Introduction to Art
Coastline College
Kevin Scianni

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Cover Image: "Nakahara in Sagami Province (Sōshū Nakahara)" by Katsuhika Hokusai from The
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The Nature of Art

Introduction

We live in a rapidly changing world in which images play an important, even central, role. With widespread use of personal electronics, we instantaneously deliver and receive sound, video, and text messages. Corporations and governments worldwide recognize the power of advertising. Art museums worldwide are putting large parts of their collections online. Today we are seeing theater-quality movies made with inexpensive equipment that was unavailable ten years ago. Selfies, personal video, and memes are everywhere. In 1968, artist Andy Warhol (1928-1967, USA) said, "In the future everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes." (Self Portrait, Andy Warhol) We are seeing that prediction come true with the advent of personal electronics that rival the sophistication of the most advanced professional studios of only twenty years ago. We are surrounded by images, but, for all of our clever technical abilities, the fundamental dynamics of visual art remain the same.

What is Visual Art?

To explore a subject, we need first to define it. Defining art, however, proves elusive. You may have heard it said (or even said it yourself) that "it might be art, but it's not Art," which means, "I might not know how to define it, but I know it when I see it."

Everywhere we look, we see images designed to command our attention, including images of desire, images of power, religious images, images meant to recall memories, and images intended to manipulate our appetites. But are they art?

Some languages do not have a separate word for art. In those cultures, objects tend to be utilitarian in purpose but often include in their design the intent to delight, portray a special status, or commemorate an important event or ritual. Thus, while the objects are not considered art, they do have artistic functions.

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Chapter 1: Defining Art

How would you define 'art'? For many people art is a specific thing; a painting, sculpture or photograph, a dance, a poem or a play. It is all of these things, and more. They are mediums of artistic expression. Webster's New Collegiate dictionary defines art as the "conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects." Yet art is much more than a medium, or words on a page. It is the expression of our experience.

Joseph Brodsky hints at a definition of art in his poem *New Life*:

> Ultimately, one's unbound
> curiosity about these empty zones,
> about these objectless vistas,
> is what art seems to be all about.

Art is uniquely human and tied directly to culture. It takes the ordinary and makes it extraordinary. It asks questions about who we are, what we value, the meaning of beauty and the human condition. As an expressive medium it allows us to experience sublime joy, deep sorrow, confusion and clarity. It tests our strengths, vulnerabilities and resolve. It gives voice to ideas and feelings, connects us to the past, reflects the present and anticipates the future. Along these lines, art history, combined with anthropology and literature, are three main sources in observing, recording and interpreting our human past. Visual art is a rich and complex subject whose definition is in flux as the culture around it changes. Because of this, how we define art is in essence a question of agreement. In this respect, we can look again to the dictionary's definition for an understanding of exactly what to look for when we proclaim something as 'art.'

Art, Aesthetics, and Beauty

Art and the Aesthetic Experience

Beauty is something we perceive and respond to. It may be a response of awe and amazement, wonder and joy, or something else. It might resemble a "peak experience" or an epiphany. It might happen while watching a sunset or taking in the view from a mountaintop—the list goes on. Here we are referring to a kind of experience, an aesthetic response that is a response to the thing's representational qualities, whether it is man-made or natural (Silverman). The subfield of philosophy called aesthetics is devoted to the study and theory of this experience of the beautiful; in the field of psychology, aesthetics is studied in relation to the physiology and psychology of perception.

Aesthetic analysis is a careful investigation of the qualities which belong to objects and events that evoke an aesthetic response. The aesthetic response is the thoughts and feelings initiated because of the character of these qualities and the particular ways they are organized and experienced perceptually (Silverman).

The aesthetic experience that we get from the world at large is different than the art-based aesthetic experience. It is important to recognize that we are not saying that the natural wonder experience is bad or lesser than the art world experience; we are saying it is different. What is different is the constructed nature of the art experience.

The art experience is a type of aesthetic experience that also includes content, and context of our humanness. When something is made by a human– we know that there is some level of commonality and/or communal experience.

Why aesthetics is only the beginning in analyzing an artwork

We are also aware that beyond sensory and formal properties, all artwork is informed by its specific time and place or the specific historical and cultural milieu it was created in (Silverman). For this reason, we analyze artwork through not only aesthetics, but also, historical and cultural contexts.

How we engage in aesthetic analysis

Often the feelings or thoughts evoked as a result of contemplating an artwork are initially based primarily upon what is actually seen in the work. The first aspects of the artwork we respond to are its sensory properties, its formal properties, and its technical properties (Silverman). Color is an example of a sensory property. Color is considered a kind of form and how form is arranged is a formal property. What medium (e.g., painting, animation, etc.) the artwork is made of is an example of a technical property. As Dr. Silverman, of California State University explains, the sequence of questions in an aesthetic analysis could be: what do we actually see? How is what is seen organized? And, what emotions and ideas are evoked as a result of what has been observed?

Subjective and Objective Perspectives

The first level in approaching art is learning to look at it. In future discussions we will spend more time in pure observation than you probably have done before. Generally, we tend to look at art in terms of "liking" it first, and "looking" at it later. From this perspective, the subjective (that is, the knowledge that resides in the emotions and thoughts of the viewer) almost completely dominates our way of looking at art.

In the arts, it's especially important to begin to develop an informed or objective opinion rather than just an instinctual reaction. An objective view is one that focuses on the object's physical characteristics as the main source of information. This does not mean that you will remove or invalidate your subjective feelings about a work, in fact you will find that the more informed you become, the more artwork will affect you emotionally and intellectually. It does mean that you will learn alternative ways to approach art, ways that allow you to find clues to meaning and to understand how art reflects and affects our lives.

It's complex, but the satisfaction of looking at art comes from exploring the work to find meaning, not shying away from it because we may not initially understand it.

Form and Content

Two basic considerations we need to be acquainted with are *form*: the physical and visible characteristics inherent in works of art, and *content*: the meaning we derive from them. Formal distinctions include a work's size, medium (painting, drawing, sculpture or other kind of work) and descriptions of compositional elements, such as the lines, shapes, and colors involved. Issues of content include any visual clues that provide an understanding of what the art tells us.

Sometimes an artwork's content is vague or hidden and needs more information than is present in the work itself. Ultimately these two terms are roped together in the climb to understand what art has to offer us.

Representational, Abstract, and Nonrepresentational Art

Painting and sculpture can be divided into the categories of figurative (or representational) and abstract (which includes nonrepresentational art). Figurative art describes artworks—particularly paintings and sculptures–that are clearly derived from real object sources, and therefore are by definition representational. Since the arrival of abstract art in the early twentieth century, the term figurative has been used to refer to any form of modern art that retains strong references to the real world.

Johann Anton Eismann, Meerhaven. 17th c. Work is in the public domain

This figurative or representational work from the seventeenth century depicts easily recognizable objects–ships, people, and buildings. Artistic independence was advanced during the nineteenth century, resulting in the emergence of abstract art. Three movements that contributed heavily to the development of these were Romanticism, Impressionism, and Expressionism.

Abstraction indicates a departure from reality in depiction of imagery in art. Abstraction exists along a continuum; abstract art can formally refer to compositions that are derived (or abstracted) from a figurative or other natural source. It can also refer to nonrepresentational art and non-objective art that has no derivation from figures or objects.

Even art that aims for verisimilitude of the highest degree can be said to be abstract, at least theoretically, since perfect representation is likely to be exceedingly elusive. Artwork which takes liberties, altering for instance color and form in ways that are conspicuous, can be said to be partially abstract.

Robert Delaunay, Le Premier Disque, 1913. Work is in the public domain

Delaunay's work is a primary example of early abstract art. Nonrepresentational art refers to total abstraction, bearing no trace of any reference to anything recognizable. In geometric abstraction, for instance, one is unlikely to find references to naturalistic entities. Figurative art and total abstraction are almost mutually exclusive. But figurative and representational (or realistic) art often contains partial abstraction.

Artistic Roles

Visual artists and the works they produce perform specific roles. These roles vary between cultures. We can examine some general areas to see the diversity they offer.

Description

A traditional role of visual art is to describe our self and our surroundings. Some of the earliest artworks discovered are drawings and paintings of humans and wild animals on walls deep within prehistoric caves. One particular image is a hand print: a universal symbol of human communication.

Portraits

Portraits, landscapes and still life are common examples of description. Portraits capture the accuracy of physical characteristics but the very best also transfer a sense of an individual's unique personality. For thousands of years this role was reserved for images of those in positions of power, influence and authority. The portrait not only signifies who they are, but also solidifies class structure by presenting only the highest-ranking members of a society. The portrait bust of Egyptian Queen *Nefertiti*, dated to around 1300 BCE, exemplifies beauty and royalty.

Egyptian, Bust of Nefertiti, painted sandstone, c. 1370 BCE, Neues Museum, Berlin.
Licensed under Creative Commons and GNU.

The full-length *Imperial Portrait of Chinese Emperor Xianfeng* below not only shows realism in the likeness of the emperor, it exalts in the patterns and colors of his robe and the throne behind him.

Imperial Portrait of Emperor Xianfeng, China, c. 1855. Palace Museum, Bejing.
Licensed under Creative Commons.

Landscapes

Landscapes – by themselves – give us detailed information about our natural and human made surroundings; things like location, architecture, time of day, year or season plus other physical information such as geological elements and the plants and animals within a particular region.

In many western cultures, the more realistic the rendering of a scene the closer to our idea of the 'truth' it becomes. In the 15th century German artist Albrecht Durer created vivid works that show a keen sense of observation. His *Young Hare* from 1495 is uncanny in its realism and sense of animation.

Albrecht Durer, Young Hare, c. 1505, gouache and watercolor on paper. Albertina Museum, Vienna.
Image in the public domain.

Scientific Illustration

Out of this striving for accuracy and documentation developed the art of scientific illustration. The

traditional mediums of painting and drawing are still used to record much of the world around us. Linda Berkley's *Merino Ram* uses a layered approach to record in great detail the physical anatomy of the head of the great sheep.
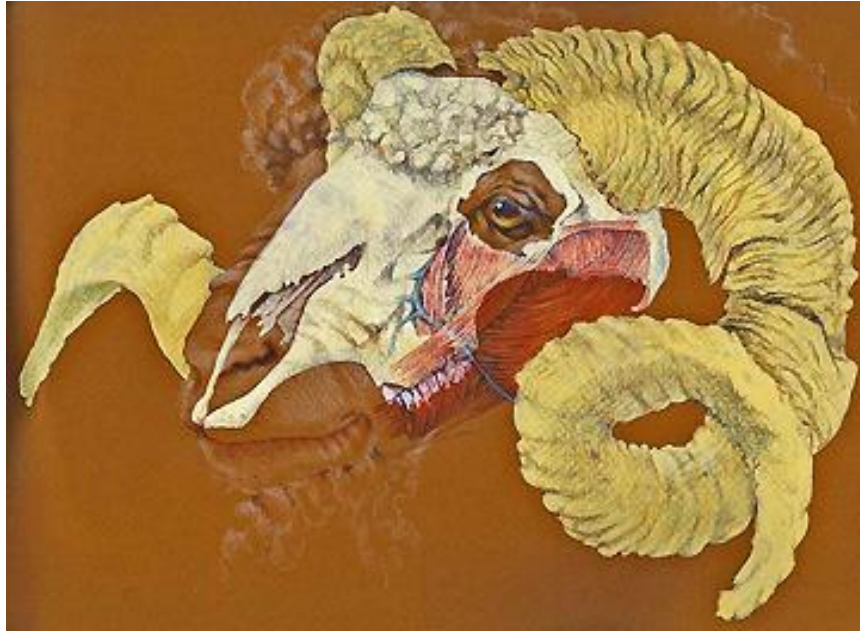
Merino Ram, composite drawing, colored pencil, acrylic on Canson paper, 2009. Linda Berkley, Illustrator. Used by permission of the artist

Enhancing our World

Enhancing the world of our everyday lives is another role art plays. This role is more utilitarian than others. It includes textiles and product design, decorative embellishments to the items we use every day and all the aesthetic considerations that create a more comfortable, expressive environment

Narratives: How Artists Tell Their Stories

Artists can combine representation with more complex elements and situational compositions to bring a narrative component into art. Using subject matter – the objects and figures that inhabit a work of art -- as a vehicle for communicating stories and other cultural expressions is another traditional function of visual art.

The narrative tradition is strong in many cultures throughout the world. They become a means to perpetuate knowledge, morals and ethics, and can signify historical contexts within specific cultures. Narrative takes many forms; the spoken or written word, music, dance and visual art are the mediums most often used. Many times, one is used in conjunction with another. In his Migration Series Jacob Lawrence paints stark, direct images that communicate the realities of the African American experience in their struggle to escape the repression of the South and overcome the difficulties of adjusting to the big cities in the North.

In contrast, photographers used the camera lens to document examples of segregation in the United States. Here the image on film tells its poignant story about inequalities based on race.

Man Drinking at a Water Cooler in the Street Car Terminal, Russell Lee, Oklahoma City, 1939.
Photo from the National Archives and in the public domain

Spirit, Myth and Fantasy

Tied to the idea of narrative, another artistic role is the exploration of other worlds beyond our physical one. This world is in many ways richer than our own and includes the world of spirit, myth, fantasy and the imagination; areas particularly suited for the visual artist. We can see how art gives a rich and varied treatment to these ideas. Artist Michael Spafford has spent his career presenting classical Greek myths through painting, drawing and printmaking. His spare, abstract style uses high contrast images to strong dramatic effect. A Smiling Figure from ancient Mexico portrays a god of dance, music and joy. A third example, Hieronymus Bosch's painting the Temptation of Saint Anthony, gives the subject matter both spiritual and bizarre significance in the way they are presented. His creative imagination takes the subject of temptation and raises it to the realm of the fantastic.

Artistic Categories

Visual arts are generally divided into categories that make distinctions based on the context of the work. For example, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa would not fall into the same category as, say, a graphic poster for a rock concert. Some artworks can be placed in more than one category. Here are the main categories:

Fine Art

This category includes drawings, paintings, sculptures, photographs and, in the last decade, new media that are in museum collections and sold through commercial art galleries. Fine art has a distinction of being some of the finest examples of our human artistic heritage. Here is where you will find Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, also ancient sculpture, such as the *Gandhara Buddha* from India, and stunning ceramics from different cultures and time periods.

Leonardo Da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503-19. Oil on poplar. 30". The Louvre, Paris

Gandhara Buddha, India

Popular Art and Design

This category contains the many products and images we are exposed to every day. In the industrialized world, this includes posters, graffiti, advertising, popular music, television and digital imagery, magazines, books and movies (as distinguished from film, which we will examine in a different context later). Also included are cars, celebrity status and all the ideas and attitudes that help define the contemporary period of a particular culture.

Handbills posted on telephone poles or the sides of buildings are graphic, colorful and informative, but they also provide a street level texture to the urban environment most of us live in. Public murals serve this same function. They put an aesthetic stamp on an otherwise bland and industrialized landscape.
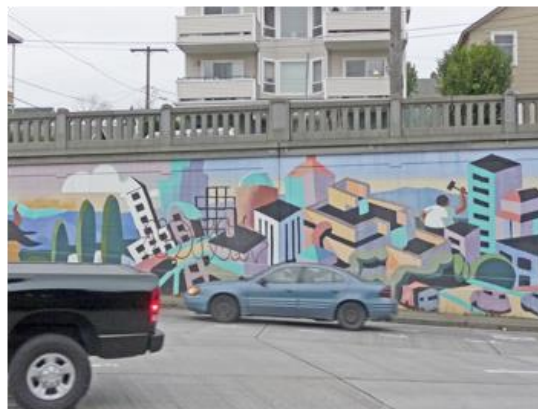
Decorative Arts (Craft)

Sometimes called "craft", this is a category of art that shows a high degree of skilled workmanship in its production. Such works are normally associated with utilitarian purposes but can be aesthetic works in themselves. Handmade furniture and glassware, fine metalworking and leather goods are other examples of decorative arts.

Ceramic bowl, Mexico, date unknown, painted clay. Anahuacalli Museum, Mexico City

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Chapter 2: The Purpose of Art

Art has had a great number of different functions throughout its history, making its purpose difficult to abstract or quantify to any single concept. This does not imply that the purpose of art is "vague" but that it has had many different reasons for being created. Some of the functions of art are provided in the outline below. The different purposes of art may be grouped according to those that are non-motivated and those that are motivated (Lévi-Strauss).

A Navajo rug made circa 1880

Non-motivated Functions of Art

The non-motivated purposes of art are those that are integral to being human, transcend the individual, or do not fulfill a specific external purpose. In this sense, art, as creativity, is something humans must do by their very nature (i.e., no other species creates art), and is therefore beyond utility.

Basic human instinct for harmony, balance, rhythm.

Art at this level is not an action or an object, but an internal appreciation of balance and harmony (beauty), and therefore an aspect of being human beyond utility.

"Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm, meters being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry."
—Aristotle

Experience of the mysterious.

Art provides a way to experience one's self in relation to the universe. This experience may often come unmotivated, as one appreciates art, music or poetry.

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." —Albert Einstein

Expression of the imagination.

Art provides a means to express the imagination in non-grammatic ways that are not tied to the formality of spoken or written language. Unlike words, which come in sequences and each of which have a definite meaning, art provides a range of forms, symbols and ideas with meanings that are malleable.

"Jupiter's eagle [as an example of art] is not, like logical (aesthetic) attributes of an object, the concept of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but rather something else – something that gives the imagination an incentive to spread its flight over a whole host of kindred representations that provoke more thought than admits of expression in a concept determined by words. They furnish an aesthetic idea, which serves the above rational idea as a substitute for logical presentation, but with the proper function, however, of animating the mind by opening out for it a prospect into a field of kindred representations stretching beyond its ken." —Immanuel Kant

Ritualistic and symbolic functions.

In many cultures, art is used in rituals, performances and dances as a decoration or symbol. While these often have no specific utilitarian (motivated) purpose, anthropologists know that they often serve a purpose at the level of meaning within a particular culture. This meaning is not furnished by any one individual but is often the result of many generations of change, and of a cosmological relationship within the culture.

"Most scholars who deal with rock paintings or objects recovered from prehistoric contexts that cannot be explained in utilitarian terms and are thus categorized as decorative, ritual or symbolic, are aware of the trap posed by the term 'art.'"
—Silva Tomaskova

Motivated Functions of Art

Motivated purposes of art refer to intentional, conscious actions on the part of the artists or creator. These may be to bring about political change, to comment on an aspect of society, to convey a specific emotion or mood, to address personal psychology, to illustrate another discipline, to sell a product (with commercial arts), or simply as a form of communication.

Communication.

Art, at its simplest, is a form of communication. As most forms of communication have an intent or goal directed toward another individual, this is a motivated purpose. Illustrative arts, such as scientific illustration, are a form of art as communication. Maps are another example. However, the content need not be scientific. Emotions, moods and feelings are also communicated through art.

"[Art is a set of] artifacts or images with symbolic meanings as a means of communication." —

Art as entertainment.

Art may seek to bring about a particular emotion or mood, for the purpose of relaxing or entertaining the viewer. This is often the function of the art industries of Motion Pictures and Video Games.

The Avant-Garde.

Art for political change. One of the defining functions of early twentieth-century art has been to use visual images to bring about political change. Art movements that had this goal—Dadaism, Surrealism, Russian constructivism, and Abstract Expressionism, among others—are collectively referred to as the avant-garde arts.

"By contrast, the realistic attitude, inspired by positivism, from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France, clearly seems to me to be hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement. I loathe it, for it is made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit. It is this attitude which today gives birth to these ridiculous books, these insulting plays. It constantly feeds on and derives strength from the newspapers and stultifies both science and art by assiduously flattering the lowest of tastes; clarity bordering on stupidity, a dog's life." —André Breton (Surrealism)

Art as a "free zone," removed from the action of the social censure.

Unlike the avant-garde movements, which wanted to erase cultural differences in order to produce new universal values, contemporary art has enhanced its tolerance towards cultural differences as well as its critical and liberating functions (social inquiry, activism, subversion, deconstruction…), becoming a more open place for research and experimentation.

Art for social inquiry, subversion, and/or anarchy.

