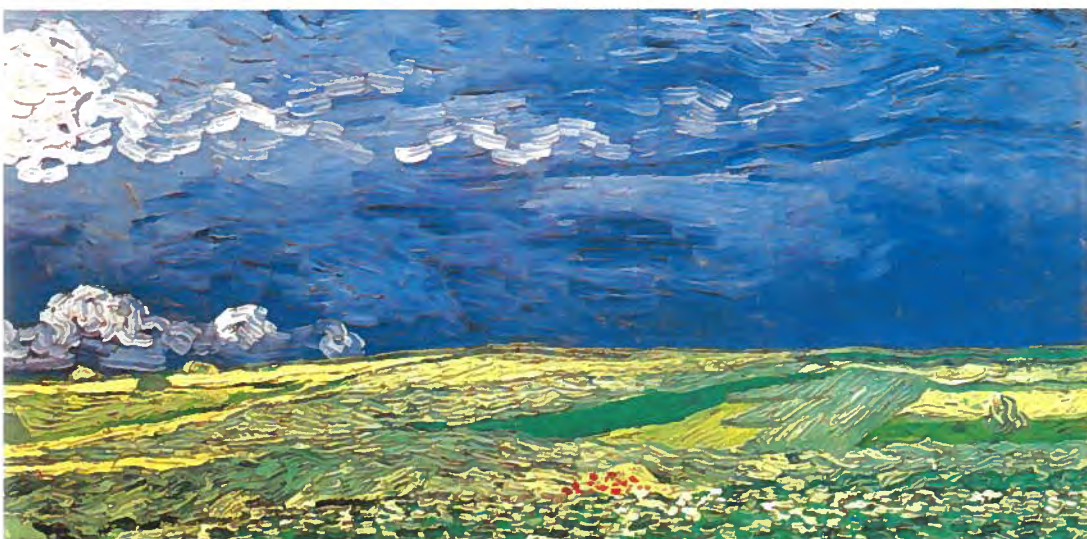
VAN GOGH (right)
"La Berceuse" (Mme Roulin rocking a cradle), 1889

After his breakdown van Gogh returned to his series of portraits of Mme Roulin, the postman's wife. She holds the ropes of a cradle in her hands, soothing the unseen baby and the viewer. The lack of modelling and the strong pattern reveal a concern for abstract as well as expressionist effects.



VAN GOGH (below)
Field with a stormy sky, 1890

Vincent's late paintings of landscapes around Auvers are essentially subjective: the vast open fields and the troubled skies express his melancholy and loneliness. The painting is structured solely by the brush-strokes and the choice of colour.



VAN GOGH (left)
Dr Paul Gachet, 1890
In letters to Gauguin and his brother Theo Vincent described his portrait in passionate terms. He was trying to create a new kind of portraiture, based not on the imitation of appearances but on the intensification of character. He gave his friend "the heartbroken expression of our time", projecting on to Gachet his own feelings.

VAN GOGH (below)
Country road by night, 1890
The paintings Vincent made in the asylum at St-Rémy unequivocally reveal madness – the rushing path, the hallucinatory sky, the greens lurid in the bursts of spiky corn. The retaining elements of the design – the figures, the horse and trap – are swept away by the violent flow of brush-strokes.



Paul Gauguin



GAUGUIN (above)
Bonjour, M. Courbet, 1889
In contrast to its buoyant model, Courbet's *Bonjour*,

M. Courbet (not shown), in his sombre picture Gauguin stands in peasant's sabots grimly, outside the gate.

Gauguin's fierce independence, his rejection of centuries-old principles of Western art, surely owed something to his lack of any early training in art at all. Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) was born of mixed blood – French and Peruvian Creole – in a family in which bizarre traditions of violence, rape, sudden death and intellectual radicalism were strangely mixed. His youth in Peru and France was followed by six years in the merchant marine, and then (1871-82) by a successful career as stockbroker; he became a collector of Impressionist paintings, and experimented as an artist himself to such good effect that by 1879 a small statuette of his had been accepted for the fourth Impressionist exhibition, followed by seven paintings in the show the year after. By 1883, when he gave up his career to devote himself entirely to art, he was already questioning Impressionist principles. Between 1886 and 1891 he became the focus of a group of artists at Pont-Aven in Brittany, making a first brief visit to exotic lands (Martinique, in 1887) and spending two fraught months (which have become famous) with van Gogh in Arles in 1888.

These were years in which Gauguin ceaselessly questioned himself and his art, amid

increasing difficulties: from affluence he sank to acute poverty, and to his great sadness he was separated from his wife and children. After he had rejected Impressionism, which he came to regard as “shackled by the needs of probability”, the first fully realized statement of his aims came in *The vision after the sermon* of 1888, a vision of Breton peasant women rapt in silence and prayer, as if in church, as they behold in a blazing red field the winged angel, gold and brilliant blue, wrestling with Jacob – the women, too, seem winged with the weird shapes of their *coiffe* head-dresses. One critic categorized this art a little later as “idea-ist, symbolist, synthetic and subjective”. While the construction acknowledges the basics of traditional perspective (and the looming foreground figures set against the action beyond recall Degas), the impact of Japanese prints is clear, and far-reaching – the schematic composition, the flat fields of unbroken, shadowless colour, the exploitation of silhouettes; even the stance of the wrestlers and of the bull are borrowed from the Japanese. The use, however, of heavy outline filled with pure colour, as in medieval enamelwork, and hence known as “*cloisonnisme*”, owed much to Emile



GAUGUIN (above)
Self-portrait, 1888
Gauguin was proud of his “Peruvian savage” features and when he sent van Gogh this portrait explained that he identified with the hero of Victor Hugo’s Romantic novel *Les Misérables*, the outlaw Jean Valjean. In the background is a *Self-portrait* by Bernard, apparently with eyes closed – inner eye open.

GAUGUIN (right)
Be in love and you will be happy, 1889-90
Gauguin claimed: “Good health, independence in one’s work, and regular love-making – that’s the secret”. In “primitive” art and its raw forms he found forceful sincerity and directness, by-passing civilized veneer; but he also found monumentality.



GAUGUIN (below)
The vision after the sermon, 1888
Gauguin’s starting point was probably a painting by Bernard, a simple design in which he had shown Breton women in their traditional

costumes. This, though, had no symbolic content. In the Gauguin the field is red as the aura of the vision; the cow recalls a Breton rite, the blessing of the horned beasts while the lesson of Jacob and the angel was

read in church. The picture is based on a real event, but literal naturalism has been expunged; the colour seems arbitrary, but is fused with line and shape to present an idea in “synthetic” terms – a new symbolism of form.



GAUGUIN (left)
The spirit of the dead watching, 1892
During his first visit to Tahiti, 1891-93, Gauguin moved away from the clear-coloured, boldly-lined art of his earlier Breton stay: conventional composition and modelling re-emerge, but in a rich, exotic context. Gauguin was fascinated by Polynesian mythology and ancestor-figures, although he imposed his own notions on the imagery he borrowed, injecting his own “indescribably sacred horror”.

Bernard, one of the group in Pont-Aven. Above all, colour takes on a symbolic and emotional significance – a spiritual dimension.

Gauguin's art had become an art of imaginative concept rather than analytical observation. "Art is an abstraction", he wrote, and described his brilliant *Self-portrait* painted for van Gogh at Arles as "absolutely incomprehensible, of course, being so abstract. At first it looks like the head of a bandit ... personifying also a discredited Impressionist painter. The drawing is quite special (complete abstraction), the eyes, the mouth, the nose are like flowers in Persian carpets, thus personifying the symbolic side. The colour is pretty far from nature ... All the reds and violets streaked by flames (are) like a furnace radiating from the eyes, seat of the struggles of the painter's thought."

Gauguin knew the leading intellectuals of the day, notably the Symbolist poet Mallarmé, but eventually reacted decisively against the sophisticated theorizing, the material corruption and complication of Western civilization, and left for Tahiti in 1891, in search of primitive values and simplicity. Harassed by poverty and illness, he was forced to return to

Paris in 1893; leaving Europe again in 1895, he remained in Tahiti till 1901, in constant conflict with the authorities on behalf of the natives. Then he moved to the Marquesas Islands, where he lived until his death in 1903.

His genius was remarkably versatile. From about 1889, he revived his early interest in sculpture; the relief *Be in love and you will be happy* of 1889-90, which at the time he considered his "best and strangest work", is very much non-naturalistic, yet the roughly carved forms, enigmatic in meaning, have immense physical density and gravity. His mind and hands were for ever restless; he would carve a walking-stick, or experiment with pottery (inspired originally by oriental pots in the Musée Guimet in Paris). His woodcuts and zincographs have an uninhibited vigour; his distortion was combined with a feeling for the possibilities of the material, which had a decisive effect on the revival of the woodcut. In painting, his Tahitian works have become the most popular, due no doubt to their mysteriously dreamy subject matter, their offer of escape to a golden primitive land – even if their serenity is profoundly melancholy; but while the Pacific gave him new themes, it did not

enlarge the formal language with which he expounded them. The famous, and vast, picture that he painted "feverishly day and night" before an abortive suicide in late 1897, *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* was intended as his spiritual last testament. It was indeed his most ambitious synthesis, reassembling in its mysterious panorama mostly symbolic figures he had already used in earlier compositions – not least the enigmatic idol, in Gauguin's description "joining substance, in my dream in front of my house, with the whole of Nature reigning in our *primitive soul*". The symbolism is hardly ever explicit or explicable verbally, as opposed to the Symbolism of Puvis de Chavannes or Odilon Redon: Gauguin said of Puvis (see p. 370) that he "explained" his idea but he did not "paint" it.

Nevertheless, because of its purely decorative qualities and its "literary" echoes, his work tended to be depreciated in an age too conscious of purely formal values, though his primitivism was seen to be significant. Gauguin, however, is one of the major founding figures of modern art. "I have tried to vindicate the right to dare anything", he wrote.

GAUGUIN (left)
Noa Noa, c. 1893
Gauguin would scratch and score the surface of his woodcuts to create a varied effect. He adopted this one for the cover of his autobiography, *Noa Noa*, 1901.

GAUGUIN (right)
Nevermore, 1897
The naked girl exudes a rich tropical warmth and a mood of superstitious dread; Gauguin used eerie, dusky colours deliberately.

GAUGUIN (below)
Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going? 1897
The monumental frieze emanates holy sanctity like an icon, but it is a dream without specific meaning.



Cézanne: Mont Ste-Victoire



The year 1886 was crucial for Cézanne, then aged 47. His father died, leaving him a comfortable fortune, and he was at last able to seal with marriage his 17-year-old liaison with Hortense Fiquet. In the same year his friendship with Zola, dating from their school-days, came to an abrupt end, and in the 20 years remaining to him he left home in Provence increasingly rarely. He became more and more touchy and suspicious, almost a recluse, even after long-delayed recognition came rapidly, indeed spectacularly, after the dealer Vollard's exhibition of about 150 of his paintings in Paris in 1895. His life was concentrated on the stubborn battle with his art – the battle to achieve a reconciliation of the three-dimensional world confronting him with the two-dimensional limitations of his canvas. In 1903 he wrote: "I am beginning to see the Promised Land"; in 1906 he wrote: "I am old and ill and have sworn to myself to die painting". In October 1906 he collapsed after being caught in a storm while painting outdoors, and died a few days later.

These later years were occupied with still lifes, figure painting – ranging from portraits to more general, monumental themes – and landscapes. Still lifes enabled him to structure his compositions before painting; even so in the finished work traditional perspective and true shapes were distorted in answer to the needs of harmony and the stability of the whole. The portraits were painted, like the still lifes, in a long process of profound analysis: giving up his portrait of Vollard (see p. 374) after 115 sittings Cézanne was "not altogether displeased with the shirt". Yet in some portraits, built up laboriously touch upon touch like all the late work, the response to individual character can still be almost lyrical.

Cézanne was also preoccupied especially with the theme of nude, female figures in a landscape, or *Bathers*. The subject is still surely Impressionist, stemming from Manet's "*Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*" (see p. 342), but the picture goes much further, not just in its distortions, but in Cézanne's attempt to create something durable, "like the art of museums".

Most of all in his last years Cézanne painted landscapes, which allowed him the greatest breadth for the development of his style and necessitated working from and with nature. He had several chosen local views to which he returned, but the favourite – and one that has become almost as much a cult image as Mount Fuji in Japanese art – was Mont Ste-Victoire. His technique, building up a pictorial structure by the schematic overlay of colours applied mostly very thinly in short, square strokes of the brush, had been developing during the 1870s, at its peak in watercolours. In the London *Mont Ste-Victoire with a great pine*, 1885-87, the composition, though framed by the arabesque of a foreground tree, is determined by the logical recession of the planes or blocks of colour. Even the outline contours usually reveal themselves on close inspection to be built up of crisply defined patches of colour, of astonishingly subtle and varied shades. In the silence, the frontal monumentality of the scene, Cézanne surely achieves his avowed wish, to do Poussin again

CEZANNE (below)
Mont Ste-Victoire with a great pine, 1885-87
 In the early days of the long struggle with Mont

Ste-Victoire, details of the landscape survive the artist's attempt to translate his sensations into paint and so achieve a "harmony

parallel to nature". In a related watercolour, these details are clearer still, and the diagonals sharper, the frontality less firm.



CEZANNE (above)
Mont Ste-Victoire, watercolour, 1906
 In the late paintings, oil or watercolour, detail is unimportant; it is unclear precisely what – a house or

a tree – is represented by any given patch of colour. The patches, overlapping and interlocking, build up their own coherent form. It was Cézanne's belief that "in the contrast and

connection of colours – there you have the secret of drawing and modelling". There is a great variety in the brushwork and the tones of colour, sometimes gentle, sometimes savage.

CEZANNE (left)
The Philadelphia Mont Ste-Victoire, 1904-06
 Rich colour applied in a mosaic-like pattern builds up and integrates the land and sky, held on the canvas with hallucinatory power. Cézanne's conversation in these years revealed that he felt that in his later views of Mont Ste-Victoire he was coming close to his goal.



CEZANNE (right)
Still life with onions, c. 1895-1900
 Form and colour echo each other across the canvas; greens complement pink onions, the rim of a glass is tilted up, a plate bent, in the interests of overall harmony. Cézanne took so long painting that fruit and vegetables shrivelled; he used wax substitutes.



from nature: this is classical form. In his final contemplations of Mont Ste-Victoire, he used the same method still more austere to extract – or abstract – his picture from the mass and profile of the landscape. The version in Philadelphia of 1904 may or may not be unfinished – Cézanne tended to advance work over the whole canvas simultaneously, so that, whenever he stopped, that stage cohered as a whole; this is faceted by those square brush-strokes, those sharp, even harsh, edges or planes of colour, into unconsoling yet majestic solidity – even in the sky. Yet there is, too, a sense of urgency: the silhouette of the mountain has become a beak or prow – aggressive or defiant. Cézanne's analytic-synthetic method was also a transposition of his own temperamental reaction to the sensation ("ma petite sensation") the landscape aroused in him.

Indefatigable as he was in his search for objectivity, Cézanne's example in paint nevertheless went far to establish the supremacy of the modern artist's subjectivity: the world is his, to translate into his own terms as he will.



CEZANNE (above)
Self-portrait with a goatee, c. 1906
 In his last *Self-portrait* Cézanne treats himself as dispassionately as a still life – in contrast to van Gogh's or Gauguin's self-expressive images. In the reduction of his head to a compendium of hollows and planes of colour, the basic grammar both of Cubism and of Fauvism is implicit.

CEZANNE (left)
"The Great Bathers", 1898-1905
 Whereas the early *Bathers* are often relatively static, rhythmic forces permeate the huge canvases of later years. These nudes seem to be primeval, fashioned of stone or wood, part of the cathedral-like structure of the forest. The picture is constructed with colour – pale shades of blue, ochre and green dappled by light.

Post-Impressionism 2, and Art Nouveau

The wild landscapes and the Atlantic coast of Brittany had attracted artists from the early nineteenth century; the little village of Pont-Aven, in particular, had been “discovered” by French painters in the 1860s, and was already an international artists’ colony by the time Gauguin arrived there. Gauguin (see p. 364) stayed in Pont-Aven on various occasions between 1886 and his final migration to the Pacific in 1895. He worked out there the principles and practice of his mature style, and became the natural leader of a group of young artists, notably Emile Bernard (1868-1941; not shown), Maurice Denis (1870-1943; not shown) and Paul Sérusier (1863-1927).

Though able painters, Bernard (who had disputed with Gauguin the claim of having first used highly simplified forms and flat colour) and Denis are more important as theorists and propagandists: Denis, aged only 20, was responsible for a dictum in 1890 that has since been quoted in contexts he would not have dreamed of, and has served as a key tenet of several developments in modern art: “A picture – before being a war horse or a nude woman or some little genre scene – is essentially a flat surface covered with colours ar-

anged in a certain order.” It was Sérusier, however, whom Gauguin instructed one day in a celebrated painting lesson in a Breton wood: the result, a cigar-box lid roughly brushed with – at first glance – an abstract colour pattern, was later shown by Sérusier to his fellow-students at the Académie Julian in Paris. It became known as “*The Talisman*” and had a catalytic effect on these young painters, soon to coalesce as a group called the Nabis (a Hebrew word for “prophet”).

Common to most artists of this group was a Christian religious fervour and a harking back, like the Pre-Raphaelites, to early Italian art. But its two most distinguished members ignored pious themes and treated contemporary, often everyday, subjects in the new style – an approach described as “Intimisme”. Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940) transformed his banal, homely interiors into beautifully balanced compositions, most successfully on a small scale. In his portrait of his *Mother and sister*, the two figures are simplified into strongly patterned, almost flat, forms, and the surface of the picture, compartmented into a bold decorative design, is held in tension by the room’s sharply exaggerated recessions. Yet the



BONNARD (above)
La Revue Blanche, 1894
“The most Japanese Nabi”, as Bonnard was hailed by an admiring critic, showed in his graphic art a unique assimilation of the spirit and principles of *ukiyo-e* colour prints. The formal qualities of his poster are openly oriental, even if the wit is peculiarly French.



SÉRUSIER (above)
“*The Talisman*”: landscape in the Bois d’Amour in Brittany, 1888
Gauguin virtually dictated the picture to his young disciple: “How do you see these trees?” he asked. “They are yellow? Well then, put down yellow. And that shade is rather blue. So render it with pure ultramarine. These red leaves...? Use vermillion.”



BONNARD (left)
Nude in the bath, 1937
Vibrant with the light and colour of southern France, Bonnard’s mature work is also suffused with a gentle nostalgia for time past. Until the death of his wife in her 60s he continued to portray her tenderly as a slim nubile girl, the model and mistress of his youth.

VUILLARD (right)
Mother and sister of the artist, c. 1893
Vuillard may have gained his first fascination with contrasts of texture and pattern from his mother, a seamstress and designer of fabrics. She often appears, sewing or in repose, in his rather claustrophobic, but always affectionate, views of quiet, cosy domesticity. Vuillard later became a successful portrait painter.



VUILLARD (above)
The laden table, c. 1908
Vuillard’s experiments with mixed media might have been encouraged by Degas’s

earlier innovatory effects. Here he has applied pastel and gouache to a ground of distemper, achieving near-Impressionist spontaneity.

figures are still lively likenesses of specific individuals. Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) was sharing a studio with Denis and Vuillard in 1890, and he, too, showed a masterly sensitivity and control of two-dimensional design in his everyday incidents. His most remarkable work, however, came very late in his career, in a great series of nudes painted in the 1920s and 1930s, in which he developed the luminous and sumptuous colour of late Monet.

In their early work both Vuillard and Bonnard reflect the asymmetrical balancing, the idiosyncratic perspective, the overall patterning so characteristic of the great masters of the Japanese print, and both were closely involved with the brilliant flowering of lithography in the 1890s – with the development not only of the *livre d'artiste* (see over) but also of the poster. Bonnard seems to have preceded Toulouse-Lautrec, who established the poster definitively as a major art-form.

Henri Marie Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec (1860-1901), like Gauguin and van Gogh, was a misfit in society; in his case, the basic cause was physical abnormality. A grotesque dwarf, an alcoholic, he nevertheless created, in his brief life no less than in his work,

an heroic legend that has fascinated posterity. Degas's draughtsmanship was always a prime inspiration for Lautrec, and he shared with Degas a fascination for metropolitan low life, the theatre and the circus; his eye was just as sardonic and unsentimental, but he also infused his characters with sharp individuality, and his vivid distortions can serve expressive as well as formal purposes. Brilliant as some of his paintings are, he found graphics his most congenial medium: he became perhaps the greatest poster designer ever. He, too, echoes the example of Japanese prints, in a witty economy of sinewy line, clear colour and strong silhouette, and in an exquisite balance between the rectangular format, the image and the lettering. Lautrec's looping forms, his exaggerations, link his graphic work with the international phenomenon of Art Nouveau.

Art Nouveau was primarily concerned with architecture and design, the applied arts. It fused its many sources of inspiration into an entirely original mode of expression, imparting to any object or design a sense of organic growth, often with erotic overtones and often fantastic in conception. It inspired, too, a handful of painters and draughtsmen of major

consequence. In England Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) drew erotic and sinister images in blackest black on white in an extraordinary fusion of elements from Japanese prints, Greek vases, Celtic interlace, Pre-Raphaelite dream and Rococo, that seemed the epitome of 'nineties decadence. Beardsley became famous through his illustrations for the periodical *The Yellow Book* and for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, and achieved international celebrity before his death by tuberculosis aged 26. He was known all over Europe, for instance in Vienna, where Gustav Klimt (1863-1918), the most original painter associated with Art Nouveau, led the Austrian Sezession (formed by analogy with the German Sezessions, see p. 378). Klimt's work became progressively less naturalistic: though the heads of his figures are modelled in the round, bodies, draperies and background dissolve into a flat mosaic of colour, swirling line and spirals. His determined defence of the artist's freedom of expression in the face of a reactionary society was crucial for the growth of Austrian Expressionism (see p. 443); and, formally, many of the Expressionists throughout Europe took important elements from Art Nouveau, not least Munch (see p. 376).



TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (left)
Self-portrait, c. 1890
A hard strain of realism
belies the decorativeness
of Lautrec's café art; his
caricature displays fine
linear control and sad wit.

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (right)
*The English girl at "Le
Star"*, Le Havre, 1899
The nicely judged pastel
colours set her off; a swift
line seems to capture the
girl in full brazen giggle.

BEARDSLEY (below left)
*Salomé: "J'ai baisé ta
bouche, Iokanaan"*, 1894
The Baptist's head rises
like a flower on a stem of
blood – a gruesome subject
chilled by the calligraphy.



TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (left)
*Jane Avril at the Jardin de
Paris*, 1893
Lautrec's inspiration was
Montmartre's *demi-monde* –
whores, and dancers, who
appear in lithographs and
posters in angled poses full
of flounce and movement.

KLIMT (above)
Judith, 1909
Obsessive Symbolist motifs
– female treachery and the
severed head of Holofernes
(probably a self-portrait) –
set in a vivid, even jarring,
patterned ground, charge
the air with neurotic energy.

Symbolism

In late nineteenth-century France, in a mood both of political disillusion, after the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune of 1870, and of reaction against materialism and scientific rationalism, Courbet's insistence on a concrete art of "real and existing" things had lost much of its force. The Romantic emphasis on the imagination was sustained and revived. The artists who had briefly come together round Gauguin at Pont-Aven in Brittany had sought to express internal feeling, and those who then cohered in a group called the Nabis had spoken of themselves as Symbolists. But perhaps the most remarkable Symbolist, Odilon Redon, stood somewhat apart from that group, and work with an obviously symbolic content was already being produced by older artists, notably Moreau and Puvis de Chavannes.

For these painters literary sources were almost more significant than visual ones – the Symbolist movement crystallized around the doctrines and poetry of Baudelaire, Gautier, Mallarmé and Verlaine. Baudelaire was the arch-prophet of Symbolism. In his seminal *Fleurs du Mal*, published as long ago as 1857, he had written (in the sonnet *Correspondances*) of scents, colours and sounds communicating

not merely sensations, but states of mind. He implied that art, too, could give rise to states of mind and ideas independent of material reality – whether verbally, visually or musically. A typically Symbolist development was the *livre d'artiste*, a book in which text (usually poems) and images (usually lithographs) co-exist as aspects of one meaning, though the text does not "explain" the images nor the images "illustrate" the text. (An early and significant work of this kind had been Mallarmé's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, with lithographs by Manet.) Baudelaire's aesthetics were developed by Verlaine and the major Symbolist poet Mallarmé, and Huysmans's novel *Against Nature* was virtually a Symbolist manifesto, with its archetypal "decadent" hero, des Esseintes, connoisseur of art, especially the art of Moreau and Redon.

Gustave Moreau (1826-98) was long disregarded, as being compromised by outmoded academic conventions in his figuration and by his "literary" content, which an admittedly modern sensibility could not redeem; he is now recognized as a crucial transitional figure (a role of which he himself was conscious). He painted on two scales – large, very heavily

worked oil-paintings and small, often weirdly incandescent watercolours. In both the subjects were the same – portentous and lurid landscapes or interiors with haunting mythological figures. The Surrealists naturally considered him an important precursor, but also his watercolours were reassessed in the light of Abstract Expressionism and Tachisme, while in his old age a remarkable group of future celebrities found in him a sympathetic teacher; they included Matisse and Rouault.

Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98) seems to present much more obviously a similar discrepancy between an apparently conventional, almost chilly, academic technique and a mysterious content. In fact Puvis's strange stillnesses, his wan, attenuated figures in lonely landscapes, are rendered evocative not only by the power of his imagination, but by his calculated and systematic use of distortion, and by their reduction to an almost two-dimensional pattern. His impact on Gauguin's schematic surface patterning is clear, while his cool, chalky colour and his enigmatic silences are echoed in Picasso's early work in Paris.

Odilon Redon (1840-1916) found a more satisfactory technique with which to realize



MOREAU (above)
The unicorns, c. 1885
Certain details of costume suggest that Moreau made use of a set of six Gothic tapestries, *The Lady and the Unicorn*, in the Musée Cluny, Paris. Painted in oils and in watercolour, the surface is encrusted as if with gems, an effect achieved not only by rich impasto, but by rubbing and scratching the canvas; Moreau often incorporated into his composition the accidental images so made.



PUVIS DE CHAVANNES (left)
Hope, 1872
Incongruous as it seems, Gauguin had a copy of this painting hung in his hut on Tahiti as a continuing inspiration. The images are traditional enough; yet the flattened forms and the decorative basis relate Puvis's art to the most progressive developments.



REDON (right)
Meadow flowers in a vase, after 1895
Redon's mastery of black and white was equalled by his achievements in the pastel medium. He was fascinated in youth by the botanical and zoological studies of Charles Darwin, and insisted on scientific reality, later, as the basis of his art. It is as if close scrutiny has heightened his perception of the object until it appears to glow with hallucinatory clarity.



REDON (below)
On the horizon, the angel of certainties, 1882
The title can be fitted to the image without too much difficulty, but the flotsam of imagination that Redon convokes is irrational, and not susceptible to prosaic interpretation. He often, however, included as well organic forms that he had studied under a microscope.

imaginative concepts, by placing, as he put it, "the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible". His disconnected imagery, his repertoire of disparate and fragmentary symbols and of concocted elements of the imagination, anticipate the Surrealists' attempts to represent the inner worlds of dreams and of the Unconscious closely. Until the 1890s he worked almost entirely in black and white, but then moved to pastels, achieving a brilliant vibration of colour in which the simplest of themes, a vase of flowers, takes on a positively unearthly intensity.

Symbolism came closest in France to being a coherent movement in the fine arts with a clear-cut programme, but symbolic imagery flourished elsewhere in Europe, although formally it was usually much more traditional. Indeed a Symbolist kind of other-worldliness pervaded even orthodox academic painting. In England Sir Edward Burne-Jones was the first of the Pre-Raphaelites (see p. 330) to establish a European reputation, when his dreamy unexplained visions of pale women, so close in mood to those of Puvis de Chavannes, were exhibited and admired in Paris. The work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, with its recurrent

ROSSETTI (right)

Astarte Syriaca, 1877

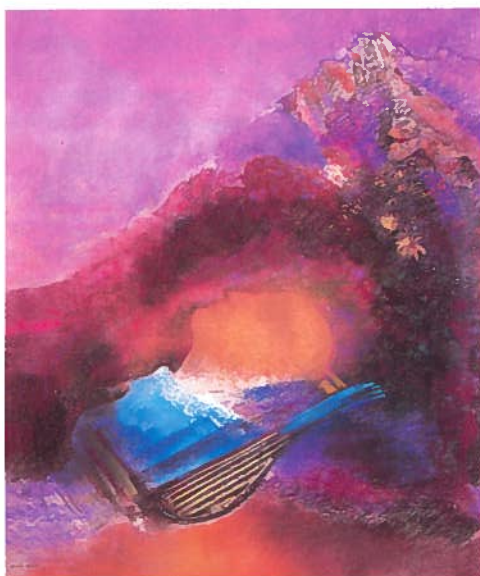
By the mid-1860s Rossetti had developed beyond the strong medievalizing bent of his early painting, and was interested in Venetian art. Astarte's rich glazed greens surely owe much to Veronese. Her dark beauty – and that of many similar lavish and sinister exotic Venuses – was modelled on William Morris' wife, Jane. Their sexuality was often comparatively explicit – in one the bitten pomegranate held by a Proserpina is a cryptic image of a vagina.



BURNE-JONES (below)

The mill, c. 1870–82

The presence of the Three Graces, which derive from Botticelli, might suggest a classical idyll; in fact the other age or world so wistfully evoked is neither antique nor medieval, even though it echoes both. The technique hardly offends academic canons, but the main figures are disposed across the foreground in a long, flattened frieze.



REDON

Orpheus, after 1913

Orpheus was torn apart by frenzied maenads who cast his head, still singing, into

a river. Afloat in iridescent colour, he typifies *le poète maudit* (the accursed poet), destroyed by the beloved Symbolist *femme fatale*.

theme of the *femme fatale*, was even more mysterious and visionary. Even George Frederick Watts made an original contribution – his *Hope* of 1886 (see p. 331) is a fascinating contrast to Puvis de Chavannes's earlier painting of the same title.

In Belgium, the weird Neo-Rosicrucian group was a focus of Symbolism, though its members still painted in academic or conventional styles. The most striking of them was Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921). His most famous painting, *The caress* (1896; not shown), a male figure embraced by a leopard with a human head, is perhaps more bizarre than convincing, but the dreamlike, irrational intensity of *Memories* (1889) – superficially a banal representation of a tennis party – has all the inexplicable compulsion of Puvis de Chavannes or Burne-Jones at their best. In Germany, the Swiss-born Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901) exercised a transitional and seminal role rather akin to that of Moreau in France. His paintings, essentially traditional and academic in technique, are rooted in Romanticism, and have a remarkable power to evoke the supernatural – never more memorably than in his enduringly famous *Island of the dead*.



KHNOPFF (above)

Memories, 1889

The two foreground figures were both modelled, one from life and one from a photograph, on the artist's sister. As in a dream, one senses obscure significance in the calm expectancy and clear, unfocused gaze of these women, who seem to float rather than walk.

BOCKLIN (below)

The island of the dead, 1880

The gaping doors of what seem to be tombs hollowed out of rock and the black spires of cypress trees – traditionally associated with death – have probably suggested the painting's title; Böcklin was content to call it simply "a dream

picture". Böcklin perhaps influenced Chirico, whose Surrealist "dummies" are anticipated in the blunt, faceless heads of the two tiny foreground figures. They are there to impart a sense of epic vastness (which recalls the settings for Wagner's operas – *The Ring* was produced for the first time at Bayreuth in 1876).



Edvard Munch



MUNCH
Self-portrait in Hell, 1895
The artist gazes out at the onlooker from inside the

inferno of his tormented imagination – a simple and telling, if theatrical, image, and clearly Expressionist.

“No longer should you paint interiors with men reading and women knitting. These must be human beings who breathe and feel and love and suffer. I would paint such pictures in a cycle. People would understand the sacredness of them and take their hats off as if in church.” This self-directive, an entry written in his notebook by Edvard Munch (1863–1944) when he was in France in 1890, formulates an aim that he was to pursue until the end of his life. He disclaims the cosy anecdotal genre of the Realist tradition popular in his native Norway (and most of Europe), and implicitly commits himself to a humanist vocation in which he would act as a prophet or priest.

Such an idea was the antithesis of the claimed objectivity of the Impressionists – though their influence was even then, in 1890, lightening Munch’s palette – but more in key with Gauguin’s objectives and virtually at one with van Gogh’s belief in the power of art to communicate truths of existence to ordinary people. It was not, however, a message either of consolation or of joy. Munch’s youth was profoundly disturbed by the deaths of his mother and sister from tuberculosis, and by the aggressiveness of his father, a doctor, who

seems to have come close to religious dementia. Later, as a student, he was involved with a radical group of writers in Oslo, the “Christiana Bohemians”, influenced by Zola’s harsh dissections of society and by Ibsen’s questioning plays of the 1880s. In this climate Munch settled compulsively on his perennial themes – the intense expression of inner states of mind (usually suffering rather than pleasure); the union of man and woman in love, and the failure of union: no painter has surpassed him in the depiction of loneliness, and few have equalled him in conveying an awareness of the doom that haunts the passion of love, even though it is a theme implanted in the European imagination from Dante’s Paolo and Francesca onwards. Woman has never been more vividly realized as both destroyer and creator than in Munch’s *Vampire* or *Madonna*.