While similar to art for political change, subversive or deconstructivist art may seek to question aspects of society without any specific political goal. In this case, the function of art may be simply to criticize some aspect of society.

Spray-paint graffiti on a wall in Rome

Graffiti art and other types of street art are graphics and images that are spray-painted or stenciled on publicly viewable walls, buildings, buses, trains, and bridges, usually without permission. Certain art forms, such as graffiti, may also be illegal when they break laws (in this case vandalism).

Art for social causes.

Art can be used to raise awareness for a large variety of causes. A number of art activities were aimed at raising awareness of autism, cancer, human trafficking, and a variety of other topics, such as ocean conservation, human rights in Darfur, murdered and missing Aboriginal women,

elder abuse, and pollution. Trashion, using trash to make fashion, practiced by artists such as Marina DeBris is one example of using art to raise awareness about pollution.

Art for psychological and healing purposes.

Art is also used by art therapists, psychotherapists and clinical psychologists as art therapy. The Diagnostic Drawing Series, for example, is used to determine the personality and emotional functioning of a patient. The end product is not the principal goal in this case, but rather a process of healing, through creative acts, is sought. The resultant piece of artwork may also offer insight into the troubles experienced by the subject and may suggest suitable approaches to be used in more conventional forms of psychiatric therapy.

Art for propaganda or commercialism.

Art is often utilized as a form of propaganda, and thus can be used to subtly influence popular conceptions or mood. In a similar way, art that tries to sell a product also influences mood and emotion. In both cases, the purpose of art here is to subtly manipulate the viewer into a particular emotional or psychological response toward a particular idea or object.

Art as a fitness indicator.

It has been argued that the ability of the human brain by far exceeds what was needed for survival in the ancestral environment. One evolutionary psychology explanation for this is that the human brain and associated traits (such as artistic ability and creativity) are the human equivalent of the peacock's tail. The purpose of the male peacock's extravagant tail has been argued to be to attract females. According to this theory superior execution of art was evolutionarily important because it attracted mates.

The functions of art described above are not mutually exclusive, as many of them may overlap. For example, art for the purpose of entertainment may also seek to sell a product (i.e. a movie or video game).

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Chapter 3: The Elements of Design

- Point
- Line
- Shape
- Space
- Value
- Color
- Texture

The Point

A **point** is the visual element upon which all others are based. It can be defined as a singularity in space or, in geometric terms, the area where two coordinates meet. When an artist marks a simple point on a surface, (also referred to as the **ground**), they immediately create a **figure-ground relationship**. That is, they divide the work between its surface and anything added to it. Our eyes differentiate between the two, and their arrangement has everything to do with how we see a final composition. The point itself can be used as a way to create forms. For example, *Pointillism* is a style of painting made famous by the French artist Georges Seurat in the late nineteenth century. He and others in the Pointillist group created paintings by juxtaposing points—or dots—of color that optically mixed to form lines, shapes and forms within a composition. Look at a detail from Seurat's *La Parade de Cirque* to see how this works. His large canvas Sunday Afternoon on the Grande Jatte is a testament to the pointillist style and aesthetic. Its creation was a painstaking process but one that generated new ways of thinking about color and form.
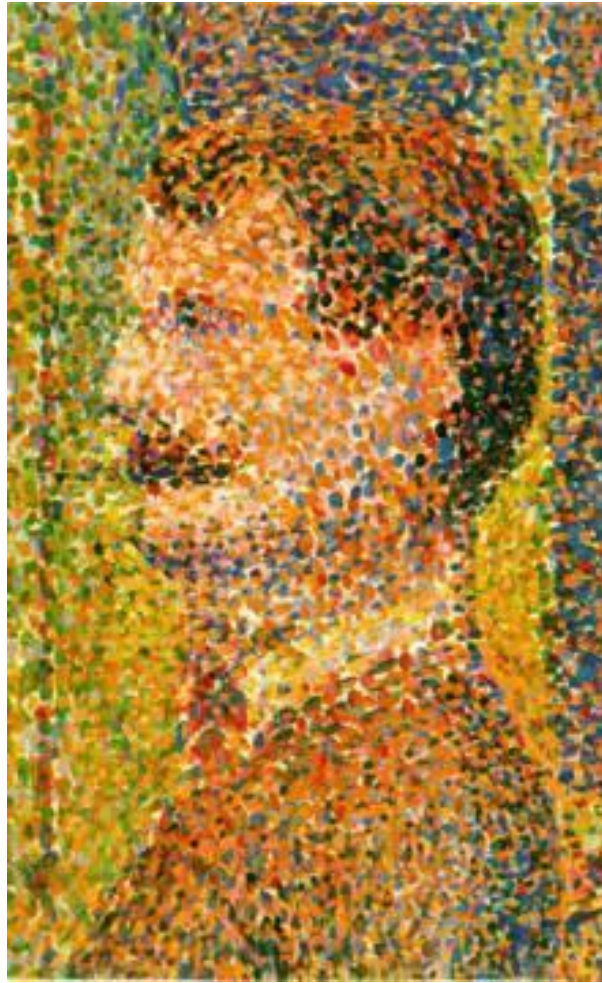
Georges Seurat, La Parade de Cirque, detail, 1887-89. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. CC BY-SA

Definitions and Qualities of Line

Essentially, when you put two or more points together you create a line. A line can be lyrically defined as a point in motion. There are many different types of lines, all characterized by their length being greater than their width. Lines can be static or dynamic depending on how the artist chooses to use them. They help determine the motion, direction and energy in a work of art. We see line all around us in our daily lives; telephone wires, tree branches, jet contrails and winding roads are just a few examples. Look at the photograph below to see how line is part of natural and constructed environments.

Photo by NASA. CC BY-NC

In this image of a lightning storm we can see many different lines. Certainly the jagged, meandering lines of the lightning itself dominate the image, followed by the straight lines of the light standards, the pillars holding up the overpass on the right and the guard rails attached to its side. There are more subtle lines too, like the gently arced line at the top of the image and the shadows cast by the poles and the standing figure in the middle. Lines are even implied by falling water droplets in the foreground.

The Nazca lines in the arid coastal plains of Peru date to nearly 500 BCE were scratched into the rocky soil, depicting animals on an incredible scale, so large that they are best viewed from the air. Let's look at how the different kinds of line are made.

Diego Velazquez's *Las Meninas* from 1656, ostensibly a portrait of the Infanta Margarita, the daughter of King Philip IV and Queen Mariana of Spain, offers a sumptuous amount of artistic genius; its shear size (almost ten feet square), painterly style of naturalism, lighting effects, and the enigmatic figures placed throughout the canvas–including the artist himself –is one of the great paintings in western art history. Let's examine it (below) to uncover how Velazquez uses basic elements and principles of art to achieve such a masterpiece.

Diego Velazquez, Las Meninas, 1656, oil on canvas, 125.2" x 108.7". Prado, Madrid. CC BY-SA

Actual lines are those that are physically present. The edge of the wooden stretcher bar at the left of *Las Meninas* is an actual line, as are the picture frames in the background and the linear decorative elements on some of the figures' dresses. How many other actual lines can you find in the painting?

Implied lines are those created by visually connecting two or more areas together. The space between the Infanta Margarita—the blonde central figure in the composition—and the *meninas*, or maids of honor, to the left and right of her, are implied lines. Both set up a diagonal relationship that implies movement. By visually connecting the space between the heads of all the figures in the painting we have a sense of jagged motion that keeps the lower part of the composition in motion, balanced against the darker, more static upper areas of the painting. Implied lines can also be created when two areas of different colors or tones come together. Can you identify more implied lines in the painting? Where? Implied lines are found in three-dimensional artworks, too. The sculpture of the *Laocoon* below, a figure from Greek and Roman mythology, is, along with his sons, being strangled by sea snakes sent by the goddess Athena as wrath against his warnings to the Trojans not to accept the Trojan horse. The sculpture sets implied lines in motion as the figures writhe in agony against the snakes.

Laocoon Group, Roman copy of Greek original, Vatican Museum, Rome. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen. CC BY-SA

Straight or classic lines provide structure to a composition. They can be oriented to the horizontal, vertical, or diagonal axis of a surface. Straight lines are by nature visually stable, while still giving direction to a composition. In *Las Meninas*, you can see them in the canvas supports on the left, the wall supports and doorways on the right, and in the background in matrices on the wall spaces between the framed pictures. Moreover, the small horizontal lines created in the stair edges in the background help anchor the entire visual design of the painting.
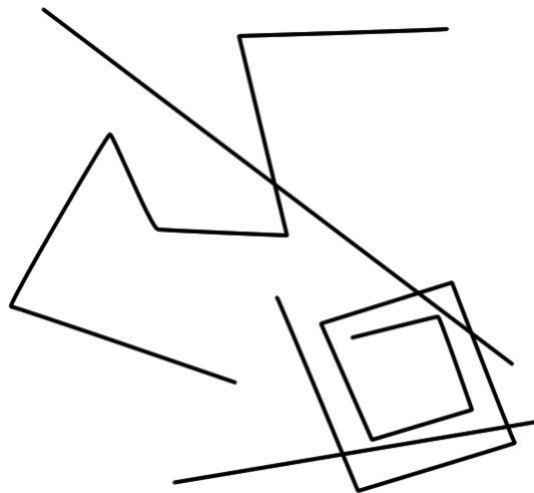
Straight lines, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Expressive lines are curved, adding an organic, more dynamic character to a work of art. Expressive lines are often rounded and follow undetermined paths. In *Las Meninas* you can see them in the aprons on the girls' dresses and in the dog's folded hind leg and coat pattern. Look again at the *Laocoon* to see expressive lines in the figures' flailing limbs and the sinuous form of the snakes. Indeed, the sculpture seems to be made up of nothing but expressive lines, shapes

and forms.
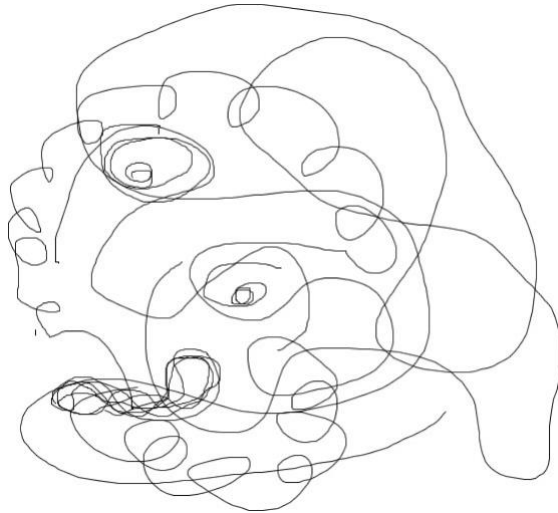
Organic lines, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

There are other kinds of line that encompass the characteristics of those above yet, taken together, help create additional artistic elements and richer, more varied compositions. Refer to the images and examples below to become familiar with these types of line.

Outline, or contour line is the simplest of these. They create a path around the edge of a shape. In fact, outlines define shapes.

Outline, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Cross contour lines follow paths across a shape to delineate differences in surface features. They give flat shapes a sense of form (the illusion of three dimensions), and can also be used to create shading.

Cross Contour, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Hatch lines are repeated at short intervals in generally one direction. They give shading and visual texture to the surface of an object.

Hatch, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Crosshatch lines provide additional tone and texture. They can be oriented in any direction. Multiple layers of crosshatch lines can give rich and varied shading to objects by manipulating the pressure of the drawing tool to create a large range of values.

Crosshatch, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Line quality is that sense of character embedded in the way a line presents itself. Certain lines have qualities that distinguish them from others. Hard-edged, jagged lines have a staccato visual movement while organic, flowing lines create a more comfortable feeling. Meandering lines can be either geometric or expressive, and you can see in the examples how their indeterminate paths animate a surface to different degrees.

A Line, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Although line as a visual element generally plays a supporting role in visual art, there are wonderful examples in which line carries a strong cultural significance as the primary subject matter.

Calligraphic lines use quickness and gesture, more akin to paint strokes, to imbue an artwork with a fluid, lyrical character. To see this unique line quality, view the work of Chinese poet and artist Dong Qichang's Du Fu's Poem, dating from the Ming dynasty (1555-1637). A more geometric example from the Koran, created in the Arabic calligraphic style, dates from the 9th century.

Both these examples show how artists use line as both a form of writing and a visual art form. American artist Mark Tobey (1890–1976) was influenced by Oriental calligraphy, adapting its form to the act of pure painting within a modern abstract style described as white writing.

Shapes: Positive, Negative and Planar Issues

A shape is defined as an enclosed area in two dimensions. By definition shapes are always implied and flat in nature. They can be created in many ways, the simplest by enclosing an area with an outline. They can also be made by surrounding an area with other shapes or the placement of different textures next to each other—for instance, the shape of an island surrounded by water. Because they are more complex than lines, shapes do much of the heavy lifting in arranging compositions. The abstract examples below give us an idea of how shapes are made.

Shapes, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Referring back to Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, it is fundamentally an arrangement of shapes; organic and hard- edged, light, dark and mid-toned, that solidifies the composition within the larger shape of the canvas. Looking at it this way, we can view any work of art, whether two or three-dimensional, realistic, abstract or non-objective, in terms of shapes alone.

Positive / Negative Shapes and Figure / Ground Relationships

Shapes animate figure-ground relationships. We visually determine *positive* shapes (the figure) and *negative* shapes (the ground). One way to understand this is to open your hand and spread your fingers apart. Your hand is the positive shape, and the space around it becomes the negative shape. You can also see this in the example above. The shape formed by the black outline becomes positive because it's enclosed. The area around it is negative. The same visual arrangement goes with the gray circle and the purple square. But identifying positive and negative shapes can get tricky in a more complex composition. For instance, the four blue rectangles on the left have edges that touch each other, thus creating a solid white shape in the center. The four green rectangles on the right don't actually connect yet still give us an implied shape in the center. Which would you say is the positive shape? What about the red circles surrounding the gray star shape? Remember that a positive shape is one that is distinguished from the background. In *Las Meninas* the figures become the positive shapes because they are lit dramatically and hold our attention against the dark background. What about the dark figure standing in the doorway? Here the dark shape becomes the positive one, surrounded by a white background. Our eyes always return to this figure as an anchor to the painting's entire

composition. In three dimensions, positive shapes are those that make up the actual work. The negative shapes are the empty spaces around, and sometimes permeating through the work itself. The *Laocoon* is a good example of this. A modern work that uses shapes to a dramatic effect is Alberto Giacometti's *Reclining Woman Who Dreams* from 1929. In an abstract style the artist weaves positive and negative shapes together, the result is a dreamy, floating sensation radiating from the sculpture.

Plane

A *plane* is defined as any surface area in space. In two-dimensional art, the picture plane is the flat surface an image is created upon; a piece of paper, stretched canvas, wood panel, etc. A shape's orientation within the picture plane creates a visually implied plane, inferring direction and depth in relation to the viewer. The graphic below shows three examples.

Shape Planes, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Traditionally the picture plane has been likened to a window the viewer looks through to a scene beyond, the artist constructing a believable image showing implied depth and planar relationships. *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, painted by Pieter Breughel the Elder in 1558 (below), presents us with the tragic ending to the Greek myth involving Icarus, son of Daedalus, who, trying to escape from the island of Crete with wings of wax, flies too close to the sun and falls to earth. Breughel shows us an idyllic landscape with farmers tilling their fields, each terraced row a different plane of earth, and shepherds tending their flocks of sheep in the foreground. He depicts the livestock in positions that infer they are moving in different directions in relation to the "window" of the picture plane. We look further to see a gradual recession to the sea and a middle ground dominated by a ship under sail. The curves of the billowing sails imply two or three different planes. The background of the painting shows the illusion of deep space, the massive cliffs now small in relation to the foreground, and the distant ship near the center as smaller and lighter in tone. In the grandeur of the scene Icarus falls into the sea unnoticed just offshore to the lower right, only his legs still above water. The artist's use of planar description is related to the idea of space and how it's depicted in two dimensions. We will look at the element of space just ahead.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus, Peter Breughel the Elder, 1558. Musee des Beaux-arts, Brussels. CC BY-SA

Mass

Mass, or form, refers to a shape or three-dimensional volume that has or gives the illusion of having weight, density or bulk. Notice the distinction between two and three- dimensional objects: a shape is by definition flat but takes on the illusion of mass through shading with the elements of value or color. In three dimensions a mass is an actual object that takes up space. Eugene Delaplanche's sculpture *'Eve After the Fall'* from 1869 (below) epitomizes the characteristics of three-dimensional mass. Carved from stone with exaggerated physicality to appear bigger than life, the work stands heavily against the space around it. Delaplanche balances the massive sculpture by his treatment of the subject matter. Eve sits, her body turned on two diagonal planes, one rising, the other descending, her right hip being the meeting point of the two. She rests her head in her hand as she agonizes over the consequences of what she's just done, the forbidden apple at her feet as the serpent slinks away to her left.
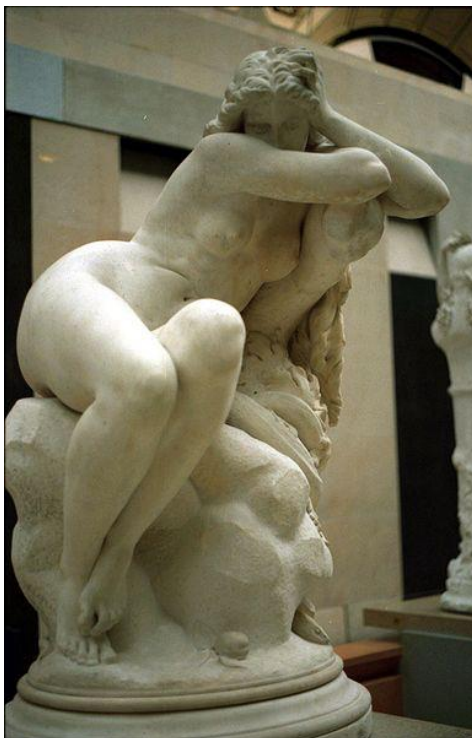
Space

Space is the empty area surrounding real or implied objects. Humans categorize space: there is outer space, that limitless void we enter beyond our sky; inner space, which resides in people's minds and imaginations, and personal space, the important but intangible area that surrounds each individual and which is violated if someone else gets too close. Pictorial space is flat, and the digital realm resides in cyberspace. Art responds to all of these kinds of space.

Clearly artists are as concerned with space in their works as they are with, say, color or form. There are many ways for the artist to present ideas of space. Remember that many cultures traditionally use pictorial space as a window to view realistic subject matter through, and through the subject matter they present ideas, narratives and symbolic content. The innovation of *linear perspective,* an implied geometric pictorial construct dating from fifteenth-century Europe, affords us the accurate illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface, and appears to recede into the distance through the use of a *horizon line* and *vanishing points*. See how perspective is set up in the schematic examples below:
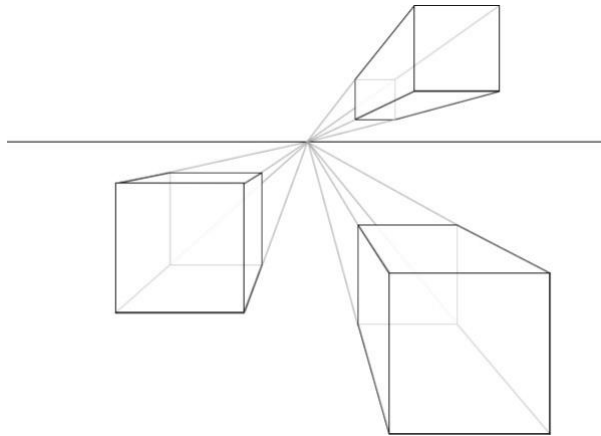
One Point Perspective, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

One-point perspective occurs when the receding lines appear to converge at a single point on the horizon and used when the flat front of an object is facing the viewer. Note: Perspective can be used to show the relative size and recession into space of any object but is most effective with hard-edged three-dimensional objects such as buildings.

A classic Renaissance artwork using one-point perspective is Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper from 1498. Da Vinci composes the work by locating the vanishing point directly behind the head of Christ, thus drawing the viewer's attention to the center. His arms mirror the receding wall lines, and, if we follow them as lines, would converge at the same vanishing point.

Leonardo da Vinci, The Last Supper, 1498. Fresco. Santa Maria della Grazie. Work is in the public domain.

Two-point perspective occurs when the vertical edge of a cube is facing the viewer, exposing two sides that recede into the distance, one to each vanishing point.
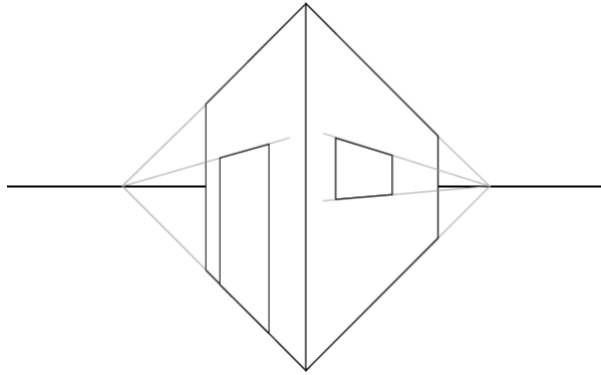
Two Point Perspective, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

View Gustave Caillebotte's Paris Street, Rainy Day from 1877 to see how two-point perspective is used to give an accurate view to an urban scene. The artist's composition, however, is more complex than just his use of perspective. The figures are deliberately placed to direct the viewer's eye from the front right of the picture to the building's front edge on the left, which, like a ship's bow, acts as a cleaver to plunge both sides toward the horizon. In the midst of this visual recession a lamp post stands firmly in the middle to arrest our gaze from going right out the back of the painting. Caillebotte includes the little metal arm at the top right of the post to direct us again along a horizontal path, now keeping us from traveling off the top of the canvas. As relatively spare as the left side of the work is, the artist crams the right side with hard-edged and organic shapes and forms in a complex play of positive and negative space.

Three-point perspective is used when an artist wants to project a "bird's-eye view", that is, when the projection lines recede to two points on the horizon and a third either far above or below the horizon line. In this case the parallel lines that make up the sides of an object are not parallel to the edge of the ground the artist is working on (paper, canvas, etc).
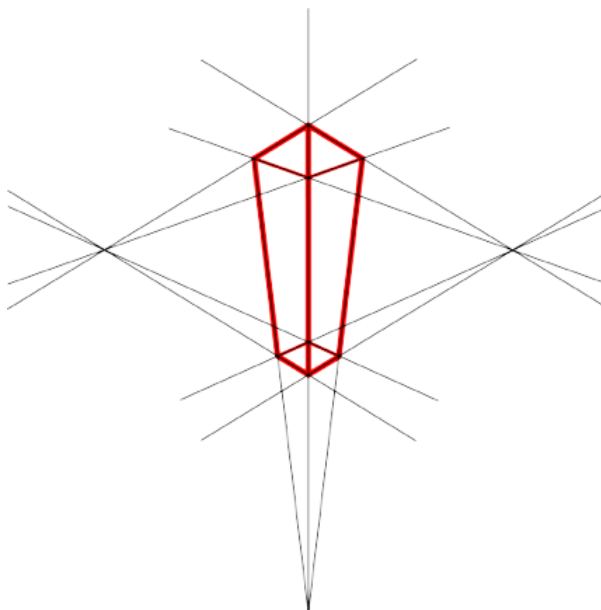
Three-point perspective (with vanishing points above and below the horizon line shown at the same time). Design by Shazz, CC BY

The perspective system is a cultural convention well suited to a traditional western European idea of the "truth," that is, an accurate, clear rendition of observed reality. Even after the

invention of linear perspective, many cultures traditionally use a flatter pictorial space, relying on overlapped shapes or size differences in forms to indicate this same truth of observation. Examine the miniature painting of the *Third Court of the Topkapi Palace* from fourteenth-century Turkey to contrast its pictorial space with that of linear perspective. It's composed from a number of different vantage points (as opposed to vanishing points), all very flat to the picture plane. While the overall image is seen from above, the figures and trees appear as cutouts, seeming to float in mid air. Notice the towers on the far left and right are sideways to the picture plane. As "incorrect" as it looks, the painting gives a detailed description of the landscape and structures on the palace grounds.

Third Court of the Topkapi Palace, from the Hunername, 1548. Ottoman miniature painting, Topkapi Museum, Istanbul. CC BY-SA

After nearly five hundred years using linear perspective, western ideas about how space is depicted accurately in two dimensions went through a revolution at the beginning of the 20th century. A young Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso, moved to Paris, then western culture's capital of art, and largely reinvented pictorial space with the invention of Cubism, ushered in dramatically by his painting Les Demoiselles d'Avignon in 1907. He was influenced in part by the chiseled forms, angular surfaces and disproportion of African sculpture and mask-like faces of early Iberian artworks.

Picasso, his friend Georges Braque and a handful of other artists struggled to develop a new space that relied on, ironically, the flatness of the picture plane to carry and animate traditional subject matter including figures, still life and landscape. Cubist pictures, and eventually sculptures, became amalgams of different points of view, light sources and planar constructs. It was as if they were presenting their subject matter in many ways at once, all the while shifting foreground, middle ground and background so the viewer is not sure where one starts and the other ends. In an interview, the artist explained cubism this way: "The problem is now to pass, to go around the object, and give a plastic expression to the result. All of this is my struggle to break with the two-dimensional aspect" (from Alexander Liberman, *An Artist in His Studio, 1960, page 113*). Public and critical reaction to cubism was understandably negative, but the artists'

experiments with spatial relationships reverberated with others and became – along with new ways of using color – a driving force in the development of a modern art movement that based itself on the flatness of the picture plane. Instead of a window to look into, the flat surface becomes a ground on which to construct formal arrangements of shapes, colors and compositions. For another perspective on this idea, refer back to module one's discussion of 'abstraction'.

You can see the radical changes cubism made in George Braque's landscape *La Roche Guyon* from 1909. The trees, houses, castle and surrounding rocks comprise almost a single complex form, stair-stepping up the canvas to mimic the distant hill at the top, all of it struggling upwards and leaning to the right within a shallow pictorial space.

George Braque, Castle at La Roche Guyon, 1909. Oil on canvas. Stedelijk van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Netherlands. Licensed through GNU and Creative Commons

As the cubist style developed, its forms became even flatter. Juan Gris's *The Sunblind* from 1914 splays the still life it represents across the canvas. Collage elements like newspaper reinforce pictorial flatness.

Juan Gris, The Sunblind, 1914. Gouache, collage, chalk, and charcoal on canvas. Tate Gallery, London. Image licensed under GNU Free Documentation License

It's not so difficult to understand the importance of this new idea of space when placed in the context of comparable advances in science surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century. The Wright Brothers took to the air with powered flight in 1903, the same year Marie Curie won the first of two Nobel prizes for her pioneering work in radiation. Sigmund Freud's new ideas on the inner spaces of the mind and its effect on behavior were published in 1902, and Albert Einstein's calculations on relativity, the idea that space and time are intertwined, first appeared in 1905. Each of these discoveries added to human understanding and realigned the way we look at ourselves and our world. Indeed, Picasso, speaking of his struggle to define cubism, said "Even Einstein did not know it either! The condition of discovery is outside us; but the terrifying thing is that despite all this, we can only find what we know" (from *Picasso on Art, A Selection of Views* by Dore Ashton, (Souchere, 1960, page 15).

Three-dimensional space doesn't undergo this fundamental transformation. It remains a visual tug between positive and negative spaces. Sculptors influenced by cubism do, however, develop new forms to fill this space; abstract and non-objective works that chanllenge us to see them on their own terms. Constantin Brancusi, a Romanian sculptor living in Paris, became a leading artist to champion the new forms of modern art. His sculpture Bird in Space is an elegant example of how abstraction and formal arrangement combine to symbolize the new movement. The photograph of Brancusi's studio below gives further evidence of sculpture's debt to cubism and the struggle "to go around the object, to give it plastic expression."

Edward Steichen, Brancusi's studio, 1920. Metropolitan Museum, New York. This photograph is in the public domain.

Now that we've established line, shape, and spatial relationships, we can turn our attention to surface qualities and their importance in works of art. Value (or tone), color and texture are the elements used to do this.

Value

Value is the relative lightness or darkness of a shape in relation to another. The value scale, bounded on one end by pure white and on the other by black, and in between a series of progressively darker shades of grey, gives an artist the tools to make these transformations. The value scale below shows the standard variations in tones.
Values near the lighter end of the spectrum are termed high-keyed, those on the darker end are low-keyed.

Value Scale, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison, CC BY

In two dimensions, the use of value gives a shape the illusion of mass and lends an entire composition a sense of light and shadow. The two examples below show the effect value has on changing a shape to a form.
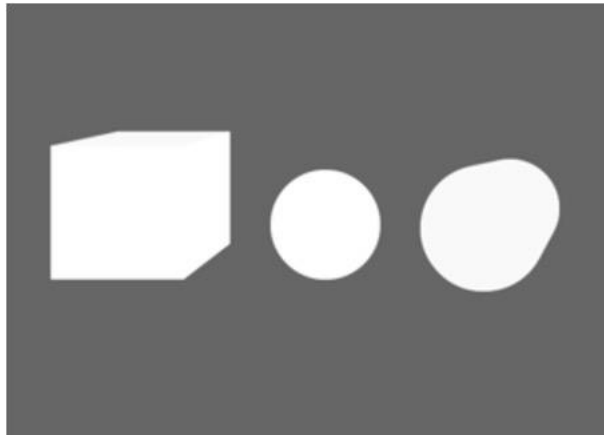
2D Form, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison, CC BY
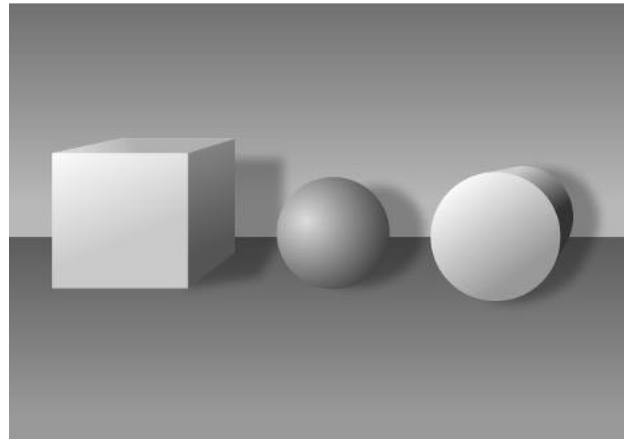
2D Form, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison, CC BY

This same technique brings to life what begins as a simple line drawing of a young man's head in Michelangelo's Head of a Youth and a Right Hand from 1508. Shading is created with line (refer to our discussion of *line* earlier in this module) or tones created with a pencil. Artists vary the tones by the amount of resistance they use between the pencil and the paper they're drawing on. A drawing pencil's leads vary in hardness, each one giving a different tone than another. Washes of ink or color create values determined by the amount of water the medium is dissolved into.

The use of *high contrast,* placing lighter areas of value against much darker ones, creates a dramatic effect, while *low contrast* gives more subtle results. These differences in effect are evident in 'Guiditta and Oloferne' by the Italian painter Caravaggio, and Robert Adams' photograph Untitled, Denver from 1970-74. Caravaggio uses a high contrast palette to an already dramatic scene to increase the visual tension for the viewer, while Adams deliberately makes use of low contrast to underscore the drabness of the landscape surrounding the figure on the bicycle.

Color

Color is the most complex artistic element because of the combinations and variations inherent in its use. Humans respond to color combinations differently, and artists study and use color in part to give desired direction to their work.

Color is fundamental to many forms of art. Its relevance use and function in a given work depend on the medium of that work. While some concepts dealing with color are broadly applicable across media, others are not.

The full *spectrum* of colors is contained in white light. Humans perceive colors from the light reflected off objects. A red object, for example, looks red because it reflects the red part of the spectrum. It would be a different color under a different light. Color theory first appeared in the 17th century when English mathematician and scientist Sir Isaac Newton discovered that white light could be divided into a spectrum by passing it through a prism.

The study of color in art and design often starts with *color theory*. Color theory splits up colors into three categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

The basic tool used is a color wheel, developed by Isaac Newton in 1666. A more complex model known as the color tree, created by Albert Munsell, shows the spectrum made up of sets of tints and shades on connected planes.

There are a number of approaches to organizing colors into meaningful relationships. Most systems differ in structure only.

Traditional Model

Traditional color theory is a qualitative attempt to organize colors and their relationships. It is based on Newton's color wheel and continues to be the most common system used by artists.

Blue Yellow Red Color Wheel. Released under the GNU Free Documentation License

Traditional color theory uses the same principles as subtractive color mixing (see below) but prefers different primary colors.

- The *primary* colors are red, blue, and yellow. You find them equidistant from each other on the color wheel. These are the "elemental" colors; not produced by mixing any other colors, and all other colors are derived from some combination of these three.
- The *secondary* colors are orange (mix of red and yellow), green (mix of blue and yellow), and violet (mix of blue and red).
- The *tertiary* colors are obtained by mixing one primary color and one secondary color. Depending on amount of color used, different hues can be obtained such as red-orange or yellow-green. Neutral colors (browns and grays) can be mixed using the three primary colors together.
- White and black lie outside of these categories. They are used to lighten or darken a color. A lighter color (made by adding white to it) is called a *tint*, while a darker color (made by adding black) is called a *shade*.

Color Mixing

A more quantifiable approach to color theory is to think about color as the result of light reflecting off a surface. Understood in this way, color can be represented as a ratio of amounts of primary color mixed together.

Additive color theory is used when different colored lights are being *projected* on top of each other. Projected media produce color by projecting light onto a reflective surface. Where subtractive mixing creates the impression of color by selectively absorbing part of the spectrum, additive mixing produces color by selective projection of part of the spectrum. Common applications of additive color theory are theater lighting and television screens.
RGB color is based on additive color theory.

- The primary colors are red, blue, and green.
- The secondary colors are yellow (mix of red and green), cyan (mix of blue and green), and magenta (mix of blue and red).
- The tertiary colors are obtained by mixing the above colors at different intensities.

White is created by the confluence of the three primary colors, while black represents the absence of all color. The lightness or darkness of a color is determined by the intensity/density of its various parts. For instance: a middle-toned gray could be produced by projecting a red, a blue and a green light at the same point with 50% intensity.
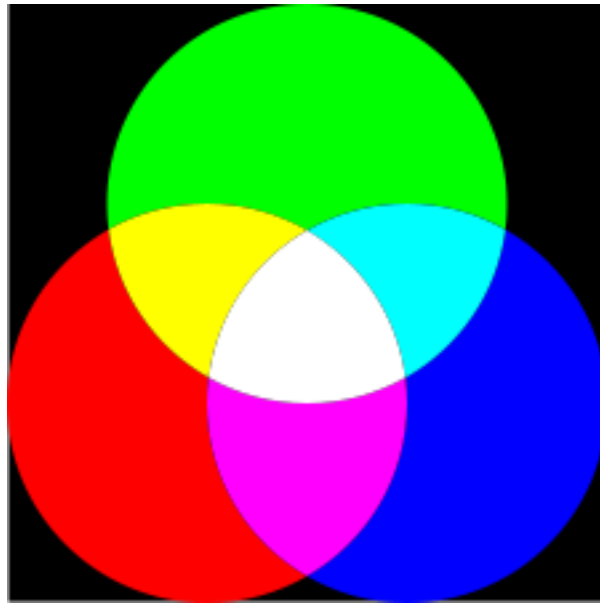
Additive Color Representation. This image is in the public domain.

The primaries are red, green and blue. White is the confluence of all the primary colors; black is the absence of color.

Subtractive color theory ("process color") is used when a single light source is being ***reflected*** by different colors laid one on top of the other. Color is produced when parts of the external light source's spectrum are absorbed by the material and not reflected back to the viewer's eye. For example, a painter brushes blue paint onto a canvas. The chemical composition of the paint allows all of the colors in the spectrum to be absorbed except blue, which is reflected from the paint's surface. Subtractive color works as the reverse of additive color theory. Common applications of subtractive color theory are used in the visual arts, color printing and processing photographic positives and negatives. The primary colors are red, yellow, and blue.

- The secondary colors are orange, green and violet.
- The tertiary colors are created by mixing a primary with a secondary color.
- Black is mixed using the three primary colors, while white represents the absence of all colors. Note: because of impurities in subtractive color, a true black is impossible to create through the mixture of primaries. Because of this the result is closer to brown. Similar to additive color theory, lightness and darkness of a color is determined by its intensity and density.
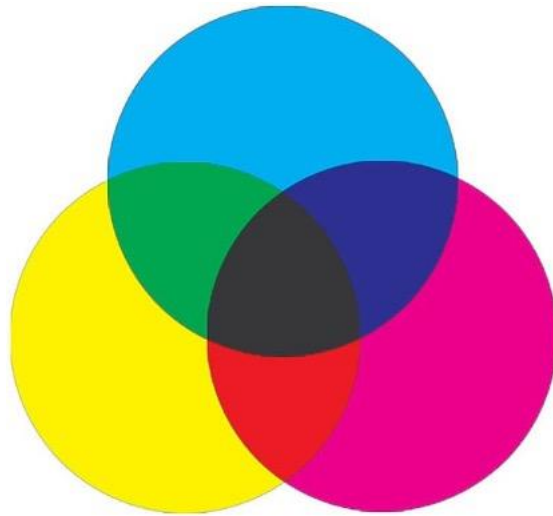
Subtractive Color Mixing. Released under the GNU Free Documentation License

The primaries are blue, yellow and red.

Color Attributes

There are many attributes to color. Each one has an effect on how we perceive it.

- **Hue** refers to color itself, but also to the variations of a color.
- **Value** (as discussed previously) refers to the relative lightness or darkness of one color next to another. The value of a color makes a difference in how it is perceived. A color on a dark background will appear lighter, while that same color on a light background will appear darker.
- **Tone** refers to the gradation or subtle changes made to a color when it's mixed with a gray created by adding two complements (see *Complementary Color* below). You can see various color tones by looking at the color tree mentioned in the paragraph above.
- **Saturation** refers to the purity and intensity of a color. The primaries are the most intense and pure but diminish as they are mixed to form other colors. The creation of tints and shades also diminish a color's saturation. Two colors work strongest together when they share the same intensity. This is called equiluminance.

Color Interactions

Beyond creating a mixing hierarchy, color theory also provides tools for understanding how colors work together.

Monochrome

The simplest color interaction is monochrome. This is the use of variations of a single hue. The advantage of using a monochromatic color scheme is that you get a high level of unity throughout the artwork because all the tones relate to one another. See this in Mark Tansey's Derrida Queries de Man from 1990.

Analogous Color

Analogous colors are similar to one another. As their name implies, analogous colors can be found *next* to one another on any 12-part color wheel:

Analogous Color, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

You can see the effect of analogous colors in Paul Cezanne's oil painting Auvers Panoromic View.

Color Temperature

Colors are perceived to have **temperatures** associated with them. The color wheel is divided into **warm** and **cool** colors. Warm colors range from yellow to red, while cool colors range from yellow-green to violet. You can achieve complex results using just a few colors when you pair them in warm and cool sets.

Warm cool color, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Complementary Colors

Complementary colors are found directly *opposite* one another on a color wheel. Here are some examples:

- purple and yellow
- green and red
- orange and blue

Complementary Color, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Blue and orange are complements. When placed near each other, complements create a visual tension. This color scheme is desirable when a dramatic effect is needed using only two colors. The painting Untitled by Keith Haring is an example. You can click the painting to create a larger image.

A **split complementary** color scheme uses one color plus the two colors on each side of the first color's complement on the color wheel. Like the use of complements, a split complement creates visual tension but includes the variety of a third color.

Split Complementary Color, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

Color Subtraction refers to a visual phenomenon where the appearance of one color will lessen its presence in a nearby color. For instance, orange (red + yellow) on a red background will appear more like yellow. Don't confuse color subtraction with the *subtractive color system* mentioned earlier in this module. Color subtraction uses specific hues within a color scheme for a certain visual effect.

Simultaneous Contrast

Neutrals on a colored background will appear tinted toward that color's complement, because the eye attempts to create a balance. (Grey on a red background will appear more greenish, for example.) In other words, the color will shift *away* from the surrounding color. Also, non-dominant colors will appear tinted towards the complement of the dominant color.