Abroad during much of 1889–92, Munch was influenced in France not only by the philosophy latent in Gauguin’s and van Gogh’s work, but also by their formal innovations. Gauguin’s flowing contours, his simplification and occasional distortion of natural form, his juxtaposition of broad areas of bright, contrasting colour, these were of seminal import-



MUNCH (above)
Madonna, 1895
The Madonna, remote in her ecstasy, emanates the force of life, terrible in its impersonality; her red lips, nipples, navel and halo recall “Our Lady of Pain” of Swinburne’s poetry. In a later lithograph Munch added an embryo, covering as if in fear of the life into which he must be born.



MUNCH (left)
The kiss, 1892
The two bodies, so merged in an embrace as to become one form, might be viewed as symbolic of union and fulfilment. But Strindberg, in his critical commentary on *The Frieze of Life*, conceived it as “the fusion of two beings, the smaller of which, shaped like a

carp, seems on the point of devouring the larger, as is the habit of vermin, microbes, vampires and women”. In a later, variant woodcut Munch simplified the forms even further, and incorporated in the design the grain of the wood itself – an innovative practice – in a violent statement of great power and economy.



MUNCH (above)
Puberty, 1895
Women at varying stages in their maturity occupy a central role in Munch’s art: for him, the progress of female development was a gripping symbol of the primary experiences of the journey through life – birth, sexual awareness and death.

These, for Munch, were all fraught with fear; and the anxiety which dominated his view of heterosexual love is explicit in this girl’s pitiful nubility – she stares out, crossing large hands, overshadowed by her growing femininity, which seems to hover like ectoplasm in her shadow.



MUNCH (right)
Vampire, 1895
Strindberg found expressed here his view of woman as the seductress and destroyer of man: “A rain of blood flows in torrents over the accursed head of him who seeks the misery, the divine misery, of being loved – or rather, of loving”.

ance to Munch's art. For Munch, however, it was always the inner needs of the subject matter that shaped its outward form, and in a highly expressive and definite manner; with Gauguin it was more often the mood that compelled the subject matter into form, and the significance could be imprecise – Gauguin's "*inquiétude de mystère*" (mysterious disquiet). In contrast, it is Munch's desolations, his desires and his fears, that overwhelm.

Between 1892 and 1908 – the finest period of Munch's art – it was Berlin, not Paris, that provided him with audience, stimulation and patronage – and controversy. The forced closing of his first show in Berlin in 1892 led directly to the founding of the German break-away group, the Berlin Sezession (see over). By 1908 he was famous, not only in Norway and in Germany, but internationally. In 1908, too, following a wretched love-affair apparently both passionate and absurd, and after various squalid brawls, he withdrew, an alcoholic and in what he called a "complete nervous collapse", to Dr Jacobsen's sanatorium at Copenhagen. The parallel with the crisis in van Gogh's career is striking, but with Munch sanity ultimately prevailed. For the rest of his

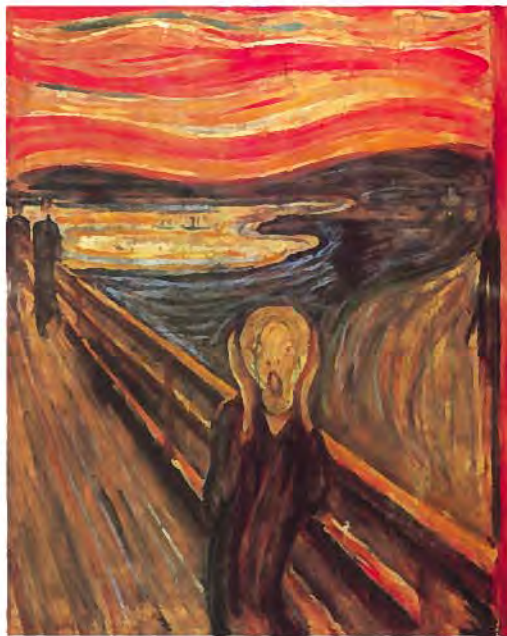
life he lived almost entirely in his native Norway, largely withdrawn from society. His fame, however, spread, and in 1933 he received the ultimate accolade as a leader of modern art, when 82 of his works were branded as "degenerate" by the Nazis. Having rejected all contact with the Quisling regime established in 1940, he bequeathed to Oslo on his death in 1944 all the works left in his possession; it is still to Oslo that those interested must go to experience the full range of his achievement, especially his later mural decorations.

The "cycle" that he had hoped for in 1890 was in part carried through, but only within his overall production. He linked a sequence of paintings under the general title *The Frieze of Life*, of which 22 were exhibited together at the Berlin Sezession in 1902. These, in their power, both formal and emotive, to convey *fin-de-siècle* disillusion and a sense of man as a victim, are perhaps his masterpieces. He was by this time, however, translating his themes into other media, and establishing himself as one of the greatest of printmakers (he learnt much technically from the printer Auguste Clot in Paris, who also worked for Vuillard and Bonnard). In his lithographs, and sometimes

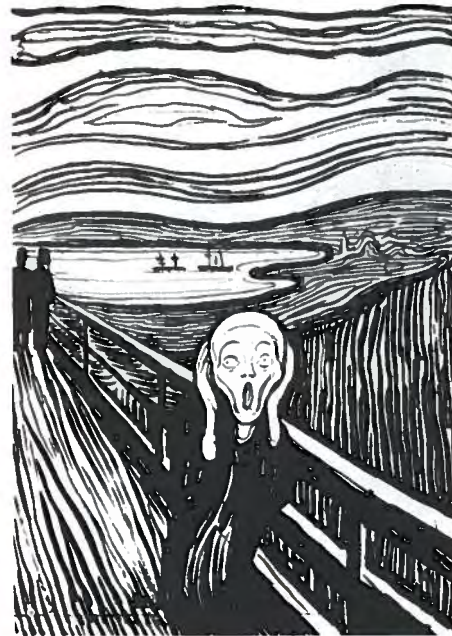
in his paintings, he tried deliberately to relax conscious control of the hand, anticipating later experiments. His most remarkable and original graphic work was in woodcut, where his technical virtuosity was matched by an ability to distil his subject into its stark and startling essentials; his woodcuts were to have a profound impact on Expressionist idiom.

In his later years Munch moved towards a freer, lighter style, especially in his murals, designed to be "at one and the same time peculiarly Norwegian and universal". Like almost all twentieth-century large-scale institutional decorations, they verge on the banal, and his smaller work remained more satisfactory, although it became repetitive. However, his long series of self-portraits maintained their early quality, and the very late *Self-portrait between clock and bed* is an image of man in his loneliness as haunting as anything that Munch had realized before. His influence had permeated the ideas of the German Expressionists well before he died, but it is perhaps only since 1945, when Paris ceased to dazzle to the exclusion of other schools, that his towering stature in twentieth-century art has become universally recognized.

MUNCH
(near right) *The scream*,
oils, 1893
"One evening I was walking along a path, the city on one side, the fiord below. I felt tired and ill ... The sun was setting and the clouds turning blood-red. I sensed a scream passing through Nature; it seemed to me that I heard the scream. I painted this picture, painted the clouds as actual blood. The colour shrieked."



(far right) *The scream*,
lithograph, 1895
When translated from oil-paint into a graphic medium, Munch's images became still more sharply defined and more potently charged: instinctual panic is expressed in swirling rhythms in the sky, the lake and in the figure, drawn up in a tortured echo of the natural forms.



MUNCH (below)
Self-portrait between clock and bed, 1940-42
Standing in the narrow space between the time that remains to him and the bed on which he is shortly to die, the artist faces mortality against a backdrop of his paintings. But although the theme is sombre, the brilliant, sunny colours stress a positive, perhaps even a triumphant, pride: his art will survive his personal extinction.



MUNCH
History, 1910-11
The decoration of the new assembly hall of Oslo University (1910-15) gave

Munch the opportunity to paint a set of murals on the themes of learning, beauty and the continuity of life. *History* is one of

three main panels and shows Age passing tradition on to Youth against a background of fiords – Norway – and below an oak tree – the

Tree of Life perhaps. The simple design, cool tones and monumental forms led the committee in charge to call it "Greek in spirit".



Impressionists and Expressionists outside France

A ferment of change was transforming the arts everywhere in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century, although Paris was its most spectacular and most clearly defined focus. The restless movement of artists, and their eagerness to experiment, led to complex cross-fertilizations, and sometimes to disconcerting changes of direction within a single artist's style. In the 1890s in Holland, for example, where painting, though leavened by Impressionist colour, was still generally very traditional, the highly talented Jan Toorop (1858-1928) could blend the linear rhythms of Art Nouveau with both the emotional and literary subject matter of Symbolism and an exoticism owing something to memories of his native Java – and yet during the same period he was also painting pure divisionist pictures.

Toorop was a member of Les Vingt (The Twenty), a group founded in Brussels in 1883 which, before it was disbanded in 1893, had greatly assisted the dissemination of Post-Impressionist art by organizing enterprising exhibitions – showing Rodin, Monet, Redon, Seurat, Gauguin, van Gogh and Cézanne. Another member of Les Vingt was James Ensor (1860-1949). Some of Ensor's earlier

paintings were remarkably precocious – interiors foreshadowing Vuillard – and the work for which he is best known was produced in less than two decades before 1900; after 1900 his inspiration seems to have failed. His imagery – macabre, jagged, grotesque, reverting obsessively to the theme of the mask – was to be echoed immediately by the German Expressionists, and so was the style with which it was conveyed: a master of traditional composition if he so wished, Ensor chose to disrupt convention into chaos, and to distort and to make deliberately ugly in order to express a profoundly pessimistic view of mankind. His most famous picture, the huge *Entry of Christ into Brussels* of 1888, seems in places almost splattered with his vitriol, and was too much for Les Vingt. Etching was perhaps his most effective medium, but even broadcast in prints his vision was individual to the point of obscurity; in his isolation, his inability to come to terms with life, he followed the pattern set by van Gogh and Munch and to be followed again by several German Expressionists.

Germany proved to be the natural home of Expressionism. Without an acknowledged national capital until 1871, the culturally dis-

united states of the German-speaking peoples had nevertheless produced a number of flourishing artistic schools in their leading cities – in Munich and Berlin, but also in Düsseldorf, Dresden, Vienna and Weimar. The predominant style had been naturalistic, academic, high-gloss, often applied with great virtuosity to genre subjects or portraiture; in the 1890s the official or semi-official bodies were challenged by breakaway groups, generally called *Sezessionen*. The symbolic signal for revolt seems to have been the forcible closure of an exhibition of Munch in 1892, when the Munich Sezession was formed; the Berlin Sezession followed in 1898-99, led by Max Liebermann (1847-1935), an able and sensitive interpreter of Impressionism, to which he had turned not long before; but Liebermann could not go along with the Expressionist Neue (New) Sezession (see p. 382) which challenged his group in 1910. Liebermann remained, however, the grand old man of German art.

The other chief exponents of the Impressionist style in Germany, tending always, though in individual ways, to modulate it according to the German tradition of lyric



TOOROP (left)
The three brides, 1893
Three ghostly women stand enmeshed in an intricate web of Art Nouveau line – a nun, the bride of Christ, an earthly bride and the bride of Hell (another manifestation of the Symbolist *femme fatale*; her necklace of skulls recalls Kali, the Hindu goddess of death).

ENSOR (right)
The murder, 1888
Ensor's blend of sadism and fantasy makes him a modern Flemish successor to Bosch. The delicacy of his line, and whimsical distortions, make his theme yet more macabre – a fairy tale turned to nightmare.



LIEBERMANN (left)
The parrot man, 1902
Influenced at first by Hals, *plein-air* painting and the

Barbizon school, Liebermann felt Manet's impact in the 1890s, then became increasingly Impressionist.

ENSOR (above)
The entry of Christ into Brussels, 1888
The fantastic mask-faces

of the people reveal a host of worldly concerns; Jesus' foredoomed entry is retold in terms of the modern city.

naturalism, were Fritz von Uhde (1848-1911), Lovis Corinth (1858-1925) and Max Slevogt (1868-1932; not shown). Their progress, however, was not easy; a vivid illustration of their difficulties is the fact that as late as 1908 Kaiser Wilhelm sacked the Director of the Berlin National Gallery, Hugo von Tschudi, because of his purchase of modern French paintings.

In sculpture, the influence of Rodin was paramount, but the major sculptors in Germany all developed styles in which profoundly personal emotions were expressed in severely simplified forms of great intensity. In his suffering figures Ernst Barlach (1870-1938) resolved the artistic problems of social realism more nobly than any artist encouraged by a totalitarian state (whatever its persuasion) has since succeeded in doing. Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919) evolved a fusion of classical reminiscence, German Gothic and the sensuous monumentality of Maillol. His strangely elegant, almost narcissistic figures – modelled rather than carved – in their simplified planes, their lean attenuation, are redolent of haunted melancholy. Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) was driven by sympathies with the poor and oppressed akin to Barlach's, but her art was more

personal: in her many self-portrait drawings she created an archetypal image of bereaved and suffering womanhood (her only son was killed in World War I, her grandson in World War II). Barlach, Lehmbruck and Kollwitz all found printmaking a satisfying medium, and, though she was a compelling sculptor, Kollwitz's best work was graphic; her lithographs, with those of Ensor and the woodcuts of Munch, prelude the Expressionists' resuscitation of the print.

Another woman pioneer of modern art was Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907). She was encouraged by the dealer Vollard, and met Cézanne; her own work was more in key with the Nabis than with the forceful expressiveness to be developed by her younger compatriots. They responded to the message of the work of Gauguin, van Gogh or Munch but were increasingly aware of the contribution that their own Nordic genius must add to it; and much that they so startlingly developed had been foreshadowed in Germany, for instance by the critic Fiedler, who had declared that "the visual aspect of an object breaks free from the object and appears as a free, independent creation".



KOLLWITZ (above)
Woman welcoming death,
1934-35
Kollwitz's *Cycle of Death*
uses taut line and menacing

shadow to convey both a fear and desire for release. An intensely personal grief is stripped of egotism, pared down to bare essentials.



UHDE (left)
At the summer resort, 1892
Uhde was a member of the Munich Sezession of 1892. His fresh and uncloying version of Impressionism, influenced by Liebermann, was still close to *plein-air*

Realism, being much less brightly and freely painted than the French original. There is even a faint echo of Runge's Romanticism in the aureoled child, who recalls the children in *The artist's parents* (see p. 323).



LEHMBRUCK (above)
Kneeling woman, 1911
The expressive elongation may derive from Rodin; the richly modelled surface is directly Rodinesque. Also Maillol could be cited. But the bowed head and docile pose, like that of some lost Virgin Annunciate, impart a distinctive spirituality – alien to France, but widely found in German sculpture.

MODERSOHN-BECKER (below)
Mother and child, 1906
The mother's heavy, almost animal body encloses the vulnerable form of the baby within a protective curve. Gauguin's impact is clear, but this is a powerful and tender image that has now an added poignancy, as it was painted the year before the artist died in giving birth to her first child.

CORINTH (below)
Morning sunlight, 1910
Corinth's Impressionism was encouraged by study in Paris and then in Berlin under Liebermann. Beside

Uhde, his handling is much freer, but sentimentality is perhaps too evident; the sensuous, warm flesh tones of the model, his wife, show his admiration of Rubens.



BARLACH (above)
The solitary one, 1911
Barlach was a friend of Kollwitz, who shared his sympathy with the miseries of the poor and lonely; he aspired, he said, to celebrate "the human condition in its nakedness between heaven

and earth", in poetry and prints as well as sculpture. He felt an affinity with the great Gothic woodcarvers, though in most figures the influence of Rodin seems paramount. This is almost bursting with some massive sorrow, too great to bear.



Nolde: The Last Supper

"With light strokes I traced 13 figures on to the canvas, the Redeemer and the 12 Apostles seated at a table in the warm spring night, the night before the Passion. This was the occasion when Christ revealed His great idea of redemption to His beloved disciples. I obeyed an irresistible impulse to express deep spirituality and ardent religious feeling, but I did so without much deliberation, knowledge or reflection . . . While working on *The Last Supper* and *Pentecost* I had to be artistically free . . . These paintings marked the transition in my development from reliance on external optical stimulus to that of experienced inner value."

When Emil Nolde (1867-1956) painted his *Last Supper*, the genesis of which he was later

to describe, as above, in his memoirs, he was already 43. He had been a slow developer. Brought up on a farm in Schleswig-Holstein, in the remoteness of north-east Germany, he always remained a somewhat solitary figure in the German Expressionist movement, with an almost hermetic, mystical dedication to his artistic vocation. He became a full-time painter only in 1894, but he had nevertheless by 1900 acquired considerable experience, in Munich, in Italy and in Paris, and had worked at Dachau in the school of Adolf Hölzel (1853-1934; not shown), whose use of symbolism and of expressive colour was probably very important for Nolde. Nolde's style evolved through Impressionism, but his real mentors were to be

Munch and Ensor.

Nolde discovered or consolidated the themes that would preoccupy him for the rest of his life between 1900 and 1910 – religion, Nature (especially the wilderness of northern plains or the elemental forces of the sea), figure painting and, not least, flowers. These, however, he painted according to his inner vision: "All the free fantastic paintings of this period came into being without any prototype or model, without any well-defined idea . . . a vague shape of glow and colour was enough. The paintings took shape as I worked." From such conceptions there evolved his idea of "passive artistic creation", defined in 1942 as "the moment when a spark glows in the



darkness and grows, if the circumstances are right, into a leaping flame.”

The handling of Nolde's *Last Supper* is indeed a far cry from the traditional formulae evolving from the famous prototype by Leonardo da Vinci (see p. 128), though the force behind it owes something surely to the tortured anguish of Grünewald's religious painting. In its harsh, summary drawing, in its echoes of tribal African or Oceanic sculpture, in the strident reds and yellow greens and the compression of figures within the picture space, the painting is unequivocally in the mainstream of German Expressionism. But the religious impact is Nolde's own, and his only peer as a religious artist in the twentieth

century is Rouault (see p. 391), also a great master of glowing colour. Nolde, however, lacked Rouault's sexual disgust, and also his formal restraint, for Nolde could unleash his brush in a wild gaiety of swirling paint in which the figures dissolve.

As a prolific printmaker, exploiting the technical potential of both woodcut and lithograph, Nolde had an importance in the development of Expressionist graphics. Yet perhaps his most remarkable achievements were in watercolour: in this medium, in the incandescent intensity with which he could kindle colour into blaze on paper, he has no peer in the twentieth century.

After he had briefly, in 1906-07, been a

member of Die Brücke, Nolde withdrew to a farm in the northern German fastnesses at Seebüll (where a foundation now houses much of his work); and became more and more a recluse. The Nazis (of whom Nolde at first approved) declared him a “degenerate” artist, but, though he was officially forbidden to paint, he produced innumerable compositions in miniature (his secret “unpainted pictures”) during World War II, and subsequently, in an astonishing burst of energy before his death, painted full-scale versions of a great many of them. Well aware of the example of van Gogh, Gauguin and Munch, he rivalled them in the intensity of his vision, in which he formulated an original, elemental imagery of great power.

NOLDE (left)

The Last Supper, 1909
Early in 1909 Nolde had been dangerously ill; on his recovery he began painting a series of religious works – *The Last Supper*, *Pentecost*, *The mocking of Christ* and *The Crucifixion*. He said: “I stood almost terrified before my drawing, without any model in nature – I was about to paint the most profoundly significant episode in the Christian religion! ... Had I felt bound to keep to the letter of the Bible or dogma, I do not think I could have painted these deeply experienced pictures so powerfully.”



ENSOR (left)
Intigue, 1890

Ensor was one of the first European artists to break traditional constraints on expression – turning to use the ugly and disturbing. In what seems to be a carnival there is here no festivity; the masks reveal an inner evil; the smiles are leers. Nolde, trying to give form to a personal vision, took up Ensor's example, conveying his emotion through garish colour and coarse features.



NOLDE (above)

A Friesland farm under red clouds, c. 1930
The wild and desolate landscape of Seebüll with its vast expanses of sky suited Nolde's fervent, solitary nature. A visit to China in 1913 perhaps stimulated the vivid hues and liking for pattern typical of his later watercolour style.



NOLDE (right)

The prophet, 1912
This is one of a series of woodcuts that Nolde made in 1912. He had earlier been associated with Die Brücke and he, too, was attracted by the German origin of the technique, and the powerful crudity of the kind of image it produces.



NOLDE (above)

Early morning flight, 1950
Nolde's late oil-paintings are all enlarged versions of watercolour improvisations, with glowing colours, free brushwork and a dreamy or

mystical quality. Perhaps these are spirits heralding the coming of morning; the subject matter is usually fanciful or fey, expressing a joyous vivacity that had seldom appeared earlier.

Expressionism 1: Die Brücke

In 1905-06 a little band of young students at an architectural school in Dresden formed a group they styled "*Die Brücke*" (The Artists' Group of the Bridge). Their aim was to create a modern artistic community, like the Pre-Raphaelites, the Nazarenes, or Gauguin and van Gogh before them, but they were fired with a more aggressive missionary zeal. Very young themselves (the eldest, Kirchner, was only 25), they addressed themselves to the young: "One of the aims of *Die Brücke* is to attract all the revolutionary and surging elements – that is what the name signifies." Their ideals were to be achieved by their communal activity, and were to be propagated by traveling exhibitions of their work.

Die Brücke were concerned with the social role of art, and in this they differed from the Fauves (see p. 390) in France, although they shared with them a delight in the resonance of contrasting, non-representational colours. Both groups, formulating their revolutionary styles in about 1905 – simultaneously and, to begin with, quite independently – naturally took advantage of the formal explorations of the Post-Impressionists and of Art Nouveau, and also shared an excitement in the expressive



distortions and simplifications of so-called "primitive" art – for *Die Brücke*, the Oceanic and African collections in the Zwinger Museum at Dresden. In the Germans' work, however, which is angular, often harsh and crowded with detail, there is an emphasis on the Nordic tradition, stemming from Gothic art, from Grünewald and the great print-makers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The painters of *Die Brücke* created psychological tensions in their work recalling those of Munch; they were reluctant, however, to admit Munch as kindred spirit, and Munch himself, at his first sight of the work of one of the group (Schmidt-Rottluff), exclaimed: "May God protect us; evil times are coming."

The three outstanding founder members were Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Erich Heckel. They were followed by Max Pechstein and Otto Mueller, and Emil Nolde (see preceding page) was briefly a member in 1906-07. The manifesto of the group was cut on wood by Kirchner – in the broadsheet tradition – and published in 1906, when its first exhibition was held, in Dresden. By about 1910, the leading members of the group were working in Berlin, where, rejected by the



KIRCHNER (above)
The artists' group of the bridge, 1906

In choosing the emblem of a bridge the group wished to represent themselves as a link between the arts of past and future. They may have found the metaphor in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a work they admired: "Man is great because he is a bridge and not a goal; he is only fit to be loved when he is a transition and a failure."

KIRCHNER (left)
Artists of Die Brücke, c. 1926

A compressed and flattened space is occupied by the angular, almost contorted figures of Mueller, seated, and Kirchner himself, with Heckel and a bespectacled Schmidt-Rottluff standing to his right. The group is portrayed as it was in the years before its dissolution.



KIRCHNER (right)
Street scene, 1913-14
Kirchner was fascinated by the people he observed in the streets of Berlin, by the movement of passers-by, dawdling or purposeful, by the anonymity of crowds, out of which a face might take form with startling immediacy. He registered the people he saw almost as caricatures – here they are shimmering repetitions of the fashionably dressed woman in the foreground, sporting the exaggeratedly tall and slender silhouette favoured just before 1914.



SCHMIDT-ROTLUFF (above)
The sun in a pine wood, 1913

Against the warm ochres of the trees and the earth, the intensity of the sunlight is suggested in its whiteness. All form has been reduced to bold, violent simplicity, though both subject and mood have their roots in the landscape tradition of German Romanticism.

KIRCHNER (left)
The couple, 1923

The woman's features reflect Kirchner's interest in African tribal masks, while the theme, rendered in brilliant acid colours, is typically Expressionist – the tensions of sex – but not harshly or bluntly treated.

Berlin Sezession, they formed a rival association, the Neue Sezession, with Pechstein as president. In 1910 Herwarth Walden, a dynamic and eloquent champion of Expressionist art in all media, started his influential periodical *Der Sturm* (The storm), and in 1912 established a gallery of the same name in which the work of Die Brücke was shown along with that of the leading artists of the various revolutionary movements in Europe. By then, however, the coherence of Die Brücke was disintegrating: they had resigned from the Neue Sezession, losing Pechstein, who continued to exhibit with it, and Kirchner's *Chronicle of Die Brücke* of 1913 proved an obituary: the group dissolved that year.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), most articulate and most gifted of the group, was also the only one of its members to have had any formal training in painting, although he shared with the others a taste for awkwardness in composition. He delighted in subjects full of movement, cabaret or circus scenes; he was a prolific printmaker, and a sculptor, but is seen at his most striking in his painted nudes and haunting street scenes: these, while they reflect in some degree the successive impacts of

Munch, of Fauvism and of Cubism, convey Kirchner's characteristic sense of urban and erotic desolation. His sensitivity was unable to stand the horrors of war, and in 1916 he suffered a breakdown; following his recovery his art became more decorative, lacking his earlier intensity. Condemned as "degenerate" by the Nazis, he committed suicide in 1938.

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976) developed a powerful command of simplified shapes and summarily modulated planes of strong colour, angular and interlocking. His landscapes painted in this idiom, from about 1911, have a magical and mystical intensity. After World War I, his work tended to be softer, more decorative, but in one famous print of 1918 he crystallized the horror of the trenches in an image of Christ, chopped and hacked on to the woodblock. His strength comes through most purely in his prints, and it was especially in the relatively coarse medium of the woodcut, whether black and white or coloured, that he and others of the group found their most striking and original expression. Erich Heckel (1883-1970), likewise a great printmaker, was a gentler talent; in his early work, angular like all Die Brücke images, his

figures are possessed by anxieties, emaciated by them. He was profoundly moved by the great Russian novelists; his most famous painting, the claustrophobic *Two men at a table*, 1912, was dedicated to Dostoevsky.

Max Pechstein (1881-1955), who joined Die Brücke in 1906, offended less against conventional taste than the others, and so became more swiftly successful. The decorative quality of his work was closer to that of the French (he was strongly influenced by Matisse), while his reliance on the forms of tribal art was intensified by a South Seas tour in 1914. Older than the others, Otto Mueller (1874-1930), who joined the group in 1910, retained a softer, more delicate lyricism in contrast to their forceful expressiveness, and preferred pastoral to urban subject matter.

Mueller, dying in 1930, was spared the persecution that the Nazi artistic pogrom of the 1930s brought upon the others, all condemned as "degenerate" artists, their works confiscated, sold or even burnt. Indeed the achievement of early German Expressionism, its forceful relevance to the tragic condition of twentieth-century man, began to impress a larger audience only after 1945.

HECKEL (right)

Two men at a table, 1912
The atmosphere, pervaded by anxiety and suspicion, is a characteristic both of Dostoevsky's novels and of many of Heckel's paintings at this period. These men face each other, seemingly tortured by mutual distrust, before an image suggesting a dead Christ of a Gothic *Deposition*; psychological anguish is vivid in their rigid, angular forms and in the relationship of their hands to the knife lying between them on the table. We seem to be witness to the moment of suffocating tension that precedes an act of fearsome violence.



MUELLER (above)
Nudes on a beach, 1920
Gypsies, and nudes in landscape settings, these were Mueller's favourite themes. Their elongated bodies and graceful air of slightly fraught melancholy recall Lehmbrück's sculpture.

Mueller never adopted the strident colour favoured by his colleagues in Die Brücke: his pale, chalky palette enhances a wistful mood. But the figures have an angularity typical of Die Brücke. His prints are more Expressionistic.



SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF (left)
The head of Christ, 1918
The woodcut reached its apogee in the art of Dürer and Holbein in the early 16th century, after the first printed images in Europe had appeared in Germany. Its national and medieval origins commended it to Die Brücke, and also its intrinsically "primitive" or stubborn handling, here exploited to forceful effect.

PECHSTEIN (right)
The harbour, 1922
Pechstein appears among the artists of Die Brücke as the chief practitioner of French ideas and methods. Fauve works such as this, though frankly derivative, have, however, a tension (here, perhaps, in the loud reds) lacking in French art.



Expressionism 2: Der Blaue Reiter

Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), the second of the two major early groups of Expressionist painters in Germany, was, unlike Die Brücke in Dresden and Berlin, quite a loose association that did not nurture a single specific style and did not envisage communal activity. It was formed in Munich in 1911-12 as a splinter group of the New Artists' Association which the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky and others had founded in 1909; it, too, was headed by Kandinsky, with Gabriele Münter, Alfred Kubin and Franz Marc. Der Blaue Reiter (the name was taken from a picture by Kandinsky) was really a board or committee, which succeeded, before its dissolution at the outbreak of World War I, in realizing only one issue of an art publication, *The Blue Rider Almanac*, and in organizing two exhibitions. Other major artists associated with the group were August Macke, Alexei van Jawlensky and Paul Klee.

Der Blaue Reiter took its final form several years after Die Brücke, founded in 1905, but many of its members had been active in Munich since the late 1890s. Munich had by then become a fertile art centre, almost rivaling Paris, and attracting artists from both west and east. From 1896 two influential art maga-

zines had been published from Munich, *Jugend* (Youth; sponsoring Art Nouveau) and *Simplizissimus*, notable especially for its graphic art. Der Blaue Reiter, compared to Die Brücke, was much more cosmopolitan in outlook, and the aim of its exhibitions was "simply to juxtapose the most varied manifestations of the new painting on an international basis ... and to show, by the variety of forms represented, the manifold ways in which the artist manifests his inner desire". Included, besides paintings by the Munich members, were works by Picasso, Braque and Delaunay (the last perhaps was the most influential on the group), by Malevich and Arp, by the recently deceased Douanier Rousseau and also paintings by the composer Schönberg. In its *Almanac*, Der Blaue Reiter published a remarkable variety of Naïve, exotic and "primitive" material – African and Oceanic, Mexican and Brazilian objects; Russian and German folk art; Japanese prints; Bavarian glass-painting; children's art (especially important for Klee's development). The common factor in all these was their freedom from the constraints and conventions of European "fine" art; suggesting possibilities of expressing the

artist's "inner necessity" more directly. The philosophy was that of Nietzsche: "Who wishes to be creative ... must first blast and destroy accepted values."

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1940), born in Moscow, was the oldest of the group. Having studied law, he turned artist and migrated to Munich only at the age of 30, in 1896. His early work in Germany shows him modulating the styles of the time – Post-Impressionism, Art Nouveau, Fauvism – into a personal, distinctly Russian, fairy-tale vision expressed in rich and glowing colour. Having exhibited not only with the Munich and Berlin Sezessions but also in Paris, he was already moving in theory towards abstract art by about 1905; he later observed that even as a student he had found subject matter more of a hindrance than a help in painting. Only in 1912, however, when he was already working on his apologia, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, did he reach abstract art in practice (see over).

Together with Kandinsky, the Munich-born Franz Marc (1880-1916) gave Der Blaue Reiter an intellectual calibre Die Brücke never had. He had started as a student of philosophy and theology; fascinated by the physical grace



KANDINSKY (left)
Composition no. 4 (Battle), 1911

In what is at first sight an abstract work, figurative features may yet be found – in the rainbow spanning a gorge and the parachuting "matchstick" figure above. However, no other members of Der Blaue Reiter attained this degree of independence from the physical world in expressing "inner necessity".



MARC (right)
Deer in a forest II, 1913-14
Marc's search for a visual system in which to express his conviction of an "inner mystical structure of the world" was aided by a visit in 1912 to Delaunay. His debt to Orphism (see p. 399) is here strongly marked.



MARC (above)
The fate of the animals, 1913
Marc aspired to give form not to the visible world but to a subjective impression of it: "How wretched, how

soulless", he wrote, "is our habit of placing animals in a landscape which mirrors our own vision, instead of sinking ourselves in the soul of the animal so as to imagine its perceptions."

MACKE (right)
Kairouan I, 1914
The crucial African journey made by Macke and Klee in 1914 (see p. 440) is evoked in exquisite tints applied in an almost abstract order.



and essential innocence of animals, he painted them at first naturalistically; then he evolved a counterpoint of form and colour, in which the sinuous rhythms of animal life invigorated broad planes of brilliant, joyous colour bearing no relation to the subject's "natural" hues – Marc's famous blue and red horses. In these an awareness both of Cubism and of Orphism is evident, and by 1913 Marc was moving to almost pure abstraction. His mature paintings are some of the most striking images of twentieth-century art, and his death in action at Verdun one of its greatest losses. Yet almost comparable was the death of August Macke (1887-1914). In sensitivity the most gifted of the group, in his last few years he produced enchantingly lyrical and elegiac visions of urban life – elegant women, children in the park – a poetry of the city very different from Kirchner's sinister evocations. He visited Paris often, but his art, far from being diluted by Fauve, Cubist, or Orphic example, was strong enough to absorb their influences into his own intensely personal view, expressed through shifting planes of colour.

Kandinsky's compatriot Alexei van Jawlensky (1864-1941) was never formally a mem-

ber of Der Blaue Reiter, but was closely sympathetic to its aims. Much influenced by the Fauves (he had met Matisse in Paris), he used strong colour in flat planes and often in heavy linear contours, and his work was increasingly invested with an almost mystical feeling. His most memorable imagery was provided by the theme of a very simplified mask-face on which he played endless variations. Also important were Gabriele Münter (1897-1962), one of the few women artists in the group, who lived with Kandinsky until his return to Russia; Heinrich Campendonk

(1880-1957; not shown), painting very stiff, primitive-looking images reminiscent of the glass-painting of Bavarian folk art; and Alfred Kubin (1877-1959), primarily a graphic illustrator with a fantastic demonic quality. Paul Klee was also working entirely in black and white when Kandinsky first came into contact with him in Munich, but then began to explore the delicate, infinitely subtle watercolour techniques that he was to deploy and develop for the rest of his life (see p. 440). But Wassily Kandinsky, self-proclaimed founder of abstract art, was undoubtedly the major force.

MÜNTER (right)
A man at a table (Wassily Kandinsky), 1911
Münter concentrated on landscape, but her portrait of her lover also shows her Fauve-influenced style – areas of bold, unmodelled colour enclosed in heavy black contours. Objects are simplified in "primitive" fashion but the execution is vigorous and assured.



MACKE (left)
People at the blue lake, 1913
More than Marc, Macke dissolved modelled form in flat, floating colours almost alone constituting figures and setting. This tendency to generalize had its root in the aim, common to Der Blaue Reiter artists, to convey a universal truth behind surface appearances.

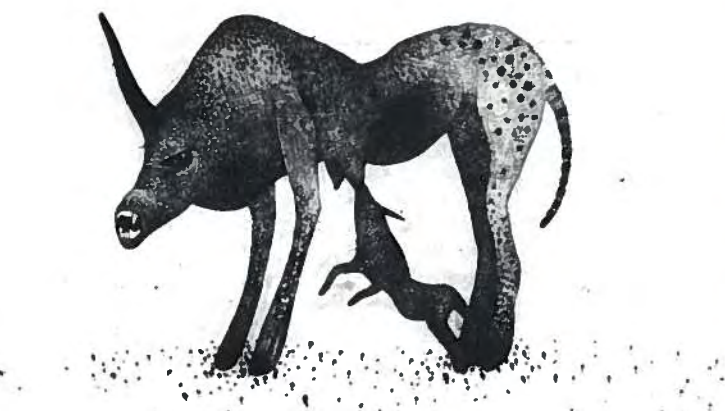
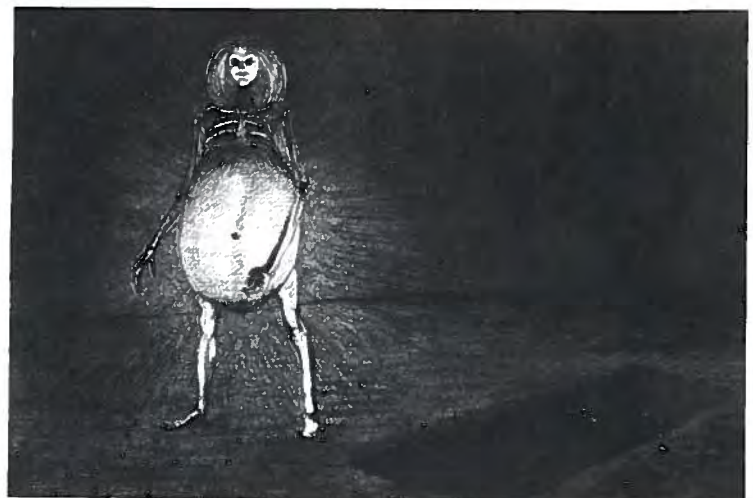


KLEE (below)
An animal suckling its offspring, 1906
The Bavarian folk craft of painting on glass aroused the interest of several Der Blaue Reiter artists, but Klee was the most active in the medium; he worked mainly in black and white and delighted in the sometimes unforeseen effects of the technique, retaining them in the final image.



JAWLENSKY (left)
Woman meditating, 1912
Jawlensky's colour tends to be hotter than that of the French Fauves, and there is a rather more charged quality to his work. Though he often gave his subjects rather heavy features, his brush-strokes could almost be called painstaking; they are more minute than bold.

KUBIN (below)
The egg, c. 1900
A tragic childhood and an obsession with the macabre – it is said that he liked to watch the recovery of corpses from the river – dominated Kubin's graphic work, which was essentially Symbolist in direction.



Kandinsky: Study for Composition no. 7



Composition no. 7 is one of the largest and most elaborate of the series of *Improvisations* and *Compositions* in which Kandinsky moved gradually, between 1910 and 1914, towards the elimination of all figurative or representational elements in his work. This study, of 1913, at first sight seethes, a hurly-burly of colour in conflict – colour that in places melts tenderly, even amorously, and in others is hot, sharp and strident; here and there are sharp scratchy scorings or criss-crosses of lines. On longer inspection, the implications of the title, a *Composition*, may seem more valid. There is a main focus of attention in an emphatic clench of forms, of thunderous blue and of heavy black left of centre, while the rectangle of the painting is divided by a diagonal from lower left to upper right. Below this is relative calm, above it all is turbulence. The onlooker's first impression may be of uncontrolled explosion; longer acquaintance reveals that the explosion is profoundly excogitated.

Wassily Kandinsky had already completed his fundamental treatise *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual in Art) in 1910, though it was not published until 1912. In this, and his other theoretical writing, the

argument is often obscure, but he was grappling with the huge difficulty of explaining the inexplicable, the unanalysable – the abstract values of colour and form completely detached from all representation of nature or objects. Very conscious of the danger of non-figurative art becoming mere vapid decoration, Kandinsky nevertheless believed that in pure colour and pure form the artist could find direct and valid expression of his mind or spirit. "The harmony of colour and form must be based solely upon the principle of proper contact with the human soul." Towards this end he worked out definitions of the qualities of colours and forms, but these, when not patently obvious, are generally highly subjective. One ready parallel with the art to which he aspired was, however, music: his own comments, and titles – *Improvisation*, *Composition* – indicate this clearly. For all his legal background, Kandinsky was always attracted by mysticism (particularly the theosophy of Madame Blavatsky), while his faith in materialism, in the value of the object, had been undermined by scientific revolution – the splitting of the atom.

Kandinsky's distrust of subject matter goes

back to his student days in Moscow, when he saw one of Monet's *Haystacks* (see p. 349), in which the subject was dissolved into shimmering light and colour. Then in Munich, probably in 1910, he saw in one of his own paintings lying the wrong way up, in a subdued evening light, an apparition, a harmony of colour, line and form "of extraordinary beauty, glowing with an inner radiance"; and this precipitated the final conversion to non-figurative art: "Now I know for certain that subject matter was detrimental to my paintings." Kandinsky claimed to have been the first to paint purely abstract pictures – or rather non-figurative ones. The Cubists and others likewise "abstracted" their compositions from their subject matter, but never became completely detached from the object. Kandinsky's claim can be and has been contested, but it is clear that he was indeed the first to establish abstract art as a consolidated and valid mode of expression.

Following the revelation of his upside-down painting, Kandinsky did not proceed immediately to absolute non-figuration, nor did he altogether abandon landscape or other subjects even when he had. Figurative motifs, while becoming increasingly schematic or ves-

KANDINSKY (left)
Study for *Composition*
no. 7, 1913

Kandinsky found "vistas of purely pictorial possibility" in the "shock of contrasting colours, the checking of fluid spots by contours of design, by the mingling and the sharp separation of surfaces".



KANDINSKY (right)
Composition no. 7,
fragment no. 1, 1913
Apocalyptic struggles have
been seen in these studies;
but also the first visual
equivalent of "conscious-
ness on a psychic level".



KANDINSKY (below)
The first abstract
watercolour, 1912
Is Kandinsky's title true?



There are rival claimants.
The difficulty is that all
the short-listed works were
long in the artists' hands

and might well have been
repainted later. This is the
favourite, as it seems fully
balanced, not an experiment.

KANDINSKY
(left) *Improvisation*
no. 30 – *Canons*, 1913;
(right) *Black lines*, 1913
Both works are abstract,
though Kandinsky agreed
that his own title *Canons*
and their clear intrusion
might reflect the constant
war-talk of the time; and
Black lines seems eerily
prophetic of aircraft being
strafed in bursts of fire.



KANDINSKY (below)
Two poplars, 1913
Kandinsky did not become
an abstract painter over-
night; the landscapes he
continued to produce until
1914 reveal no impassable
gulf between painting the
soul and painting trees.



tigial, persist in some of his paintings as late as 1920. Before 1914, however, he had already singled out the Unconscious as the mainspring of his work. Thus of *Improvisation* no. 30 – *Canons* he wrote that it was "painted rather subconsciously in a state of strong inner tension. So intensively did I feel the necessity of some of the forms that I remember having given loud directions to myself, for instance, 'But the corners must be heavy'." This may suggest a closer parallel with the Abstract Expressionism of American artists in the 1950s than is really justifiable. Kandinsky's workings, his intuition, were always controlled by an inner discipline, and there are more than 12 preliminary studies for *Composition* no. 7; the final painting took three days.

World War I disrupted Kandinsky's career. Returning to Russia, he painted relatively little, and after the Revolution was busily employed as an artistic administrator, although his work found no favour with the young Constructivists. During this time, however, he was refining his practice towards the geometric, "hard-edge" style that he was to develop fully on his establishment, in 1921, in the Bauhaus (see p. 438).

Fauvism

At the Salon d'Automne of 1905 in Paris, a critic found a classicizing torso in pale marble as if trapped amidst a pack of canvases of ferociously exuberant colours. His exclamation, "*Donatello au milieu des fauves!*" (Donatello amidst the wild beasts), baptized one of the most important movements of the early twentieth century – though it was barely cohesive enough to be called a movement, and very brief-lived.

The central figure amongst the Fauves was always Henri Matisse (see over), and that particular brilliance of colour and freshness characteristic of Fauvism in its prime recurs in his painting again and again until his very last work, in cut paper, in the 1950s. Matisse, Albert Marquet and Georges Rouault had all worked in Gustave Moreau's studio at various times between 1895 and 1899, and Moreau's expressive command of glowing colour surely affected all of them. Some 15 years, however, before Fauvism startled the public, Gauguin had defined a quality essential to it: "Instead of trying to render what I see before me, I use colour in a completely arbitrary way to express myself powerfully." In 1901, the work of another forerunner, van Gogh, had been dis-

MATISSE (below)
The gypsy, 1906
At the height of his Fauve period Matisse's exuberant handling of paint and rich

colour had a forcefulness moderated in his later art. Yet the form is defined in the abandon of colour: Matisse studied Cézanne.



played in Paris in a retrospective exhibition at which Matisse first met Maurice de Vlaminck. In 1903, dissatisfied with existing annual exhibitions, a group including Renoir, the Symbolist novelist and critic Huysmans and Rouault founded the Salon d'Automne (Autumn Salon) and gave that year a memorial exhibition of Gauguin; this was followed in 1904 by a large retrospective of Cézanne and in 1905 by the burst of colour that precipitated the Fauve painters' sobriquet.

Artists allied to those already mentioned in elements of style, though they never associated as an organized group, included André Derain, Raoul Dufy and Georges Braque. The adherence of some to Fauvist principles was brief indeed. André Derain (1880-1954), in the south of France in 1905 with Matisse, distilled brilliant, dazzling canvases from the light of the Midi sun, and soon afterwards in London, rather surprisingly, painted equally luminous, if cooler, versions of the river Thames. But within a year or two he had abandoned his brilliant palette, and an essential conservatism tamed his later ventures into Cubism. Georges Braque's Fauve period was even briefer, though to it are due a handful of the most



DERAIN (above)
The harbour at Collioure, 1905
Derain's sense of colour was transformed by strong sun: sunlight seems to burn in the unmodulated dashes applied on a white ground.

BRAQUE (below)
The little bay of La Ciotat, 1907
The seascape is only barely outlined, the arrangement of strokes almost abstract. There is a marked delicacy, and care for composition.



DERAIN (left)
Effects of sunlight on water, 1905
Derain once compared a tube of paint with a stick of dynamite, but he never, like Vlaminck, advocated arson. In the dazzling explosion of colour there still lurks structure – a firm horizon, for instance. His canvas is like a pointillist work energized and saturated.

DUFY (below)
Riders in the wood, 1931
Influenced by Marquet and Matisse's Fauve paintings, Dufy adopted the wild and free use of colour which distinguished the group, but, unlike most others, he was moved by a concern for an everyday realism and by a love of decorative effects, throughout a long career.



subtle and sensitive pictures in the style, and by late 1907 he was moving, with Picasso, into Cubist rigours (see p. 396).

For Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), who had started as an Impressionist, the Fauve vision proved too intense and exclamatory; soon he developed that characteristic lightness of touch, that elegant and witty calligraphy with which he was to describe the pleasures of leisure – beaches, yachts and racecourses – in later decades. Albert Marquet (1875–1947) was always more traditional, though he had a sure skill in extracting the essence of the scene before him, and after a brief explosion of colour as early as 1900 reverted to a more subdued tonal painting, exquisitely controlled.

Georges Rouault (1871–1958) perhaps never belonged emotionally to the Fauve movement: the closest of the Fauves to Moreau (and curator of the Musée Gustave Moreau in Paris), he was driven – by moral indignation, by a fascination with the scatological and, ultimately, by profound religious conviction – far away from the spontaneous hedonism and delight in decorativeness of the others. In this he was the direct heir to the Symbolists, while technically, in his *cloisonné* patterning of col-

our strongly reminiscent of the compartmentation of stained-glass windows, he followed the example of the painters of Pont-Aven. His prostitutes and clowns glow sombrely as if in the fires of Hell. Rouault is a direct link between Symbolism, including Gauguin, and the more ferocious output of German Expressionism, and he also ventured into graphic art, in his series of black and white prints “*Miserere et Guerre*” (War and pity; not shown) produced between 1914 and 1918. He stands apart, as perhaps the major religious artist of the twentieth century.

Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958) was the most committed of the Fauves, apart from Matisse, from whom in character he was very different: he was self-taught, anti-intellectual, fiercely scornful of the art of academies or museums. He was also for a short time a professional cyclist and peripatetic fiddler; he used to wear wooden ties varnished in bright colours, and indulged in hearty eating contests with Derain and the poet and critic Apollinaire. “I have never ‘thought about art’... I wanted to burn the Ecole des Beaux-Arts with my cobalts and vermilions and I wanted to interpret my feelings with my brushes without

thinking what had gone before me.” Profoundly stirred by the van Gogh exhibition in 1901, he unleashed his harsh primaries of red, white and blue against Vincent’s favourite yellows, oranges and greens with forceful and sometimes discordant clangour. The vigour of his attack on the canvas can produce the feeling in the onlooker that he is passing through these streets and landscapes at speed, as if on Vlaminck’s racing cycle, but in his later work impatience weakened his compositions.

Vlaminck’s urge to convey the fleeting impression with the greatest possible immediacy was characteristic of the initial Fauve approach: the aim was to achieve the maximum force of expression in colour and in the movement of the brush – the more violent the contrast between the colours the better. The real world served only as a point of departure in the creation of an image that had conceptual or existential rather than representational value. Once the initial excitement – an essentially youthful excitement – had passed, the style could only degenerate into mannerism, as often in Vlaminck’s later work. It was above all Matisse who had the stamina and discipline to control and adapt it to a developing art.

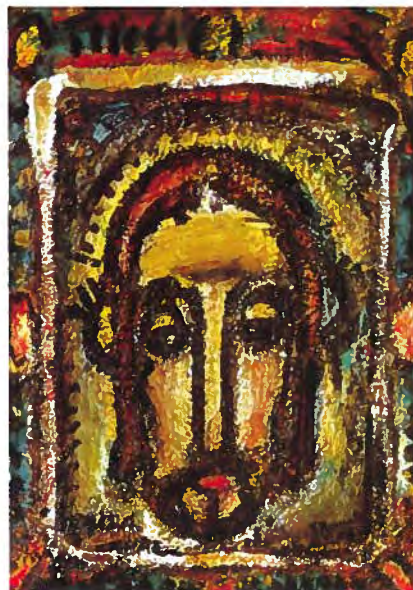
MARQUET (right)
Hoardings at Trouville,
1906
Under Matisse’s influence Marquet used the Fauves’ strong, unmodified colours for a time, but he was never as wild as the nickname. He would paint in bright tones one day, browns and greys the next, composing finely balanced pictures with a minimum of detail.



VLAMINCK (below)
Landscape with red trees,
1906–07
Vlaminck’s best landscapes were composed in primary colours in which freshness becomes almost tangible. He would often squeeze the paint directly from the tube on to the canvas, with scarcely precedented freedom from constraint.



ROUAULT (above)
The prostitute, 1906
Although he exhibited at the Fauve Salon of 1905, Rouault stood apart from the Fauves in important aspects of style (he did not use pure colour) and choice of subject matter. His harsh brushwork and bold use of line evoke the prostitute with expressive power, creating a symbol of the degradation of man.



ROUAULT (left)
The face of Christ, 1933
Rouault remained true to his artistic convictions: the bold contours and deep colours which marked his work in his Fauve period, featuring clowns and social outcasts, later served his mainly religious themes. And yet his vigour was not dependent on colour, and is unsoftened in his graphics.

Matisse: Le Luxe II

"With '*Le Luxe I*'", George Heard Hamilton has observed, "Matisse completed and closed the Fauve revolution." By the time the painting was finished, in 1908, Henri Matisse (1869-1954) was no longer young, but in the previous years he had refined, consolidated and then unleashed his feeling for the expressive possibilities of luminous colour, first fostered in Moreau's studio ten years earlier.

Unlike his fellow-Fauve Vlaminck, Matisse was a conscientious student of the art both of the past and of his contemporaries: "I have never shunned outside influences. I should consider that an act of cowardice, and bad faith towards myself. I believe that the struggles that an artist undergoes help him assert his personality." In the late 1890s he was painting landscapes very much in Impressionist terms, with, however, at one stage (sometimes called "proto-Fauve") greater audacity of colour contrast than the Impressionists had ever shown; in 1900, though he was then quite the reverse of rich, he bought Cézanne's *Three bathers* (not shown), and certain compositions on the same lines show Matisse thereafter grappling with problems of form as well as colour. A crucial lightening and kindling of colour seems then to have been sparked by a summer spent at St-Tropez with Signac.

Matisse painted "*Luxe, Calme et Volupté*" in 1904-05, applying the divisionist technique in almost doctrinaire fashion, producing a mosaic of short stabs of colour. The result is

somewhat stilted and inert, but it is nevertheless the point of departure for "*Le Luxe II*" (a shortened version of the first title, which was a phrase from Baudelaire) and for much of Matisse's future career. It states above all the theme of the female nude, but also the artist's mature quest for "an art of balance, of purity and of serenity devoid of troubling or disturbing subject matter ... like a comforting influence, a mental balm – something like a good armchair in which one rests from physical fatigue". Nothing, perhaps, could seem further from that ideal than the Fauve explosion of colour that came in 1905 (see preceding page), but in the great canvas "*La Joie de Vivre*", nearly two and a half metres (8ft) wide, which he finished in the following year, that aim is almost completely achieved. The divisionist technique has yielded to clear contour, curvaceous line – though there is little depth; the scenery seems composed of stage flats. Perspective is abandoned, and the figures and their scale are arbitrary, attenuated or distorted as the rhythms of the design may require. Technically, the picture owes much to Gauguin, and much also surely to the sinuous linearism of Art Nouveau. Its theme is Arcadian – such a vision as has haunted European fantasy since Titian's *Bacchanals* (see p. 145), a terrestrial paradise that not only Signac and Derain but also Renoir, Gauguin and Cézanne had glimpsed.

Then "*Le Luxe*" I and II come as the climax

of this development – the process of reduction and elimination of inessentials in the design, the distillation of Matisse's art to its characteristic flat colour and line. The theme is still *Bathers*: indeed the two major figures are adapted from two on the left edge of "*La Joie de Vivre*". In the study, "*Le Luxe I*", the brushwork is relatively loose, the colours broken, the contours tentative, and auras, or penumbras, around the figures, though diminished, are present here and there. In the final version, "*Le Luxe II*", the clarity of contour is final, the penumbras eliminated; the ragged edge of the cloud is now smooth. The line is comprehensive, incisive, incomparably economic. The colour is lucent.

Matisse did not share Vlaminck's urge to translate impression into instant expression. "I want to achieve that state of condensation of sensations which makes a picture ... a representation of my mind." The sentiment may suggest a close relationship between Matisse and the early Cubists, but the *Luxe* series and *The dance* of 1910 could be read almost as anti-Cubist manifestos. Although Matisse's painting subsequently went through a phase sometimes described as "constructivist" – a sharp disciplining of the lyrical curve of his line – his pure singing colour and his characteristic fluent arabesque line were to be reasserted in the 1920s and 1930s (see p. 432) and not least in the remarkable colour cut-papers he made in his 70s and 80s (see p. 476).

MATISSE (below)
"*Luxe, Calme et Volupté*",
1904-05
The title is a phrase from
Baudelaire's *Invitation to*

the Voyage: "There, all is
order, beauty, luxuriance,
calm and voluptuousness."
Cézanne's *Bathers* theme
is treated in Signac's style.



MATISSE (above)
"*La Joie de Vivre*", 1905-06
Here Matisse reached an
expression unmistakably his
own (greatly disappointing
his mentor Signac). His soft,

flat tints and strong curves
exhale a serene bliss; some
of the nudes retain from
"*Luxe, Calme et Volupté*"
their penumbras, on which
they recline pneumatically.

MATISSE (right)
The dance, 1910
Matisse detached the group
of dancers from "*La Joie
de Vivre*", transforming the
distant, relatively loose-
knit circle into a tighter
design, a fully independent
picture. The fast tempo of a
farandole performed at the
famous Moulin de la Galette
inspired him. The rhythmic
lines of the figures are even
bolder than those of "*Le
Luxe II*", a lithe pattern
in themselves – the rapid
development of Matisse's
flat colour and flowing
line reaches culmination.



MATISSE (above)
"*Le Luxe I*", 1907
Viewing the full-scale oil-
sketch for "*Luxe II*" the
critic Barr felt that, after
study, "the earlier picture
('Luxe I') grows on one
despite its faults or perhaps
because of them. The sense

of experiment and struggle
sets up a tension that holds
the interest by comparison
with the decorative grace
of the second version."
The light is unnatural, but
the colour more realistic
than in Fauve paintings,
the forms more modelled.



MATISSE (left)
"Le Luxe II", 1907-08
Matisse's teacher Moreau
is said to have remarked:
"Henri, you were born
to simplify painting."

Cubism I: Picasso and Braque

The achievement of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) reveals an astonishing stamina and inventiveness continuous through almost three quarters of the twentieth century. His fame has echoed beyond the confines of art and art history, placing him in a select category of genius – one of the names known throughout Western civilization, with Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Napoleon.

Son of a Spanish art teacher, Picasso trained in Barcelona, and established a precocious reputation in Paris between 1900 and 1906. In his prolific "Blue" and "Rose" periods (1901-04; 1904-06) he drew on the example of Toulouse-Lautrec, Art Nouveau and Symbolism to create strange, haunting, melancholic images of lonely figures from the ranks of the deprived or outcast. In 1906-07, however, he performed the first, and most radically violent, of those changes of course that characterize his career, in "*Les Femmes d'Alger*". Executed in 1907, it was not yet a fully resolved Cubist composition. Like Fauve painting (though Picasso never had a Fauve period), it rejects naturalistic colour, Renaissance perspective, consistent lighting – but it also rejects the sensuous pleasure of the

Fauves, and their flat, bright colours. There is certainly depth, the forms jut out from the picture; here and there it seems to incorporate views of the subject seen from different angles. The heads are treated in three different ways: the two central ones are closely related to two primitive Iberian sculptures that Picasso owned, while the head on the left (reworked) reflects the style of Ivory Coast tribal masks, and the two on the right, violently rehandled in the last phase of painting, relate to sculptures from the Congo. The realization of the power of African and Oceanic art had struck both Derain and Matisse in 1905-06; it was not, however, the expressive, emotional potential of "primitive" styles that was decisive for Picasso, so much as their freedom from illusionism, their lack of inhibition in amalgamating different views and aspects into one image.

Georges Braque (1882-1963) had been introduced to Picasso by the controversial champion of the avantgarde, the flamboyant poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire. Like everyone else, Braque was initially bewildered by the *Demoiselles*, but he felt compelled to come to terms with it. In his "*Grand Nu*" (Great Nude) of the following year, 1908, the



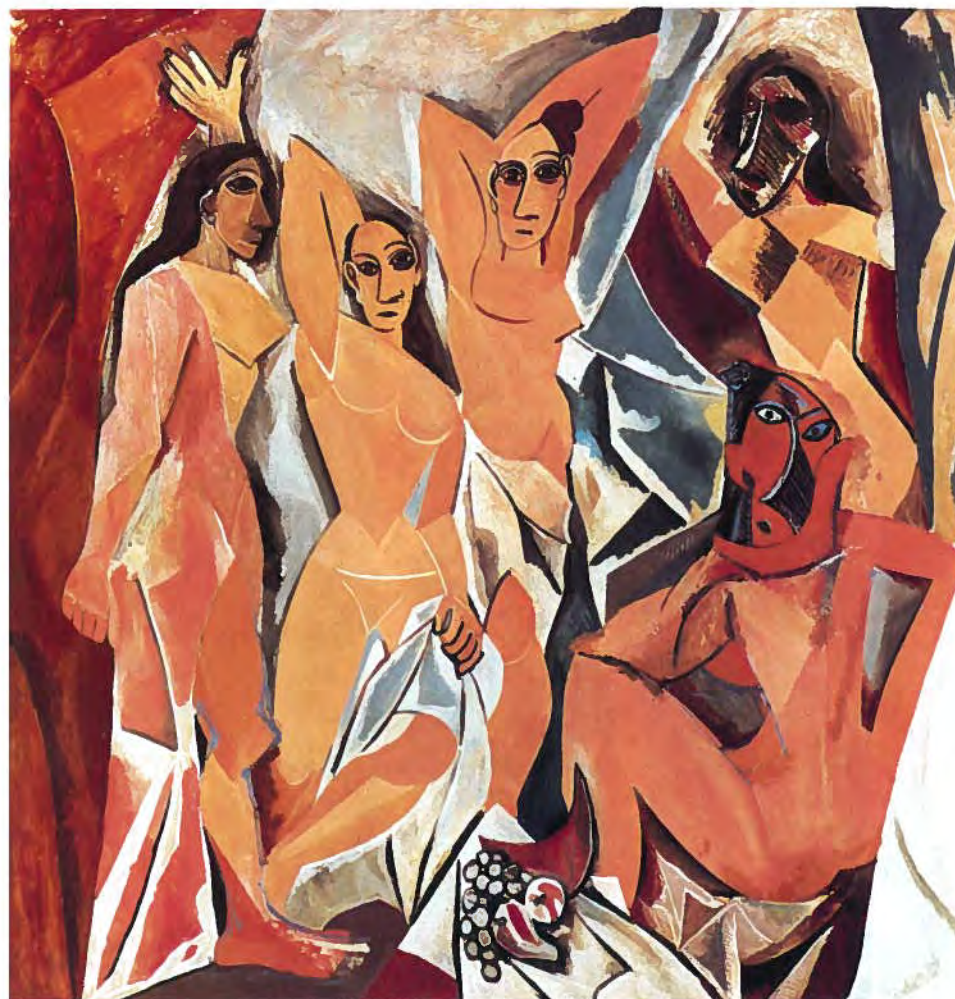
BRAQUE (above)
Houses at L'Estaque, 1908
In 1908 Braque discovered both Cézanne and Picasso. The volumes and the space

of a hilly countryside are evoked in firmly modelled, sombre, elemental blocks in a jigsaw of jutting forms composing an architecture.



PICASSO (left)
Life, 1903
The group is suffused with a vague timeless sadness, typical of Picasso in his Blue period. In this he was essentially Symbolist, like Puvis de Chavannes (see p. 370). The forms are classical: *Demoiselles* was a kind of auto-iconoclasm.

BRAQUE (below)
"*Grand Nu*" (Great nude), 1907-08
Braque's monumental nude is a variant on one of the *Demoiselles* figures, no less bold in distortion, more severely sculptural. Later Braque said that African masks had opened horizons for him, helped him towards fresh, instinctive creation.



PICASSO (above)
"*Les Femmes d'Alger*", 1907
Alger is a reference not to the French town but to a famous street in the red-light district of Barcelona. The painting

is more a record of work in progress, of an artist in the process of changing his mind, than a resolved composition: the forms are dislocated, inconsistent in style, in fact unfinished. It is still a disturbing

picture, and in 1907 more so – overthrowing perspective, single viewpoint, integral form, local colour, decorative colour; it was also a travesty of the great theme of nude *Bathers*, running from Cézanne to Matisse.

"primitive" distortion is very strong; both object and space are arbitrarily modelled. But more evident in the Braque is the Cubists' debt to Cézanne: especially momentous was his technique of modelling in terms of interlocking and overlapping planes, his subjects being sometimes not only arbitrarily lit, but seen from slightly different angles: his patchwork of blocks of translucent colour, deployed across the whole surface, produced an effect of depth and volume without destroying the flatness, the integrity of the painting.

Between 1908 and 1910, often working closely together, Braque and Picasso perfected a joint style. Their harmony at this time was such that the question of primacy, who discovered what first, is controversial, and perhaps otiose. It was Braque's *Landscapes of L'Estaque* that in 1908 provoked a critic to speak of "cubes"; the movement was subsequently called "Cubism".

Their early Cubist work, up to 1912, fell into two phases, subsequently known as "analytical" and "synthetic". In the analytic phase, 1909-10, the more solid massing of forms of their first Cubist paintings gave way to a technique in which the contours of form were

dissolved, so that one form opened and fused with another, and with the void of space surrounding it. The elements of form were taken apart and reorganized, not to sum up the essence of the subject comprehensively but rather to re-create it as a picture. The notion of a painting as a *peinture-objet*, an object in its own right independent of its subject matter, was abroad by 1910. Yet Cubism was claimed as a realist art, and its connection with its subject matter was never wholly lost, though it became tenuous. Picasso's "portrait" of Vollard of 1909-10 (see p. 374) is informed by a strong personal presence, and was greeted, it is said, with warm recognition by Vollard's dog; in that of Kahnweiler, however, late 1910, the sitter's individuality is scarcely hinted at. In Braque's and Picasso's still lifes of 1910-11 and early 1912 (known as their "hermetic" or esoteric period, when they reached their furthest point of abstraction) the subject matter appears to be incidental to the perfectly articulated structure of fragmented planes.

"Synthetic" Cubism was in part a reaction against the abstract tendency of the analytical phase. In 1911 both artists had included in their compositions stencilled capital letters,

fragments of words (often puns, sometimes obscene – Picasso's humour could never remain repressed for long). When early in 1912 Picasso created his *Still life with chair-caning*, using extraneous objects stuck to the picture surface – the first collage-painting – he introduced reality literally and physically, reaffirming in the midst of abstraction ties with everyday ephemera. Picasso's collages were a development of Braque's experiments in the same year with *papiers collés*, pasted cut-papers which acted both as formal elements of the composition and representationally, yet at the same remained obdurately just objects. Once the synthetic principle – building up, putting together, rather than breaking down, rearranging – had been formulated, the conceptual nature of both artists' work became ever more marked.

In autumn 1912 Picasso moved to Montparnasse, where he was no longer a neighbour of Braque. Braque's subsequent career, interrupted by active service in World War I, was more one of refinement than of innovation (see pp. 426, 476), while Picasso, a neutral Spaniard, continued throughout the War and after to widen his scope (see pp. 426, 450, 476).

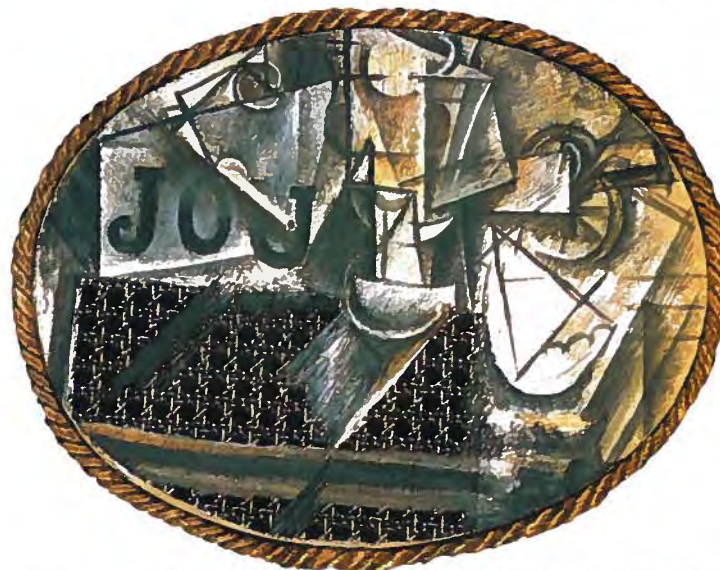
PICASSO (below)
Daniel Henry Kahnweiler,
1910
Kahnweiler was Braque's
and Picasso's dealer, one of
the Cubists' first patrons.
He sat for his portrait
more than 20 times, but it
remains ghostly, veiled by
the fragmented planes of
the pictorial structure.