Color interaction affect values, as well. Colors appear darker on or near lighter colors, and lighter on or near darker colors. Complementary colors will look more intense on or near each other than they will on or near grays (refer back to the Keith Haring example above to see this effect).

Simultaneous Contrast, 11 July 2012, Creator: Oliver Harrison. CC BY

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Chapter 4: The Principles of Design

- Visual Balance
- Repetition
- Scale and Proportion
- Emphasis
- Time and Motion
- Unity and Variety

Art as Visual Input

Visual art manifests itself through media, ideas, themes and sheer creative imagination. Yet all of these rely on basic structural principles that, like the elements we've been studying, combine to give voice to artistic expression. Incorporating the principles into your artistic vocabulary not only allows you to objectively describe artworks you may not understand but contributes in the search for their meaning.

The first way to think about a principle is that it is something that can be repeatedly and dependably done with elements to produce some sort of visual effect in a composition.

The principles are based on sensory responses to visual input: elements appear to have visual weight, movement, etc. The principles help govern what might occur when particular elements are arranged in a particular way. Using a chemistry analogy, the principles are the ways the elements "stick together" to make a "chemical" (in our case, an image). Principles can be confusing. There are at least two very different but correct ways of thinking about principles. On the one hand, a principle can be used to describe an operational cause and effect such as "bright things come forward and dull things recede". On the other hand, a principle can describe a high-quality standard to strive for such as "unity is better than chaos" or "variation beats boredom" in a work of art. So, the word "principle" can be used for very different purposes.

Another way to think about a principle is that it is a way to express a value judgment about a composition. Any list of these effects may not be comprehensive, but there are some that are more commonly used (unity, balance, etc). When we say a painting has unity, we are making a value judgment. Too much *unity* without *variety* is boring and too much variation without unity is chaotic.

The principles of design help you to carefully plan and organize the elements of art so that you will hold interest and command attention. This is sometimes referred to as *visual impact.*

In any work of art there is a thought process for the arrangement and use of the elements of design. The artist who works with the principles of good composition will create a more interesting piece; it will be arranged to show a pleasing rhythm and movement. The center of interest will be strong, and the viewer will not look away, instead, they will be drawn into the work. A good knowledge of composition is essential in producing good artwork. Some artists today like to bend or ignore these rules and by doing so are experimenting with different forms of expression. The following page explore important principles in composition.

Visual Balance

All works of art possess some form of visual balance – a sense of weighted clarity created in a composition. The artist arranges balance to set the dynamics of a composition. A really good example is in the work of Piet Mondrian, whose revolutionary paintings of the early twentieth century used non-objective balance instead of realistic subject matter to generate the visual power in his work. In the examples below you can see that where the white rectangle is placed makes a big difference in how the entire picture plane is activated.
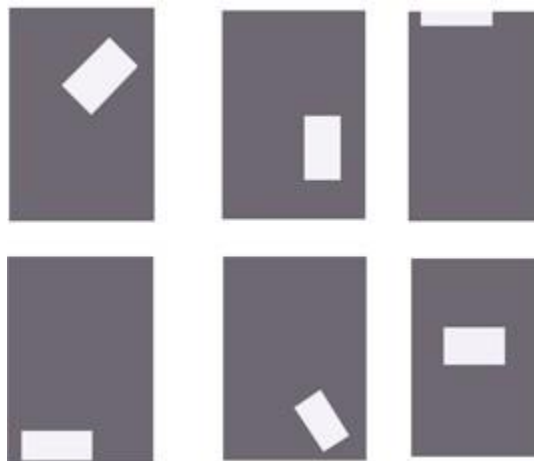
Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

The example on the top left is weighted toward the top, and the diagonal orientation of the white shape gives the whole area a sense of movement. The top middle example is weighted more toward the bottom, but still maintains a sense that the white shape is floating. On the top right, the white shape is nearly off the picture plane altogether, leaving most of the remaining area visually empty. This arrangement works if you want to convey a feeling of loftiness or simply direct the viewer's eyes to the top of the composition. The lower left example is perhaps the least dynamic: the white shape is resting at the bottom, mimicking the horizontal bottom edge of the ground. The overall sense here is restful, heavy and without any dynamic character. The bottom middle composition is weighted decidedly toward the bottom right corner, but again, the diagonal orientation of the white shape leaves some sense of movement. Lastly, the lower right example places the white shape directly in the middle on a horizontal axis. This is visually the most stable but lacks any sense of movement. Refer to these six diagrams when you are determining the visual weight of specific artworks.

There are three basic forms of visual balance:

- Symmetrical
- Asymmetrical
- Radial

Symmetrical balance is the most visually stable and characterized by an exact—or nearly exact—compositional design on either (or both) sides of the horizontal or vertical axis of the picture plane. Symmetrical compositions are usually dominated by a central anchoring element. There are many examples of symmetry in the natural world that reflect an aesthetic dimension. The Moon Jellyfish fits this description; ghostly lit against a black background, but absolute symmetry in its design.

Moon Jellyfish, (detail). Digital image by Luc Viator, licensed by Creative Commons

But symmetry's inherent stability can sometimes preclude a static quality. View the Tibetan scroll painting to see the implied movement of the central figure Vajrakilaya. The visual busyness of the shapes and patterns surrounding the figure are balanced by their compositional symmetry, and the wall of flame behind Vajrakilaya tilts to the right as the figure itself tilts to the left. Tibetan scroll paintings use the symmetry of the figure to symbolize their power and spiritual presence.

Spiritual paintings from other cultures employ this same balance for similar reasons. Sano di Pietro's '*Madonna of Humility',* painted around 1440, is centrally positioned, holding the Christ child and forming a triangular design, her head the apex and her flowing gown making a broad base at the bottom of the picture. Their halos are visually reinforced with the heads of the angels and the arc of the frame.

Sano di Peitro, Madonna of Humility, c.1440, tempera and tooled gold and silver onpanel. Brooklyn Museum, New York. Image is in the public domain

The use of symmetry is evident in three-dimensional art, too. A famous example is the *Gateway Arch* in St. Louis, Missouri (below). Commemorating the westward expansion of the United States, its stainless-steel frame rises over 600 feet into the air before gently curving back to the ground. Another example is Richard Serra's *Tilted Spheres* (also below). The four massive slabs of steel show a concentric symmetry and take on an organic dimension as they curve around each other, appearing to almost hover above the ground.

Eero Saarinen, Gateway Arch, 1963-65, stainless steel, 630' high. St. Louis, Missouri. Image Licensed through Creative Commons

Richard Serra, Tilted Spheres, 2002 – 04, Cor-ten steel, 14' x 39' x 22'. Pearson International Airport, Toronto, Canada. Image Licensed through Creative Commons

Asymmetry uses compositional elements that are offset from each other, creating a visually unstable balance. Asymmetrical visual balance is the most dynamic because it creates a more complex design construction. A graphic poster from the 1930s shows how offset positioning and strong contrasts can increase the visual effect of the entire composition.
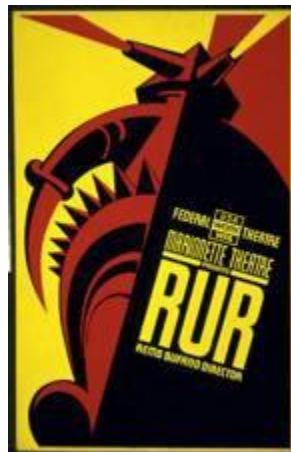
Poster from the Library of Congress archives. Image is in the public domain

Claude Monet's Still Life with Apples and Grapes from 1880 (below) uses asymmetry in its design to enliven an otherwise mundane arrangement. First, he sets the whole composition on the diagonal, cutting off the lower left corner with a dark triangle. The arrangement of fruit appears haphazard, but Monet purposely sets most of it on the top half of the canvas to achieve a lighter visual weight. He balances the darker basket of fruit with the white of the tablecloth, even placing a few smaller apples at the lower right to complete the composition.

Monet and other Impressionist painters were influenced by Japanese woodcut prints, whose flat spatial areas and graphic color appealed to the artist's sense of design.

Claude Monet, Still Life with Apples and Grapes, 1880, oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago. Licensed under Creative Commons

One of the best-known Japanese print artists is Ando Hiroshige. You can see the design strength of asymmetry in his woodcut *Shinagawa on the Tokaido* (below), one of a series of works that explores the landscape around the Takaido road. You can view many of his works through the hyperlink above.

Hiroshige, Shinagawa on the Tokaido, ukiyo-e print, after 1832. Licensed under Creative Commons

In Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure* the organic form of the abstracted figure, strong lighting and precarious balance obtained through asymmetry make the sculpture a powerful example in three-dimensions.

Henry Moore, Reclining Figure, 1951. Painted bronze. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Photo by Andrew Dunn and licensed under Creative Commons

Radial balance suggests movement from the center of a composition towards the outer edge—or vice versa. Many times, radial balance is another form of symmetry, offering stability and a point of focus at the center of the composition. Buddhist mandala paintings offer this kind of balance almost exclusively. Similar to the scroll painting we viewed previously, the image radiates outward from a central spirit figure. In the example below there are six of these figures forming a star shape in the middle. Here we have absolute symmetry in the composition, yet a feeling of movement is generated by the concentric circles within a rectangular format.
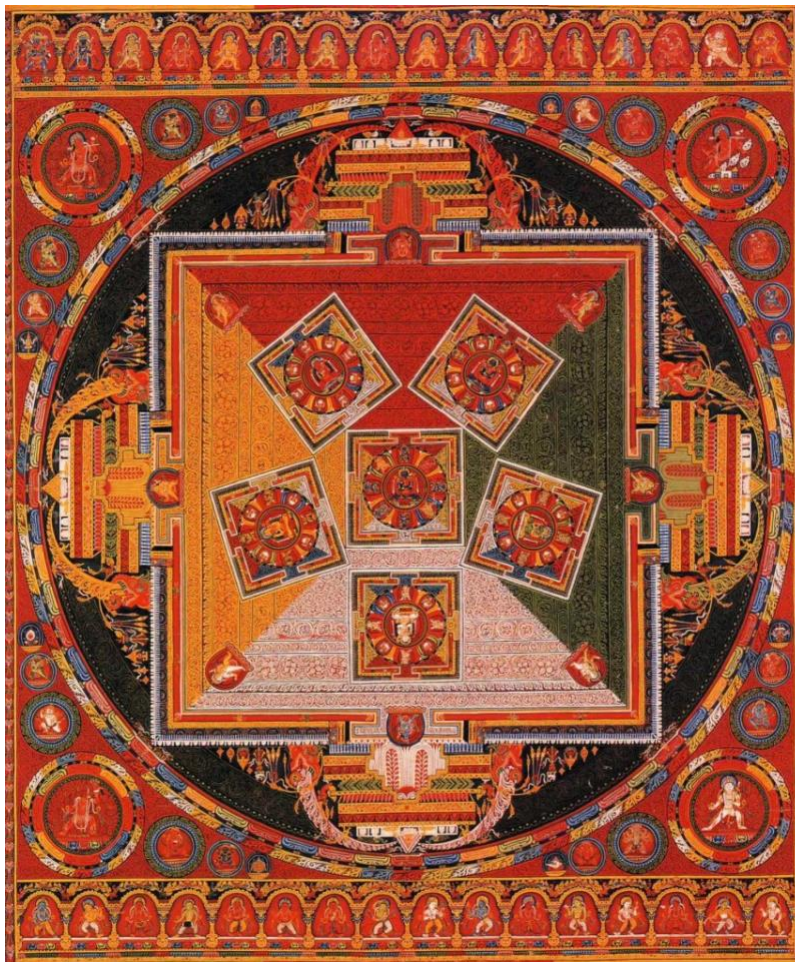
Mandala of the Six Chakravartins, c. 1429-46. Central Tibet (Ngor Monestary). Image is in the public domain

Raphael's painting of Galatea, a sea nymph in Greek mythology, incorporates a double set of

radial designs into one composition. The first is the swirl of figures at the bottom of the painting, the second being the four cherubs circulating at the top. The entire work is a current of figures, limbs and implied motion. Notice too the stabilizing classic triangle formed with Galatea's head at the apex and the other figures' positions inclined towards her. The cherub outstretched horizontally along the bottom of the composition completes the second circle.

Raphael, Galatea, fresco, 1512. Villa Farnesina, Rome. Work is in the public domain

Within this discussion of visual balance, there is a relationship between the natural generation of organic systems and their ultimate form. This relationship is mathematical as well as aesthetic, and is expressed as the Golden Ratio:

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/fmaVqkR0ZXg

Here is an example of the golden ratio in the form of a rectangle and the enclosed spiral generated by the ratios:
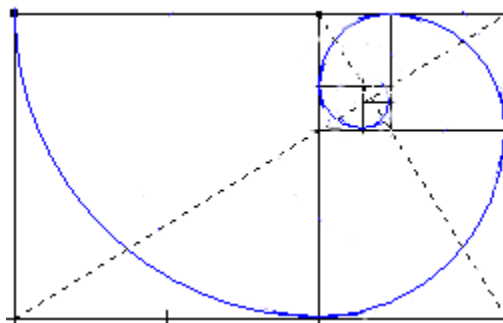
The golden ratio. Image from Wikipedia Commons and licensed through Creative Commons

The natural world expresses radial balance, manifest through the golden ratio, in many of its

structures, from galaxies to tree rings and waves generated from dropping a stone on the water's surface. You can see this organic radial structure in some natural systems by comparing the satellite image of hurricane Isabel and a telescopic image of spiral galaxy M51 below.
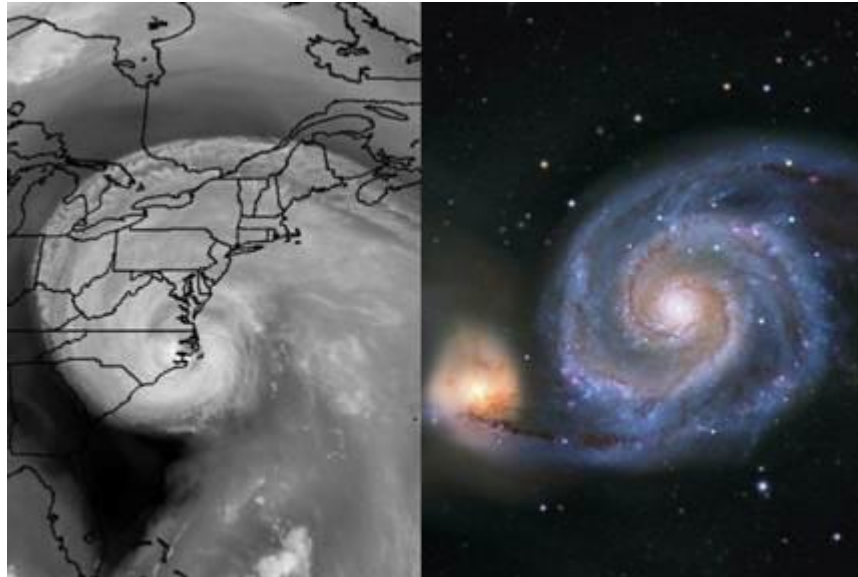
Images by the National Weather service and NASA. Images are in the public domain.

A snail shell, unbeknownst to its inhabitant, is formed by this same universal ratio, and, in this case, takes on the green tint of its surroundings.

Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

Environmental artist Robert Smithson created *Spiral Jetty,* an earthwork of rock and soil, in 1970. The jetty extends nearly 1500 feet into the Great Salt Lake in Utah as a symbol of the interconnectedness of ourselves to the rest of the natural world.

Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty, 1970. Image by Soren Harward, CC BY-SA

Repetition

Repetition is the use of two or more like elements or forms within a composition. The systematic arrangement of a repeated shapes or forms creates **pattern.**

Patterns create **rhythm**, the lyric or syncopated visual effect that helps carry the viewer, and the artist's idea, throughout the work. A simple but stunning visual pattern, created in this photograph of an orchard by Jim Wilson for the New York Times, combines color, shape and direction into a rhythmic flow from left to right. Setting the composition on a diagonal increases the feeling of movement and drama.

The traditional art of Australian aboriginal culture uses repetition and pattern almost exclusively both as decoration and to give symbolic meaning to images. The *coolamon,* or carrying vessel pictured below, is made of tree bark and painted with stylized patterns of colored dots indicating paths, landscapes or animals. You can see how fairly simple patterns create rhythmic undulations across the surface of the work. The design on this particular piece indicates it was probably made for ceremonial use. We'll explore aboriginal works in more depth in the 'Other Worlds' module.

Australian aboriginal softwood coolamon with acrylic paint design. Licensed under Creative Commons

Rhythmic cadences take complex visual form when subordinated by others. Elements of line and shape coalesce into a formal matrix that supports the leaping salmon in Alfredo Arreguin's '*Malila Diptych'.* Abstract arches and spirals of water reverberate in the scales, eyes and gills of the fish. Arreguin creates two rhythmic beats here, that of the water flowing downstream to the left and

the fish gracefully jumping against it on their way upstream.

Alfredo Arreguin, Malila Diptych, 2003 (detail). Washington State Arts Commission. Digital Image by Christopher Gildow. Licensed under Creative Commons.

The textile medium is well suited to incorporate pattern into art. The warp and weft of the yarns create natural patterns that are manipulated through position, color and size by the weaver. The Tlingit culture of coastal British Columbia produce spectacular ceremonial blankets distinguished by graphic patterns and rhythms in stylized animal forms separated by a hierarchy of geometric shapes. The symmetry and high contrast of the design is stunning in its effect.

Scale and Proportion

Scale and proportion show the relative size of one form in relation to another. Scalar relationships are often used to create illusions of depth on a two-dimensional surface, the larger form being in front of the smaller one. The scale of an object can provide a focal point or emphasis in an image. In Winslow Homer's watercolor A Good Shot, Adirondacks, the deer is centered in the foreground and highlighted to assure its place of importance in the composition. In comparison, there is a small puff of white smoke from a rifle in the left center background, the only indicator of the hunter's position. Click the image for a larger view.

Scale and proportion are incremental in nature. Works of art don't always rely on big differences in scale to make a strong visual impact. A good example of this is Michelangelo's sculptural masterpiece *Pieta* from 1499 (below). Here Mary cradles her dead son, the two figures forming a stable triangular composition. Michelangelo sculpts Mary to a slightly larger scale than the dead Christ to give the central figure more significance, both visually and psychologically.
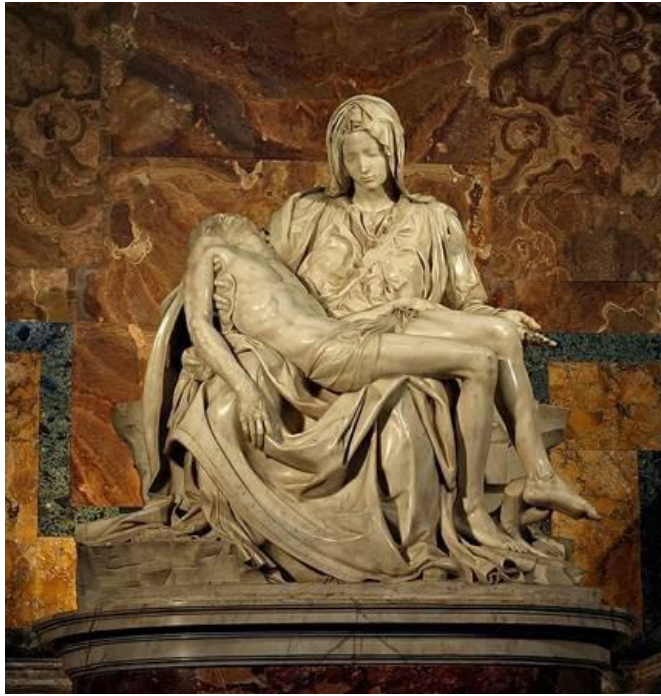
Michelangelo's Pieta, 1499, marble. St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. Licensed under GNU Free Documentation License and Creative Commons

When scale and proportion *are* greatly increased the results can be impressive, giving a work commanding space or fantastic implications. Rene Magritte's painting Personal Values constructs a room with objects whose proportions are so out of whack that it becomes an ironic play on how we view everyday items in our lives.