Expression of personality
is not the artist's goal,
it is rather that complex
reconstruction of forms
symptomatic of analytical
Cubism in its last stage.
Yet Picasso implanted in
it recognizable details, the
hands, button and watch-
chain of the waistcoat, as
if to help out the spectator.



BRAQUE (above)
Still life with fish,
c. 1909-10
Even in the most austere
phase of analytical Cubism
Braque never quite lost his
elegance and lustrous col-
our. In his *Kahnweiler* (left)
Picasso tantalized the eye

with the play of plane and
counter-plane in what must
be a solid face; Braque's
slightly earlier picture
vibrates in scintillating
blocks across the surface.
It is more spacious, and the
process of abstraction is
less opaque, less riddling.



BRAQUE (above)
The man with a pipe, 1912
Braque and Picasso had
developed Cubist painting
together, almost neck and
neck, using each other's
inventions to extend the
scope of their art with
astounding rapidity. The
Cubist use of *papier collé*
is attributed to Braque,
and *The man with a pipe*
is a very early example.
The extension of the idea
to an art all of collage was
an invention of Picasso.
Braque was a craftsman's
son, quick to fasten on to
new devices which Picasso
used more imaginatively: so,
Braque taught Picasso to
use a comb on wet brown
paint to produce the effect
of wood-graining; Picasso
promptly exploited it to
represent a woman's hair.

PICASSO (right)
*Still life with chair-
caning*, 1911-12
A scrap of mechanically
printed oilcloth with a
pattern of caning is stuck
to the picture, mocking the
reign of illusionism over
centuries of Western art.
Collage almost embodies
the principle of synthetic
Cubism – the construction

of a picture with materials
that are, once arranged, the
subject of the painting. It
was in 1911 that Braque
had first used lettering in
his pictures to this end,
and Picasso soon joined in.
The rope that replaces the
conventional gold frame is
a further touch, asserting
literally self-containment –
it is, it does not represent.

Cubism 2, and Orphism

Picasso and Braque (see preceding page) stood aloof from the usual means of making their work known – the various annual exhibitions in Paris – but their ideas and practice were on display at the gallery of their exclusive dealer, Kahnweiler, and soon attracted attention. Cubist works by enthusiastic followers began to appear just as Picasso and Braque were moving from analytical to synthetic Cubism – first at the Salon d'Automne in 1910, then in the Cubists' own room at the Salon des Indépendants in 1911, whence they were invited to Brussels in the same year. Events were known in Germany and Italy almost as soon as they unfolded in Paris. Picasso and Braque were included by Roger Fry in his second Post-Impressionist exhibition in London in 1912, inducing rage and fury; the epoch-making Armory Show exhibited Cubism to a startled New York in 1913. In 1912 the painters Gleizes and Metzinger published *Cubism*, which ran through 15 editions before the end of the year; Apollinaire in 1913 produced *The Cubist Painters*; A. J. Eddy's *Cubism and Post-Impressionism* appeared in America in 1914. Picasso had made Cubist sculpture as early as 1909, and others soon followed (see p. 426).

GRIS (below)
Homage to Picasso, 1911-12
When he applied analytical
Cubism to its perpetrator,



Gris achieved a sober, cool architecture distinct from Picasso's (whose neighbour he had been since 1907).

Juan Gris (1887-1927) had observed his fellow-Spaniard Picasso's early Cubist ventures very closely, and had also made his own independent study of Cézanne. Having begun to paint seriously only in 1911, he made a sensational début at the Salon des Indépendants of 1912 with *Homage to Picasso* – a methodical rearrangement of Picasso's person executed with great assurance. Developing with remarkable speed, by the end of the year he had established a distinctive style: while Braque and Picasso had seemed to move around their subject, to take views from different angles, and then as it were to reshuffle them into pictorial coherence, Gris set each facet of his model – each seen from a single, relatively consistent viewpoint – in a compartmented framework, rather like the leading of a stained-glass window. He eagerly adopted the new techniques of synthetic Cubism, collage and *papier collé*, but unlike Picasso and Braque did not tone down his colour. He soon increasingly abstracted form to fit his compositional needs, a method he described succinctly: "I begin by organizing my picture: then I define the object." "It is not picture X which manages to correspond with my subject

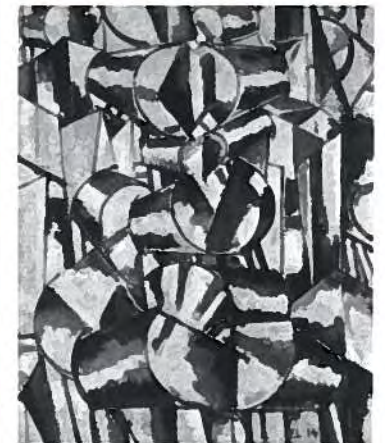


GRIS (above)
The wash-stand, 1912
Gris' synthetic Cubist still lifes were constructed with draughtsman-like skill and intellectual precision; he disposed his forms in mathematical relationships set up by a dissecting grid. Under the curtain, a mirror represents the mirror: it is a mirror, and reflects as one – rather a witty collage.

GRIS (right)
Landscape at Ceret, 1913
Gris often worked beside Picasso, Braque and Derain in southern France. The landscapes of Braque were solidly modelled, subdued in colour; Gris responded with rich, high-keyed colour harmonies, accentuating the flatness as if the picture were made of loose parts from a broken kaleidoscope.



LEGER (right)
Nudes in the forest, 1909-10
This is an ambitious canvas on a monumental scale, and the choice of subject – three woodcutters at work like machines – introduced a Courbet-like Realism to the Cubist repertoire, reflecting Léger's belief in "the people". Further, in astonishing contrast to the static compositions of Picasso and Braque, the figures, the hills and the trees seem to thrum with a vigorous sense of action. Muted greys and greens reflect a dappled forest.



LEGER (above)
Contrasting forms, 1913
Roughly painted highlights on Léger's characteristic cylinders flatten the plane, disrupted by split solids interpenetrating; angular shapes counterpoint round ones. The pyramidal organization assists the sense of monumentality; the movement may reflect the impact of the Futurists.

but subject X which manages to correspond to my picture." Deeply interested in the geometry of proportions and the mathematics of formal relationships, he was a leading contributor to the first exhibition of the Section d'Or (Golden Section) in 1912.

The Section d'Or artists were committed to Cubism but aware of its limitations: they wanted to reinstate colour and movement, and to expand its range of subject matter. They arrived at a resolved pictorial structure not by a reduction of the objects represented but by the application of the laws of musical harmony, of ratio and proportion. Amongst their members were the future exponents of Dada, Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp, and Fernand Léger. Fernand Léger (1881-1955) remained a Cubist throughout his career, but from the outset his aims went beyond those of Picasso and Braque: he wanted his work to reflect, to appeal to and to enhance the lives of ordinary people, so his subject matter was more important to him, and more emotive. His training as an architectural draughtsman gave his designs a clarity and precision of outline which emerged as an essential characteristic of his style, consolidated during and after World

War I (see p. 426). His earliest exhibition work in the Cubist idiom was *Nudes in the forest* of 1909-10: the forms are chunky, contained by their outlines and not opening into one another, and there is more than a hint of traditional perspective; in marked contrast to Braque and Picasso, there is a strong sense of movement, almost of clash and tumult. Already the form that obsessed Léger all his life, the cylinder (which earned him the title "tubist"), is dominant. He was then influenced, in the Section d'Or, to experiment with pure or nearly pure abstraction, notably in his series *Contrasting Forms*, 1913-14.

Robert Delaunay (1885-1941) moved quickly towards a completely abstract art, and one primarily concerned with colour. His *Eiffel Tower* series of 1910 demonstrates his grasp of Cubist fragmentation but also his feeling for the rhythms and contrasts of colour – his prime concern during the most important part of his career, the few years before World War I. His initiative was christened "Orphism" by Apollinaire, who found in it "pure" painting, a close analogy to music. By 1912 Delaunay was experimenting with colour wheels on circular canvases, as in his series of *Circular Forms* –

the first completely non-figurative paintings by a French artist. Colours were to act on each other reciprocally "in simultaneous contrasts", creating form and movement in space: "Colour is form and subject; it is the sole theme that develops, transforms itself apart from all analysis, psychological or otherwise. Colour is a function of itself." Delaunay's wife Sonia Terk and Frank Kupka (1871-1957) also turned very early to abstraction, Kupka applying colour theory and musical harmonies to his own "mystical" Orphism.

Although by 1914 Delaunay's painting had almost nothing in common with Cubism, Cubism proved a liberation for him, and for numbers of major artists who rapidly worked through their own understanding of it and advanced beyond it. Having observed Cubism in Paris, by 1914 Mondrian (see p. 436), back in Holland, was developing his own austere abstraction, and Orphism strongly attracted notably some artists of Der Blaue Reiter (see p. 384). The Futurists soon discovered (see over) that Cubism could serve their purposes. Though for some years to come Cubism remained controversial with the general public, it was already a fact of life.

DELAUNAY (right)
The Eiffel Tower, 1910
Delaunay sought a novel expression – of sensation, of the movement of light and the rhythm of structure, not as fixed at one moment or seen from one aspect, but as sensed "universally". The dynamism of the Tower is conveyed in crumbling, buckling, lurching forms.



DELAUNAY (below)
A window, 1912
The starting-point was an open window in sunlight through which reflections of the city (Delaunay was fascinated by the city) are seen. Thence he developed a series of virtually non-figurative paintings, with almost transparent planes of light in prismatic colours making crystalline patterns.



DELAUNAY (right)
Circular forms: sun and moon, 1912-13
Delaunay had created his first pure non-figurative painting by 1912, having arrived by a path utterly different from Kandinsky's (see p. 602). The Russian had insisted that abstract art must be founded on a "proper contact with the human soul"; Delaunay was more intellectual than intuitive, and demanded a self-sufficient abstraction: "So long as art does not free itself from the object, it remains descriptive ... degrading itself by using defective means." There was nothing mystical in Delaunay's art, which was an "absolute" investigation of the movement of colour in harmony and dissonance.



KUPKA (left)
The disks of Newton: study for a fugue in two colours, 1911-12
The interaction of colours was the theme of several series by Kupka. Here he sought to demonstrate that rotating wheels of colour, static disks energized by contrasting colours, create an effect of radiant white light. His experiments were intended to create "something between sight and hearing". Like Delaunay's, Kupka's interest in energy is a parallel to Futurism.



Futurism

The emergence of Futurism, the most aggressive, the most politically conscious and (Dada apart) the noisiest of the important early movements of twentieth-century art, was signalled by the publication in February 1909 of Marinetti's call to action, *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), poet and playwright, was aligned politically with Gabriele d'Annunzio and later (until 1919) with Mussolini in the attempt to consolidate the recently federated component states of Italy into a modern, glamorous, vigorously nationalistic unity. He was the instigator, the theoretician and the voice of the "art of the future", rejecting all art of the past ("*le Passéisme*") for a new art that would celebrate technology and scientific advance, psychoanalysis and all things modern. A more or less simultaneous supporting manifesto was signed by five artists, Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), Carlo Carrà (1881-1966), Luigi Russolo (1885-1947), Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) and Gino Severini (1883-1966). Their underlying philosophy was greatly influenced by Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, in which the importance of continual forward-looking development,

conditioned by universal dynamism and flux, was stressed. Successive manifestos claimed that dynamism and flux, in colour and in form, should power the new art.

Italian painting at the turn of the century had been generally conservative; there was no avantgarde, and little awareness of avantgarde developments in Paris. Two painters, Giovanni Boldini and Antonio Mancini, both had international reputations – Boldini as an almost fatuously skilful master of society portraiture, in what Sickert called his "wriggle-and-chiffon" style; Mancini for a blurred, atmospheric version of Impressionism – but the only truly major talent to emerge in Italy had been the sculptor Medardo Rosso (see p. 355). Rosso's mirroring of the fleeting moment of time and of form coming into being had some relevance for the Futurists. It was, however, an integral part of the Futurists' purpose to remedy what they felt to be a national shortcoming, and to create an art worthy of Italy – of the new Italy, not that of its artistic past; their movement was unusual in that its artistic practice was preceded by theoretical exposition – those manifestos, verbose, declamatory, arrogant and provocative,

which set the pattern for so many later variants in twentieth-century art. Marinetti's first famous broadside, however, had real panache: "We shall sing the love of danger, the habit of energy, boldness . . . a new beauty – the beauty of speed . . . a roaring automobile, which seems to run like a machine gun, is more beautiful than 'The Victory of Samothrace'."

The problem of matching the programme with works of art worthy of it was not so easy. Futurist works were first exhibited in Milan in 1911, but it was recognized that Paris, the international focal point, must be attacked, if the movement were to be established. The first Futurist exhibition was staged in Paris in February 1912. Accompanied by a vigorous public relations campaign, it attracted great attention, but also considerable derision, although Apollinaire reviewed the exhibition with respect. The show then circulated in London, Berlin, Brussels, Amsterdam, Munich and elsewhere: everywhere it aroused interest spiced with alarm, but Futurism certainly became known, its works were sold, and its influence was felt wherever it was seen.

Futurist techniques owed much initially to Neo-Impressionist practice – breaking down

BALLA (right)
The street lamp, 1909
Balla's chief interests remained limited to the representation of light and movement, provoking rebuke from colleagues who felt that Futurism should champion radical, universal issues in a changing world.



BOCCIONI (below)
The city rises, 1910-11
The tempestuously surging waves, 3m (10ft) across, had sensational impact when launched in exhibition. The implicit radical politics were also likely to shock. Boccioni, like Balla, took up Divisionism at the turn of the century, informed by French example, pursuing the characteristic Divisionist effects of luminosity and scintillation. But these paintings were static, and Boccioni's Futurist ideals demanded movement. The Divisionist dots now became blurred with high speed.

BOCCIONI (below)
Farewells, 1911
The emotions of parting are Boccioni's theme: this is the centre of his triptych



States of mind, in which he hoped to force "colours and form to express themselves", that is, the energy latent within them. Cubist

devices appear amid "force lines", in an abstraction of a steam locomotive leaving. Delaunay (see preceding page) was a main influence.



BALLA (right)
Dynamism of a dog on a leash, 1912
The comic quality of the little dog survives the seriousness of the intent, the quasi-scientific study of motion, captured with Balla's usual delicacy. His superimposition of successive movements owed much to chrono-photography – studies by Muybridge (see p. 375) and others of the running horse or the moving human body, in "stills" taken in quick succession. Duchamp was later to apply the same principle in his *Nude descending a staircase* (see p. 416), though he claimed to have arrived at that image before he knew Futurism.



the colours into small fragmentary patches. Divisionism seemed the best means of reproducing the effect of light kindling and moving in colour, of form dissolving into flux, into speed. The treatment was applied to urban and political subject matter: one of the earliest fully Futurist paintings was Balla's dazzling *Street lamp*, 1909; here, however, movement and direction are indicated and defined by lines, "lines of force". The first Futurist attempts to convey the impression of velocity were sometimes somewhat naive – the indication, for example, of movement in a limb by showing it in different positions. The best-known example is Balla's delightful *Dynamism of a dog on a leash*, 1912; the same device was put to more serious, sharply dramatic use in Carrà's *Funeral of the anarchist Galli*, 1910-11.

Most satisfying, in terms of formal resolution, was the Futurist work produced by Boccioni. His huge *The city rises* of 1910-11 is impressive, but the violence of the divisionistic foreground, in tumult, does not marry happily with the naturalistic surge of the new city behind it; Boccioni in fact found his best form only when, in Paris in 1912, he carefully studied Cubist techniques. That these were



BOCCIONI (above)
Unique forms of continuity in space, 1913
The complex forms of the bronze figure arose from Boccioni's investigation into the phenomenology of moving muscles. Hence his image of strength and speed, a "force form, the equivalent of the expansive power of the body".

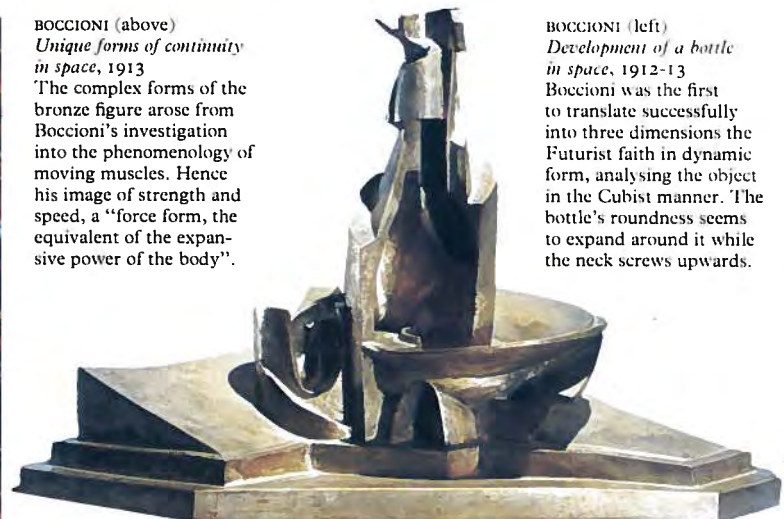
known to some of the group earlier is clear from such paintings as Carrà's *Funeral*, and Severini had been living in Paris since 1906, returning to Milan in 1911. It was Boccioni, however, who grasped how aptly the Cubist technique of interpenetrating planes, of one form opening into and fusing into another, could be applied to the very different aims of Futurist movement, so as to create an effect of simultaneity. Yet surely the most original of Boccioni's subsequent achievements came in the form of sculpture, in which he claimed to have realized "not pure form, but *pure plastic rhythm*: not the construction of the body, but the construction of the *action* of the body". He was indeed so successful in his aim that his striding *Unique forms in continuity* was compared favourably by later critics with the Hellenistic "*Victory of Samothrace*" (see 250) explicitly derided by Marinetti.

Boccioni died as a result of an accident in 1916. The vital spark of Futurism did not survive World War I, although adherents kept its name alive until about 1930, working in stylized, diluted and mannered versions of its original form. Its impact, however, had been considerable, not least on Dada.



CARRÀ (above)
The funeral of the anarchist Galli, 1910-11

The desired effect, shock, was achieved by depicting the subject, the riot which broke out at the funeral, in violent, glaring colours and savage, stabbing forms.



BOCCIONI (left)
Development of a bottle in space, 1912-13
Boccioni was the first to translate successfully into three dimensions the Futurist faith in dynamic form, analysing the object in the Cubist manner. The bottle's roundness seems to expand around it while the neck screws upwards.



SEVERINI (left)
Pam-Pam at the Monaco, 1910-12
Severini's *Pam-Pam* was a hit at the 1912 Futurist exhibition in Paris – the gaiety of a dancing crowd caught by Futurist means.



RUSSOLO (above)
The revolt, 1911-12
Russolo himself saw this work as the "collision of two forces, the force of the revolutionary element made up of enthusiasm and Red lyricism against the force

of inertia and reactionary resistance". Russolo was a keen political activist, the most literal exponent of Futurist thought, fond of grandiose, often absurd gestures expressed in bold colour and brave new form.

Dada

The orgy of destruction that convulsed the Western world between 1914 and 1918 checked the progressive spirit that had animated the arts in the years just before. Activity was not stifled (two global wars proved unable to quell Picasso's genius), but the most significant movement took the form of a revolt against the culture and the corrupt, complacent values (many felt) that had encouraged the suicidal massacre of trench warfare. "Modern civilization" was itself to be destroyed, and the instrument to be used was not art but "anti-art" or "non-art"; there was no thought of development or replacement, even if "non-art" proved in fact to hold the seeds of just that, a new art, a new development.

The intense frustration engendered by the War erupted simultaneously in widely separated centres. Its protagonists were mostly very young, in their early twenties, and most had "opted out", avoiding conscription in the shelter of neutral cities such as New York, Zurich and Barcelona. By 1918, however, even before the Armistice, the movement was igniting in blockaded, hungry Berlin, and by the following year the groups were linked by an exchange of visits between the leading figures

and a spectacular barrage of publications – periodicals, revues, manifestos – rather than by exhibitions. The title by which the movement came to be known was "Dada".

Some of the iconoclastic activities of Marcel Duchamp (see over) in New York in 1914-15, and not least his "ready-mades", were precociously Dadaist in spirit, but the movement first started into life as such in Zurich, when Hugo Ball (1886-1927) founded the Cabaret Voltaire there in 1916. With him were associated some who would become famous names in art between the Wars – notably Jean or Hans Arp (1887-1966). The most demonic activist, however, was the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963). All forms of expression were conscripted to serve in the protest – cabaret performances; meetings designed to provoke controversy and even (sometimes successfully) riot; events that had much in common with those to be dubbed in the 1960s "Happenings". The name itself is a nonsense word; accounts of its origin are contradictory, but it is a word common in many languages, and universal in baby-talk the world over. According to Breton, "Dada is a state of mind". According to Arp, "Dada is, like

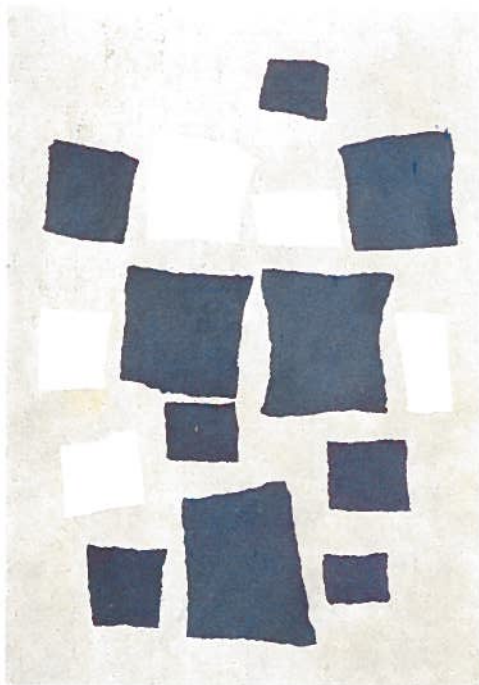
Nature, without meaning. Dada is for Nature and against Art... Dada stands for unlimited meaning and limited means. *For Dadaists life is the meaning of art.*" Dada's first manifesto, by Tzara, 1918, offered no programme, no apology, no explanation. As a revolt the movement involved a complex irony, being dedicated to the destruction of a society of which it was nevertheless a part, and, almost by definition, there was also dissension in the attitudes of the Dadaists. Henchman to Tzara in Zurich was the volatile Francis Picabia (1879-1953) – Picabia, having participated in Cubism, had already been inciting artistic revolution with Duchamp and Man Ray (1890-1977) in New York and in 1916 in Barcelona. Together in Zurich Tzara and Picabia preached an increasingly subversive view of art and a nihilistic vision of life itself. Ball left for Berne; the German Richard Huelsenbeck (1892-1974), a founding member, had left for Berlin in 1917; when Tzara followed Picabia to Paris in 1920 the Zurich phase of Dada was over.

In Germany, the prime centres were Berlin, Cologne and Hanover. The Berlin version, triggered by Huelsenbeck, was satirical and actively political, its targets more narrowly

ARP (below)
Collages of squares arranged according to the laws of chance, 1916-17

Arp declared that the law of chance could be experienced only by means of a "complete devotion to the Unconscious"; further, that "anyone who followed this law was creating pure

life". His acknowledgment both of an innate creative drive and of a standard of aesthetic beauty sets Arp slightly apart from those Dadaists who were chiefly concerned with chance as an anarchic means of subverting established art; but it led directly into the realms of Surrealism.



PICABIA (right)
I see again in memory my dear Udité, 1914

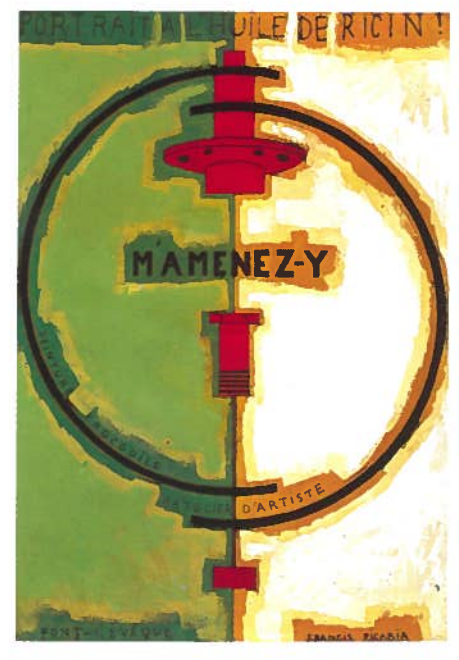
By 1910, soon after he had met Duchamp, Picabia applied his gift for colour to delicate experiments with abstract forms, with a decidedly Cubist bias. In New York in 1913, he developed, in response to

its technological marvels, his "machinist" style; here, mechanical and suggestive biomorphic forms combine in a dynamic composition. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia once said: "His activity was utterly gratuitous and spontaneous... it never had any programme, method or articles of faith."



MAN RAY (left)
The rope-dancer accompanies herself with her shadows, 1916
Though it is painted in oils, the picture owes a patent debt to collage. Solid blocks of shadow contrast with the delicate star of the dancer and the sinuous line of her rope.

PICABIA (below)
"Al'Amenez-y" ('Take me there'), 1919-20
Nonsensical references in capital letters to pots of castor-oil and crocodile's dentures make up Picabia's provocative, iconoclastic composition; it presages his ultimate outrage, a blot of ink of 1920 that he chose to title *The Blessed Virgin*.



and precisely defined than elsewhere. Its armament was a number of magazines – *Club Dada*, *Der Dada* – produced between 1918 and 1920 by Huelsenbeck, in company with one Johannes Baader; Raoul Hausmann (1886–1971) became the editor of *Der Dada*. These periodicals deployed a raucous use of exploded and explosive typography and photomontage. The Cologne version, 1919–20, was by contrast biased towards aesthetics even if only in the sense of being anti-aesthetics. It included two major artists – Arp (see further p. 429) and Max Ernst (see p. 420). Ernst, with John Heartfield (see p. 442), exploited satirical collage techniques using popular printed material, in free play with the grotesque and the weirdly erotic, often foreshadowing Paris Surrealism; the Paris connection was confirmed when Ernst moved there in 1922.

In Hanover, Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) invented *Merz*. Rejected by Berlin Dada as being too bourgeois, he was nevertheless, of all of them, perhaps the most enduringly committed to Dada principles, stubbornly individualistic, anarchistic and fantastic. *Merz* (a nonsense name from a torn scrap of print with the word *kommerziell*, meaning “commer-



HAUSMANN (above)
The art critic, 1920
Hausmann's photomontage

is typical of Dada weaponry – satiric invention, boast, scorn, ridicule, abuse.



SCHWITTERS (above)
“Arbeiterbild” (Worker-picture), 1919
The word *Arbeiter*, printed in red on a scrap of paper, gives the collage a name but not a message or purpose – rather, its socialist references are ignored. Stripped of associations, it becomes merely part of a harmony of colours and textures.

SCHWITTERS (right)
Amble-side, 1945–48
Dada tended to underline the original functions of *objets trouvés* in order to make their appearance in other contexts all the more absurd. Schwitters' deeper concern with abstraction led him to use materials in a way that freed them from their mundane identities.

cial”) was the title of a magazine (1923–32), and was applied to his art, which he practised in Germany, in Norway, where he took refuge from the Nazi regime in 1937, and from 1940 in England. He never adopted the extreme “anti-art” stance, but he used the detritus of urban life – bus tickets, torn newspaper, cartoons, broken bits of wood or metal – in collages or relief montages, transforming his base materials into exquisitely balanced and unified compositions. He was obsessed by the ideal of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an art that included all forms of art. His first *Merzbau* (including a chamber named “The Cathedral of Erotic Misery”) was an endless construction of bits and pieces that wandered horizontally through the rooms of his house, vertically up through its floors and even out of the windows. This *Merzbau* in Hanover was destroyed by bombs in 1943; another in Norway was burnt in 1951; something of an English version was salvaged by the University of Newcastle.

Paris, though not until 1920, witnessed the climax of Dada, which began with a performance supporting an exhibition and ended in riot. But soon its impetus was sapped, and by 1924 it was ripe for take-over by Surrealism.

BAADER (below)
Collage A 92-22, c. 1920
Baader (Dada name, Ober-Dada) took eccentricity to

its limit; he caused uproar in Berlin Cathedral by shouting at worshippers “Christ is a sausage!”



Marcel Duchamp



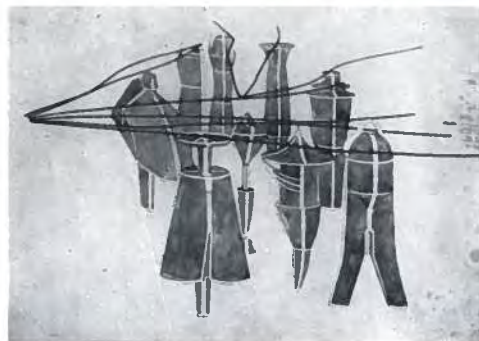
Marcel Duchamp

Duchamp's art was always intellectual, not emotional, as if it were a chess game of ideas. It was continuous: he reworked, reinterpreted or developed his early, famous works later in life (in 1965, for instance, he exhibited a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* with the title *Shaved*). It led nowhere, if only in the sense that every gambit implied a counter-gambit; one consistent trend in his later response was that the nature of the art is dependent on its spectator.

DUCHAMP (right)

Nude descending a staircase no. 2, 1912

Duchamp's approach to the abstraction of form was not so analytical or committed as that of the members of Section d'Or, which may explain their disapproval of the painting. But it was no more favourably greeted in the USA. Duchamp's prime inspiration was the mechanics of movement, as the three sets of dotted lines indicate, showing the rotation of the hips as the body moves through space.



DUCHAMP (left)
A cemetery of uniforms and liveries - the bachelors, 1914

A study for part of the lower half of "*The Large Glass*" shows male sexuality in terms of implements like pistons or syringes. Duchamp called the group "the matrix of Eros".

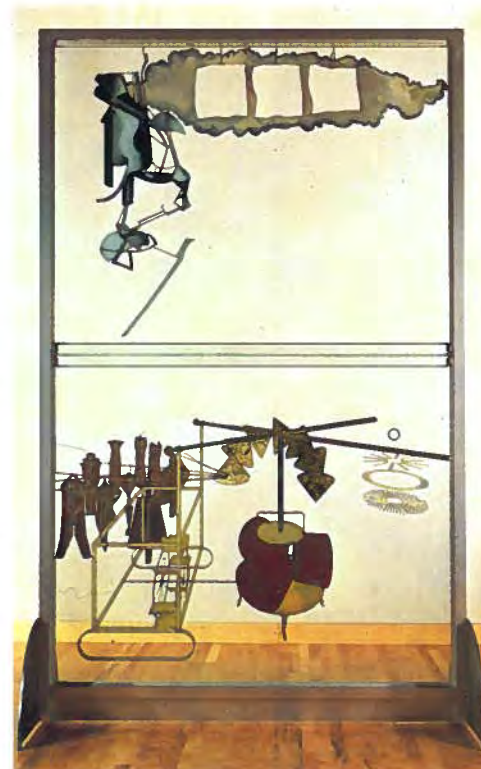
Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) was the dandiacal cat who walked by himself through the highways and byways of modern art from his first important exhibition in 1912 till his death more than half a century later. Wherever he walked, controversy sprung up in his wake, and since his death his historical importance has become increasingly clear. Two of his brothers also made significant contributions: Raymond Duchamp-Villon was one of the most important sculptors associated with the Cubist movement (see p. 426), his career cut short by premature death, while Jacques Villon (1875-1963; not shown) had a long, very professional career, especially as a printmaker.

Marcel Duchamp became a member of the Cubist Section d'Or group in Paris (see p. 398) in 1912. His early experiments reached their climax in his *Nude descending a staircase*, 1911-12, one of the most famous of all twentieth-century works of art. In it he was clearly aware of Cubist techniques of dismantling an object into its constituent planes, then reshuffling them, and perhaps also of Futurist dynamism (though he denied that); he was certainly also aware of novel photographic techniques which showed the body in pro-

gressive stages of a movement, and his *Nude* does just that, but the stages are consolidated into an image of arresting originality. Sensing trouble, Duchamp withdrew it from the Salon des Indépendants exhibition; the following year, in the Armory Show in New York, it aroused clamorous controversy. By then, he was already preparing for his masterpiece, *The bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even*, known as "*The Large Glass*" (still incomplete in 1923, though he then signed it). Work on it began in 1915, in New York, where much of his subsequent activity took place – an activity not so much as an artist but as an iconoclast, an anti-artist and a conceptualist. "I wanted to get away from the physical aspect of painting. I was much more interested in re-creating ideas in painting. For me the title was very important . . . I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind." His early work had been influenced by Cézanne, by the Fauves; then into the Cubist world he reintroduced the human figure as prime subject, still disintegrating it, but in "*The Large Glass*" presenting it in terms of a pseudo-scientific diagram, in which nonsense mechanisms are activated by human desires.

AFTER DUCHAMP (right)

Fountain, original 1917
In submitting a urinal for exhibition Duchamp was in effect undermining the assumption, held even by the avantgarde, that a work of art requires an artist. Although the Society of Independent Artists might pride itself on its freedom from bourgeois taste or convention, this *Fountain*, authorless and blatantly vulgar, forced it into just such bourgeois attitudes of outrage as it would condemn in others.