American sculptor Claes Oldenburg and his wife Coosje van Bruggen create works of common objects at enormous scales. Their Stake Hitch reaches a total height of more than 53 feet and links two floors of the Dallas Museum of Art. As big as it is, the work retains a comic and playful character, in part because of its gigantic size.

Emphasis

Emphasis—the area of primary visual importance—can be attained in a number of ways. We've just seen how it can be a function of differences in scale. Emphasis can also be obtained by isolating an area or specific subject matter through its location or color, value and texture. Main emphasis in a composition is usually supported by areas of lesser importance, a hierarchy within an artwork that's activated and sustained at different levels.

Like other artistic principles, emphasis can be expanded to include the main *idea* contained in a work of art. Let's look at the following work to explore this.

We can clearly determine the figure in the white shirt as the main emphasis in Francisco de Goya's painting *The Third of May, 1808* below. Even though his location is left of center, a candle lantern in front of him acts as a spotlight, and his dramatic stance reinforces his relative isolation from the rest of the crowd. Moreover, the soldiers with their aimed rifles create an implied line between themselves and the figure. There is a rhythm created by all the figures' heads—roughly all at the same level throughout the painting—that is continued in the soldiers' legs and scabbards to the lower right. Goya counters the horizontal emphasis by including the distant church and its vertical towers in the background.

In terms of the idea, Goya's narrative painting gives witness to the summary execution of Spanish resistance fighters by Napoleon's armies on the night of May 3, 1808. He poses the figure in the white shirt to imply a crucifixion as he faces his own death, and his compatriots surrounding him either clutch their faces in disbelief or stand stoically with him, looking their executioners in the eyes. While the carnage takes place in front of us, the church stands dark and silent in the distance. The genius of Goya is his ability to direct the narrative content by the emphasis he places in his composition.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, The Third of May, 1808, 1814. Oil on canvas. The Prado Museum, Madrid. This image is in the public domain

A second example showing emphasis is seen in Landscape with Pheasants, a silk tapestry from nineteenth- century China. Here the main focus is obtained in a couple of different ways. First, the pair of birds are woven in *colored* silk, setting them apart visually from the gray landscape they inhabit. Secondly, their placement at the top of the outcrop of land allows them to stand out against the light background, their tail feathers mimicked by the nearby leaves. The convoluted treatment of the rocky outcrop keeps it in competition with the pheasants as a focal point, but in the end the pair of birds' color wins out.

A final example on emphasis, taken from The Art of Burkina Faso by Christopher D. Roy, University of Iowa, covers both design features and the idea behind the art. Many world cultures include artworks in ceremony and ritual. African *Bwa* Masks are large, graphically painted in black and white and usually attached to fiber costumes that cover the head. They depict mythic characters and animals or are abstract and have a stylized face with a tall, rectangular wooden plank attached to the top. In any manifestation, the mask and the dance for which they are worn are inseparable. They become part of a community outpouring of cultural expression and emotion.

Time and Motion

One of the problems artists face in creating static (singular, fixed images) is how to imbue them

with a sense of **time and motion**. Some traditional solutions to this problem employ the use of spatial relationships, especially perspective and atmospheric perspective. Scale and proportion can also be employed to show the passage of time or the illusion of depth and movement. For example, as something recedes into the background, it becomes smaller in scale and lighter in value. Also, the same figure (or other form) repeated in different places within the same image gives the effect of movement and the passage of time.

An early example of this is in the carved sculpture of Kuya Shonin. The Buddhist monk leans forward, his cloak seeming to move with the breeze of his steps. The figure is remarkably realistic in style, his head lifted slightly and his mouth open. Six small figures emerge from his mouth, visual symbols of the chant he utters.

Visual experiments in movement were first produced in the middle of the 19th century. Photographer Eadweard Muybridge snapped black and white sequences of figures and animals walking, running and jumping, then placing them side-by-side to examine the mechanics and rhythms created by each action.
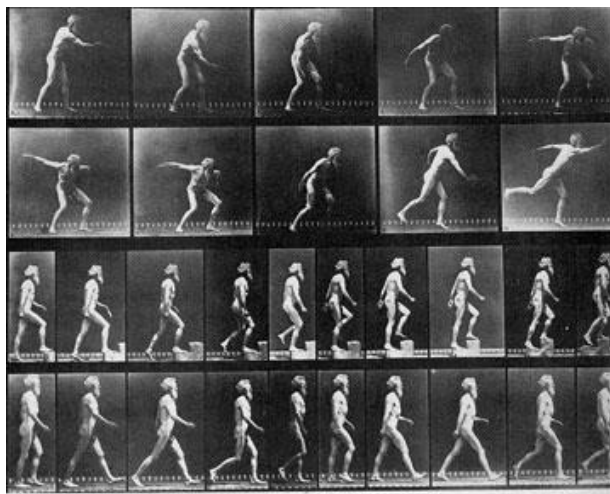
Eadweard Muybridge, sequences of himself throwing a disc, using a step and walking. Licensed through Creative Commons

In the modern era, the rise of cubism (please refer back to our study of 'space' in module 3) and subsequent related styles in modern painting and sculpture had a major effect on how static works of art depict time and movement. These new developments in form came about, in part, through the cubist's initial exploration of how to depict an object and the space around it by representing it from multiple viewpoints, incorporating all of them into a single image.

Marcel Duchamp's painting Nude Descending a Staircase from 1912 formally concentrates Muybridge's idea into a single image. The figure is abstract, a result of Duchamp's influence by cubism, but gives the viewer a definite feeling of movement from left to right. This work was exhibited at The Armory Show in New York City in 1913. The show was the first to exhibit modern art from the United States and Europe at an American venue on such a large scale. Controversial and fantastic, the Armory show became a symbol for the emerging modern art movement.

Duchamp's painting is representative of the new ideas brought forth in the exhibition. In three dimensions the effect of movement is achieved by imbuing the subject matter with a dynamic pose or gesture (recall that the use of diagonals in a composition helps create a sense

of movement). Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture of David from 1623 is a study of coiled visual tension and movement. The artist shows us the figure of David with furrowed brow, even biting his lip in concentration as he eyes Goliath and prepares to release the rock from his sling.

The temporal arts of film, video and digital projection by their definition show movement and the passage of time. In all of these mediums we watch as a narrative unfolds before our eyes. Film is essentially thousands of static images divided onto one long roll of film that is passed through a lens at a certain speed. From this apparatus comes the term *movies*.

Video uses magnetic tape to achieve the same effect, and digital media streams millions of electronically pixilated images across the screen. An example is seen in the work of Swedish Artist Pipilotti Rist. Her large-scale digital work Pour Your Body Out is fluid, colorful and absolutely absorbing as it unfolds across the walls.

Unity and Variety

Ultimately, a work of art is the strongest when it expresses an overall **unity** in composition and form, a visual sense that all the parts fit together; that the whole is greater than its parts. This same sense of unity is projected to encompass the idea and meaning of the work too. This visual and conceptual unity is sublimated by the **variety** of elements and principles used to create it. We can think of this in terms of a musical orchestra and its conductor: directing many different instruments, sounds and feelings into a single comprehendible symphony of sound. This is where the objective functions of line, color, pattern, scale and all the other artistic elements and principles yield to a more subjective view of the entire work, and from that an appreciation of the aesthetics and meaning it resonates.

We can view Eva Isaksen's work *Orange Light* below to see how unity and variety work together.

Eva Isaksen, Orange Light, 2010. Print and collage on canvas. 40" x 60." Permission of the artist

Isaksen makes use of nearly every element and principle including shallow space, a range of values, colors and textures, asymmetrical balance and different areas of emphasis. The unity of her composition stays strong by keeping the various parts in check against each other and the space they inhabit. In the end the viewer is caught up in a mysterious world of organic forms that float across the surface like seeds being caught by a summer breeze.

License and Attributions

Chapter 5: Finding Meaning

How We See: Objective and Subjective Means

Up until now we've been looking at artworks through the most immediate of visual effects: what we see in front of our eyes. Now we can begin to break down some barriers to find specific meaning in art, including those of different styles and cultures. To help in this journey we need to learn the difference between **looking** and **seeing**.

To look is to get an objective overview of our field of vision. Seeing speaks more to understanding. When we use the term "I see" we communicate that we understand what something means. There are some areas of learning, particularly psychology and biology, that help form the basis of understanding how we see. For example, the fact that humans perceive flat images as having a "reality" to them is very particular. In contrast, if you show a dog an image of another dog, they neither growl nor wag their tail, because they are unable to perceive flat images as containing any meaning. So, you and I have actually developed the ability to "see" images.

In essence, there is more to seeing than meets the eye. We need to take into account a cultural component in how we perceive images and that we do so in subjective ways. Seeing is partly a result of cultural biases. For example, when many of us from industrialized cultures see a parking lot, we can pick out each car immediately, while others from remote tribal cultures (who are not familiar with parking lots) cannot.

Gestalt is the term we use to explain how the brain forms a whole image from many component parts. For instance, the understanding of gestalt is, in part, a way to explain how we have learned to recognize outlines as contours of a solid shape. In art for example, this concept allows us to draw "space" using only lines.

The sites below have some fun perceptual games from psychology and science about how we see, along with some further explanations of gestalt:

Scientific Psychic
Visual Illusions Gallery

The First Level of Meaning: Formal

So, after we see an object, we can understand its **form**: the physical attributes of size, shape and mass. With art, this may at first appear to be simple: we can separate out each artistic element and discover how it is used in the work. The importance of a formal level of meaning is it allows us to look at any work of art from an objective view.

The invention of the photograph has greatly changed our ideas about what looks 'correct'. A good example of this idea can be seen looking at the two images below: the first is a digital photo of a foggy landscape and the second a painting by the color field painter Mark Rothko (click the hyperlink here to view his work).
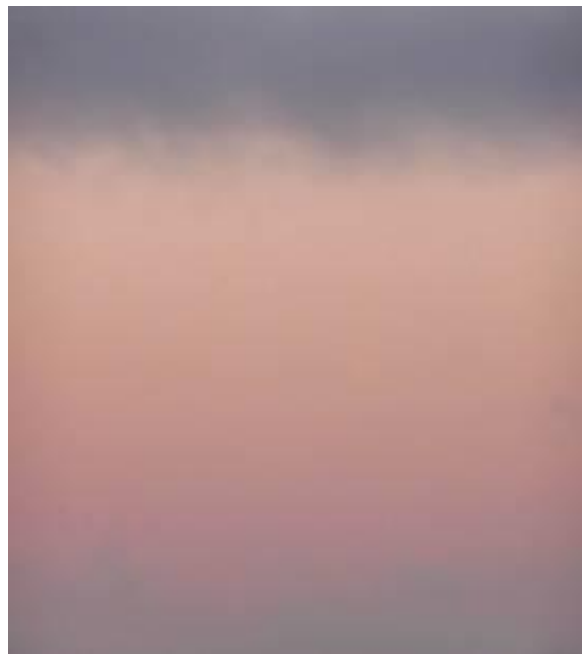
Foggy Landscape. Image: Christopher Gildow
Used with permission of artist

When you compare the two, you see that formally they are similar; bands of color spread horizontally across the surface in layers. Yet Rothko's painting is much more reductive than the photo. The space is flat, sitting right on the surface of the canvas, whereas in the photo you get a feeling of receding space as areas of color overlap each other. This similarity is not coincidental. As a young man Rothko lived in Portland, Oregon, and hiked the Cascade Mountains. On hikes to higher elevations, he saw the landscape and atmosphere around him and was especially moved by the colors in the sky near the horizon just before sunrise and just after sunset. This phenomenon is called the *Veil of Venus*: bands of pink, violet and blue near the horizon directly opposite the setting or rising sun. Below is an example of this phenomenon.

Veil of Venus. Image: Christopher Gildow
Used with permission of artist

Now you can imagine these memories reflected in Rothko's series of abstract 'color field' paintings. It's simplistic to say this was Rothko's only influence. As an artist he explored painting styles emerging out of Surrealism, including automatic drawing and more complex *mythomorphic* techniques. But it's hard to deny that to some extent his paintings are based on what he saw. Click the link to read more about Mark Rothko.

In another example of formal similarities, early photographs often used paintings as reference. We can see this in a comparison of a nineteenth century photo of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, and a painting from the series 'The Course of Empire' by Thomas Cole titled "The Consummation". Both show commanding views of landscape dominated by classic Greek architecture. The photo mimics Cole's painting in formal terms, emphasizing the grandeur of the architecture within a vast expanse of space.

Conversely, realist paintings from the 19th century were sometimes ridiculed for being too lifelike and not 'ideal' enough. Theodore Gericault's Raft of the Medusa is an example. Nowadays people often proclaim that a painting is good because it looks "just like a photograph".

The rise of modern art produced artistic styles that challenge viewers in finding meaning in the works they see. The use of abstraction and gesture as subject matter runs counter to traditional avenues for finding meaning. It is in this formal, gesture-laden approach, however, that much of the grace and delicacy, as well as power, anger or other emotions can be conveyed. In other words, it is the application of the elements that can give us clues to a work's meaning. If we take the formal quality of application (what kind of lines or shapes are created, how the paint is applied, etc) and combine it with a specific subject (the act of painting itself), you can discover a new meaning from the combination of these visual effects.

When looked at from this perspective, the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists become more meaningful. In particular, the art of Joan Mitchell captures the exuberance and energy that the application of paint can achieve.

This bridge between formal quality and subject matter can be applied to meaning in works of art from many cultures. Gesture and pattern combine to enhance the meaning of more decorative works like the paintings from a Ceremonial House ceiling from the Sepik region of New Guinea. The ceremonial house was built as a place for spirits to dwell. The paintings themselves indicate abstracted images of faces making fierce gestures, suns and female genitalia, all in reference to the spirits surrounding the ceremony taking place inside.

The Second Level of Meaning: Subject

There are specific categories of ideas that have been represented in art over time. Many of them are present in some cultures, but never present in others. This disparity gives us another place to look for meaning when we approach differences in representation. But generally, these categories of ideas (sometimes called subjects) can also be called a *genre* of art; that is, a fairly loose category of images that share the same content. Here is a brief list of the type of genre that you may see in a work:

- Landscape
- still life
- portrait
- self-portrait
- allegory: representing a mythological scene or story
- historical: actual representation of a historic event
- religious: two forms: religious representation or religious action
- daily life: sometimes also called genre painting

- nude: male nude and female nude are separate categories
- political: two forms: propaganda and criticism
- social: work created to support a specific social cause
- power: work created to connect to specific spiritual strength
- fantasy: work created to invent new visual worlds
- decoration: work created to embellish surroundings
- abstraction: work whose elements and principles are manipulated to alter the subject in some way.

What you will discover when you think about some of these subjects is that you may already have a vision of how this subject should appear. For example: visualize a portrait or self-portrait. You can see the head, probably from the shoulders up, with little background, painted fairly accurately. Artists often reinvent how a subject is portrayed Some works of art can be part of a certain genre by using metaphor: one image that stands for another. A good example is this quilt by Missouri Pettway from Gees Bend, Alabama. Made of strips of old work clothes, corduroy and cotton sacking material, it becomes a portrait of the artist's husband. Missouri's daughter Arlonzia describes the quilt: "It was when Daddy died. I was about seventeen, eighteen. He stayed sick about eight months and passed on. Mama say, 'I going to take his work clothes, shape them into a quilt to remember him, and cover up under it for love.'

Contemporary artists sometimes reinterpret artworks from the past. This can change the context of the work (the historical or cultural background in which the original work was created), but the content remains the same. Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, Nipomo Valley from 1936 (below) uses the subject matter of a mother and her children to symbolize the hardships faced during the Great Depression. The woman's face speaks of worry and desperation about how to provide for her children and herself. Comparatively, San Francisco photographer Jim Thirtyacre's image *Working Mother* from 2009 reflects this same sentiment but through the context of the first major economic crisis of the twenty first century.

Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother,* 1936. Photograph. Farm Security Administration collection, U.S. Library of Congress.

Jim Thirtyacre, *Working Mother,* 2009. Color digital image. Used by permission

It is important to note that many cultures do not use particular genres – portraiture, for example, in their art. For some cultures the representation of an actual human face is dangerous and can call up spirits who will want to live in the image: so their masks, while still face-like, are extremely stylized. Traditional Islamic images are forbidden to depict figures and other material objects. In their place artists use the genre of decoration.

The Third Level of Meaning: Context

The craft arts have meaning too, primarily in the functionality of the art works themselves, but also in the style and decorations afforded them. A goblet from the 16th century has an aesthetic meaning in its organic form, in its function as a means to hold and dispense liquid, and a particular historical meaning in the way it is embellished with diamond point engravings that depict the flow of the river Rhine.

Goblet (Roemer), early 17th century. Dutch probably Amsterdam. Metropolitain Museum of Art, New York. Image is in the public domain

The goblet's detailed map of the Rhine gives it specific context: the historical, religious or social issues surrounding a work of art. These issues not only influence the way the viewer finds meaning in particular works of art but also how the artists themselves create them.

For instance, the hammered gold mask from Peru's Sican culture below is simple and symmetrical in form and striking in its visage. For the Sican people the mask represented either the Sican deity from the spiritual world or the lord of Sican, a man who represented the deity in the natural world. Masks were stacked at the feet of the dead lord in his tomb. In this cultural context the masks had significance in the life, death and spiritual worlds of the Sican people.

Golden Mask, Lambayeque, Sican culture, Peru. C. 9th century C.E. Museo Oro del Peru y Armas del Mundo, Lima. Image licensed through Creative Commons

To view James Rosenquist's painting F-111 is to be confronted with a huge image of a fighter jet overlaid with images from popular culture, all in bright colors and seemingly without connection. But when we see the work in the context of American experience in the 1960's we realize the two-pronged visual comment Rosenquist is making about war and consumerism; what he termed "a lack of ethical responsibility"* (from James Rosenquist, "Painting Below Zero", Notes on a Life in Art, 2009, Alfred A. Knopf, page 154). In the artist's hands the two ideas literally overlap each other: the salon hair dryer and diver's bubbles mimic the mushroom cloud rising behind the opened umbrella (which is another formal link to the nuclear bomb blast behind it). The painting is at such a large scale that viewers are dwarfed by its overpowering presence.

The Fourth Level of Meaning: Iconography

At the simplest of levels, *iconography* is the containment of deeper meanings in simple representations. It makes use of symbolism to generate narrative, which in turn develops a work's meaning.

Jan van Eyck, The Arnolfini Portrait, 1434. Oil on oak. The National Gallery, London. Image licensed through Creative Commons

Each of the objects in Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait* has a specific meaning beyond their imagery here. In fact, this painting is actually a painted marriage contract designed to solidify the agreement between these two families. It is especially important to remember that this is not a painting of an actual scene, but a constructed image to say specific things.

1. You notice that the bride is pregnant. She wasn't at the time of the painting, but this is a symbolic act to represent that she will become fruitful.
2. The little dog at her feet is a symbol of fidelity and is often seen with portraits of women paid for by their husbands.
3. The discarded shoes are often a symbol of the sanctity of marriage.
4. The single candle lit in the daylight (look at the chandelier) is a symbol of the bridal candle, a devotional candle that was to burn all night the first night of the marriage.
5. The chair back has a carving of St. Margaret, the patron saint of childbirth.
6. The orange on the windowsill and the rich clothing are symbols of future material wealth (in 1434 oranges were hand carried from India and very expensive).
7. The circular mirror at the back reflects both the artist and another man, and the artist's signature says, "Jan van Eyck was present", both examples of witnesses for the betrothal pictured. (We don't think of this much anymore, but a promise to marry was a legal contract). The circular forms around the mirror are tiny paintings of the Stations of the Cross.

You can see how densely populated iconography in imagery can convey specific hidden meanings. The problem here is to know what all of this means if we want to understand the work. Understanding the context of the work will help.