AFTER DUCHAMP (left)
The bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even ("*The Large Glass*"), original 1915-23

Duchamp's non-picture (it is not an easel-painting, anyway, being on glass) needs an elaborate verbal commentary; even then it defies critical assessment. It is perhaps the first example of Conceptual art, being as much a scheme or a plan as an art object. Essentially it represents the two forces that will also figure in the later "*Étant Donnés*" – male (in the lower panel), female (in the upper). Desire for sexual union is translated into an automatic process, divested of all sentiment but seemingly still prone to chance. This reconstruction was made in 1965-66 by the Pop artist Richard Hamilton.

His first published statement (1915) was entitled *A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions*, by Marcel Duchamp, Iconoclast, and he never ceased to question conventional responses and expectations regarding art. The invention of the "ready-made" principle was also of 1914-15: he claimed the right for anyone to choose virtually any object whatsoever, and by choosing it, and in some cases signing it, to establish it as a work of art. Early specimens were a bottle-rack, a snow shovel and a ventilator; the most notorious the urinal signed *R. Mutt*. The latter, offered for the exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists as *Fountain* in 1917, was rejected. Duchamp resigned. At this period, he was closely associated in New York with Picabia and Man Ray, and promoted two Dadaist revues, *The Blind Man* and *Rong Wrong*. He was indeed the *guru* of the New York Dada movement, and probably the only Dada artist to sustain its anarchic values and contradictions with uninhibited zest during a long career right to the end.

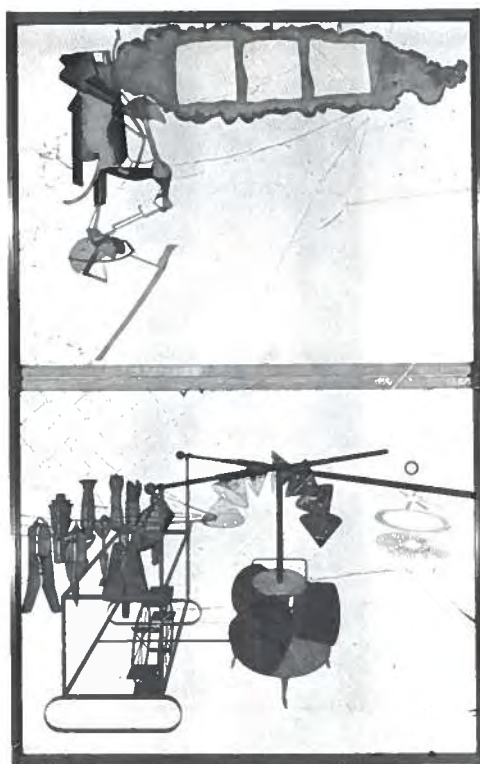
In 1918, he virtually gave up painting, and devoted himself to chess. He created another of the most mesmerizing images of twentieth-century art, simply by endowing a repro-

duction of the *Mona Lisa* with a moustache and goatee and subscribing it with an obscene French pun, *L.H.O.O.Q.* (She's hot in the tail). This was another shot against received attitudes to art; it violated the most famous of all masterpieces, contradicted the idea of the sanctity of art and of the value of the unique art object; it swore against good taste – or any taste. "I have forced myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste." But he also might deny that he was "anti-art": "Whether you are 'anti' or 'for' it's two sides of the same thing."

His work, or his not-work, his life-style, foreshadowed many aspects of mid- and late twentieth-century art. An arch-Dadaist, he became a prophet for the neo-Dadaist elements especially of Pop art. He was a star for the Surrealists. His experiments with "mobiles" – first with a bicycle wheel revolving on a stool – anticipated kinetic art (see p. 428). His exploitation of chance was shared by others but he anticipated the Abstract Expressionists, when "*The Large Glass*" was broken accidentally in 1937, by rejoicing, and incorporating the breaks with loving care in the reassembled work. Perhaps above all he prefigured the

Conceptual trend of the 1960s and 1970s. He expected audience participation, believing "it is the SPECTATORS who make the pictures". He lived on paradox; he was cultivated, intensely sensitive and gifted, devoting much time to chess and to calculating the risks of roulette. He refused to live from his art, though towards the end of his life he agreed to allow limited editions of facsimiles of his *Fountain*, doubtless thereby debunking the prestige as a unique art object that the original had acquired since he signed it 50 years before.

Not the least of his baffling and endlessly fascinating innovations was the injection of relentless irony into serious art, the questioning of all accepted values; he took advantage of any fortuitous offering that took his fancy, descending or soaring into coarse buffoonery. Yet in 1961 he stated: "I'm nothing else but an artist . . . I couldn't be very much more iconoclastic any more." After his death, it was revealed that his masterly inactivity of the previous quarter-century had in fact been diverted on and off with the creation of a final masterpiece, a large tableau, "*Etant Donnés*" (Given that . . .), featuring a life-size peep-show of a nude through a door.



DUCHAMP (above)
"*The Large Glass*" (broken state), 1937

In Duchamp's meticulous reassembly of his broken original there was perhaps an urge to rule chance. Systematically paradoxical, paradoxically systematic, he had tried in the 1920s to find a way of always winning at roulette; here he played chance at art.

DUCHAMP (right)
L.H.O.O.Q., 1918
Duchamp's annotated postcard of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* was first of all one more "ready-made", even if it has also been seen as the quintessential Dada work of art, being at the same time quite puerile and profoundly anarchic. The joke still runs – variations on it keep appearing.

AFTER DUCHAMP (right)
"Ready-made", original 1913
The wooden stool with a bicycle wheel was the first of the "ready-mades", mass-produced, mundane objects taken out of context and presented to the viewer as art. The adjustment in the viewer's mind was of more significance than the form, to which Duchamp attached no importance, although these works usually reveal his interest in mechanical movement and were fairly new technological devices.



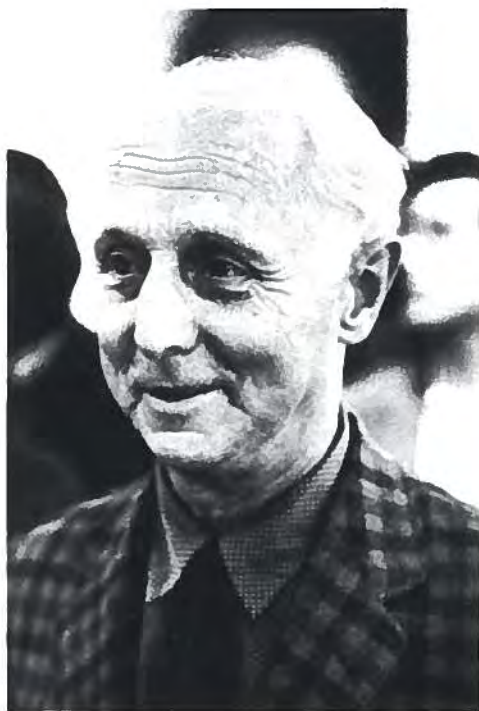
L.H.O.O.Q.

DUCHAMP (below)
"*Etant Donnés*" (Given that . . .), 1946-66
Reinstating in his name the unique art object, Duchamp's widow refuses permission to reproduce what the spectator can see through the cracks in

the door – an allegorical peep-show of the human condition? Behind, there is a waterfall, in front of which reclines a nude (sprawling suggestively) with a gas burner – this "illuminating gas" and the cascade are the "given".



Max Ernst



Max Ernst

Ernst was an exponent of Dada in Cologne; in Paris from 1922, he was one who led it into Surrealism.

ERNST (right)

"Aquis submersus" (Plunged in the waters), 1919
The debt to Metaphysical painting is clear – blank, empty space, still statues – but the mood is both weird and almost merry. It rejoices in simple visual puns – the blank reflection in water of the clock-faced moon, an impossible diver inverting the shape of the dummy that grins in the foreground.

ERNST (below)

Katerina ondulata, 1920
The chevron design on the angular construction is in fact a piece of wallpaper, which Ernst has overlaid with gouache in a kind of *papier collé* in reverse.



In 1961, Max Ernst (1891–1976) revised for publication a selection from his own utterances, autobiographical notes in the third person. The text begins: "First contact with the sensible world: on April 2nd at 9.45 a.m. Max Ernst hatched from the egg which his mother had laid in an eagle's nest and over which the bird had brooded for seven years. It happened in Brühl, six miles south of Cologne. There Max grew up, and became a beautiful child. . . ." Clearly then, the habit of poetic fantasy, the superb egocentricity, the ability to dislocate the structure of the visible world and to reassemble it in the compulsive imagery of an alternative reality, these were all with him in the egg. They were to persist and flourish.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the theories of Freud, the concept of the Unconscious, were becoming widely known, and certainly were relevant to the development of Ernst's imagination. He enrolled in the University of Bonn for a degree in psychiatry, but found academic disciplines distasteful: "The young man, eager for knowledge, avoided any studies which might degenerate into breadwinning." His prime concern was painting. He seems to have been virtually self-

taught, but in 1910–11 he saw the work of the most advanced artists: he was also, when visiting asylums, astounded by the art of the insane. August Macke introduced him to the Blaue Reiter group and in 1913 he exhibited with Macke, Kandinsky and others in Berlin. He met Robert Delaunay, and was dazzled by Apollinaire's verbal acrobatics; he made a first short visit to Paris. Early in 1914 he met Jean Arp, a lasting friend and influence.

"On August 1st 1914 Max Ernst died. He was resurrected on November 11th 1918 as a young man who aspired to find the myths of his time." He was in fact a gunner on active service; appalled by the experience of war ("How! Blaspheme? Vomit? . . ."), he was ripe for Dada. He found Arp again; he also came across scientific drawings of micro-organisms, and harnessed their strange shapes into a biomorphic imagery that the Surrealists later found irresistible, as did Arp. He discovered Chirico, which sparked off his first collages. *"Aquis Submersus"* (Plunged in the waters) of 1919, perhaps his first major painting, shows a clear debt to Chirico; it was shown at the first Cologne Dada exhibition. At the second exhibition, which was entered through the men's



ERNST (right)

Men shall know nothing of this, 1923
Dedicated to André Breton, the work incorporates many of the Surrealists' *leit-motifs*. A vast sky, an empty desert, are the setting for an erotic theme spelled out by a poem on the back of the canvas, which explains the image as an ideal of cosmic and sexual harmony.

ERNST (below)

The elephant Celebes, 1921
Grotesque mechanical forms that nevertheless suggest humans or animals recur in Ernst's work. This vivid, monstrous mix of vacuum-cleaner and elephant shows a developing Surrealist illusionism; by including some intelligible images within a still irrational composition, the artist can disturb more profoundly than with just the bizarre.



ERNST (above)
Hundred-headed Woman: Germinal, my sister, 1929

Engravings from popular Victorian fiction are set upon by sadism, corruption.

lavatory and which included works offered up for destruction, a collage of his was condemned as pornographic, but the pornographic element in it proved to be Dürer's print *Adam and Eve* (see p. 152). Some of Ernst's work of this time (probably influenced by Picabia) also presents nightmares of mechanical or scientific apparatus animated by human desires, somewhat like Duchamp's.

Ernst was interested neither in the political nor in the caricatural possibilities of Dada. Always attracted to Paris, he gravitated there in 1922. His reputation had preceded him. André Breton, soon to be the major prophet of Surrealism, had organized an exhibition of Ernst's collages in 1920; the greatest Surrealist poet, Paul Eluard, illustrated a volume with Ernst's images. By the time of Ernst's arrival in Paris, the brief Dada explosion there was almost spent, and the movement was ripe for consolidation into an orthodoxy by Breton.

The realistic element in Ernst's work was by now established. For him it was necessary to touch off "the strangest poetic sparks by bringing together two seemingly unrelated elements on a plane unrelated to both" — an effect vividly achieved, for example, by the

juxtaposition or conjunction of two widely disparate but realistically rendered objects (such as a female torso and a bird's head) by the collage method. In Paris Ernst, in company with others such as Picabia, Arp, Man Ray, experimented with new techniques for precipitating images hidden in the unconscious mind. By 1923 he was working on paintings in a fully Surrealist vein, and in 1924 Breton announced the official birth of Surrealism as a coherent movement, soon to become a weird orthodoxy, and ultimately a dogma. In 1925, Ernst discovered a technique which was to prove most rewarding for him, *frottage* — a texturing achieved in simple form by rubbing pencil, chalk or even paint on paper laid over strongly grained wood or another textured material; subsequently elaborated by divers methods. This technique served him admirably in those characteristic paintings, at first glance naturalistic visions of moonlit forests, that turn on closer study into fearful dreams.

Ernst was never one to fit easily into an orthodoxy, and committed various heresies against Breton's gospel. His activities were vigorously diverse. His great collage novel, *La Femme Cent Têtes* (Hundred-headed woman),

was published in 1929; he collaborated in films with Buñuel and Dali, designed sets and costumes for Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes. In 1938, he quit the Surrealists. In 1941, after being interned in France as an enemy alien, he moved to New York and there was briefly married to his second wife, the collector and art impresario Peggy Guggenheim. The fertility of his imagination, his technical inventiveness and improvisation, flourished unabated: in 1942, in *Man intrigued by the flight of a non-Euclidean fly*, he used a drip technique, preceding Pollock. In 1949, he returned to France, to become ultimately a French citizen. The mood of Ernst's paintings is often reminiscent of the haunted desolations of his great German Romantic predecessor, Friedrich, even if his pictures of the 1930s frequently seem omens of the nightmare about to take substance; his vision of *Europe after the rain*, painted 1940-42, could be a prophecy of the earth's surface in radioactive mutation after the atomic bomb. In his later years, Ernst's mood mellowed; at all times his wit and humour could break free, while his technical virtuosity, his range of glowing colour, are as brilliant as any painter's of modern times.

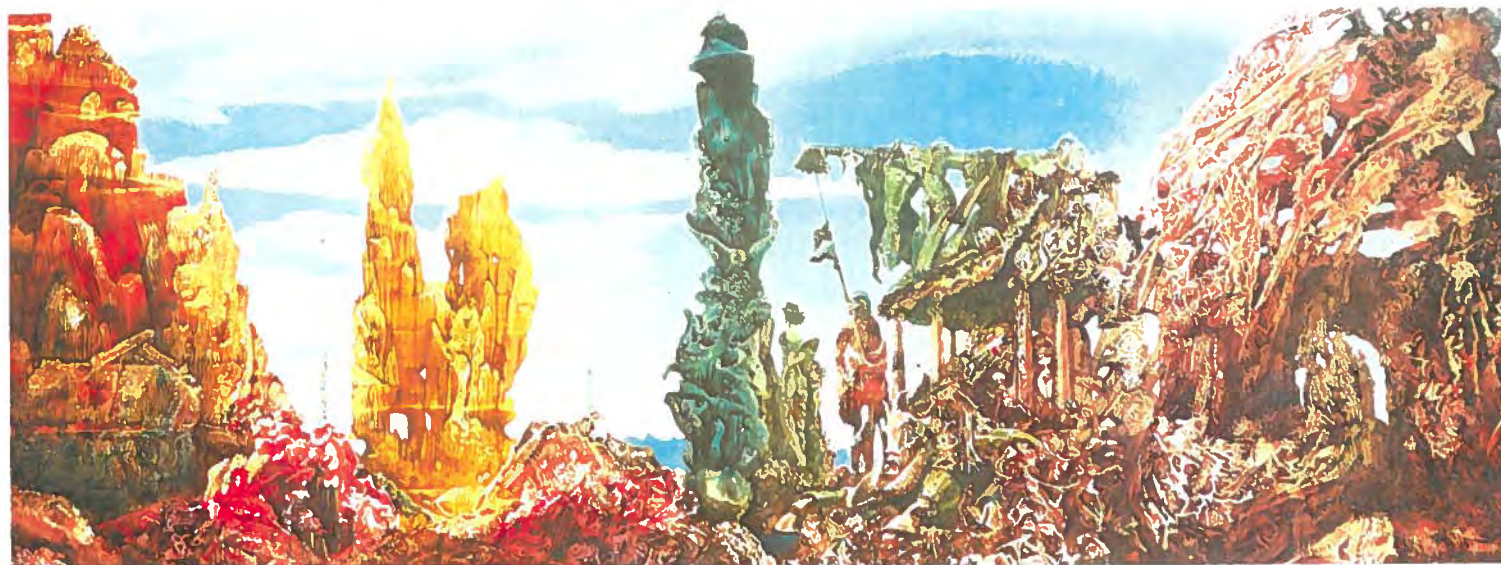


ERNST (left)
The great forest, 1927
Enchantment and terror, Ernst's feelings when he first entered a forest as a child, are recaptured in the almost fungal effects of his *frottage*, evoking "a new, incomparably vaster domain of experience".

ERNST (right)
Man intrigued by the flight of a non-Euclidean fly, 1942
A puzzled "geometric" man gazes in comic confusion at a fly, its dizzying motion conveyed in drips of paint (from a can circling above).



ERNST (below)
Europe after the rain, 1940-42
Even if inspired only by doodles or random images, such visions are convincing as descriptions of other, wholly credible realities.



Surrealism I: Figurative

"Surrealism: noun, masculine. Pure psychic automation by which one intends to express verbally, in writing or by other method, the real functioning of the mind. Dictation by thought in the absence of any control exercised by reason, and beyond any aesthetic or moral preoccupation. (Encycl., Philos.) Surrealism is based on the belief . . . in the omnipotence of dreams, in the undirected play of thought."

The definition comes from the *Manifesto of Surrealism* published by Breton in 1924. André Breton (1896-1966), the so-called "Pope" of Surrealism, deplored the nihilistic and destructive character of Dada; nevertheless he built on many Dada ideas to create a movement with a comparatively coherent philosophy, although, like Dada, it was as much a total way of life as an artistic credo. Fairly rapidly it developed into an orthodoxy, prone to disruption, heresy and schism, though it was armed (at least in the "Pope's" view) with powers of excommunication.

Surrealism was essentially a revolt against the intellectual concerns of Cubism, against formalist art, Art for Art's sake, against abstraction. Breton himself was a dedicated student of the work of Freud. Initially Surrealism

was primarily literary, claiming as ancestors writers such as Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Jarry or Apollinaire (who had first used the term "surrealist"). "Pure psychic automatism" – the untrammelled expression of the Unconscious – is easier to achieve in writing than in the more complex, more constraining materials of the visual arts, which – especially sculpture – inhibit the desired spontaneity of free association. On the other hand, painting could trap a dream into physical substance, and in the works of Chirico (see p. 418) the Surrealists found a language of dream imagery

that for some seemed almost definitive. Tribal art had again particular significance, and the congruence of incongruous objects, most vividly achieved in Ernst's collages, remained a staple of Surrealist imagery. The ideal text for a Surrealist painting had been provided by Lautréamont's famous phrase, "as beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella".

The movement early included artists enlisted from the ranks of Dada, some of them major, such as Ernst (see preceding page) and Arp (see pp. 414 and 429). It fostered its own



MAGRITTE (above)
The human condition, 1934
The perfect continuity of the landscape across the easel and window imparts an uneasy sense that the removal of the easel would reveal a frightening void. The idea might have come from the artist's early experiments with collage.



DALÍ (above)
The temptation of St Anthony, 1947
Dalí has admitted a frank respect for the themes of the European tradition; St Anthony's persecution by the devil is reinterpreted as a confrontation with unconscious forces.

MAGRITTE (right)
Time transfixed, 1939
Some kind of logic in the relationship of seemingly unconnected objects may give Magritte's best work its power to disturb. The fireplace recalls a tunnel, the engine's smoke evokes the function of the hearth.



DALÍ (right)
The persistence of memory, 1931
Dalí rejoices in fetishes and obsessions. His famous soft watches were allegedly inspired by the experience of eating Camembert cheese. He loves to set images of decay in a golden glare at once heavenly and sinister. He paints dream-pictures; Magritte made illusions.



major artists, such as Miró, Dali and Magritte, but other major artists, not formally linked with the movement, also began to exploit imagery properly classifiable as Surrealist. Indeed, in the 1920s and 1930s, Surrealism was the dominant avantgarde art in Europe.

Two main trends co-existed. One was dependent on figuration, on the precise reproduction of natural forms – generally juxtaposed, transposed, displaced or mutated far from real situations. The other moved towards abstraction, to an imagery without specific reference to forms found in nature, to forms generated within the Unconscious (see over).

The most remarkable of the figurative painters was the Belgian René Magritte (1898-1967), who perfected an academic, naturalistic, illusionistic technique of accurate, flatly prosy description. Apart from a brief stay near Paris in 1927-30, when he met Breton and exhibited with the Surrealists, Magritte spent a discreet and industrious life in Brussels, painting the impossible with calm and confident conviction. Magritte was the most accomplished dissembler of conventional expectations, exploiting astonishing discrepancies of scale (an apple fills a room; a loco-

motive bursts through a giant fireplace); denying the laws of gravity; endowing the sky with a material substance that can be cut out and put on to an easel. His strangeness is heightened by his use of everyday objects: the hero of many of his later pictures is the man in urban uniform – coat, bowler hat, sometimes a brief-case – as expressionless in the even light as a tailor's dummy. The ambiguity of the relationship between the object and its painted image is stressed constantly – a faithful likeness of a pipe, inscribed *This is not a pipe*.

The quietness of Magritte's method had the result that his achievement was for some time undervalued; public attention to the Surrealists concentrated rather on the frenetic activities of the Spaniard Salvador Dali (1904-1989), *provocateur-en-chef* of the bourgeoisie from his first association with Parisian Surrealism in 1927 onwards. Like Magritte, however, his technique was that of nineteenth-century academic naturalism, applied to unreal (or a mixture of real and unreal) subjects as if they were real. He worked in many media, in writing, painting, jewellery, film – including, with Luis Buñuel, the famous Surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou* (An Andalusian dog) – but

perhaps above all in his own fantastically moustachioed person, in a spectacular public career often virtually like show business – a giant egocentricity powered by an energetic paranoia. His relations with official Surrealism, at first euphoric, later became strained.

A more constricted talent, but one that introduced an individual and enduringly mysterious note into the range of Surrealist imagery, was that of another Belgian, Paul Delvaux (born 1897). In paintings of the 1930s and since he has realized a world of lonely alienation, suburbs of desolation haunted by trains and trams, peopled by silent waiting women who prove on closer inspection to be all identical – perhaps the most intense realization of dream or nightmare achieved by any Surrealist. However, he was not formally associated with the Surrealists; nor was Maurits Escher (1898-1972), a Dutchman. Escher was not strictly a Surrealist at all, though he is most easily considered in that context. His best-known works are his brilliantly calculated games with perspective, presenting with great precision quite different images interpenetrating with such ambiguity that the eye cannot establish where one begins and the other ends.



MAGRITTE (left)
Man in a bowler hat, 1964
The epitome of bourgeois respectability, a bowler-hatted man figures in many of Magritte's meticulous scenes of visual absurdity.

DALI (right)
The Venus de Milo of the drawers, 1936
The image suggests today Melanie Klein's theories that the infant desires to excavate the maternal breast, not only to suck.

DELVAUX (below)
The village of the sirens, 1942
Idealized forms set in a space recalling Chirico evoke an erotic dream.



DALI AND BUNUEL (above)
Still from *Un Chien Andalou*, 1929
A hand swarming with ants

is one of the film's milder images; its gruesome early sequence provoked a riot. Breasts, buttocks abounded.



ESCHER (above)
Still life and street, 1937
Tricks of perspective and scale in Escher's work can

induce a sense of hallucination in the viewer. His prints became popular in the 1960s "drug culture".

Surrealism 2: Abstract

The representational side of Surrealist art appears at its most successful in the work of Magritte, Dali (at his best) and Delvaux (see preceding page), and in the work of certain other artists who in their variety and achievement escape categorization in any one mode. Picasso (see p. 450) was one, Ernst (see p. 420) was another, and Arp (see p. 429) yet another, and in the 1930s Giacometti, a late-comer. Norman Henry Moore (see p. 448) be considered without reference to Surrealism, or Surrealism be considered without reference to the continued carryings-on of Marcel Duchamp (see p. 416), Picabia and Man Ray (see p. 414).

The non-representational wing of Surrealism was no less vigorous. The work especially of Arp was more often non-figurative than not, but the major artists most consistently independent of natural phenomena were the Spaniard Joan Miró (1893-1983) and the Frenchman André Masson (1896-1987), who had studios side by side in Paris and who both joined Breton's Surrealist group at its launch in 1924. For a time both experimented freely with "automatic" drawings, the visual counterpart of the crucial technique or non-technique of Surrealist irrationalism, "auto-

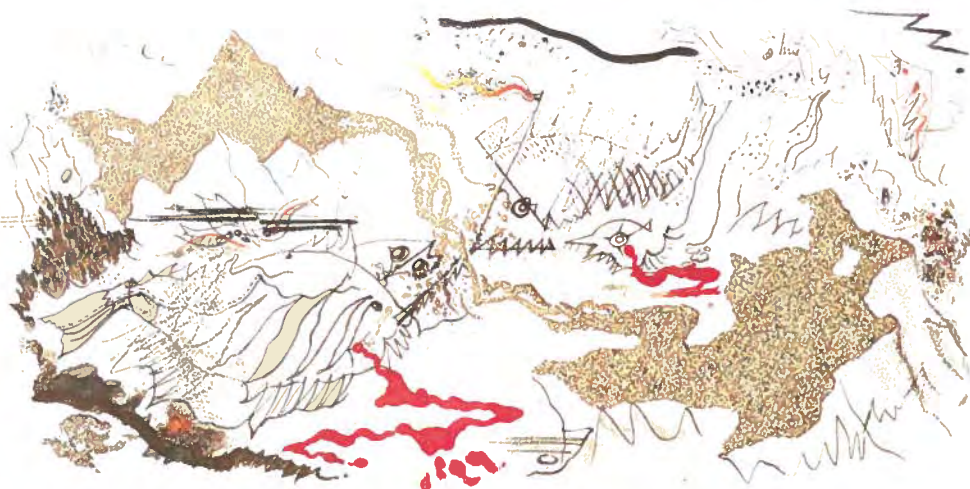
matic" writing: its intention was to allow free association so as to find, if possible, an absolutely spontaneous expression. Both found the development of Cubism, whether into the rigid doctrinaire theories of Gleizes, or towards the austere geometric reductions of Mondrian, sterile and inadequate to their needs. Masson's outlook was conditioned permanently by appalling experiences in World War I; he was obsessed by the domination of the rule of tooth and claw in all life, animal or human, and his work is a release of the violence of base instincts. He was himself a violent man, who bellowed emotive phrases while he worked, and often physically attacked unsatisfactory canvases. By 1926 he was exploiting chance and accident as part of his technique: he would scatter sand over canvases previously spread in haphazard areas with glue, and then, at great speed, orchestrate their random configurations and textures into loose rhythms of brushwork and colour. The images that appeared were brutal; they gradually became more specific, and horrific creatures emerged. In 1929, Masson withdrew from the official Surrealist cadre, and some find his work of the 1930s less intense and less successful. How-

TANGUY (below)
The palace of windows at the rocks, 1942
In order to purge himself

of all conscious intention, Tanguy is reputed to have painted his randomly titled compositions upside down.



MASSON (above)
Furious suns, 1925
The expressive potential of "automatic" writing and drawing was promoted by Breton, in whose theories Masson found the means to "seize at last the knife immobilized upon the Cubist table". This transformation of Cubism made him, later, a crucial link in the chain from Picasso to Pollock, from Cubism to Abstract Expressionism.



MASSON (above)
The battle of the fishes, 1927
Masson's spontaneous line learnt to make shapes, so to speak, in a Cubist school. But Cubist splintering has been energized to express movement, rage, instinct.

MIRO (below)
Dog barking at the moon, 1926
We recognize a few simple figurative images while at the same time allowing that they are visionary elements belonging to another, wholly fantastic, personal reality.



TANGUY (right)
The more we are, 1929
Tanguy taught himself to paint after seeing a work by Chirico in a Parisian shop-window. He had been a sailor, and the memories of his marine experiences are even more obvious in his early works than later, when he enlarged his forms: biomorphic, yet painted in metallic colours, they cast harsh shadows over a landscape of apparent infinity.



ever, in America during World War II, moved once again by the horror of man's inhumanity to man, he reverted to more "automatic" procedures, and his work of these years influenced the subsequent emergence of the Abstract Expressionist school after the War.

Yves Tanguy (1900-1955), largely self-taught, was taken into the Surrealist squad by Breton, and from 1926 discovered and developed his own vivid and original imagery, a realization of the hallucinatory state of mind in a convincing alternative to the dreams formulated by Chirico. Tanguy's imagery often seems submarine, suggesting an endless seabed littered with debris, some of it resembling ominous amoeba-like organisms previously unknown to science. Increasingly he developed the contrasts and variety of his textures, so that his pictures might be classed as a kind of Metaphysical Dutch still-life painting. Forms grew beneath Tanguy's brush under their own mysterious prompting, so he maintained, rather than by any intervention on his part.

The most prolifically various, most genial and also generally the most optimistic of the practitioners of abstract Surrealism was Joan Miró, though Miró himself has always dis-

missed suggestions that his work is abstract; for him, his armoury of fantastic forms always signifies real objects. He was, like Picasso and Dalí, one of that brilliant breed of new Spanish artists who arrived in Paris in the early twentieth century but, unlike Picasso, he returned constantly from Parisian turmoil to his native country. Immediately after World War I Miró was working in a style of meticulous realism, from which the development of his mature style emerged almost abruptly, like a butterfly from its chrysalis, about 1924-25, certainly encouraged by his contacts with the new Surrealist group. Some commentators on Miró have been obsessed with the sinister overtones in his work, with omens and signals of catastrophe, and in his darker works (especially during and after the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39) such signs are certainly there, but again and again a positive gaiety sparkles from his canvases – ferocious, often, but with the ferocity that one finds in children's art.

Miró's imagery was fully established in a famous canvas of 1926, *Dog barking at the moon*, which one might well suspect to be the original fount from which the comic strip *Peanuts* developed. His strange images tend to

be biomorphic, similar to those of Arp, and his fantasy is often close to that of Klee: unknown but convincingly possible organisms take shape, defined in clear outline and sharp lucent colours – primary reds, blacks and whites predominate. Words and phrases sometimes float on the canvas: Miró admitted no differentiation between poetry and painting, and claimed that his work always grew from "a state of hallucination, provoked by some shock or other, objective or subjective, for which I am entirely irresponsible". Irresponsible or not, the initial conception is then marshalled by an unerring sense of design, of space and interval, into a strange formal harmony. During World War II, in Spain, he turned his attention to printmaking, and later to sculpture and especially ceramics. He began afterwards to work on a very large scale, in giant murals such as those for the Terrace Hilton Hotel in Cincinnati (1947; not shown) or the ceramic walls of the UNESCO building in Paris (1958). In his restless inventiveness he was prepared to investigate the possibilities of any medium, often in collaboration with specialist craftsmen, and the fertility of his vision has never slackened in his long career.



MIRO (right)
Painting, 1933
By the 1930s Miró had achieved his full artistic maturity, making dramatic use of colour; against the ground of limited primary colours bizarre, expressive organisms are suspended, absurd, idiotic, profound.



MIRO (above)
Aerial acrobatics, 1934
Miró's inherently graphic imagination tends to revert to linear creatures: these dance, float and wriggle in and about his pictures, apparently engaged in gentle, endearing games, in defiance of the laws of gravity.

MIRO (below)
The wall of the moon, 1958
His growing interest in the interaction of broadly handled abstract lines and colours attracted Miró to large-scale projects – these tiles adorn a wall of the UNESCO Building in Paris.



Art in Germany: The Bauhaus

The Bauhaus was founded by the architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) in Weimar in 1919; it moved to Dessau in 1925-26 and to Berlin in 1932, and was closed by the Nazi regime in 1933. The name and concept, however ("Bauhaus" is not precisely translatable into any other language; it means "building house" approximately), have certainly survived the repression of the institution itself.

The founding *Manifesto* of 1919 opened with the sentence: "*Das Endziel aller bildnerischen Tätigkeit ist der Bau!* (The final goal of all activity in the visual arts is the complete building)." It continued: "It was once the most distinguished task of the visual arts to adorn it; they were inseparable components of the great building. Today they exist in self-sufficient isolation, from which they can be rescued only by the conscious co-operation of all working people. Architects, painters and sculptors must recognize anew the complex, composite nature of a building, in all the parts of its entity. Only then will that work be imbued with the architectonic spirit that it has lost as 'Salon art' . . . Art is not a profession. There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman."

The inspiration for this gospel of creativity came from Henry van der Velde, active from before World War I in Weimar as a prophet of synthesis in art and of "pure form"; from the tenets of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement; not least from the example of the medieval guilds. Yet though Lyonel Feininger's woodcut frontispiece for the *Manifesto* showed the new unity of the arts in terms of a medieval cathedral, the Bauhaus, unlike its progenitors, welcomed the new technology of the Machine Age with enthusiasm, working to take full advantage of it structurally, theoretically and aesthetically.