Another more contemporary painting with icons imbedded in it is Grant Wood's *American Gothic* from the 1930's.
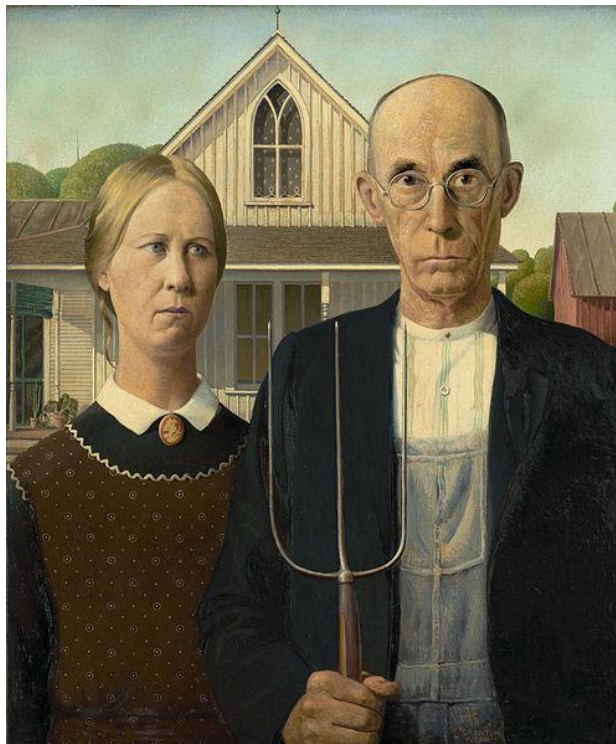
Grant Wood, American Gothic, 1930. Oil on beaver board. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. This image is in the public domain.

The dower expressions on the figures' faces signify the toughness of a Midwestern American farm couple. Indeed, one critic complained that the woman in the painting had a "face that could sour milk". Notice how the trees and bushes in the painting's background and the small cameo the woman wears mirror the soft roundness of her face: these traditional symbols of femininity carry throughout the work. In contrast, the man's straight-backed stance is reflected in the pitchfork he holds, and again in the window frames on the house behind him. Even the stitching on his overalls mimics the form of the pitchfork. The arched window frame at the top center of the painting in particular is a symbol of the gothic architecture style from 12th century Europe.

In addition, a popular genre in painting from 16th century northern Europe, especially the Netherlands, is known as vanitas painting. These still life paintings are heavily dependent upon symbolic objects that project the joy and accomplishments life affords, yet at the same time remind us of our mortality. Edward Collier's painting below is a good example of how crowded these could be.

Edward Collier, A Vanitas, 1669, oil on canvas. This item is in the public domain

The armor, weapons and medals show a focus on military accomplishments. The open book alludes to knowledge and in this case, the drawing of a canon mirrors the overall theme. The globe is a symbol of both travel and our common existence as earth-bound beings. Contemporary vanitas paintings could certainly include allusions to air and space travel. On the far right of the work, behind the book and in the shadows, lies a skull, again reminding us of the shortness of life and the inevitability of death.

We can use iconography to find meaning in artworks from popular culture too. The "Golden Arches" mean fast food, the silhouette of an apple (with a bite out of it) means a brand of computer, a single, sequined glove stands for Michael Jackson, the 'king of pop' and the artist Andy Warhol's soup can image forever links Campbell's soup with Pop Art.

Critical Perspectives

From the first forms of art criticism in ancient Greece, the discussion of meaning in art has taken many directions. The professional art critic is one of the gatekeepers who, through their writing,

endorse or reject particular kinds of art, whether in style, artistic ability or message. In fact, a study of the different ways to look at art can tell us much about changing times and philosophies: the role of aesthetics, economics and other cultural issues have much to do with the origin of these philosophical positions. Of course, none of them are completely true but simply different types of discourse. People approach meaning from different perspectives. The artworks sit silent while all around them the voices change. We are at a time when there are several, sometimes greatly conflicting, ways of thinking about meaning in art. Here are six different perspectives art critics use as compasses to interpreting meaning:

Structural Criticism

Structuralism is based on the notion that our concept of reality is expressed through language and related systems of communication. On a larger scale, visualize culture as a structure whose foundation is language, speech and other forms of communication. When this approach is applied to the visual arts, the world of art becomes a collective human construction, where a single work needs to be judged within the framework supported by the whole structure of art. This structure is still based in language and knowledge and how we communicate ideas. I often use the example of the word "cowboy".

In your head: visualize a cowboy: then describe what you saw. What gender was your person? What race was this person? Now let's apply those answers to historical fact. The fact is up to 25% of the historical cowboys in the United States were black slaves freed after the civil war. Did you see your cowboy as white?

Your idea of cowboy might have come from film, which is an extremely different form of reality. The structural idea manifests itself when we look for meaning in art based on any preconceived ideas about it we already have in our mind. These preconceptions (or limitations) are shaped by language, social interaction and other cultural experiences.

Deconstructive Criticism

Deconstructive Criticism goes one step further and posits that any work of art can have many meanings attached to it, none of which are limited by a particular language or experience outside the work itself. In other words, the critic must reveal (deconstruct) the structured world in order to knock out any underpinnings of stereotypes, preconceptions or myths that get in the way of true meaning. Taking the perspective of a deconstructive critic, we would view a portrait of Marilyn Monroe by pop artist Andy Warhol as an imaginary construct of what is real. As a popular culture icon, Marilyn Monroe the movie star was ubiquitous: in film, magazines, television and photographs. But Marilyn Monroe the person committed suicide in 1962 at the height of her stardom. In truth, the bright lights and celebrity of her Hollywood persona eclipsed the real Marilyn, someone who was troubled, confused and alone. Warhol's many portraits of her –each one made from the same publicity photograph –perpetuate the myth and cult of celebrity.

Formalist Criticism

Formalist criticism is what we engaged in when we looked at the elements and principles of art. Formalism doesn't really care about what goes on outside the actual space of the work but finds meaning in its use of materials. One of the champions of the formalist approach was Clement Greenberg. His writing stresses "medium specificity": the notion there is inherent meaning in the way materials are used to create the artwork. As is relates to painting and works on paper, the result is a focus on the two-dimensional surface. This is contrary to its traditional use as a

platform for the illusion of depth. Formalism allows a more reasoned discussion of abstract and nonrepresentational art because we can approach them on their own terms, where the subject matter becomes the medium instead of something it represents. This is a good way to approach artworks from cultures we are not familiar with, though it has the tendency to make them purely decorative and devalue any deeper meaning. It also allows a kind of training in visual seeing, so it is still used in all studio arts and art appreciation courses.

Greenberg was a strong defender of the Abstract Expressionist style of painting that developed in the United States after World War II. He referred to it as "pure painting" because of its insistence on the act of painting, eventually releasing it from its ties to representation.

Ideological Criticism

Ideological criticism is most concerned with the relationship between art and structures of power. It infers that art is embedded in a social, economic and political structure that determines its final meaning. Born of the writings of Karl Marx, ideological criticism translates art and artifacts as symbols that reflect political ideals and reinforce one version of reality over another. A literal example of this perspective would view the *Lincoln Memorial* in Washington, D.C. as a testament to a political system that oppressed people because of race yet summoned the political will to set them free in the process of ending a Civil War.

The Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C. Photo by Jeff Kubina and licensed through Creative Commons

In contrast, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's painting *Franzi in Front of a Carved Chair* (below) from 1910 is also considered a symbol of artistic (hence, political) freedom. His Expressionist art – with its strong, sometimes arbitrary colors and rough approach to forms, was denounced by Nazi Germany as being "degenerate". The Degenerate Art Show of 1937 was a way for the German political establishment to label modern art as something evil and corrupt. Hitler's regime was only interested in heroic, representational and idealistic images, something Kirchner was rebelling against. Kirchner and other Expressionist artists were marginalized and many of their works destroyed by the authorities.
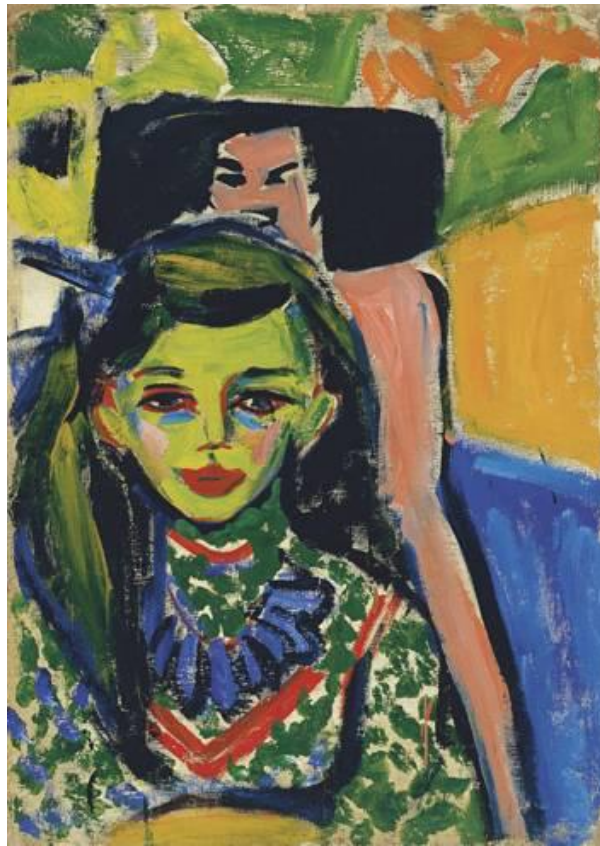
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Franzi In Front of A Carved Chair, 1910, oil on canvas, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid This item is in the public domain

Psychoanalytic Criticism

Psychoanalytic criticism is the way we should look at work if we feel it is only about personal expression. The purest form of this criticism ranks the work of untrained and mentally ill artists as being just as important as any other art. It is in this way that the artist "inside" is more important than any other reason the art happens or the effect the art has. When discussing Vincent van Gogh you will often hear people make mention of his mental state more than his actual artwork, experience, or career. This is a good example of psychoanalytic criticism. One of the problems in this type of criticism is that the critic is usually discussing issues the artist themselves may be totally unaware of (and may deny these issues exist).

Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism began in the 1970's as a response to the neglect of women artists over time and in historical writings. This form of criticism is specific to viewing art as an example of gender bias in historical western European culture and views all work as a manifestation of this bias. Feminist criticism created whole movements in the art world (specifically performance-based art) and has changed over the last few years to include all underrepresented groups. Examples of feminist art include Judy Chicago's large-scale installation The Dinner Party and the work of Nancy Spero.

In reality, all of these critical perspectives hold some truth. Art is a multifaceted medium that contains influences from most all the characteristics of the culture it was created in, and some that transcend cultural environments. These perspectives, along with the different levels of

meaning we explored, help us to unravel some of the mysteries inherent in works of art, and bring us closer to seeing how art expresses feelings, ideas and experiences that we all share. In our search it is important to be aware of all the issues involved, take aspects of each critical position depending upon the work being viewed, the environment (and context) you're seeing it in, and make up our own mind.

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Art Media and Technique

Introduction

In this section we will discuss some of the major materials, processes, and techniques used in making art.

Creating a work of art is a process. When an artist chooses to work with a certain medium, or use specific techniques, those choices are some of the most defining parameters of the entire creative process.

Let's return to the caves at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc, where, roughly 35,000 years ago, humans transformed the space into a kind of canvas. Those prehistoric artists were using the technologies available to them—charred bones or charcoal from the fire. It's surprising how the nature of the work surface figures into the end result, too. In the same way that a painter might select a particular type of brush for the kind of brushstroke it will produce, the prehistoric artists made thoughtful choices about where to place specific renderings of animals so they could use the natural contours and fissures in the cave rocks to create bas-relief giving a horn, a hump, or a haunch realistic depth (Thurman).

If art is a process of seeing, imagining, and making, as Henry Sayre explains, then media and techniques give voice to the imagination (Sayre 3). All media bring specific visual effects that affect how we interpret them as viewers. As you read through the content in this section, consider how the visual effects of a figure drawn by hand with charcoal are different from a figure drawn with a digital vector-based drawing program. How would an artist's drawn rendering of a scene in a courtroom be different from a photograph of the same thing?

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Chapter 6: Drawing

Artists find ways to express themselves with almost anything available. It is a stamp of their creativity to make extraordinary images and objects from various but fairly ordinary materials. From charcoal, paper and thread to paint, ink and found objects like leaves, artists continue to search for ways to construct and deliver their message.

Drawing is the simplest and most efficient way to communicate visual ideas, and for centuries charcoal, chalk, graphite and paper have been adequate enough tools to launch some of the most profound images in art.

Leonardo da Vinci's The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist wraps all four figures together in what is essentially an extended family portrait. Da Vinci draws the figures in a spectacularly realistic style, one that emphasizes individual identities and surrounds the figures in a grand, unfinished landscape. He animates the scene with the Christ child pulling himself forward, trying to release himself from Mary's grasp to get closer to a young John the Baptist on the right, who himself is turning toward the Christ child with a look of curious interest in his younger cousin.

Leonardo da Vinci, The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist, c.1499, drawing on paper, The National Gallery Collection, London This item is in the public domain

The traditional role of drawing was to make sketches for larger compositions to be manifest as paintings, sculpture or even architecture. Because of its relative immediacy, this function for

drawing continues today. A preliminary sketch by the contemporary architect Frank Gehry captures the complex organic forms of the buildings he designs.

Types of Drawing Media

Dry Media

Dry Media includes charcoal, graphite, chalks and pastels. Each of these mediums gives the artist a wide range of mark making capabilities and effects, from thin lines to large areas of color and tone. The artist can manipulate a drawing to achieve desired effects in many ways, including exerting different pressures on the medium against the drawing's surface, or by erasure, blotting or rubbing.

This process of drawing can instantly transfer the sense of character to an image. From energetic to subtle, these qualities are apparent in the simplest works: the immediate and unalloyed spirit of the artist's idea. You can see this in the self-portraits of two German artists; Kathe Kollwitz and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Wounded during the first world war, his *Self-Portrait Under the Influence of Morphine* from about 1916 presents us with a nightmarish vision of himself wrapped in the fog of opiate drugs. His hollow eyes and the graphic dysfunction of his marks attest to the power of his drawing.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Self Portrait Under the Influence of Morphine, around 1916. Ink on paper. Licensed under Creative Commons.

Graphite media includes pencils, powder or compressed sticks. Each one creates a range of values depending on the hardness or softness inherent in the material. Hard graphite tones range from light to dark gray, while softer graphite allows a range from light gray to nearly black. French sculptor Gaston Lachaise's Standing Nude with Drapery is a pencil drawing that fixes the energy and sense of movement of the figure to the paper in just a few strokes. And Steven Talasnik's contemporary large-scale drawings in graphite, with their swirling, organic forms and architectural structures are testament to the power of pencil (and eraser) on paper.

Gaston Lachiase, Standing Nude with Drapery, 1891. Graphite and ink on paper. Honolulu Academy of Arts. Licensed under Creative Commons.

Charcoal, perhaps the oldest form of drawing media, is made by simply charring wooden sticks or small branches, called **vine** charcoal, but is also available in a mechanically **compressed** form. Vine charcoal comes in three densities: soft, medium and hard, each one handling a little different than the other. Soft charcoals give a more velvety feel to a drawing. The artist doesn't have to apply as much pressure to the stick in order to get a solid mark. Hard vine charcoal offers more control but generally doesn't give the darkest tones. Compressed charcoals give deeper blacks than vine charcoal but are more difficult to manipulate once they are applied to paper.

Charcoal drawings can range in value from light grays to rich, velvety blacks. A charcoal drawing by American artist Georgia O'Keeffe is a good example.

Pastels are essentially colored chalks usually compressed into stick form for better handling. They are characterized by soft, subtle changes in tone or color. Pastel pigments allow for a resonant quality that is more difficult to obtain with graphite or charcoal. Picasso's Portrait of the Artist's Mother from 1896 emphasizes these qualities.

Pastels, digital image licensed through Creative Commons.

More recent developments in dry media are ***oil pastels***, pigment mixed with an organic oil binder that deliver a heavier mark and lend themselves to more graphic and vibrant results. The drawings of Beverly Buchanan reflect this. Her work celebrates rural life of the south centered in the forms of old houses and shacks. The buildings stir memories and provide a sense of place, and are usually surrounded by people, flowers and bright landscapes.

She also creates sculptures of the shacks, giving them an identity beyond their physical presence.

Wet Media

Ink: Wet drawing media traditionally refers to ink but really includes any substance that can be put into solution and applied to a drawing's surface. Because wet media is manipulated much like paint – through thinning and the use of a brush – it blurs the line between drawing and painting. Ink can be applied with a stick for linear effects and by brush to cover large areas with tone. It can also be diluted with water to create values of gray. The Return of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt shows an expressive use of brown ink in both the line qualities and the larger brushed areas that create the illusion of light and shade.

Rembrandt, The Return of the Prodigal Son, c.1626-69, drawing with pen and brush, The Teylers Museum Collection, Haarlem This item is in the public domain

Felt tip pens are considered a form of wet media. The ink is saturated into felt strips inside the pen then released onto the paper or other support through the tip. The ink quickly dries, leaving a permanent mark. The colored marker drawings of Donnabelle Casis have a flowing, organic character to them. The abstract quality of the subject matter infers body parts and viscera.

Other liquids can be added to drawing media to enhance effects – or create new ones. Artist Jim Dine has splashed soda onto charcoal drawings to make the surface bubble with effervescence. The result is a visual texture unlike anything he could create with charcoal alone, although his work is known for its strong manipulation. Dine's drawings often use both dry and liquid media. His subject matter includes animals, plants, figures and tools, many times crowded together in dense, darkly romantic images.

Traditional Chinese painting uses water-based inks and pigments. In fact, it is one of the oldest continuous artistic traditions in the world. Painted on supports of paper or silk, the subject matter includes landscapes, animals, figures and **calligraphy**, an art form that uses letters and script in fluid, lyrical gestures.

Two examples of traditional Chinese painting are seen below. The first, a wall scroll painted by Ma Lin in 1246, demonstrates how adept the artist is in using ink in an expressive form to denote figures, robes and landscape elements, especially the strong, gnarled forms of the pine trees. There is sensitivity and boldness in the work. The second example is the opening detail of a copy of "Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion" made before the thirteenth century. Using ink and brush, the artist makes language into art through the sure, gestural strokes and marks of the characters.

Ma Lin, Wall Scroll, ink on silk. 1246 Used under GNU Free Documentation License
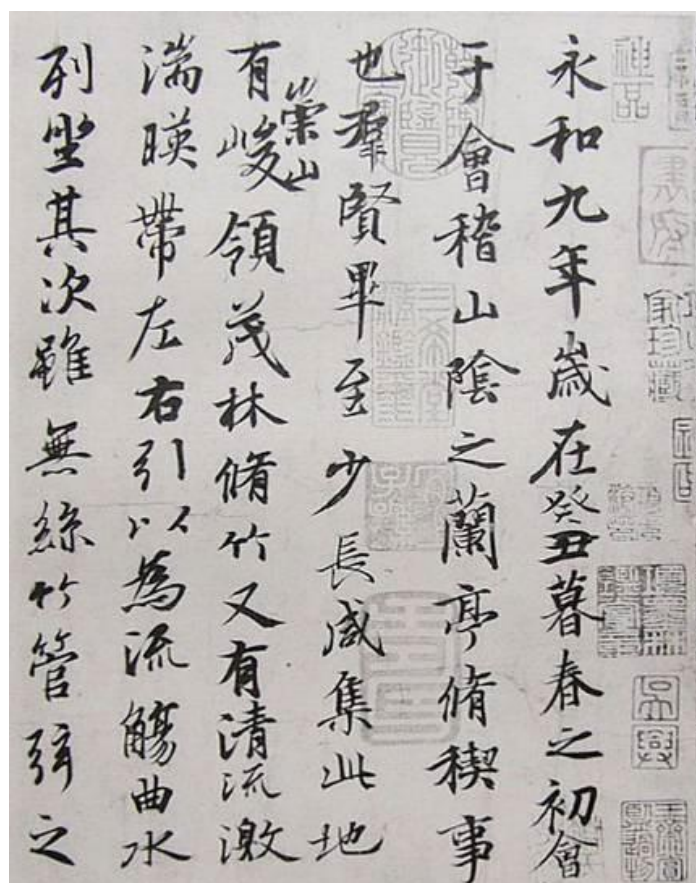
Opening detail of a copy of Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion. Before the thirteenth century. Hand scroll, ink on paper. The Palace Museum, Beijing. Licensed through Creative Commons.

Drawing is a foundation for other two and three-dimensional works of art, even being incorporated with digital media that expands the idea of its formal expression. The art of Matthew Ritchie starts with small abstract drawings. He digitally scans and projects them to large scales, taking up entire walls. Ritchie also uses the scans to produce large, thin three-dimensional templates to create sculptures out of the original drawings.

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Chapter 7: Painting

Painting is the application of pigments to a support surface that establishes an image, design or decoration. In art the term "painting" describes both the act and the result. Most painting is created with pigment in liquid form and applied with a brush. Exceptions to this are found in Navajo sand painting and Tibetan mandala painting, where powdered pigments are used. Painting as a medium has survived for thousands of years and is, along with drawing and sculpture, one of the oldest creative media. It's used in some form by cultures around the world.

Three of the most recognizable images in Western art history are paintings: Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Edvard Munch's The Scream and Vincent van Gogh's The Starry Night. These three artworks are examples of how painting can go beyond a simple mimetic function, that is, to only imitate what is seen. The power in great painting is that it transcends perceptions to reflect emotional, psychological, even spiritual levels of the human condition.

Painting media are extremely versatile because they can be applied to many different surfaces (called *supports*) including paper, wood, canvas, plaster, clay, lacquer and concrete. Because paint is usually applied in a liquid or semi-liquid state it has the ability to soak into porous support material, which can, over time, weaken and damage it. To prevent this a support is usually first covered with a *ground*, a mixture of binder and chalk that, when dry, creates a non-porous layer between the support and the painted surface. A typical ground is gesso.

There are six major painting media, each with specific individual characteristics:
- Encaustic
- Tempera
- Fresco
- Oil
- Acrylic
- Watercolor

All of them use the following three basic ingredients:
- Pigment
- Binder
- Solvent

Pigments are granular solids incorporated into the paint to contribute color. The *binder*, commonly referred to as the vehicle, is the actual film-forming component of paint. The binder holds the pigment in solution until it's ready to be dispersed onto the surface. The *solvent* controls the flow and application of the paint. It's mixed into the paint, usually with a brush, to dilute it to the proper viscosity, or thickness, before it's applied to the surface. Once the solvent has evaporated from the surface the remaining paint is fixed there. Solvents range from water to oil- based products like linseed oil and mineral spirits.

Let's look at each of the six main painting media:

Encaustic

Encaustic paint mixes dry pigment with a heated beeswax binder. The mixture is then brushed

or spread across a support surface. Reheating allows for longer manipulation of the paint. Encaustic dates back to the first century C.E. and was used extensively in funerary mummy portraits from Fayum in Egypt. The characteristics of encaustic painting include strong, resonant colors and extremely durable paintings. Because of the beeswax binder, when encaustic cools it forms a tough skin on the surface of the painting. Modern electric and gas tools allow for extended periods of heating and paint manipulation. Below is an example of encaustic painting by José María Cano.

José María Cano, detail of painting made in encaustic, 2010

Tempera

Tempera paint combines pigment with an egg yolk binder, then thinned and released with water. Like encaustic, tempera has been used for thousands of years. It dries quickly to a durable matte finish. Tempera paintings are traditionally applied in successive thin layers, called glazes, painstakingly built up using networks of cross hatched lines. Because of this technique tempera paintings are known for their detail.

In early Christianity, tempera was used extensively to paint images of religious icons. The pre-Renaissance Italian artist Duccio (c. 1255 – 1318), one of the most influential artists of the time, used tempera paint in the creation of The Crevole Madonna (above). You can see the sharpness of line and shape in this well-preserved work, and the detail he renders in the face and skin tones of the Madonna (see the detail below).

Duccio, The Crevole Madonna (detail), c. 1280. Tempera on board. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, Italy. Image is in the public domain

Contemporary painters still use tempera as a medium. American painter Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) used tempera to create Christina's World, a masterpiece of detail, composition and mystery.

Fresco

Fresco painting is used exclusively on plaster walls and ceilings. The medium of fresco has been used for thousands of years but is most associated with its use in Christian images during the Renaissance period in Europe.

There are two forms of fresco: *Buon* or "wet,"and *secco*, meaning "dry."

Buon fresco technique consists of painting in pigment mixed with water on a thin layer of wet, fresh lime mortar or plaster. The pigment is applied to and absorbed by the wet plaster; after a number of hours, the plaster dries and reacts with the air: it is this chemical reaction that fixes

the pigment particles in the plaster. Because of the chemical makeup of the plaster, a binder is not required. Buon fresco is more stable because the pigment becomes part of the wall itself.

Domenico di Michelino's Dante and the Divine Comedy from 1465 (below) is a superb example of buon fresco. The colors and details are preserved in the dried plaster wall. Michelino shows the Italian author and poet Dante Aleghieri standing with a copy of the Divine Comedy open in his left hand, gesturing to the illustration of the story depicted around him. The artist shows us four different realms associated with the narrative: the mortal realm on the right depicting Florence, Italy; the heavenly realm indicated by the stepped mountain at the left center – you can see an angel greeting the saved souls as they enter from the base of the mountain; the realm of the damned to the left – with Satan surrounded by flames greeting them at the bottom of the painting; and the realm of the cosmos arching over the entire scene.

Domenico di Michelino, Dante's Divine Comedy, 1465, buon fresco, the Duomo, Florence, Italy. This image is in the public domain

Secco fresco refers to painting an image on the surface of a dry plaster wall. This medium requires a binder since the pigment is not mixed into the wet plaster. Egg tempera is the most common binder used for this purpose. It was common to use secco fresco over buon fresco murals in order to repair damage or make changes to the original.

Leonardo Da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper (below) was done using secco fresco.

Leonardo Da Vinci, The Last Supper, 1495–98, dry fresco on plaster. Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan. This image is in the public domain

Oil

Oil paint is the most versatile of all the painting media. It uses pigment mixed with a binder of linseed oil. Linseed oil can also be used as the vehicle, along with mineral spirits or turpentine. Oil painting was thought to have developed in Europe during the fifteenth century, but recent research on murals found in Afghanistan caves show oil-based paints were used there as early as the seventh century.

Some of the qualities of oil paint include a wide range of pigment choices, its ability to be thinned down and applied in almost transparent glazes as well as used straight from the tube (without the use of a vehicle), built up in thick layers called **impasto** (you can see this in many works by Vincent van Gogh). One drawback to the use of impasto is that over time the body of the paint can split, leaving networks of cracks along the thickest parts of the painting. Because oil paint dries slower than other media, it can be blended on the support surface with meticulous detail. This extended working time also allows for adjustments and changes to be made without having to scrape off sections of dried paint.

In Jan Brueghel the Elder's still life oil painting you can see many of the qualities mentioned above. The richness of the paint itself is evident in both the resonant lights and inky dark colors of the work. The working of the paint allows for many different effects to be created, from the softness of the flower petals to the reflection on the vase and the many visual textures in between.

Jan Brueghel the Elder, Flowers in a Vase, 1599. Oil on wood. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Germany. Used under GNU Documentation Licensing

Richard Diebenkorn's Cityscape #1 from 1963 shows how the artist uses oil paint in a more fluid, expressive manner. He thins down the medium to obtain a quality and gesture that reflects the sunny, breezy atmosphere of a California morning. Diebenkorn used layers of oil paint, one over the other, to let the under painting show through and a flat, more geometric space that blurs the line between realism and abstraction.

Georgia O'Keeffe's oil paintings show a range of handling between soft and austere to very detailed and evocative. You rarely see her brushstrokes, but she has a summary command of the medium of oil paint.

The abstract expressionist painters pushed the limits of what oil paint could do. Their focus was in the act of painting as much as it was about the subject matter. Indeed, for many of them there was no distinction between the two. The work of Willem de Kooning leaves a record of oil paint being brushed, dripped, scraped and wiped away all in a frenzy of creative activity. This idea stays contemporary in the paintings of Cecily Brown.

Acrylic

Acrylic paint was developed in the 1950's and became an alternative to oils. Pigment is suspended in an acrylic polymer emulsion binder and uses water as the vehicle. The acrylic polymer has characteristics like rubber or plastic. Acrylic paints offer the body, color, resonance and durability of oils without the expense, mess and toxicity issues of using heavy solvents to

mix them. One major difference is the relatively fast drying time of acrylics. They are water soluble, but once dry become impervious to water or other solvents. Moreover, acrylic paints adhere to many different surfaces and are extremely durable. Acrylic impastos will not crack or yellow over time.

The American artist Robert Colescott (1925-2009) used acrylics on large-scale paintings. He uses thin layers of underpainting, scumbling, high-contrast colors, and luscious surfaces to bring out the full range of effects that acrylics offer.

Watercolor

Watercolor is the most sensitive of the painting media. It reacts to the lightest touch of the artist and can become an over worked mess in a moment. There are two kinds of watercolor media: *transparent* and **opaque**. Transparent watercolor operates in a reverse relationship to the other painting media. It is traditionally applied to a paper support and relies on the whiteness of the paper to reflect light back through the applied color (see below), whereas opaque paints (including opaque watercolors) reflect light off the skin of the paint itself. Watercolor consists of pigment and a binder of gum arabic, a water-soluble compound made from the sap of the acacia tree. It dissolves easily in water.

Light passes through the color and is reflected by the paper underneath.
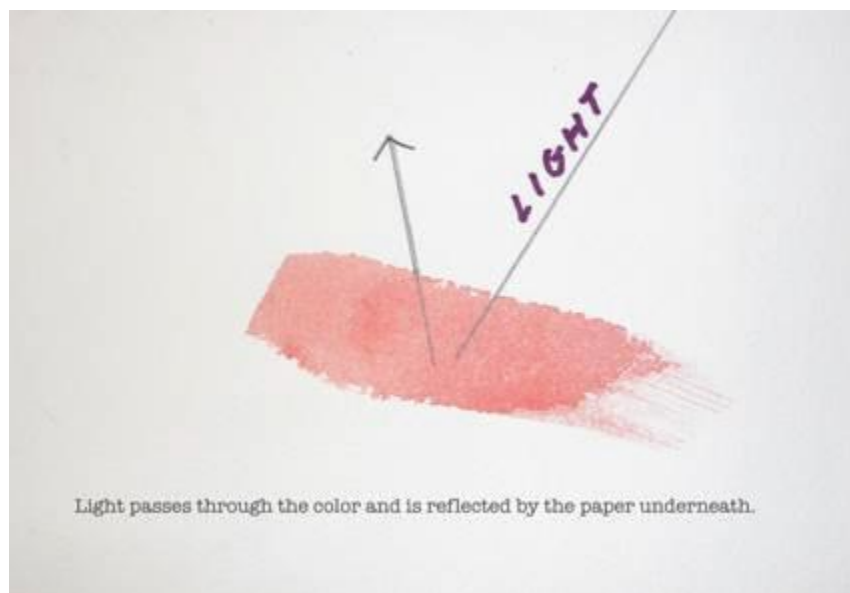
Image by Christopher Gildow. Used here with permission.

Watercolor paintings hold a sense of immediacy. The medium is extremely portable and excellent for small format paintings. The paper used for watercolor is generally of two types: hot pressed, which gives a smoother texture, and cold pressed, which results in a rougher texture. Transparent watercolor techniques include the use of **wash**; an area of color applied with a brush and diluted with water to let it flow across the paper. **Wet-in-wet** painting allows colors to flow and drift into each other, creating soft transitions between them. **Dry brush** painting uses little water and lets the brush run across the top ridges of the paper, resulting in a broken line of color and lots of visual texture.
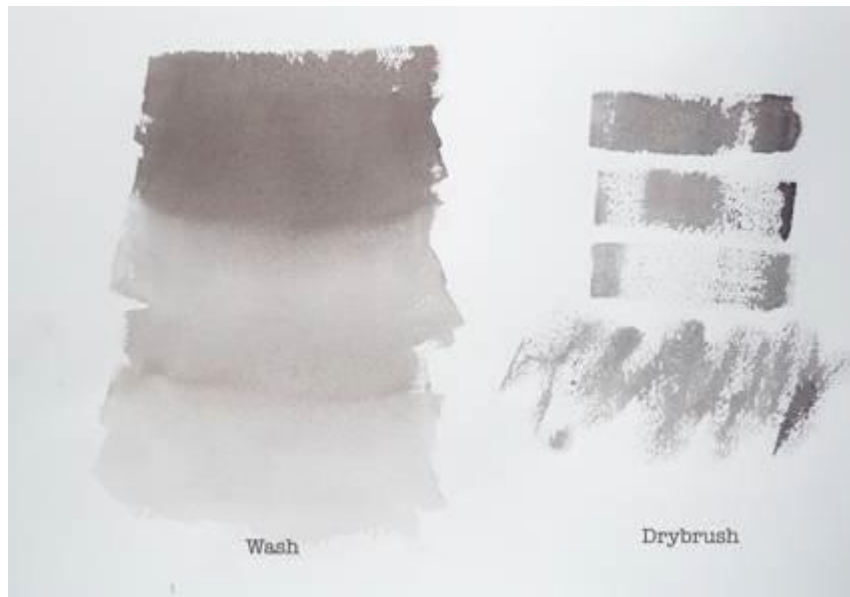
Examples of watercolor painting techniques: on the left, a wash. On the right, dry brush effects. Image by Christopher Gildow. Used here with permission.

John Marin's Brooklyn Bridge (1912) shows extensive use of wash. He renders the massive bridge almost invisible except for the support towers at both sides of the painting. Even the Manhattan skyline becomes enveloped in the misty, abstract shapes created by washes of color.

Boy in a Red Vest by French painter Paul Cezanne builds form through nuanced colors and tones. The way the watercolor is laid onto the paper reflects a sensitivity and deliberation common in Cezanne's paintings.

The watercolors of Andrew Wyeth indicate the landscape with earth tones and localized color, often with dramatic areas of white paper left untouched. Brandywine Valley is a good example.

Opaque watercolor, also called **gouache**, differs from transparent watercolor in that the particles are larger, the ratio of pigment to water is much higher, and an additional, inert, white pigment such as chalk is also present. Because of this, gouache paint gives stronger color than transparent watercolor, although it tends to dry to a slightly lighter tone than when it is applied. Gouache paint doesn't hold up well as impasto, tending to crack and fall away from the surface. It holds up well in thinner applications and often is used to cover large areas with color. Like transparent watercolor, dried gouache paint will become soluble again in water.

Jacob Lawrence's paintings use gouache to set the design of the composition. Large areas of color – including the complements blue and orange, dominate the figurative shapes in the foreground, while olive greens and neutral tones animate the background with smaller shapes depicting tools, benches and tables. The characteristics of gouache make it difficult to be used in areas of detail.

Gouache is a medium in traditional painting in cultures. Zal Consults the Magi, part of an illuminated manuscript form sixteenth-century Iran, uses bright colors of gouache along with ink, silver and gold to construct a vibrant composition full of intricate patterns and contrasts. Ink is used to create lyrical calligraphic passages at the top and bottom of the work.

Other Painting Media

Enamel paints form hard skins typically with a high-gloss finish. They use heavy solvents and are extremely durable.

Powder coat paints differ from conventional paints in that they do not require a solvent to keep the pigment and binder parts in suspension. They are applied to a surface as a powder then cured with heat to form a tough skin that is stronger than most other paints. Powder coats are applied mostly to metal surfaces.

Epoxy paints are polymers, created mixing pigment with two different chemicals: a resin and a hardener. The chemical reaction between the two creates heat that bonds them together. Epoxy paints, like powder coats and enamel, are extremely durable in both indoor and outdoor conditions.

These industrial grade paints are used in sign painting, marine environments, and aircraft painting.

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Chapter 8: Printmaking

Printmaking uses a transfer process to make multiples from an original image or template. The multiple images are printed in an *edition*, with each print signed and numbered by the artist. All printmaking media result in images reversed from the original. Print results depend on how the template (or *matrix*) is prepared. There are three basic techniques of printmaking: *relief*, *intaglio* and *planar*. You can get an idea of how they differ from the cross-section images below, and view how each technique works from this site at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The black areas indicate the inked surface.
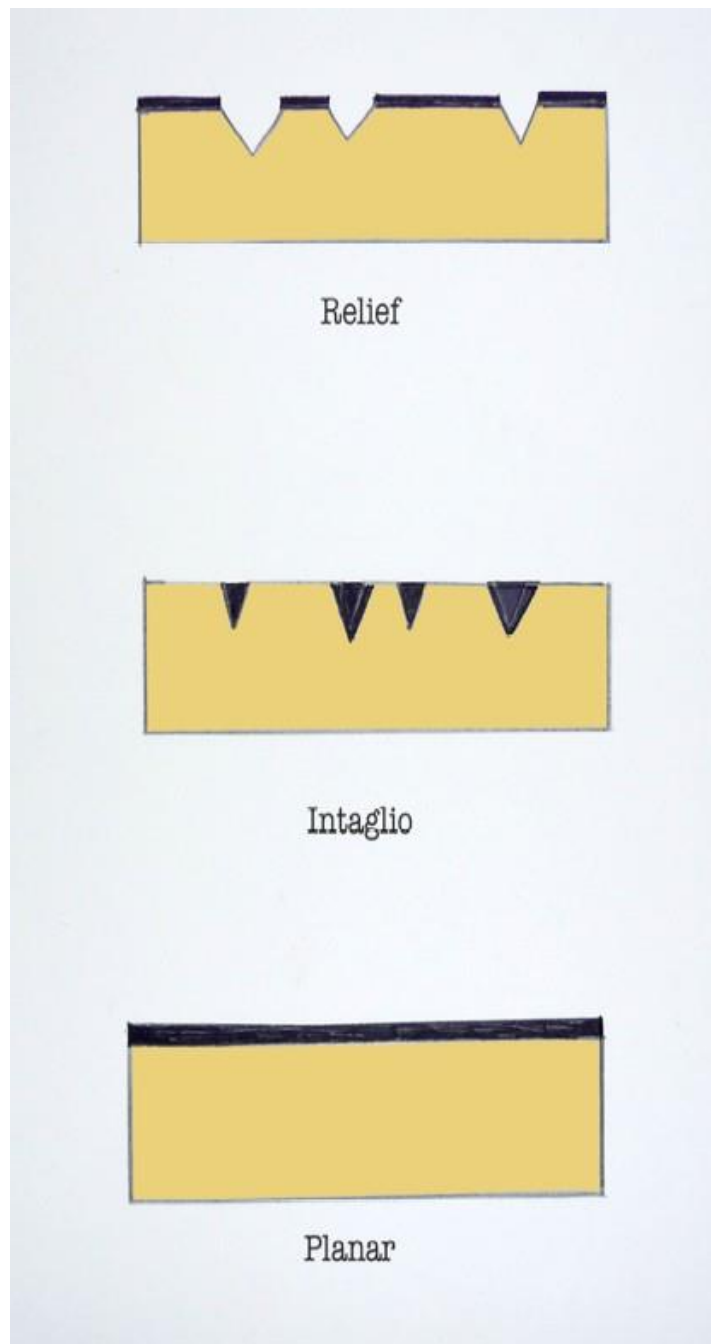
Cross section of printmaking media. Christopher Gildow. Used with permission

Relief

A **relief** print, such as a woodcut or linoleum cut, is created when the areas of the matrix (plate or block) that are to show the printed image are on the original surface; the parts of the matrix that are to be ink-free having been cut away, or otherwise removed. The printed surface is in relief from the cut away sections of the plate. Once the area around the image is cut away, the surface of the plate is rolled up with ink. Paper is laid over the matrix, and both are run through a press, transferring the ink from the surface of the matrix to the paper. The nature of the relief process doesn't allow for lots of detail but does result in graphic images with strong contrasts. Carl Eugene Keel's Bar shows the effects of a woodcut printed in black ink.

Carl Eugene Keel, Bar, 2006. Woodcut print on paper. Licensed by Creative Commons

Block printing developed in China hundreds of years ago and was common throughout East Asia. The Japanese woodblock print below shows dynamic effects of implied motion and the contrasts created using only one color and black. Ukiyo-e or "floating world" prints became popular in the nineteenth century, even influencing European artists during the Industrial Revolution.

Relief printmakers can use a separate block or matrix for each color printed or, in **reduction** prints a single block is used, cutting away areas of color as the print develops. This method can result in a print with many colors.

Christopher Gildow, Boathouse, 2007, from the Stillaguamish Series. Reduction woodcut print. Used with permission

You can watch how this process develops in the accompanying video.