Bauhaus teaching in each subject began with a six-month foundation course: each course was under the guidance of a *Formmeister* (concerned with fundamental principles of form and creativity) and a modern craftsman. Students were very much apprentices, and theory and practice were tightly allied; some of the Bauhaus textbooks became classic documents for the arts world-wide – Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1925) and Kandinsky's *Point and Line to Plane* (1926). However, the curriculum was in continual evolution, as a matter of principle. In the early years of trial

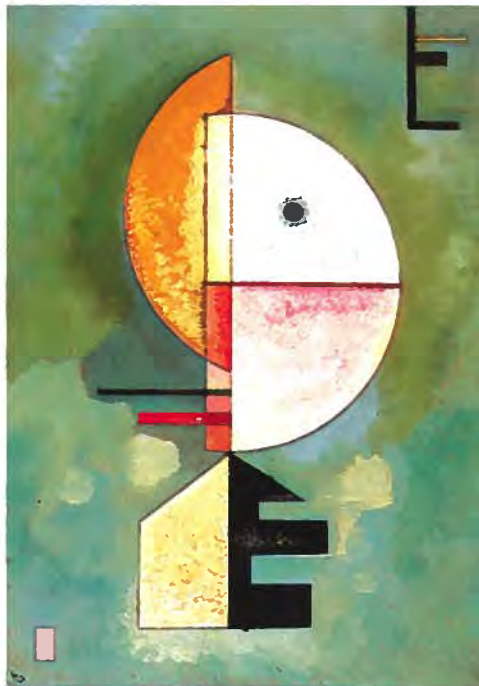
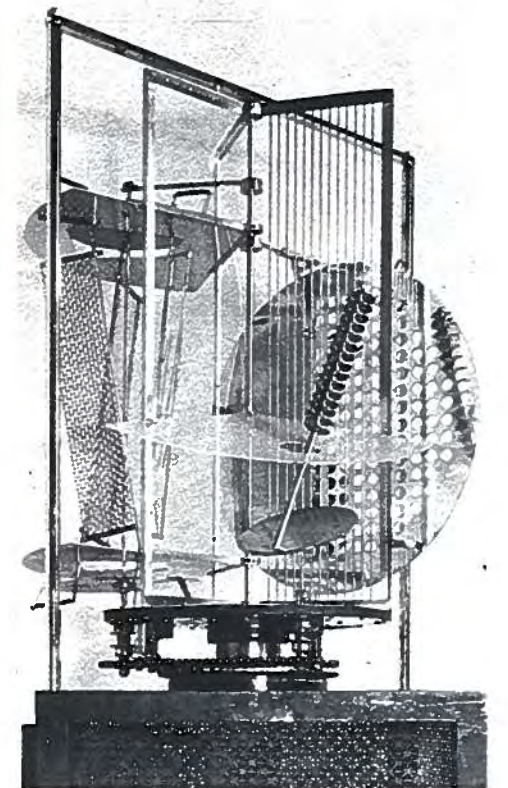
FEININGER (below)
Frontispiece for the
Bauhaus *Manifesto*, 1919
The socialist cathedral
(still Expressionist, but also

dynamic with light) was
to "rise one day . . . from
the hands of a million
workers like the crystal
symbol of a new faith".



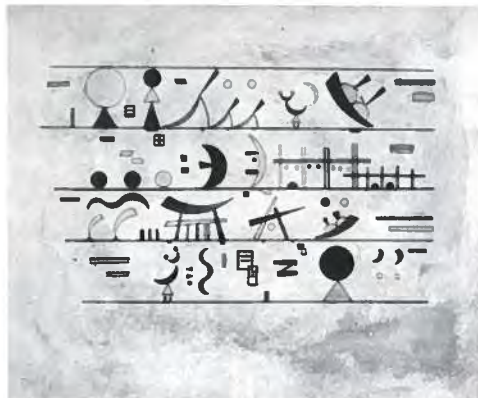
MOHOLY-NAGY (below)
Light-space modulator,
1922-30
Moholy-Nagy was a true
mechanic-artist, applying
art to industrial design

and technology to art. He
was fascinated especially
by the media of light: the
Modulator activates space
by reflections and shadows
of its revolving forms.



KANDINSKY (above)
On high, 1920
Kandinsky's encounter in
Russia with Suprematism
(see p. 407) led him into
a disciplined style with
a more geometrical basis:
this cool austerity was
further influenced by the
Bauhaus spirit. The free
personal expression of his
Munich abstracts has been
sacrificed in the creation
of a more concrete order.

KANDINSKY (right)
Rows of signs, 1931
Kandinsky's hieroglyphs
are like Miro's Surrealist
forms subject to a regimen.
They are a synthesis of
pure, constructed forms and
intuitive, suggestive ones.



KLEE (above)
Italian town, 1928
Klee made many references
in his notebooks to the
common structural ground
of buildings and paintings:
this was directly reflected
in canvases that combine
abstract arrangements of
colour with lines defining
planes, blocks and space of
an architectural character.
With the move to Dessau
in 1925-26 the Bauhaus be-
came more concerned with
architecture and design, and
Klee participated in this
new spirit whole-heartedly.
He left only in 1931 when
functionalism – an interest
in the "truth" primarily
of technological materials
– began to predominate.

and experiment, the emphasis on the theory of form and the nature of materials, on the sciences and on manual and technical skills, was balanced by the spiritual, even mystical intensity which notably Kandinsky and Klee brought to teaching – there was a positive awareness of the irrational side of creativity. But from 1923 the architectural side became more dominant, as the uniting factor of all the artistic disciplines, closely knit under the influence of László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), Josef Albers and Marcel Breuer (1902-1981). Then it was primarily in the fields of architecture and industrial and interior design – furniture, ceramics, textiles – that the Bauhaus made its greatest impact – the establishment of a basic grammar of spare, functional design, taking advantage of new techniques and materials, of mass-production no less than plastics. The aims of De Stijl were taken up and developed; the emphasis was increasingly Constructivist rather than Expressionist.

It was a crucial element in Gropius' genius that he could attract and recruit a cosmopolitan staff of the very highest calibre. His early appointments included the Swiss Johannes Itten (1888-1967) and Lyonel Feininger

(1871-1956), American-born but of German extraction. Feininger had earlier been decisively influenced by Art Nouveau and by Delaunay's Orphism, but from this he developed his personal lyrical dreams, abstracting architectural forms into delicate crystalline structures. The Russian Wassily Kandinsky was closely associated with the Bauhaus between 1922 and 1933, and there defined further the stricter, more geometrical development of his non-figurative work. Paul Klee, who had earlier associated with Kandinsky in Munich (see p. 385), was on the Bauhaus staff from 1920 to 1931, returning to his native Switzerland in 1933 (see over). A crucial and dynamic personality at the Bauhaus between 1923 and 1928 was the Hungarian Moholy-Nagy, on whom the revolutionary work of the Russians Malevich and especially El Lissitzky had had a decisive impact. Moholy-Nagy's interests, irrepressibly various and inventive, extended beyond painting and sculpture to experimental work in photography, film, even light itself as a medium for art; into theatre, ballet and typography. Despite the quality of its staff, however, the Bauhaus bred no outstanding painters and sculptors among its

students, and opportunities for free painting and sculpture diminished, until one of the most gifted painters there, Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943), commented: "Painters are no more than a necessary evil there." Gropius (and Moholy-Nagy) left the Bauhaus in 1928, and under new direction the school entered a more functionalist phase; the political slant leant increasingly actively towards the Left and as an inevitable consequence it was closed by the Nazis in 1933.

The Bauhaus principles of design and of the relationship of art and industry, its theory of form and its teaching methods were not extinguished, but on the contrary broadcast through the Western world as former members of the Bauhaus became refugees from Nazi oppression. The strongest Bauhaus impact came in the United States, where Moholy-Nagy established in Chicago (1937-38) the Institute of Design, and Albers became a leading figure at Black Mountain College (see p. 468); Feininger, Gropius, the typographer Herbert Bayer, the master designer Marcel Breuer and the last Director of the Bauhaus, the architect Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), all moved to America.



GROPIUS (above)
The Director's office at the Weimar Bauhaus, 1923
Shape and colour are ruled by clean lines, clear light.

MOHOLY-NAGY (below)
Yellow cross, c. 1923-28
Balance and space, static and kinetic movement were Moholy-Nagy's concerns.



ITTEN (left)
Benign light, 1920-21
Itten's dedication to the properties of colour, both physiological and psychological, gave his abstracts a firm, systematic basis. This multi-colour diagram of subtle tonal gradations was issued as a study aid; it was followed by a series of expressive and lucid grid paintings, which amount to more than merely didactic expositions of his theory, though Itten's reputation as a teacher has tended to overshadow that of his art.



BREUER (above)
Steel chair, 1925
Inspired by the handlebars of a bicycle, Breuer made the first tubular steel chair – strong, light and compact.



SCHLEMMER (right)
Concentric group, 1925
As master of the theatre workshop, Schlemmer had studied actors' positions and spatial relationships.



Paul Klee



Perhaps more than for any other great modern artist, the essential biography of Paul Klee (1879–1940) is his art, but his art remains triumphantly inexplicable. It does not respond very well even to commentary. For instance, historians tend to contradict each other flatly at a basic level – what is the prime motive of his work, the formal construction or the inspiration of the imagination? But in the most famous of his apothegms, Klee spoke of drawing (or at least of his drawing, or at any rate of some of his drawing) as “taking a line for a walk”. In a variation of that, the image of a man taking a dog for a walk may come to mind, the reasonable man and the instinctive dog linked by the line of the leash, moving together in unpredictable rhythms, indissolubly.

Paul Klee was born in Switzerland into a family, part German, part French in origin, of professional musicians. Klee himself was a violinist of high calibre, and the movement of his compositions often seems closer to music than to the visual art of the other major artists of his time. And yet Klee was responsive to almost any visual stimulus, including that of the most advanced art being produced around him. By 1914 he had seen in Munich the work

of Der Blaue Reiter artists, and had been himself loosely associated with that group; he had travelled in Italy, spent almost a year in Paris in 1912, and travelled in 1914 with Macke in Tunisia. He was aware not only of Renaissance art but also of Byzantine and Coptic; he made reference to the colourism of the Fauves, to Cézanne’s use of colour, to the Cubist colourism of Delaunay – but also to the colour patterning of Islamic carpets. He came to know the work of Douanier Rousseau, as also the “primitive” art of Africa and Oceania, and the drawing of children and of the insane. He was widely read in German and French poetry. Yet it is absurd to talk of influences in the case of Klee: he came, he saw, he digested. He was nourished.

He was based in Munich between 1906 and 1920 (with a break for army service, 1916–18), and the contact with Der Blaue Reiter, and especially with Kandinsky and Marc, decisively confirmed his belief in the spiritual well-springs of artistic creativity. Until 1914 his work was almost entirely in black and white (see p. 385) and generally in a Symbolist, Expressionist tradition deriving from artists such as Böcklin and Ensor, but with a very

Paul Klee

“He was a man who knew of day and night, of sky, sea and air. But . . . our language does not suffice to express such things, and he had to find sign, colour or form”, commented a devoted friend of Klee’s.

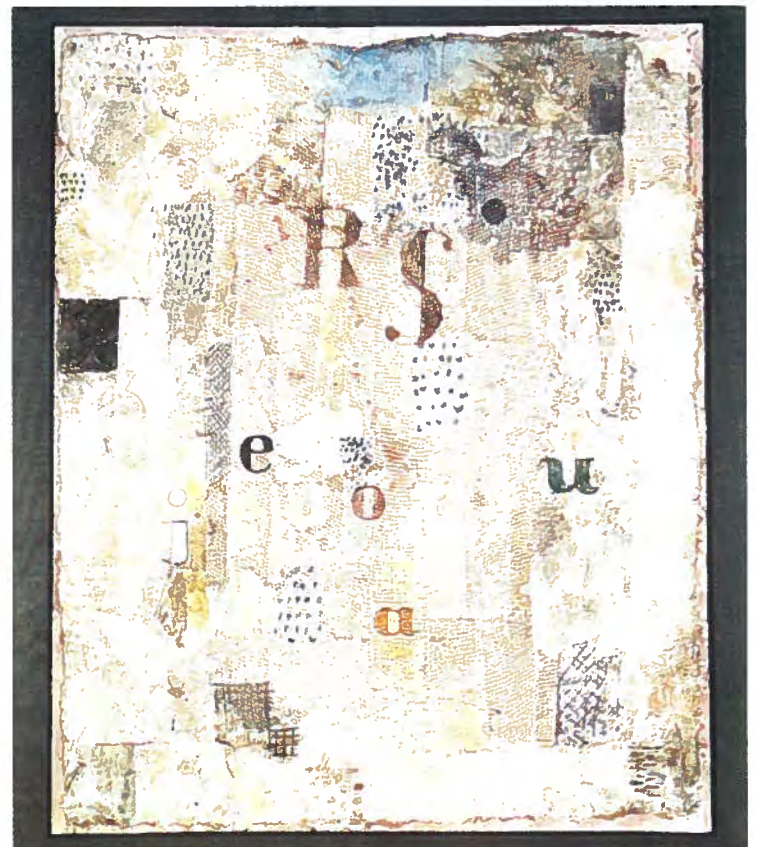
KLEE (right)

Motif of Hammamet, 1914
The cube-like architecture set in shining sands under an intensely blue sky is fabricated into a patchwork of the local colours; the texture of the paper, visible through the paint, gives a shimmering effect.



KLEE (below)

The country child, 1923
Klee’s first application for a teaching post was turned down because the board of governors found his work “frivolous”; now the value and significance of fairy tales are better understood and respected.



KLEE (above)

The vocal fabric of the singer Rosa Silber, 1922
The title, as so often with Klee’s paintings, is a play on words: Rosa Silber is a name but also means “rose silver”, the main colours. The canvas is just a piece of rough material on which patches of colour, letters (evoking a musical notation) and patterns are delicately disposed so as to suggest the structure of a sound.



KLEE (left)

Mask with small flag, 1925
Klee’s fertile imagination and prolific output – 8,926 works in all – are the more astounding in that there is so little repetition within his work, though it is instantly recognizable. Instantly, too, he dazzles and entrances. It is, however, possible to see underlying preoccupations, such as the human face. But compare Kandinsky’s *On high* (see preceding page).

original blend of fantasy and wit. He first made his name with etchings, influenced in style by Dürer. His progress towards colour is charted in his early journals and letters, and in 1914, in Tunisia with Macke, the bright desert sunlight transformed his vision as it had Delacroix's and Renoir's before him: "Colour has taken hold of me; I no longer have to chase after it... I and colour are one. I am a painter." He was then already 35 years old. The contribution he was to make in colour was a revelation of inexhaustible variations and permutations, of melody and harmony, probably unequalled in its variety. His subsequent production was remarkably prolific, amounting to rather more than 8,000 paintings and drawings.

Klee's appointment to the Bauhaus teaching staff in 1920 was of great importance to his art, even though the Bauhaus ethic, towards the end of his time there, had hardened into an active inhospitality towards painting. He taught there (see preceding page) not only painting but also textiles and stained-glass design, and an intimacy with his materials is an outstanding feature of his work. The Bauhaus gave Klee first a financial independence he had never had before and secondly encouragement

to proceed with an intellectual analysis of his own work. His *Pedagogical Sketchbook* of 1925 was the second of the 14 Bauhaus manuals edited by Gropius and Moholy-Nagy; a primer for his students, it illustrates vividly the tenets that underlie Klee's unique marriage of scientific and mathematical precision with the organic processes of the imagination. In 1923, in the course of a lecture *On Modern Art* (published only in 1945), he formulated a famous metaphor which still seems the most illuminating comment on the nature of his art – the metaphor or simile of the tree.

"The artist has studied this world of variety and has, we may suppose, unobtrusively found his way in it. His sense of direction has brought order into the passing stream of image and experience. This sense of direction in nature and life, this branching and spreading array, I shall compare with the root of the tree. From the root the sap flows to the artist, flows through him, flows to his eye. Thus he stands as the trunk of the tree. Battered and stirred by the strength of the flow, he moulds his vision into his work. As, in full view of the world, the crown of the tree unfolds and spreads in time and space, so with his work. Nobody would

affirm that the tree grows its crown in the image of its root... Different functions expanding in different elements must produce vivid divergences... (The artist), standing at his appointed place, the trunk of the tree, does nothing other than gather and pass on what comes to him from the depths. He neither serves nor rules – he transmits."

In 1931, Klee left the Bauhaus to take up a professorship at Düsseldorf, whence the Nazis expelled him in 1933. He settled in Berne, near his birthplace; his last years were clouded by illness, but his work continued. His later painting tended to be rather larger in scale (though all his work has a comparatively small format) and was sometimes sombre with an imagery and colour that seem to reflect his awareness not only of approaching death but also of the imminent tragedy of war. Yet the variety of Klee's imagery confounds categorization; it ranges from the menacing to the most delicately witty or nonsensical.

Historians have sometimes been reluctant to accept Klee's great stature, but that perhaps was before the propagation of the maxim "Small is beautiful"; there was some confusion about the importance of scale.

KLEE (right)

"Ad Parnassum", 1932
A mountainous landscape is portrayed in what Klee called his "divisionist" style, after Seurat. Tiny scales vibrate over a surface of modulated colour.



KLEE (below)

Fire in the evening, 1929
This belongs to the series of "magic squares" which occupied Klee from 1922 to the end of his life – these exquisite harmonies in major and minor keys disclose his musical talents.



KLEE (above)

Death and fire, 1940
Painted in the year of his death, *Death and fire* is a product of Klee's aim to "create much, spiritually, out of little". Klee could discover the world or more in the page of a notebook as surely as the poet Blake could in a grain of sand.



KLEE (left)

Under the angel's wing in a steep path, 1931
Not only was he a gorgeous colourist; Klee was also a magician with the pen or the pencil. Images of angels frequent his later work.

Expressionist Developments, and Neue Sachlichkeit

The term "Expressionism", used to categorize a certain kind of art and to distinguish it from other kinds, first became current about 1910. It is applied to an art in which the artist dominates his subject matter to the point of distorting its appearance, so as to express in the most forceful fashion possible his own view of the world, and to make a comment – generally but not necessarily critical – on its nature. "Expressionism" seems to describe aptly the work of several German artists active in the early years of the century – those of Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter, even those of Dada – but also to apply to many working in Germany after 1918 and to several outside Germany – Kokoschka in Austria, Permeke in Belgium, Rouault (see p. 391) in France.

Two of the most brilliant second-generation German Expressionists emerged directly from the politically orientated Dada group launched by Huelsenbeck in Berlin in 1917 – Grosz and Heartfield. George Grosz (1893-1959) began as a satirical caricaturist, and his best work was defined by an acid-sharp and relentlessly hard line throughout. His running commentary on German social and political life in the aftermath of war was one of the most savage and

GROSZ (below)
Dusk, 1922
Grosz's watercolour and pen drawings of urban scenes



are peopled with hard-faced burghers, war-victims and leering women, personifying inhumanity and suffering.

scathing made on any society ever, exposing the oppression and exploitation of the poor of Berlin by the military and capitalist classes in brutally explicit scenes of murder, prostitution and urban degradation. His characters – notably his bull-necked, squash-faced, cigar-smoking men with shaven heads – are profoundly disturbing and convincingly evil. Technically, he early on became aware of the dynamic Futurist style, then exploited brilliantly the fragmenting methods of Dada, including montage; his urban settings often echo those of Metaphysical painting. Grosz's overt, ferocious, utterly uninhibited satire was driven by an irrepressible and courageous anger against injustice (he was prosecuted on several occasions) but was countered by an ambivalent romanticism. Though he had been a member of the German Communist Party since its foundation, when with the coming to power of the Nazis he could no longer work in Germany he moved not to Russia but to America (becoming an American citizen in 1938). There, though his original satiric bent found expression occasionally, the impetus of his art was sapped, and his painting tended to become soft-edged (very close to Pascin's). His

GROSZ (right)
Eclipse of the sun, 1926
The images in *Eclipse*, one of Grosz's own favourite paintings, are savage – the men of money, without their heads, conspire with the fat decorated general, epitome of bloodthirsty cruelty. The expression of political comment in such allegorical form was novel in painting.



DIX (below)
The match-seller, 1920
Dix's work is exclusively devoted to human beings, to their greed, brutality and to their suffering. He began his pictures of war-victims in 1919, with views of the crippled ex-soldiers seen on the streets of Dresden. His vision is beyond pity or sentiment: the dachshund pisses on the match-seller.



HEARTFIELD (above)
War and corpses, 1932
Heartfield's photomontage was used in Spain in 1934 as a communist poster, the decoration round the neck of the hyena being replaced by a swastika. Photography was for Heartfield a new international and populist language, which he exploited, and expressionistically manipulated, to reveal the inner truths of human society.



HOFER (left)
Three masqueraders, 1922
Hofer strove to probe the visible world as the Neue Sachlichkeit artists did, sharing their aesthetic of disillusionment. However, he refused to accept the "Expressionist" label – his roots lay in a classical idealism transformed by the influence of Cézanne and disturbed by the shock of service in the trenches.

friend John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfelde, 1891-1968), an active revolutionary, used photomontage as a weapon of social satire with an unsurpassed visual wit and efficacy.

Otto Dix (1891-1969) also made his mark in the early 1920s as a cutting and cynical satirist of contemporary society; horrific experience in war and disillusionment afterwards were bitterly expressed in his pitiless linear precision, his clear, often brilliant colour and modelling, and his formulation of repulsive human types. In the mid-1920s, he was the dominant personality of the trend known as "*Neue Sachlichkeit*" (New Objectivity), also called Magic Realism. The label "*Neue Sachlichkeit*" was coined for a projected exhibition in Mannheim in 1923 of "artists who have retained or regained their fidelity to positive, tangible reality". In that sense it was a reaction against abstraction and against the earlier Expressionist destruction of form, but in other senses it sustained some central characteristics of Expressionism – the directness of the artist's confrontation with reality, his use of distortion to emphasize his view of the world. The artist's emotion was, however, to be held in tight control, in a concentration that often invested

his work with a neurotic, eerie tension.

There was no co-ordinated movement of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and artists practising variations within it were working at several centres in Germany during the Weimar Republic; they included Carl Hofer (1878-1955), Franz Radziwill and Georg Schrimpf (1889-1938). Their work was not tolerated by the Nazis and, though few of them left Germany, most of them radically altered their styles after 1933.

Meanwhile there had been an extraordinary ferment of intellectual and artistic life in Vienna early in the century, nurturing Freud, Schönberg and the Vienna Sezession. Following on the work of Klimt, a fierce strain of Expressionism flared in the haunting psychological intensity of the portraits of Richard Gerstl (1883-1908; not shown), who committed suicide, in the works of Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980) and in the starved, aching eroticism of Egon Schiele (1890-1918). Kokoschka was initially the *enfant terrible* of the Viennese art scene, a picturesque, flamboyant personality and a strenuous exhibitionist; he began there a long series of portraits (see p. 477), including a continuing sequence of *Self-portraits*, that constitute a great part of his

achievement. In these, and in his figure paintings, the delicate exploratory line combines with broken and shifting depths of colour to produce an extraordinary strength of mood. After World War I he travelled extensively, and in Paris began a series of large landscape panoramas, Impressionistic in their brilliance of fragmented colour, Expressionistic in their tumultuous atmospheric vigour.

The Expressionist urge seems to have been a northern characteristic, and after the first inspirations of the Dutchman van Gogh and the Norwegian Munch it nowhere produced a richer harvest than in the Germanic countries, although it appeared in Italy, in the work of Scipione, and in the dour paintings of the earth and the peasantry by Constant Permeke (1886-1952) in Belgium. In Germany itself, Expressionist freedom was anathema to Nazi doctrine. Systematic suppression of free art culminated in the exhibition of "*Degenerate Art*" in 1937; Germany destroyed or dispersed the most remarkable achievements of her visual arts since the time of Dürer and Grünewald. And yet Max Beckmann (see over), living in obscurity in Amsterdam, continued his formidably apocalyptic painting undeflected.



SCHRIMPF (left)
Boy with a rabbit, 1924
The emergence of a rather stiff realism in Germany during the 1920s owed something to Rousseau's Naïve reconstruction of reality. Schrimpf's gently romantic, unpretentious paintings are typical of the style – simple, monumental forms smoothly painted, carefully modelled.



KOKOSCHKA (right)
Lovers with a cat, 1917
Kokoschka's free brushwork distances his *Lovers* from their 16th-century source, a painting by Cranach, and creates a lyricism highly charged with emotion, as if the brush-strokes themselves were spiritual emanations. In this way he could, too, create violent, Promethean visions of human suffering.



SCHIELE (left)
The embrace, 1917
Schiele's own restlessness, in his personal life, seems to suffuse *The embrace*, this contorted clutching amidst crumpled sheets. The male figure is a self-portrait. His eroticism (which had occasioned his arrest in 1911) is anguished, but the complex, angular lines riot with a decorative rhythm.

PERMEKE (right)
The sower, 1933
Permeke's subject is clearly social realist, but a moral is not explicit; his massive figures have a chthonic, or elemental, timeless being. In their dignity and pathos they recall 19th-century heroic pastoral paintings, and late work by Millet.



Beckmann: Departure

BECKMANN (right)

Night, 1918-19

Symbols of human sadism and anguish (Beckmann's reaction to war and the civil violence of post-War Germany) are depicted in livid colours, angular line and with an exaggeration of detail – the phonograph, the torturer's bulging eyes – anticipating aspects of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* need for intensity in the object.



BECKMANN (below)

Self-portrait with a red scarf, 1917

Beckmann's *Self-portraits* start before World War I with images of an elegant, unharmed man: they then chart a life of traumatic experience through which Beckmann always maintains an appearance of toughness, but sometimes his deep anxiety breaks the surface.



BECKMANN (left)

Quappi in pink, 1932-34
Whatever Beckmann made of his own image in his revealing *Self-portraits*, he always painted his wife Quappi as a lady, indeed almost as a fashion-plate. Both line and colour here recall *Die Brücke* styles.



BECKMANN (above)

Self-portrait with Quappi Beckmann, 1941
Fear and grim resignation are expressed in these two faces. With deep shadows Beckmann dramatizes their plight as refugees; he has been spurned as an artist but he remains formidable.

The figures are almost clamped in heavy black outlines, and the space they occupy bears in on them and compresses them still further – the claustrophobic effect is overwhelming. The subject matter is unconscionably brutal, and worked with an appropriately coarse violence. Yet man in the lifetime of Max Beckmann (1884-1950) proved to be only too capable of the imprisonment, mutilation and mental torture that ravage his first triptych, *Departure*. The colour is generally sombre, kindling with the glow and flush of a stained-glass window, and the three panels read as a sort of post-Christian altarpiece recording the events of a modern Revelations. Triptychs soon became a favourite form of Beckmann's, and their violent, complex themes, evoking the circus, the stage and classical myth in a very Germanic interpretation, have, though always personal, a resonant twentieth-century relevance.

Max Beckmann began his career as a painter in a relatively orthodox style. His independent spirit, however, amounted already to high arrogance: his reaction on his first visit to



Paris, aged 19, was: "What's there, I know already." This confidence was matched by a striking ability. He had established a reputation by the time of his first one-man exhibition (in Frankfurt) in 1911, and by then he was demonstrating two qualities that would persist throughout his career – his ability to control large and complex compositions, and an obsession with horrific subject matter.

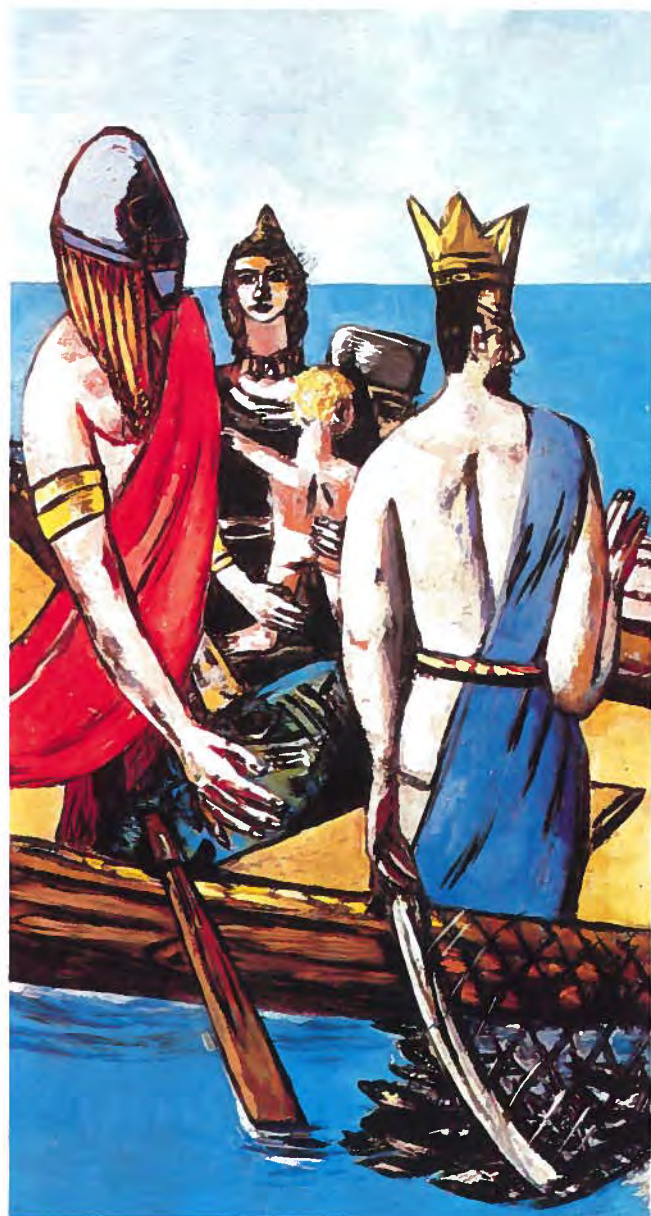
Before World War I, Beckmann had encountered in *Der Blaue Reiter* the belief of Franz Marc in an art "seeking and painting the inner spiritual side of nature", together with a demand for utter artistic objectivity towards the thing represented. In 1914, Beckmann worked as medical orderly on the front, but was released in 1915, apparently after a nervous breakdown. The experience of the horror of war proved the turning-point for his view of nature and of man. Stylistically and emotionally, his examples became Bruegel, Signorelli and the brutal assault on the emotions of Grünewald, while his stark and heavily outlined figures, massive within the frame,

directly recall the fierceness of Die Brücke artists, of Kirchner and also of Rouault. In his stubborn insistence on veristic representation he is close to some painters of the Neue Sachlichkeit, but Beckmann's intellectual stature, his ego, the thrust and concentration of his vocation, set him apart from all his German contemporaries; indeed the power of his achievement has caused some critics to compare him with Picasso (characteristically, Beckmann himself suggested that Picasso's *Guernica* (see p. 451) was a distorted Beckmann). Undoubtedly he was a myth-maker of the order of Picasso, capable of creating a world of events rationally and even symbolically inexplicable, yet which are compelling as illustrations of hidden but eternal truths.

Beckmann seems to have absorbed what he needed from the compositional methods of the Cubists, but the structural – as it were materialist – concerns obsessing modern movements did not involve him. "Self-realization is the urge of all objective spirits. It is this Ego for which I am searching in my life and in my art

... My way of expressing my Ego is by painting ... Nothing could be more ridiculous or irrelevant than a 'philosophical conception' painted purely intellectually without the fury of the senses grasping each visible form of beauty and ugliness."

Naturally one subject to which he reverted constantly in his search for his ego was his own person – a range of *Self-portraits* in which he appears in various disguises or with strange attributes – horns, saxophones – or as a character in one of his mythologies, or, most tellingly, foursquare as a modern urban man, often in suit and bowler hat, an implacable, unplaceable presence. Leaving Germany on the eve of the Nazi exhibition of "Degenerate Art" in 1937, he established himself in obscure isolation in Paris, and then in Amsterdam. "Nothing shall disturb my composure" is a note that recurs in his diary for the catastrophic year of 1940. In America from 1947 till his death three years later, he re-emerged into critical acceptance, and his stature has since continued to grow.



BECKMANN (left)
Departure, 1932-35
The triptych form evokes a long tradition in north European painting, from Gothic altarpieces to Hans von Marées' Symbolist art in the 19th century, and Nolde's religious triptychs in the 20th. Beckmann began to exploit the full symbolic and monumental potential of the form in 1932 with his *Departure*, the first of nine finished triptychs. The shadow of Christian imagery hangs over its mythical subject: in the left-hand panel the figure bound to a column echoes the flagellation of Christ. Beckmann's friend Perry Rathbone explained *Departure* in these words: "The side panels symbolize, on the left, man's brutality to man in the form of a callous executioner and his victims; on the right, the unbearable tragedy that Nature itself inflicts on human life as symbolized by the mad hallucinations of a woman encumbered by the lifeless form of a man. Out of this earthly night of torment and anguish, the figures of the central panel emerge into the clear light of redemption and release, embarked for eternity." Beckmann said that the centrepiece was the end of the tragedy, but could not be understood except as one part of the whole.

The Sources of Abstract Expressionism

During the 1930s there had been an increasing influx of major European artists to the United States, refugees first from Hitler's repression in Germany and then from total war. Picasso and Matisse and Miró did not come, but Grosz, Léger, Albers and Mondrian did, and also – seminal for the triumphant emergence of American painting in the 1950s – practitioners of Surrealism, Tanguy, Masson, Ernst, and its “Pope”, André Breton. There was also, in Marcel Duchamp, the enigmatic presence, disruptive yet fertilizing, of ongoing Dada.

The significance of these artists for the new American movement was generously acknowledged by Jackson Pollock, destined to be its most famous star, as early as 1944: “The fact that good European moderns are now here is very important, for they bring with them an understanding of the problems of modern painting. I am particularly impressed with their concept of art being the Unconscious.” Yet the very presence of these exiles in the USA indicated the exhaustion of their native European climate; where indeed could art flourish and find a new relevance for a world in violent flux, except in America? The United States emerged in 1945 as the most powerful nation in

the world; during the War, unoccupied, un-bombed, it seemed, in spite of its colossal military commitments to East and West, to have inexhaustible reserves of energy on which even the arts could draw.

The American public, though mainly in New York and only gradually and reluctantly, had become acclimatized to the shocks of modern art since 1913 and the Armory Show. A network, both cultural and commercial, was building up to sustain and increase its interest. The foundation of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1929 was a milestone: it was to develop not only as a museum in the old sense, but also as an active patron and trend-setter. Some of the most famous American private patrons and collectors (notably Gertrude Stein in Paris) were expatriate and orientated to Europe, but others – most famous among them Peggy Guggenheim (1898–1979) – were active and creative agents in America itself. Official acknowledgment of responsibility for the arts, including the avantgarde, had been demonstrated by the Federal Art Project of 1935.

Among indigenous painters, the key transitional figure linking pre-War with post-War American art was Stuart Davis (1894–1964),

who brought a concentrated integrity to his pursuit of pictorial structure. (In a curious parallel to George Stubbs' months-long investigation of equine anatomy in confrontation with horses' carcasses, Davis more or less shut himself up during '1927–28 in contemplation of an egg-beater.) Davis' contribution can be seen as an American extension of Cubism: he was at times close to Léger, but he used colour very differently, bright and clear, solid and flat: “People used to think of colour and form as two things. I think of them as the same thing.” This, together with his conspicuous modernity, his celebration of the banal vocabulary of everyday urban life, was a decisive influence on artists of the 1940s and 1950s, and then on Pop art. Also significant were the Precisionists, a loosely unified group who portrayed contemporary America in a hard-edged, boldly coloured version of Cubism; with them for a time was Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986), who in a long career developed an increasingly abstract imagery, based on magnified organic forms and on the rolling, wind-swept plains of Texas.

American artists looked to the East as well as to the West; they also looked to native art,

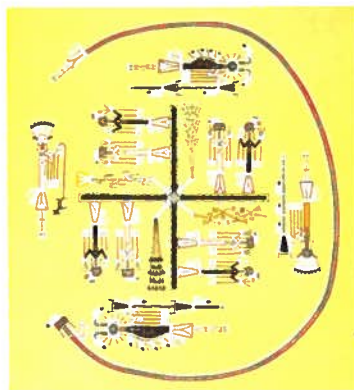


DAVIS (left)
Lucky Strike, 1921
An illusionistic collage from cigarette packets was Davis' answer to Cubist *papiers collés*; he showed a dazzling virtuosity in the tight restructuring of his fragmented urban imagery.



DAVIS (right)
Ultra-Marine, 1943
The forms seem to stomp through Davis' pictures in jazz-like rhythms, in a magnetic dance: “Colour in a painting occupies different positions in space” was his comment.

NAVAJO ARTIST (below)
“Sand painting”, 1966
The painting is performed by a medicine-man, as part of his healing ceremony.



O'KEEFFE (above)
Light coming on the plains II, 1917
The lyrical and evocative

shapes of O'Keeffe's work hover on a delicate border between representation and abstraction pure and free.



MATTA
Stop the age of Hemorrh, c. 1942
Matta's imagery combines

study of ancient cultures with an extensive reading of science fiction and of South American novels.

American Indian and Pre-Columbian. Pollock was fascinated by Mayan glyphs, and was intrigued by Navajo "sand painting", not so much its form as its ritual and the manner of its painting, in large gestures and on the ground. It was the supposed motivation of such "primitive" art, its vital and direct contact with the Unconscious, that chiefly interested the Abstract Expressionists. The Chilean Surrealist Roberto Matta Echaurren (born 1912), who lived in the United States from 1939 to 1948, was instrumental in bringing to their notice the American Indian cultures that suggested his personal mythology.

The two main forerunners of Abstract Expressionism were Arshile Gorky (1905–48), Armenian-born, settled in the United States since 1920, and Hans Hofmann (1880–1966), German-born, who migrated to America in 1930. Gorky by 1942 had arrived at a very free calligraphic brushwork, very bright in colour, often entirely without figurative reference. "I never finish a painting – I just stop working on it for a while. I like painting because it's something I never come to an end of." Such statements, no less than his paintings, indicate his importance as a transitional figure for



HOFMANN
Untitled, 1943
Much of Hofmann's work is founded on his theory of

"tensions" – he believed conflicting forces should be contained in a painting, in a tenuous equilibrium.

GORKY (right)
Water of the flowery mill, 1944

Gorky, born in Armenia as Vosdanig Adoian, emigrated first to Russia and then to America, where he worked through the styles of the fathers of modern art, Picasso and Cézanne, of the Surrealists Miro, Matta, and of Kandinsky. He developed a personal Surrealism that verges on Abstract Expressionism; mercurial forms coagulate and merge, as fluid as the rich paint creating them. A devastating fire in his studio, an operation for cancer, a car accident that prevented him painting, his wife's adultery and his own impotence precipitated the artist's suicide at 44.



Abstract Expressionism, but his painterliness always reflected his European origins. Hofmann established a profoundly influential school in New York in 1934. He not only was able to provide a forcefully articulated theoretical support for non-figurative art, but remained very open to the stimulus of the new. In particular he reflected Symbolist ideas, of the independence of the world of art from the world of appearances; he used colour to express mood as Kandinsky had, yet retained a feeling for form that stems from Cézanne and Cubism. Anticipating Pollock, he had even experimented with "drip" techniques in 1940, but his own most magical colouristic inventions, coming at the end of his life, express a radiant serenity very far from Pollock's.

Mark Tobey (1890–1978) was never part of the Abstract Expressionist movement; rather, his work ran in parallel with it. He was crucially influenced by oriental example – by Japanese Zen philosophy and painting (see p. 294) with its own kind of "automatism".

After World War II New York was established with remarkable speed as the world centre of avantgarde art, displacing Paris, and so remained for the next 15 years.



GORKY (above)
The limit, 1947
Greys and blacks pervade the works painted during the depression of Gorky's last years. Despite their appearance of spontaneity, even of automatism, they evolved from sketches, sometimes squared up and transferred to the canvas.

TOBEY (below)
Forms follow man, 1941
These frenzied meshes of agitated lines and forms Tobey once called "white writing"; they were directly inspired by his study of oriental scripts. Though his work seems sometimes to anticipate Pollock's, it is not so free, and on a small scale.



HOFMANN (left)
Radiant space, 1955
Hofmann brought with him to America long experience of teaching, in Paris and in Munich. This he imparted to the fledgling Abstract Expressionists attending his school in New York. In later work he managed to amalgamate his European and American careers in paintings of an expressive abstraction often somewhat like de Stael's (see p. 472).



Jackson Pollock



NAMUTH (above)
Jackson Pollock, 1952
Namuth's photographs contributed to Pollock's fame, especially after his death. Magazine articles proliferated, discussing Pollock's private life in as much detail as his art. He was the first American artist to become a star.

POLLOCK (below)
Self-portrait, 1933
Pollock was often to be found in the Benton home in his early days in New York. Benton commented: "He was mostly a silent, inwardly turned boy, and even in gay company had something of an aura of unhappiness about him."



POLLOCK (right)
Pasiphaë, 1943
The wife of King Minos of Crete, Pasiphaë, was impregnated by a bull and so produced the Minotaur. The original title was *Moby Dick*; both legends featured huge, primordial animals. Between the Wars Jung had begun to inter-

pret myths as metaphors of the working of psychic energies; Pollock, in the early 1940s, painted a set of works inspired by myths in which elemental forces seem to figure. *Pasiphaë* bears a strong resemblance to Picasso's *Guernica* (see p. 451); Pollock had copied some preliminary drawings.

Jackson Pollock (1912-56) was born in Cody, Wyoming. His father was an unsuccessful farmer, and later a government land surveyor: Pollock, in his teens, experienced the vast, elemental landscape of Arizona and the Grand Canyon and also, on surveying trips with his father, came into contact with Indian culture. Moving to New York in 1929, he was taught by Thomas Hart Benton (see p. 454), a leading figure in the American Realist tradition, portraying the rural and small-town Midwest. His subject matter only briefly influenced Pollock, but possibly Benton's rhythmic control of paint and his truculent, independent character made an impression that was to last. Pollock's restlessness was expressed in long, lonely hitch-hiking journeys about America; an addiction to alcohol began very early. In 1938 he started work for the Federal Arts Project and managed to stay with it, somewhat unsatisfactorily, until it ceased in 1943. By then he was in analysis. In the same year, 1943, he signed a one-year contract with Peggy Guggenheim, the most prestigious collector and dealer in wartime New York, and in a group exhibition at her gallery was singled out by the critic Clement Greenberg, who was in no small

part responsible for establishing Pollock's controversial fame. In 1945, Pollock married the painter Lee Krasner and moved to Springs, Long Island. There he remained based, while his work became celebrated not only in New York but throughout the world. In 1956, he was killed in a car crash.

By the time of his death, Pollock was already a legendary figure, having fulfilled the public's expectations of a Bohemian artist by outrageous behaviour to match his outrageous pictures. Physically large and impressive, he was also gentle and somewhat inarticulate, almost shy, when sober; when drunk, he would become violently aggressive, hell-bent on shattering the conventions of ordinary society. The existence of his psychological difficulties is well attested, though the interpretation of them differs; it is clear, however, that he had a core of violence – seeking, and sometimes finding, release in his work – which could be irritated beyond control when he was threatened by success, by acceptance by the society whose conventions he scorned but on whom he depended for his livelihood. To his Jungian analyst, his condition when painting suggested "a parallel with similar states of mind ritually



POLLOCK (left)
Going west, 1934-35
The influence of Benton is present not only in the subject matter but also in the undulating contours, in the thick, turbulent paint. Some of this, however, may reflect Pollock's youthful admiration for El Greco. He studied with Benton for two years; he thought his time with Benton was "important as something against which to react very strongly, later on".



induced among tribal societies or in shamanistic trance states". He was anti-intellectual, though highly intelligent, and drew deliberately in his mature work on the irrational depths of the Unconscious.

Pollock's early work was influenced by the Mexican Revolutionary painters: they taught him, it has been said, by their expressive, often violent use of paint, "that art could be ugly". The large scale of Mexican work, especially the murals, impressed him, and Siqueiros introduced him to new materials and techniques, of crucial importance in Pollock's development, since his style was not only conditioned but even generated by his media and the way they could be handled. Picasso and Surrealist influences (especially from Miró) had their effect on Pollock's tumultuous figurative symbolism of the late 1930s. In the early 1940s, Pollock's "totemic" period, his work was full of mysterious forms associated with those primordial strata of the imagination from which "primitive" art was thought to emerge. The preoccupation with symbols vanished about 1946, and the non-figurative, "all-over" work for which he is famous began. His method is well known from Hans Namuth's

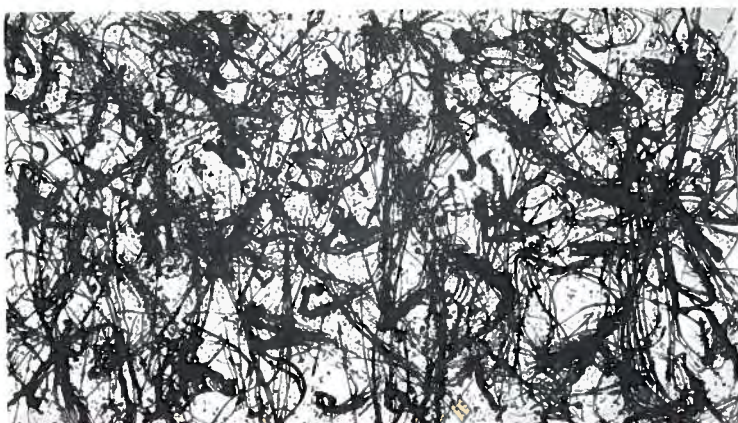
photographs and films of him "in the act", and from his own description.

"My painting does not come from the easel. I hardly ever stretch my canvas before painting. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor, I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides, and literally be *in* the painting. This is akin to the method of the Indian sand painters of the west. I continue to get further away from the usual painter's tools, such as easel, palette, brushes etc. I prefer sticks, trowels, knives and dripping fluid paint or a heavy impasto with sand, broken glass and other foreign matter added. When I am *in* my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It's only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about ... the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through ..."

With paint trailed, dribbled, dropped, splashed, smacked across expanses of canvas – often huge – the resulting object is an immensely complex network of linear colour. It denies traditional perspective, emphasizes the

flatness of the picture plane yet also creates a mysterious depth in its interstices. The method recalls Surrealist "automatism", though Pollock also claimed: "I *can* control the flow of the paint, there is no accident, just as there is no beginning and no end." To a bewildered public the result was at first insultingly incomprehensible, meaningless, devoid of form, yet as Pollock's work settles in history its original quality, then felt to be expressive of anger, revolt, even mindless violence, takes on enduring conviction; while losing none of its vitality, it seems now a classic statement.

There was a desperate, doomed aura about several artists associated with Abstract Expressionism, and Pollock's death, whether self-inflicted or drunken or purely accidental, seemed the necessary fulfilment of a death-wish. Intensely subjective, Abstract Expressionism demanded of its practitioners a total, almost religious, commitment but, with no established structure of tradition to support them, they were way out on their own, and for some the loneliness, the strain of freedom, proved too much. They were, in fact, true pioneers. The originality of the Abstract Expressionists was their American own.



POLLOCK (left)
No. 32, 1950

Pollock produced a number of works between 1950 and 1952 using black paint only. Their rhythmic quality has since been likened to jazz improvisations with their off-beat tempi and sudden stresses. His habit of numbering his canvases has been explained by his wife, Lee: "Numbers are neutral, they make people look at the picture for what it is – pure painting."



NAMUTH (above)

Pollock painting, 1950
Namuth also photographed Pollock at work, and made two films of the progress of a painting from start to finish. "It was a great drama", Namuth said, "– the flame of explosion when the paint hit the canvas; the dance-like movement; the eyes tormented before knowing where to strike ... my hands were trembling."



POLLOCK (left)
Convergence, 1952

This is one of Pollock's last paintings using the "drip" technique; in his few late works he reverted to a more formal method. It was originally one of the black paintings, and the scrawling network of black lines and splashes can be seen beneath the trails of floating white and primary colours – fixed in a state of flux, seething and dynamic.

Abstract Expressionism: The New York School

The term "Abstract Expressionism" seems to have first been used in Berlin in 1919; re-discovered in America about 1929, as relevant to aspects of Kandinsky's early abstract work, it came into general currency about 1946 to describe the work of a group of American painters centred in New York – though they only very loosely formed a group, and denied that they were abstract. An alternative label, "Action Painting", was coined in 1952 by Harold Rosenberg (born 1906); he and Clement Greenberg (born 1909) were the most influential critics, apologists and expounders of the new movement, which became known also as "The New York school". By 1955, it had become almost a new orthodoxy, matched by parallel or dependent movements in Western Europe under various titles – "Tachisme", "Art Informel", "Abstraction Lyrique"; in whatever guise, it was the expression of fervent individualism, and the communist cultures of Eastern Europe rejected it entirely.

Some of the European, native American and oriental antecedents of Abstract Expressionism have been suggested on page 458. The American upsurge differed from most European abstraction precisely in that it did not

depend on an initial abstraction from perceived nature. The paintings had no context in the European tradition of representation or illusionism. The whole painting – the support, canvas or board, and the paint on it – became both subject and object, its primary reality; it was not an abstraction but a physical presence. This presence was emphasized by the very large scale on which most of the Abstract Expressionists worked.

Action painting was carried out at arm's length, with wide and rhythmic sweeps of a large and loaded brush, if brush were used; or,

in Pollock's style, the artist almost climbed into the canvas, laid flat on the floor, and swung and dripped paint from the can. From such techniques the "all-over" character of the paintings emerged naturally. The limits of the canvas edges might impose a shape, although Pollock often cut his work for stretching and framing only after he had finished painting. As traditional concepts of composition, space, volume and depth were jettisoned, so the flatness of the picture plane came to be respected, and the varying insistences of colours, in ambiguous relationship with it, came to be

STILL (below)
1957-D no. 1, 1957
Still's enormous canvases dominate the spectator. Their effect is enhanced by

the flames of paint which seem to move in and out of the canvas, suggesting that what is there is only a part of something even larger.



GUSTON (left)
Dial, 1956
Guston used to paint very close to his canvas for hours without stopping, so that he became completely immersed in his painting. Using different tones he built up throbbing areas of colour – hence the title "Abstract Impressionism".

GUSTON (right)
Untitled, 1958
Blacks and dark greys start to appear in Guston's work in the late 1950s, and these paintings are more sombre in mood. The brushwork is freer; he lets the viewer trace in the movements of the brush all the hesitations and doubts that are integral to the action of painting.



KLINE (above)
Orange and black wall, 1959
The major part of Kline's work is in black and white – so stressing the stroke – but throughout he also used colour; his pictures became increasingly larger – this is literally of mural size.

KLINE (left)
Mahoning, 1956
Mahoning is a county in Pennsylvania, Kline's native state. He habitually painted what seem to be memories of the local landscape, an industrial area dissected by numerous railway lines.



cherished. The physical action – or exertion – of painting became almost as much an end as a means, and the resulting imagery was the most direct expression, visceral rather than intellectual, of the artist's unconscious being.

Painting was a process of self-discovery by the artist. Artists' selves, however, obviously differ, and so the work of the leading figures in the movement differs likewise, not only in the expressive imagery that they used (or that used them) but in their techniques and attitudes. They can be categorized, if only for convenience, within two poles, the active, and the passive or contemplative. The passive element was common in some degree to all of them, in that they were the instruments of the Unconscious; and they all acted in "psychic improvisation". In some, however, the activity is violent and aggressive in gesture: as time passes, Pollock (see preceding page) and De Kooning (see over) emerge even more clearly as the outstanding figures at this end of the spectrum. The contemplative procedures of Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman mark the passive end, and they are considered beside the later, more colouristic painters (see p. 466). The work of Philip Guston, Clyfford Still,

Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb and the ever experimental and articulate Hans Hofmann seems to lie between these two poles; except Hofmann (see p. 458), who was of an older generation, these are the painters illustrated here.

Clyfford Still (1904-80), always a detached figure, worked on a very large scale, his characteristic image being a heavily impasted, jagged form silhouetted in dramatic contrast against a broad, even plane of colour. Philip Guston (1913-80) had his own, highly personal variation, sometimes called "Abstract Impressionism"; from this he moved to a more expressive style in the late 1950s. The vigorous gestural work of Franz Kline (1910-62) has sometimes been compared to gigantically enlarged fragments of Chinese calligraphy; his best-known work was fiercely black and white, but he early began using colour, too. Robert Motherwell (born 1915), originally a scholar rather than a painter, was one of the theorists of the movement – articulate, involved with Existentialist philosophy, seeing painting as an essentially ethical activity. His work is bold and simple, often with symbolic, sometimes figurative and even political connotations.

Still's close contemporary Adolph Gottlieb (1903-74) exploited Surrealist imagery in the 1930s, but was also deeply interested in Indian art, and from this he developed in the 1940s his so-called "pictographs", characterized by very Freudian imagery. In the 1950s, his theme became abstract *Imaginary Landscapes*; these he distilled still further, and at the same time expanded to heroic scale, in his *Burst* series, variations on the theme of an overriding solar orb, luminous above an explosion of colours on Earth – paintings with an apocalyptic presence. The mystic vision developed by the younger painter Sam Francis (born 1923) was lighter, more optimistic – a series of large canvases of the 1950s in which colour runs, coalesces and spills over the canvas. Once described as a "portrait of the surface of the unconscious mind", the result, formless, evanescent as clouds moving in the upper air, invokes meditation. Francis is arguably not of the New York school, since he worked both in Japan and in Paris: his canvases sometimes have the effect almost of a late Monet *Water-lily* painting, while they look forward also to the so-called "colour-field" painting of the 1960s (see p. 466).



GOTTLIEB (below)
Black and black, 1959
Gottlieb's *Burst* series explores the relationship between two shapes, circle and rough rectangle, which have symbolic resonances – of harmony and violence, of freedom and control.

MOTHERWELL (above)
The voyage, 1949
The title is a tribute to a poem by Baudelaire, *Le Voyage*, which described modern art as travelling into unknown territory, much as Motherwell felt he and others were doing.

MOTHERWELL (right)
Elegy to the Spanish Republic no. 34, 1953-54
Motherwell denied that his *Elegies* – there are more than 100 – were political; he called them "general metaphors of the contrast between life and death".



FRANCIS (left)
Summer no. 2, 1958
Francis was Still's pupil in San Francisco and was influenced by Pollock's "drip" technique. He took as his basic theme tensions created between splashes and dribbles of vibrant colour against brilliantly white grounds. Unlike many Abstract Expressionists of the older generation his work lacks symbolic content; he was concerned solely with the emotive values latent in colour, especially white, to him "ringing silence ... an endless, ultimate point at the end of your life".

De Kooning: Woman I



DE KOONING: *Woman I*, 1950–52



DE KOONING (above)
Woman sitting, 1943–44
The thin washes of paint, the muted, delicate tones and graceful drawing recall some works (see p. 458) by Gorky, a fellow-European sharing with De Kooning a studio and an admiration for Picasso and Cubism. Gorky, however, painted very few figurative works.



DE KOONING (right)
Woman, 1943
No more than a fraction of De Kooning's 1940s work is extant. His reluctance to finish a painting was ingrained; if possibilities of further work on a canvas seemed unpromising, then often he would destroy it.

The stature of Willem De Kooning (born 1904) is today clear: he was, with Pollock, the strongest and most original force amongst the painters associated with Abstract Expressionism. The intensity of dispute about the relative success or failure of his various shifts of style and subject is perhaps more telling as a witness to his importance than as criticism. While he was always committed to the physical, gestural side of Abstract Expressionism – a true, relentless Action Painter – De Kooning's work represents a figurative element in the movement: figuration seems to lurk in the tormented surface of his paint almost throughout his career: it emerges irresistibly, thrashing demonically through it.

De Kooning migrated from his native Holland to New York when aged 23. By 1939 he was a member of the group soon to be known as the New York school, and especially close to Arshile Gorky. In the 1930s he had painted, in rather delicate greyish, pinkish, greenish tones, alternately pure abstracts and what was virtually traditional figuration. By 1948, when he had his first one-man show, De Kooning's work was generally similar in effect to Pollock's – vigorous, gestural, and often in black and white, for he could not always afford to buy colour, although he was already celebrated in New York avantgarde circles. In

DE KOONING (right)
Excavation, 1950
Although De Kooning was at his closest to complete abstraction in *Excavation*, its shapes tend to suggest wild ghostly dancers. The painting was very heavily worked, reworked, scraped, rubbed and slashed, until its surface accumulated a solid, densely charged, intricately meshed relief.



DE KOONING (below right)
Study for *Woman*, 1949–52
Greenberg had described De Kooning's aims, before the *Women* alienated him, with sympathy – to recover "a distinct image of the human figure, yet without sacrificing anything of abstract painting's decorative and physical force".



DE KOONING (below)
Woman on the dune, 1967
Splayed legs and a toothy grin are the only parts of

the woman that are clearly decipherable; the rest of her is inextricably united with the riotous landscape.



Excavation, an important work of 1950, he did use colour; as soon as this abstract had left the studio he was at work on *Woman I*. He continued to work on it for two years (it has been called "a noble battlefield rather than a completed painting"). Finished, or at least desisted from, in 1952, it was exhibited, with five other *Women*, nos II–VI, at his third one-man show in 1953; bought by the Museum of Modern Art, it became one of the most widely reproduced paintings of the 1950s and at the same time a focus for pugnacious controversy amongst not only public but critics: the two most influential critics of the New York avantgarde disagreed violently, Clement Greenberg attacking with the rage of one betrayed, Harold Rosenberg remaining De Kooning's most loyal and articulate supporter. The believers in a rigorously abstract art were dismayed; the general public was shocked by the gross grinning ugliness of De Kooning's presentation of a classical subject, "the idol, the Venus, the nude", as he said.

On first impact, the image is indeed sinister, threatening. It has been construed as a satire on women, an ejaculation of fascinated horror at sexuality, an attempt at exorcism of the threatening Black Goddess or Earth Mother. De Kooning has insisted that it is also funny (specifically, "hilarious"), and that its banality

is deliberate ("I seem always to be wrapped in the melodrama of vulgarity") – this banality was later to be exploited, in very different techniques, by Pop artists. The ferocious leer is a sharpening of the toothpaste smile of magazine pin-ups: De Kooning liked to cut the smiles from the magazines, and in a *Woman* study of about 1950–51 the cut-out smile is pasted directly on to the oil-paint. ("I felt everything ought to have a mouth.") Portions of the anatomy of the *Women* were interchangeable: De Kooning often did drawings of details and tried them for size, pinning them here or there on the canvas.

Violence, energy and ambiguity are staple characteristics of De Kooning's work, but they are not used destructively; instead they are activated as part of the process of establishing an aesthetic order. In his later work, there is an element of landscape involved in the paint, and the female figures in the landscapes all tend to merge back into the vigorous brushwork: many of his later paintings seem closer to pure abstraction, and some find in them a falling off in power, compared to his earlier work. De Kooning is probably not worried. He once said: "Painting the *Woman* was a mistake. It could not be done . . . In the end I failed. But it didn't bother me . . . I felt it was really an accomplishment."

Abstract Developments 1: Colour-Field

Several important artists in America in the late 1940s and the 1950s were experimenting with the use of flat areas or fields of colour to induce contemplation in the beholder – even to a pitch of mystic intensity. Most of them are generally described as of the New York school and as Abstract Expressionists, but if they were Abstract Expressionists they were very much on the passive wing of that movement, in contrast to the agitation of Pollock or De Kooning, though it is hard to draw a dividing line – Clyfford Still's work, for example (see p. 462), can be thunderous in mood, but is positively severe in contrast with Pollock's action. The work of these artists was on a very large scale, in which it differed sharply from the related investigations of Albers and others, the scale being necessary to the creation of the effect.

The senior and most distinguished of these "colour-field" painters was Mark Rothko (1903–70), Russian-born, but brought up in the United States; he has been described, with Still, as the chief exponent of the "American Sublime". He had first exhibited in 1929, and by about 1940 was working in an expressively Surrealistic vein, busy with biomorphic imagery not unlike Gorky's (see p. 459). By 1947,

however, he was evolving the formula to which he was to remain faithful for the rest of his life. This formula, though generally interpreted on a monumental scale, is almost as simple as that of Albers' square (see over). Rothko's rectangular canvases proffer, on an even-coloured ground or field, two or three rectangles of different colours, varying in width or in height but seldom in both, disposed precisely horizontal or vertical. There, however, precision ends, for the colour is washed or stained with shifting tones, shifting luminous intensities, while the edges of the rectangles blur out of definition until the colour seems to float – and, so powerful and intense is the impression of mysterious radiance flooding from these great canvases, the spectator in contemplating them may seem almost to float, too.

"I am for the simple expression of complex thoughts", said Rothko, and indeed his best work invites and seduces to always unconcluded meditation. It is at its most potent when several canvases surround the onlooker, as in the series, on an heroic scale, at Harvard and in a chapel at Houston, Texas, which reproduces for a twentieth-century sensibility the effect of Bernini's Cornaro chapel (see p. 190) –



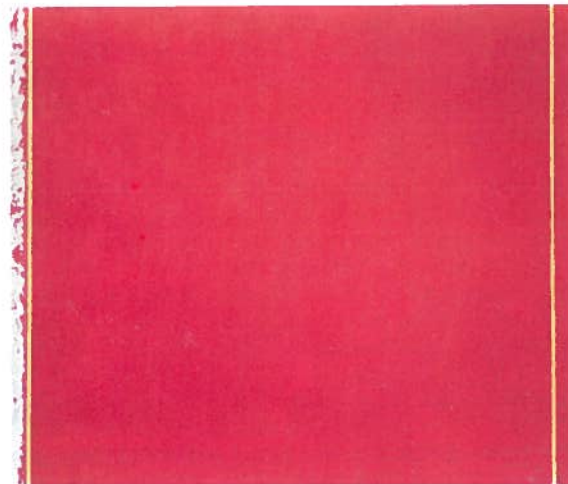
ROTHKO (above)
Central green, 1949
Rothko declared that he set out to use colour in

such a way that it would stimulate in the spectator an emotional reaction, such as ecstasy or melancholy.



ROTHKO (above)
The Rothko room, Tate Gallery, London, 1958–59
Rothko required progress "towards clarity, towards the elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and between the idea and the observer. As examples of such obstacles I give ... memory, history, geometry."

NEWMAN (right)
The third, 1962
A writer and dialectician as well as a painter and also a sculptor, Newman has had battles of words with many; one of his best witticisms is "Aesthetics is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds."



NEWMAN (above)
Concord, 1949
By rejecting utterly all the traditional ingredients of painting, such as depth, figuration, shape or form, Newman believed that he

was making an assertion of freedom. He once said in an interview that if the world could read his work correctly it would abolish all state or totalitarian control of the individual.

totally involving the onlooker, who becomes a participant. Rothko's first such commission was for a set of canvases to decorate the Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram building in New York: he produced in fact three sets, each more sombre in colour, and finally withdrew from the commission altogether. He later selected eight of the final set to be hung in the Tate Gallery, London, where he knew his paintings would be hanging under the same roof as Turner's.

Barnett Newman (1905-70) was associated with Rothko and Motherwell in the founding of an art school on Eighth Avenue, New York, in 1947 and with the Abstract Expressionist group in general: he worked for a time on the magazine *The Tiger's Eye*, which voiced the opinions of many of the group. In his mature work he arrived at even more simplified solutions than Rothko, and was never influenced by the gestural painting of Pollock. His formula already by 1950 was closer to the investigations of Mondrian or of Constructivism than to those of either Rothko or Pollock, although, like Pollock, he sought inspiration in the elemental art of the North American Indians, finding there a "terror before the

unknowable". In his formula, however, the mystical aim is distilled down to the sparsest symbolic geometry: the composition is that of the rectangular canvas, essentially a field of colour divided by one or more vertical stripes. Newman seems to have seen this reduction also as an assertion of the sublime; though his paint is still laid on, applied not stained, and the brush-marks remain, Newman's work is unimpassioned in character, and essentially "cool" in the sense that the young abstract painters of the 1960s would be cool. Close in mood both to Newman and to Rothko was William Baziotes (1912-63), though he developed a style that verged on the figurative as theirs never did; his paintings contain often relatively complex shapes suggestive of animate or inanimate forms.

One figure crucial to the development of colour-field painting was Helen Frankenthaler (born 1928). After working in a Cubist tradition, she moved into an Abstract Expressionist key in the early 1950s, making a significant development of Pollock's "drip" technique. In a painting of 1952, *Mountains and sea*, the paint, rather than being dripped and trailed on the prostrate but primed canvas, is instead

stained or soaked, diluted very thin into raw, unprimed cloth, and becomes integral with it rather than applied. The method allows the spontaneity and immediacy of Pollock's work, but mutes his "bravura rhetoric". Through Frankenthaler's work generally there emerges a sensation of landscape, of lyricism, of lightness and airiness.

When in 1952 Morris Louis (1912-62) visited New York from Washington, he was as much impressed by *Mountains and sea* as by Pollock's work, and in 1954 he developed a refinement of its technique, using thinned acrylic paint, very liquid, on unprimed cotton duck. In his series called *Veils*, the translucent colours, the weave and texture of the cloth, drift down in inextricable unity: the illusion of depth, reduced in Pollock's work but still present there, is eliminated. In his last works, influenced partly by his younger friend, Noland (see p. 470), he produced his *Unfurled* and *Pillar* series, in which he set off rivulets or stripes of opaque and brilliant colour against a vast white blankness of the canvas. His work became increasingly impersonal, closer to the hard-edge colour investigations of Albers (see over) and others.



BAZIOTES (left)
White bird, 1957
Baziotes differs from most Abstract Expressionists in his attention to subject matter, though he was no more willing to be tied down by it than the rest. His images are free forms.



FRANKENTHALER (right)
Mountains and sea, 1952
The seminal importance of this painting's technique has tended to overshadow its fine formal qualities. Frankenthaler abandoned in later work its whipping, wiry lines of charcoal.



LOUIS (below)
Floral, 1959
The achievement of Louis' mature work was built on a foundation provided by Frankenthaler. Louis said of her: "She was a bridge between Pollock and what was possible".



LOUIS (above)
Gamma zeta, 1960
The expanse of "unfurling", nearly 4m (12ft) across, bound only by the banks of

rivulets, suggests an abyss into which the spectator is drawn. The scale of the canvas makes it possible to take it in as a whole only

from a great distance, and as the viewer approaches there is a growing feeling of magnetic attraction and of unavoidable engulfment.

Albers: Homage to the Square

The post-War movement in painting that shocked and dazzled the eyes of the Western world in the 1950s was the Abstract Expressionism of the New York school. The scale of their paintings, the unorthodox behaviour of the painters – the noise of it all – diverted the attention of the media and the general public from other, parallel trends in art. These did not, however, wither away. Problems of harmony and proportion in abstract painting were being explored by Josef Albers (1888-1976), who had been teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina since 1933, when he migrated there from the Bauhaus (see p. 439), closed in that year by the Nazis.

ALBERS (right)

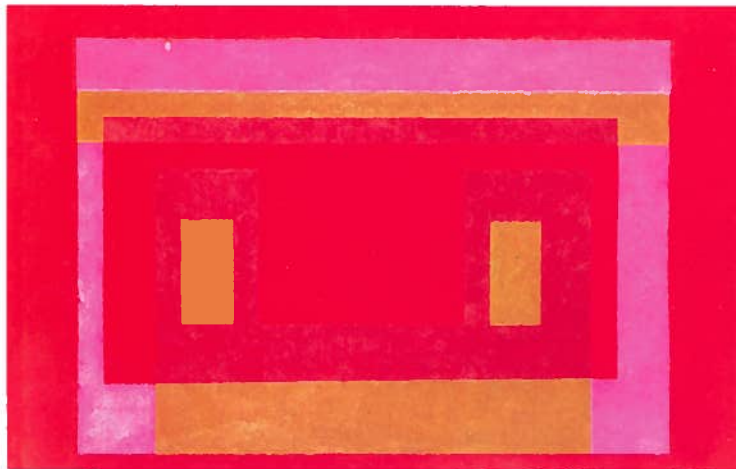
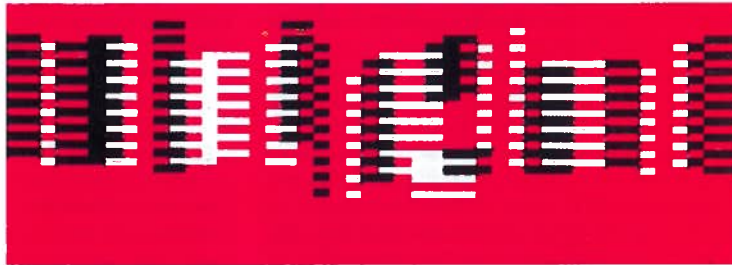
Fugue, 1925

This is a good example of Albers' Bauhaus work, on opaque glass. The colour is removed through stencils to reveal the glass beneath.

ALBERS (below)

Variation in red, 1948

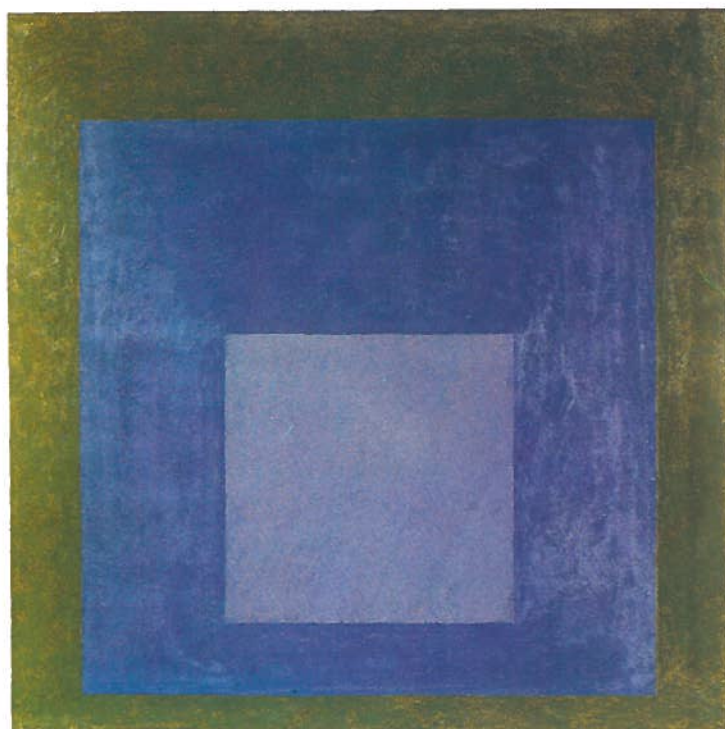
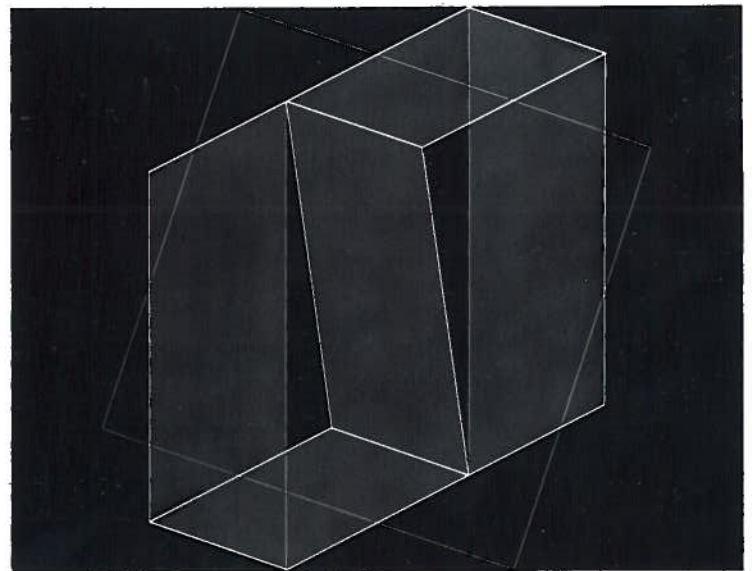
Each of the *Variations on a Theme* has the same basic geometry in varied colours.



ALBERS (below)

Transformation of a scheme no. 24, 1952

The disturbing optical effect prefigures Op Art. This, too, is from a series.



ALBERS

Studies for Homage to the Square:

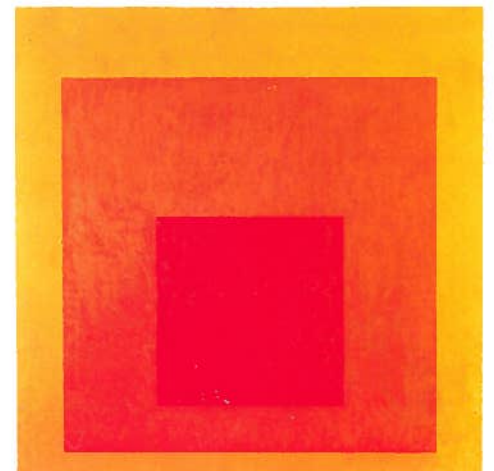
(left) *Rain forest*, 1965;

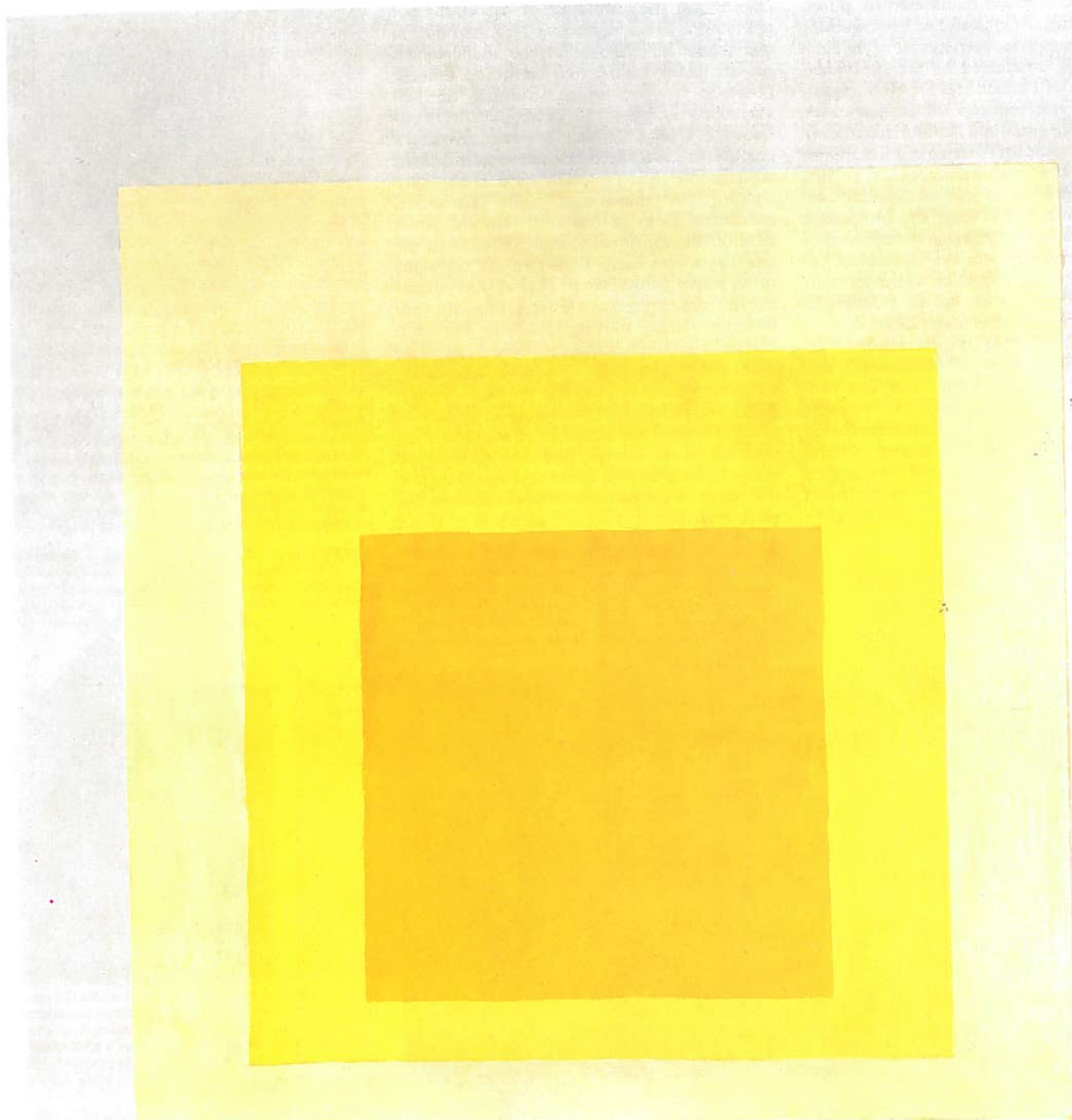
(right) *R-NW IV*, 1966

In all the variations the largest square measures 10 units; the other squares set within it measure a varying number of units or half units. These two show a progression from base to top of $\frac{1}{2}$:1:4:3:1 $\frac{1}{2}$; across the ratios are 1:2:4:2:1. *Confirming* (far right) has four squares, not three; the ratios are from base to top $\frac{1}{2}$: $\frac{1}{2}$:4:1 $\frac{1}{2}$:1 $\frac{1}{2}$; across the ratios are 1:1:1:4:1:1:1.

moved to Yale, in 1950, did he begin in earnest the sequence called *Homage to the Square*.

Homage to the Square consists of hundreds of paintings and prints all within a square format; though they vary in size, they all feature three or four squares, superimposed – a nest of squares positioned with vertical but not horizontal symmetry. Some are distinguished, within the series, by lyrical subtitles (*Distended*, *Softly spoken*, *Curious* etc.); some are only numbered. Albers used the formula to demonstrate his abiding belief in an essential dichotomy of art, “the discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect”. Thus the linear structure of his square pictures is of the most simple, unarguable clarity. The colour structure is created likewise in evenly applied paint, straight from the tube; the colour of each of the three or four squares usually has no variation of intensity, and so should be completely inexpressive of any quality other than its particular blueness, redness – its local colour. In fact, in the eyes of the onlooker, the flat picture plane becomes three-dimensional as one colour seems to advance, another to recede, according to its nature; furthermore, the pure evenness of colour within each square is affected optically by reaction to its neighbours – and all the colours shift character as the light in which they are seen changes. The colour is a mystery floating on the canvas, independent of the lines which contain it.



ALBERS: Study for *Homage to the Square* - Confirming, 1971

Albers thought long and deeply on colour phenomena; his treatise *Interaction of Color* was published in 1963. He also played with another form of optical illusion in a series of linear drawings, black on white or vice versa, called *Structural Constellation* – the abstract equivalent of Escher's famous figurative nonsense drawings (see p. 423). He was not, however, the slave to a need to produce a closed logical system, and in *Homage to the Square* he presents the problem in an endless series of solutions, or variations, of the unreconciled yet reconciled co-existence of colour and geometrical linear structure on his canvases. He was

also a poet, and some of his poems state the paradox with equal wit and clarity.

Initial confrontation with a single Albers painting may be disappointing: they need really to be seen in a sequence, when the variation in scale, in the internal relationships of the nesting squares, but above all the play of colour over and through the invariable physical fact of the square, make their full impact.

Homage to the Square was the climax of Albers' remarkable career as a transitional figure between the European traditions and the new American. His work evolved from the European, non-objective art of the Construc-

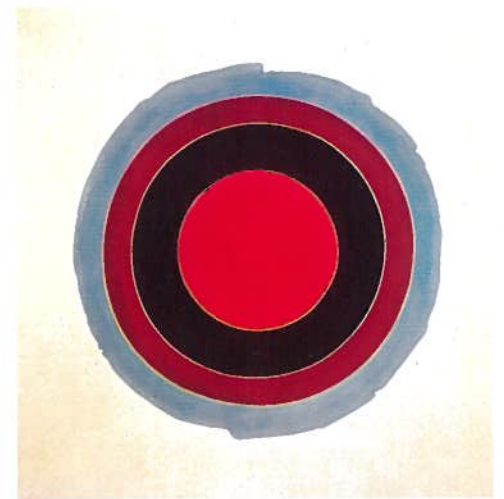
tivists – of the early Russians, of Mondrian and De Stijl – through the aesthetic, and the moral and social commitment, of the Bauhaus. It is European in scale, best when small and intense (his large-scale murals were done by assistants from his blueprints); some have likened his *Homage to Monet's* famous series. His heirs, however, were the Americans of the late 1950s and the 1960s, who, while respecting the Abstract Expressionist achievement, found in his work a pattern and an intense colour sensation on which they could build (see over). Later again, his interest in perception became relevant for Op and even Conceptual art.

Abstract Developments 2: Hard-Edge and Minimal

Ad Reinhardt (1913-67) emerged as a major figure in the 1950s, pursuing with rigour an impersonal abstraction dominated by purely formal problems. Reinhardt had been working in a fairly geometric, rectangular style since the late 1930s, unaffected by the expressive, gestural work of Pollock and De Kooning; by the 1950s he had reduced his elements even further than Newman and Rothko (see p. 466): he painted series, each in terms of a field of one colour – red, blue and, finally, black. At first glance these may seem just rectangular canvases painted in one colour; the component rectangles or squares lurking in the colour only gradually emerge. His aim was “art-as-art”, to be achieved only by reduction to the ultimate abstraction – “no other art or painting is detached or empty or immaterial enough” – and his severity was highly influential.

The impersonal effect of Reinhardt's and also of Newman's and Albers' canvases provoked a strong response from the younger artists who would form the “hard-edge” wing of colour-field painting. Kenneth Noland (born 1924) looked at Pollock but “could gain no lead from him”. As it had been for his friend Morris Louis (see p. 466), Frankenthaler's

technique of colour-staining was seminal for Noland, and he, too, integrated his acrylic colour into the substance of the cloth, not applying it to the surface as Newman did, in oil; colour materializes in the shape of his picture. Like Louis, too, he would become obsessed by one image, working through variations on it until its possibilities were exhausted. Unlike Louis', however, Noland's colours, in a lucid high key, are usually defined with geometrical precision by a knife-sharp contour, the “hard edge”. His first series, concentric rings of colour within the white field of the unprimed canvas, dates from the late 1950s and early 1960s. About the same time, Jasper Johns (see p. 484) was investigating the same image, as a *Target*, but with very different aims, moving towards Pop art; Noland's interests, however, have more to do with the workings of colour vision, after-images, induced colours and the like – Op art. Later on, in variations on a chevron theme, Noland shifted the image to an asymmetrical position on the canvas, and then allowed the image to form its own white field and to dictate the shape of the picture: in works such as the elongated-diamond-shaped canvases of about



NOLAND (above)
Ember, 1960
Though moving towards a hard-edged style, Noland sometimes in this series would leave the outer ring unfinished, suggesting that the whole is pulsating and expelling unwanted energy.

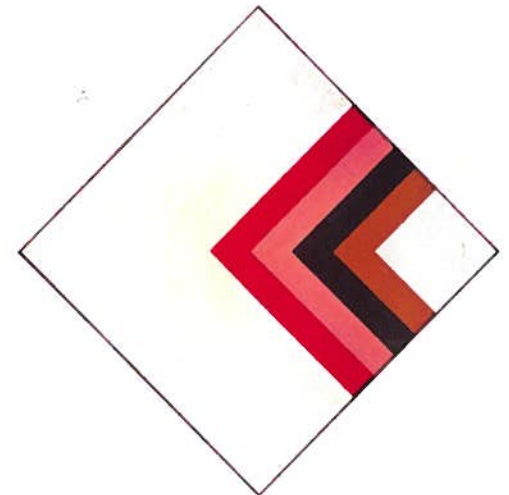
NOLAND (below)
Apart, 1965
For two years Noland was at Black Mountain College with Albers; the fruits of their contact are evident in Noland's hard edges, his concentration on one image, the kind of image he chose.

REINHARDT (below)
Untitled, 1948
Reinhardt's earliest work shows the assimilation of various abstract styles: prime and prior was the

influence of Mondrian (not least the late work, see p. 437) and of Stuart Davis. His paintings of the 1930s are hard-edged and bright in colour, but during a period

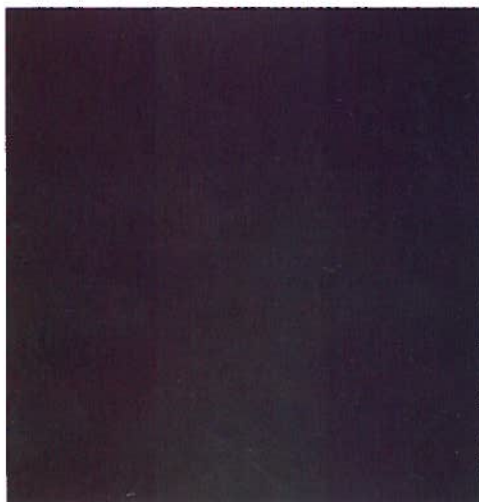
of close contact with the Abstract Expressionists in the 1940s he softened both the angularity and the colour of his painting. Reinhardt's intention, to

produce an art devoid of any external associations, was shared by Rothko and Newman, but his work is purer, if only because its emotional effect is less.

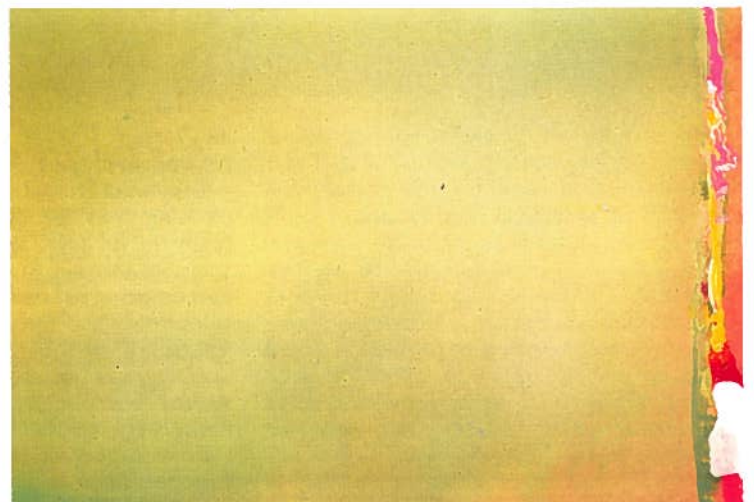


OLITSKI (below)
Green goes around, 1967
Olitski's works have been described as “the first fully abstract version of Impressionism”. They are built up from layers of

sprayed paint which shift in hazes across the canvas with a result reminiscent of the atmospheric effects of Monet's *Waterlilies* (see p. 374); Olitski spent a year studying in Paris.



REINHARDT (left)
Black painting, 1960-66
Reinhardt has described his progression towards the black squares as a search for an image like that of the Buddha, which he once called “breathless, timeless, styleless, lifeless, deathless, endless”. His ultimate aim was, he said, “to paint and repaint the same things over and over again, to repeat and refine the one uniform form again and again” – which is a Minimal art.



1966, the unity of image, colour, surface and object is absolute. Some of his vast horizontal-stripe paintings are only centimetres tall, but several metres long (Barnett Newman had preceded him in this kind of narrow painting, but vertical, in the early 1950s).

The Russian-born Jules Olitski (born 1922) had moved by the early 1960s into pure fields of colour, saturating (using a fine spray) unprimed canvas with paint, obliterating linear design, depth of space and all composition other than the shape provided by the (usually vast) rectangle of the cloth. Ideally, he once said, he would like "nothing but some colours sprayed into the air and staying there". The colour is indeed lusciously rich, sometimes too sweetly rich for some palates. In one phase – whether in a nod in the direction of Abstract Expressionism or in an ironic snook against it – there is gesture sprawled at just one edge.

The development of hard-edge painting in the 1950s and early 1960s can be read as stages in the progress towards the "ultimate abstraction" that Reinhardt sought, into the utterly impersonal realm of Minimal art (see further p. 494); and yet that progress was undertaken by distinctively different personalities. Ells-

worth Kelly (born 1923) and Al Held (born 1928) both reflected in their work European sensibilities, each having spent some time in Paris in his twenties, setting on a flat-coloured ground large, clear-cut, flat-coloured shapes that seem to echo Matisse's cut-paper pictures (see p. 476) or the flat reliefs of Arp rather than any American example. Kelly in particular was influenced by the European Constructivists and produced paintings and prints composed of bold, striking colours set one next to the other; though he was not so obviously concerned with optical effects as Albers, Kelly's work has a similar impact. Forms abstracted from natural ones seemed to linger behind Kelly's images in the early and mid-1950s, but then, perhaps finding it difficult to resolve satisfactorily the relationship of image to colour field, he moved into true Minimal art with featureless sculpture – at its simplest, two sheets of metal, coloured. Al Held first attempted to reconcile Pollock and Mondrian, then moved into the Abstract Expressionist orbit with very heavily pigmented work. By the late 1950s, however, his constructions, while still heavily painted, were greatly simplified, but on a very large scale: one remarkable series was

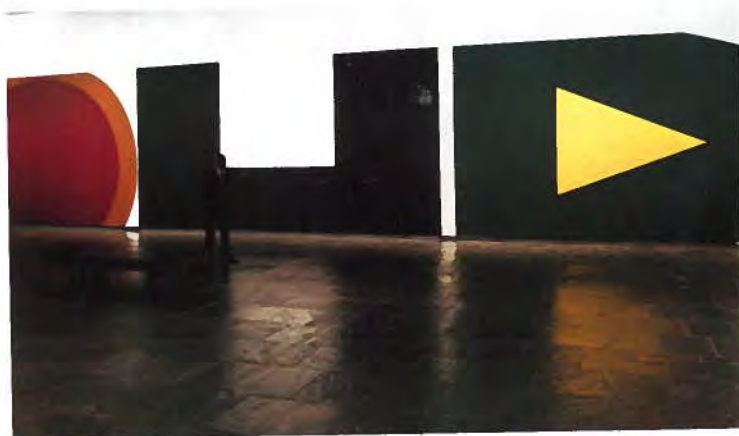
structured on capital letters of the alphabet. In 1964–66 came the colossal, 17-metre (56ft) long *Greek garden*, and then his work, no longer classifiable as Minimal, moved towards the three-dimensional.

The archetypal hard-edge Minimal painter in those years was perhaps Frank Stella (born 1936). By 1958–59 he was implicitly criticizing the energetic gesturing of Abstract Expressionism in an austere group of black canvases, patterned with concentric, geometric, very thin lines: his aim was "to force illusionistic space out of the painting at a constant rate by using a regulated pattern. The remaining problem was simply to find a method of paint application which followed and complemented the design solution. This was done by using the house-painter's techniques and tools." He advanced to aluminium and copper stripes, and to very strongly shaped irregular canvases, which, hung on a wall, do not so much decorate it as take charge of it. He has experimented with shapes of many kinds, using vivid, often harshly discordant colour, sometimes fluorescent, applied utterly impersonally: with Stella the individualism crucial to Abstract Expressionism was finally eliminated.

KELLY (below)
Four panels, 1964
The term "hard-edge" was coined by the Los Angeles art critic Jules Langser

in 1958; it was then taken up by the British-born critic Lawrence Alloway and applied to a tendency in American painting of

the early 1960s. The clean, clear colour and forms of hard-edge work constitute a homogeneous surface – without figure or ground.



HELD (above)
Greek garden, detail, 1964–66
A decisive factor in the development of hard-edged painting was the European

sojourn of its practitioners – Held, Olitsky, Kelly and Noland, who were all studying in Paris in the late 1940s and the 1950s, and so were not closely

involved in the onset of Abstract Expressionism. Reacting to the style of Pollock and others, Held wanted, he said, to "give the gesture structure".

STELLA (below)
Port aux Basques, 1969
Stella insists that his work is totally objective. In an interview in 1966 he declared: "My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there. It really is an object. All I want anyone

to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them, is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion. What you see is what you see". This non-associative colour and weaver's pattern corroborate his words, but his recent art is exuberant.



STELLA (above)
Black adder, 1965
Although shaped supports have often been used in the past in altarpieces or in canvases for specific

locations, in this century few artists before Stella had experimented with the painting's shape. Arp had, Chirico had, but for them shape was not the prime

subject. Mondrian's *Fox-trot* series offered some precedent. But for Stella shape is inseparable from what shape contains, the one determining the other.

Informal Abstraction in Europe

When World War II ended, some European refugees remained in America, to be integrated into the American scene; others returned to Europe. Those who returned tended to go back to Paris: there was Picasso like a living monument. But for many Picasso was now an Old Master; the interests of the so-called "middle generation" lay in other directions, some of them strikingly parallel to those of the rising New York school of Abstract Expressionism, but initially quite independent of it. In France, these tendencies had various labels, corresponding to the niceties of underlying theory, if not so obviously to definable differences in practice – "Art Informel", "Tachisme", "Abstraction Lyrique", "Art Autre" – now generally called "Informal" art. They were essentially a reaction of the irrational and spontaneous against Constructivist abstraction, for instance in Mondrian.

Jean Fautrier (1898-1964) had painted during World War II a series called *Hostages*, inspired by victims of Nazi brutality – images built up in thick, clotted layers of paint. Their modelling was rudimentary in any naturalistic sense, but they revealed great feeling for refined colour and for the sensuous quality of

the raw material of paint. Wols (Wolfgang Schülze, 1913-51), German-born, was early associated with the Surrealists (Miró, Tristan Tzara, Ernst) in Paris, but took to drawing and painting as his primary activity only during the War – his work was intensely subjective, an expression of his psychic reactions to experiences endured in these years. Like Fautrier, he used densely worked paint textures. Wols' later paintings, however, are a record of the activity of manipulating paint rather than an attempt to evoke associations; the parallel with Pollock is striking – the doomed charisma, the alcoholism, the social and artistic nonconformity – and both died young. But Wols was an Existentialist, a friend of Sartre, and his paintings do not express exuberance as Pollock's so often do, but often seem the very image of alienation. Hans Hartung (born 1904), another German-French artist, was painting abstracts by 1922, and even before the War had formulated his own characteristic, linear style – clusters, bundles or sheaves, usually sharp and brittle, often on a field of translucent colours. This is a sort of calligraphy responding directly to unconscious energies – "drawing flowing from the fingers",

as Wols once described his own work. Pierre Soulages (born 1919; not shown) achieved similar contrasts with broad, elemental bands of black, resonant against white.

By 1947 Georges Mathieu (born 1921), self-styled founder of Abstraction Lyrique, propagandist and publicist of verve and panache – "the fastest painter in the world" – was painting in spontaneous splashes, with paint squeezed from the tube, worked with the fingers, in a rapid but elegant calligraphy of colour whipped across a plain background. The affinities with Pollock's Action Painting (though Mathieu worked quite independently) are clear; Mathieu, too, worked on a very large scale. His avowed purposes were different, however: Mathieu aimed to create in his abstract painting the equivalent of traditional epic "history" painting, and above all – this applies to all the painters of the Paris school, except Dubuffet, when compared to the leading American Abstract Expressionists – Mathieu's work is somehow stamped with European qualities of tastefulness and succulence, and lacks the elemental force of the Americans.

European delicacy and suggestion are most exquisite in the work of the Russian-born



FAUTRIER (above)
Head of a hostage, 1945
Fautrier's source, though he has abstracted from it, was decayed human heads. The agony of his theme is conveyed not by realistic rendering of the wounded features, but by a hacked impasto, pink-tinged, which merely suggests some brutal mutilation. Fautrier's later works are like reliefs, the paint is laid on so thickly.



WOLS (left)
The blue phantom, 1951
The mysterious forms that inhabit Wols' paintings resemble huge monocellular organisms. He disliked, he said, "too much ambitious purpose and gymnastics".

DE STAËL (right)
Figure by the sea, 1952
De Staël's brilliant and sensitive colour harmonies were stimulated by trips to Morocco and the South of France: this was painted at Antibes shortly before his suicide. A friend of Braque's, he painted not "psychic improvisations" but constructed evocations.



HARTUNG (right)
T' 1955-23, 1955
Hartung's work is typical of Art Informel: his lines are a record of a release of the artist's energy. If his painting is compared to Kline's (see p. 462), then the problem in assessing the European equivalent to American Action Painting is clear: Hartung's work has been judged "eloquent" or "monotonous"; Kline's work has a brash vigour that is neither of these.

MATHIEU (below)
Painting, 1952
Speed, for Mathieu, was essential, to prevent ideas and memories hampering the brush's dancing rhythm.



Nicolas de Staël (1914-55). His chords of colour and his infectious delight in the sheer sensuous qualities of his paint ("*la matière*") were unrivalled in his generation. His art was a development of Cubism, and he found himself unable to resolve, at least to his own satisfaction, the equation he sought – the union of an abstract picture surface with the natural image of reality. Expressed in rather different terms, a comparable concern with surface textures and the integrity of materials appeared elsewhere in Europe, in Spain in the work of Antonio Tàpies (born 1923) with its rough,

decaying, scrawled and scratched surfaces, and in Italy in the rags, sacking and bandages of Alberto Burri (born 1915).

Nearest to the American Action Painters in uninhibited, even brash vigour were the artists of the brief-lived CoBrA group (the original members came from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam), which held together from about 1948 to 1951. The Dutchman Karel Appel (born 1921) was the major talent here, assaulting the canvas with stridently savage slashes of colour, sometimes abstract, sometimes swirling into crude imagery. The most

original spirit of this European generation was, however, the Frenchman Jean Dubuffet (1901-85), who settled into full-time painting only in the 1940s; his first exhibition was in 1944. Initially taking Klee's ideas perhaps still further, he found models of a fiercely direct expression of the Unconscious in the paintings of the insane and of children – "Art Brut".

The variety and quantity of Dubuffet's output has been formidable. In the late 1940s and the 1950s his characteristic media were sand, earth, glue, clinkers etc., with pigment mixed in, bashed and scratched into vitality to reveal weird primordial creatures, foetuses, fertility figures and the like. But Dubuffet's variations on different combinations of materials to produce new relationships are almost unclassifiable. In the early 1960s, he experimented extensively with a brilliantly coloured all-over imagery he called *L'Hourloupe*, or *The Twenty-Third Period of My Works*. In these sometimes enormous canvases – one is 8.2 metres (27ft) long – a coagulating writhe of interlocking squiggles resolves itself on closer inspection into an endless jig of small totemic frenzied creatures. Through much of his work there runs a sort of manic gaiety; it vividly expresses many of the main preoccupations of the post-War period, including the paradox of highly cultured, self-conscious and sophisticated urban man deliberately seeking out the primitive, the Unconscious, the ugly.

APPEL (right)

A bird with a fish, 1956

The members of CoBrA shared a common interest in "primitive" and Naïve art and in automatism. In most of his work Appel's dynamic, violent textures are used to express natural forces, animal vitality.



TÀPIES (below)

Pale blue composition, 1956

Tàpies combines sand, glue and matt, cracked paint in severe compositions, "when dull, inert matter begins to speak with incomparable expressive force". His attitude to materials was almost moral; formulated in the mid-1950s, it was highly significant for the 1960s.



BURRI (right)

Sacking with red, 1954

Burri began to paint when he was a prisoner of war in Texas: there he had to paint on pieces of sacking instead of canvas, and his post-War work contains similar wasted materials – sacks and rags roughly sewn and torn, often singed, splashed with paint. His *Sacchi* (Sacks), resembling stained bandages, express Burri's war experiences, but are also a metaphor for decay and destruction, for the mortality of mankind.



DUBUFFET (left)

The very rich earth, 1956

All the myriad variety of the cells making up a speck of earth is suggested in the variegated mosaic of the painting. It contains, however, a figure – goblins like this inhabit most of Dubuffet's clotted abstracts.



DUBUFFET (right)

Uncertain situations, 1977

This recent work seems to be directly inspired by Dubuffet's collection of Art Brut: crude cartoon figures like those found in children's drawings are in abundance. All save one are enclosed in capsules, from which some strain to be free – a comment perhaps on contemporary existence.