Intaglio

Intaglio prints such as etchings, are made by incising channels into a copper or metal plate with a sharp instrument called a *burin* to create the image, inking the entire plate, then wiping the ink from the surface of the plate, leaving ink only in the incised channels below the surface. Paper is laid over the plate and put through a press under high pressure, forcing the ink to be transferred to the paper.

Examples of the intaglio process include etching and *dry point*: In dry point, the artist creates an image by scratching the burin directly into a metal plate (usually copper) before inking and printing. Today artists also use plexiglass, a hard and clear plastic, as plates. Characteristically these prints have strong line quality and exhibit a slightly blurred edge to the line as the result of burrs created in the process of incising the plate, similar to clumps of soil laid to the edge of a furrowed trench. A fine example of dry point is seen in Rembrandt's Clump of Trees with a Vista. The velvety darks are created by the effect of the burred-edged lines.

Etching begins by first applying a protective wax-based coating to a thin metal plate. The artist then scratches an image with a burin through the protective coating into the surface of the metal. The plate is then submersed in a strong acid bath, etching the exposed lines. The plate is removed from the acid and the protective coating is removed from the plate. Now the bare plate is inked, wiped and printed. The image is created from the ink in the etched channels. The amount of time a plate is kept in the acid bath determines the quality of tones in the resulting print: the longer it is etched the darker the tones will be. *Correccion* by the Spanish master Francisco Goya shows the clear linear quality etching can produce. The acid bath removes any burrs created by the initial dry point work, leaving details and value contrasts consistent with the

amount of lines and the distance between them. Goya presents a fantastic image of people, animals and strange winged creatures. His work often involved biting social commentary. *Correccion* is a contrast between the pious and the absurd.

Francisco Goya, Correccion, 1799. Etching on paper. Work is in the public domain

There are many different techniques associated with intaglio, including aquatint, scraping and burnishing.

You can watch how this process develops in the accompanying video.

Planar

Planar prints like monoprints are created on the surface of the matrix without any cutting or incising. In this technique the surface of the matrix (usually a thin metal plate or Plexiglass) is completely covered with ink, then areas are partially removed by wiping, scratching away or otherwise removed to form the image. Paper is laid over the matrix, then run through a press to transfer the image to the paper. Monoprints (also monotypes) are the simplest and painterly of the printing media. By definition monotypes and monoprints cannot be reproduced in editions. Kathryn Trigg's monotypes show how close this print medium is related to painting and drawing.

Lithography

Lithography is another example of planar printmaking, developed in Germany in the late eighteenth century. "Litho" means "stone" and "graph" means "to draw." The traditional matrix for lithography is the smooth surface of a limestone block.

Lithographic stone is on the left with the negative image. Printed positive image is on the right. Image by Chris73. Licensed under Creative Commons.

While this matrix is still used extensively, thin zinc plates have also been introduced to the medium. They eliminate the bulk and weight of the limestone block but provide the same surface texture and characteristics. The lithographic process is based on the fact that grease repels water. In traditional lithography, an image is created on the surface of the stone or plate using grease pencils or wax crayons or a grease-based liquid medium called tusche. The finished image is covered in a thin layer of gum arabic that includes a weak solution of nitric acid as an etching agent. The resulting chemical reaction divides the surface into two areas: the positive areas containing the image and that will repel water, and the negative areas surrounding the image that will be water receptive. In printing a lithograph, the gum arabic film is removed and the stone or metal surface is kept moist with water so when it's rolled up with an oil-based ink the ink adheres to the positive (image) areas but not to the negative (wet) areas.

Because of the media used to create the imagery, lithographic images show characteristics much like drawings or paintings. In *A Brush for the Lead* by Currier and Ives (below), a full range of shading and more linear details of description combine to illustrate a winter's race down the town's main road.
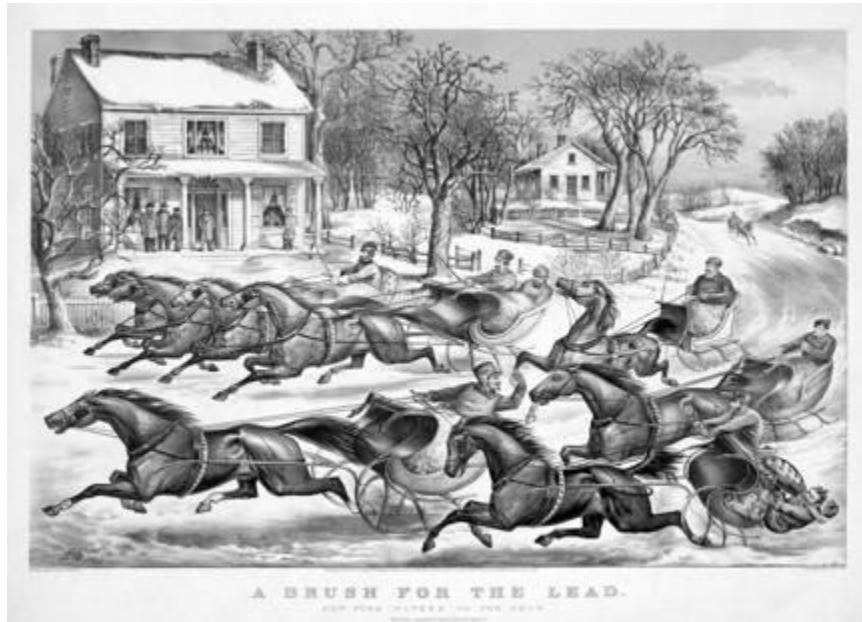
Currier and Ives, A Brush for the Lead; New York Flyers on the Snow, 1867. Lithograph Library of Congress. Image is in the public domain.

You can watch how this process develops in the accompanying video.

Serigraphy/Screen Printing

Serigraphy, also known as *screen printing*, is a third type of planar printing medium. Screen printing is a printing technique that uses a woven mesh to support an ink-blocking stencil. The attached stencil forms open areas of mesh that transfer ink or other printable materials that can be pressed through the mesh as a sharp-edged image onto a substrate such as paper or fabric. A roller or squeegee is moved across the screen stencil, forcing or pumping ink past the threads of the woven mesh in the open areas. The image below shows how a stencil's positive (image) areas are isolated from the negative (non-image) areas.

a

In serigraphy, each color needs a separate stencil. You can watch how this process develops in the accompanying video. Screen printing is an efficient way to print posters, announcements, and other kinds of popular culture images. Andy Warhol's silk screens use images and iconography from popular culture.

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Chapter 9: Photography

The invention of the camera and its ability to capture an image with light became the first "high tech" artistic medium of the Industrial Age. Developed during the middle of the nineteenth century, the photographic process changed forever our physical perception of the world and created an uneasy but important relationship between the photograph and other more traditional artistic media.

Early Developments

The first attempts to capture an image were made from a camera obscura, used since the 16th century. The device consists of a box or small room with a small hole in one side that acts as a lens. Light from an external scene passes through the hole and strikes the opposite surface inside where it is reproduced upside-down, but with color and perspective preserved. The image is usually projected onto paper adhered to the opposite wall and can then be traced to produce a highly accurate representation. Experiments in capturing images on film had been conducted in Europe since the late 18th century.
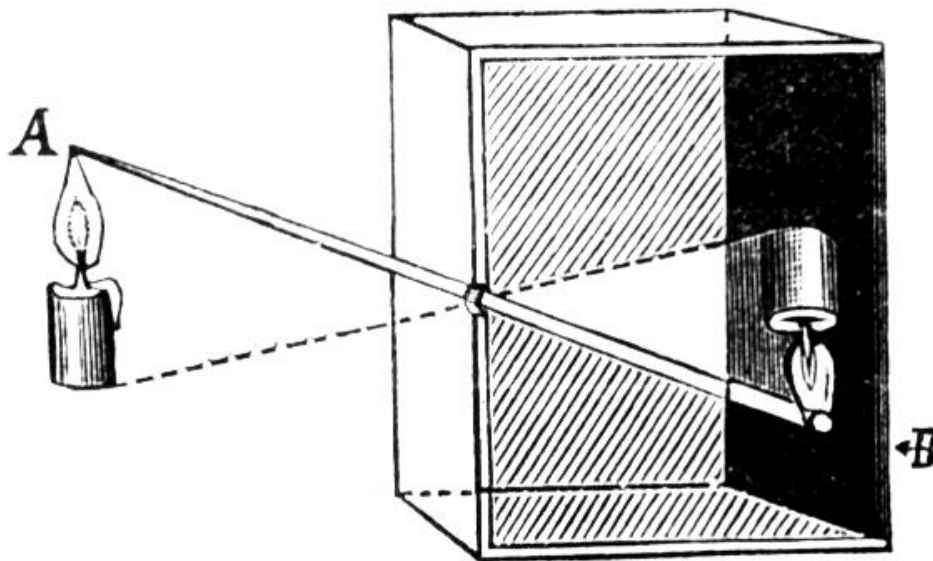
Camera Obscura, 1910. Lithograph Library of Congress. Source: Wikimedia Commons Image is in the public domain.

Using the camera obscura as a guide, early photographers found ways to chemically fix the projected images onto plates coated with light sensitive materials. Moreover, they installed glass lenses in their early cameras and experimented with different exposure times for their images. View from the Window at Le Gras is one of the oldest existing photographs, taken in 1826 by French inventor Joseph Niepce using a process he called heliograpy ("helio" meaning sun and "graph" meaning write). The exposure for the image took eight hours, resulting in the sun casting its light on both sides of the houses in the picture. Further developments resulted in apertures–thin circular devices that are calibrated to allow a certain amount of light onto the exposed film. Apertures allowed photographers better control over their exposure times.

1. Large aperture. 2. Small aperture. Licensed by Creative Commons

During the 1830's Louis Daguerre, having worked with Niepce earlier, developed a more reliable process to capture images on film by using a polished copper plate treated with silver. He termed the images made by this process "Daguerreotypes". They were sharper in focus and the exposure times were shorter. His photograph Boulevard du Temple from 1838 is taken from his studio window overlooking a busy Paris street. Still, with an exposure of ten minutes, none of the moving traffic or pedestrians (One exception. See if you can find it!) stayed still long enough to be recorded.

Louis Daguerre, Boulevard du Temple, 1838. Image in the public domain

At the same time in England, William Henry Fox Talbot was experimenting with other photographic processes. He was creating photogenic drawings by simply placing objects (mostly botanical specimens) over light sensitive paper or plates, then exposing them to the sun. By 1844 he had invented the calotype; a photographic print made from a negative image. In contrast, Daguerreotypes were single, positive images that could not be reproduced. Talbot's calotypes allowed for multiple prints from one negative, setting the standard for the new medium. Though Daguerre won the race to be first in releasing his photographic process, Talbot's negative to positive process would eventually become the dominant process.
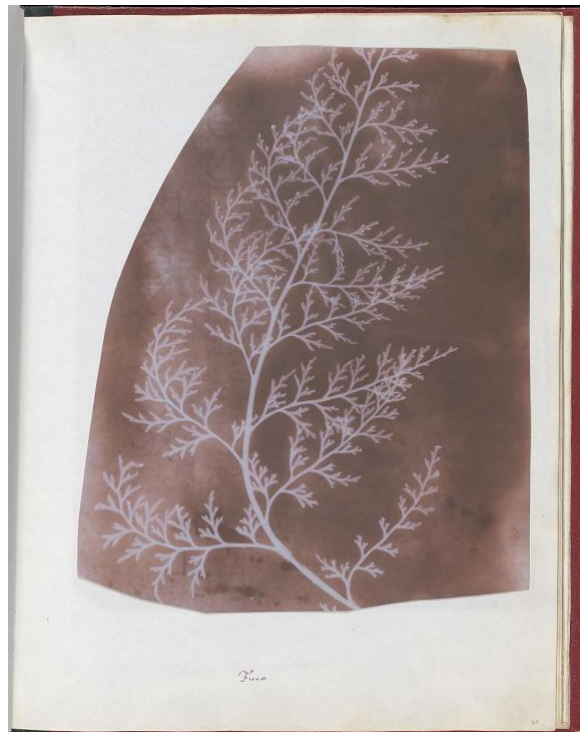
William Henry Fox Talbot, Wrack, c. 1839. Photogenic Drawing. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art Image in the public domain

Impact on Other Media

The advent of photography caused a realignment in the use of other two-dimensional media. The photograph was now in direct competition with drawing, painting and printmaking. The camera turns its gaze on the human narrative that stands before it. The photograph gave (for the most part), a realistic and unedited view of our world. In its early beginning, photography was considered to offer a more "true" image of nature because it was created mechanically, not by the subjective hand of an artist. Its use as a tool for documentation was immediate, which gave the photo a scientific role to play. The sequential, instantaneous exposures by Eadweard Muybridge helped to understand human and animal movement, but also highlighted that photography could be used to expand human vision, imaging something that could not be seen with the naked eye. The relative immediacy and improved clarity of the photographic image quickly pitted the camera against painting in the genre of portraiture. Before photography, painted portraits were afforded only to the wealthy and most prominent members of society. They became symbols of social class distinctions. Now portraits became available to individuals and families from all social levels.

Let's look at two examples from the different mediums to compare and contrast.

Gilbert Stuart's painted portrait of Mrs. Oliver Brewster (Catherine Jones) (1815) not only records the sitter's identity but also a psychological essence. There is a degree of informality in the work, as she leans forward in the chair, a shawl draped over one shoulder, hands clasped, with raised eyebrows and a slight smile on her lips. Her amusement is palpable and endearing.

In the photographic portrait of the English actress Ellen Terry, Julia Margaret Cameron captures the same informality and psychological complexities as Gilbert does, except this time the sitter leans against a patterned background, a simple white gown slips off her shoulders as she gently grasps a necklace with her right hand. Here the sitter's gaze is cast downward, unsmiling, in a moment of reflection or sadness. The lighting, coming from the right, is used to dramatic effect as it illuminates the left side of Terry's body but casts the right side in shadow.

One obvious difference is the lack of color in Cameron's photo. Her use of black and white creates a graphic composition based on both dramatic and subtle changes in value. The first color photographs were developed as early as the 1860's, but these early processes were impractical and of little value.

Painters worried that this new medium would spell the end to theirs. In reality, early photographers were influenced by popular styles of painting in creating their own compositions. Cameron's staged photograph Queen Esther before King Ahasuerus from 1865 mimics the Symbolist paintings of the time in both style and subject matter. They used mythology, dramatic poses and other Romantic themes to create visual worlds with dream like figures and dark emotions. You can see the similarity between Cameron's photograph and George Frederic Watts' painting "Paolo and Francesca" from about the same time.

George Frederic Watts, *Paolo and Francesca*, c. 1865. Oil on canvas.
Image is in the public domain

Photography as an Art

It didn't take long for photographers to see the aesthetic value in the new medium. As early as 1844 Henry Talbot was taking pictures with a concern towards formal composition. The Open Door uses mundane subject matter to create a study in contrasts, visual balance and textures. The solid composition, anchored by the dark rectangle of the door and interior space book ended by sunlit areas, becomes animated with diagonals created in the heavy shadow cast on the door. The broom's placement and its shadow reinforce this. Vines cropped on each side of the photo's frame give balance, and the broom straw, stonework and door hardware create visual textures

that enhance the effect. Finally, the lamp hanging near the right edge of the frame creates an accent that draws our eye.

Early photographs were made from single plates of metal, glass or paper, each one painstakingly prepared, exposed and developed. In 1884 George Eastman invented transparent roll film; strips of celluloid coated with a light-sensitive emulsion. Four years later he developed the first handheld camera loaded with roll film. The combination brought access to photography within the reach of almost anyone. Additional advances were made in lens optics and shutter mechanics. By the turn of the nineteenth century the photograph represented not only a new artistic medium but also a record -- and a symbol -- of the Industrial age itself.

As a new medium, photography began the march towards being considered a high form of art. The darkroom became the studio of the photographer. It was there where visual ideas translated into images: an opportunity to manipulate the film negative, to explore techniques and discover the potential the photograph had in interpreting objects and ideas.

Alfred Stieglitz understood this potential, and as a photographer, editor and gallery owner, was a major force in promoting photography as an art form. He led in forming the **Photo Secession** in 1902, a group of photographers who were interested in defining the photograph as an art form in itself, not just by the subject matter in front of the lens. Subject matter became a vehicle for an emphasis on composition, lighting and textural effects. His own photographs reflect a range of themes. The Terminal (1892) is an example of "**straight photography**": images from the everyday taken with smaller cameras and little manipulation. In *The Terminal* Stieglitz captures a moment of bustling city street life on a cold winter day. A massive stone façade looms in the background while a half-circle of horses and street wagons are led out of the picture to the right. The whole cold, gritty scene is softened by steam rising off the horses and the snow provides highlights. But the photo holds more than formal aesthetic value. The jumble of buildings, machines, humans, animals and weather conditions provides a glimpse into American urban culture straddling two centuries. Within ten years from the time this photo was taken horses will be replaced by automobiles and subway stations will transform a large city's movement into the twentieth century.

Other photographs by Stieglitz concentrate on more conceptual ideas. His series of cloud photos, called Equivalents, are efforts to record the essence of a particular reality, and to do it "so completely, that all who see [the picture of it] will relive an equivalent of what has been expressed". His *Equivalents* photos establish a new level for the aesthetic content of ideas and are essentially the first abstract photographs.

Darkroom Processes: The camera's ability to capture a moment in time is not without difficulties. We've all had the experience where we declare "If I only had a camera with me!" On one hand, photographs taken in the studio are controlled productions, with the photographer working to find balances with lighting and composition. On the other hand, straight outdoor photography is unpredictable. Lighting and weather conditions change quickly, and so do the locations where the photographer will find that "one great shot". To compensate for these variables, photographers typically take hundreds of pictures, bracketing shutter speeds and aperture settings as they go, then carefully editing each negative and print until they find the handful, or perhaps only the one, that will be the best image of them all.

The darkroom is where the exposed film is developed. It must be dark to eliminate any chance of outside light ruining the exposed film. In black and white film developing, a low-intensity red or

amber colored lamp called a **safe light** is used so the photographer can see their way around during developing. The light emitted from the lamp is of a wavelength that does not affect exposure results.

Safelight used in the darkroom. Licensed through Creative Commons

Other tools used in a darkroom are typically an **enlarger**, an instrument with a lens and aperture in it that projects the image from a negative onto a base. **Photographic paper** is then placed under the projected image and exposed to light. The paper is put into a series of **solutions** that progressively start and stop the development of the positive photographic image. The development process gives the photographer another opportunity to manipulate the original image. Specific areas on the print can be exposed to more light ("**burning**" or darkening areas) or less light ("**dodging**" or lightening areas) in order to bring up details or create more dramatic visual effects. The image can also be cropped from its original size depending on how the photographer wants to present the final image.

Photograph of the body of water with dodge and burn text overlaid in order to give an example of the two effects. Licensed through Creative Commons

Light meters are used to calibrate the amount of light available for a certain exposure. The photographer adjusts the aperture of the camera to allow for more or less light to fall on the film during the initial exposure. But light meters alone don't guarantee the perfect photograph because they indicate the *total* amount of light, without respect to specific areas of light or dark within the format of the picture.

For this, the photographers Ansel Adams and Fred Archer created the **zone system**. The

system relies on two interrelated factors – the ***visualization*** of how the photographer wants the print to look even *before* they take it, and a correct light calibration from all the areas by assigning numbers to different brightness values – or 'zones' on the value scale, from white to black and all the various gray tones in between. The zone system is tedious both in the field and in the darkroom, but, since its inception in 1940, has spurred creation of photographs absolutely stunning in their clarity, composition and graphic drama. Adams' *Taos Pueblo* below is an example.

Ansel Adams, *Taos Pueblo*, 1942. Black and white photograph. Collection of the National Archives, Washington, D.C. Library of Congress Image in the public domain

The Human Element

Photography became the most contemporary of artistic media, one particularly suited to record the human dramas being played out in an increasingly modern world. French photographer Robert Doisneau's The Kiss on the Sidewalk from 1950 shows a romantic kiss as an oasis in the middle of a busy Paris sidewalk. That the photo was not spontaneous but a reenactment takes nothing away from the emotional content: Paris as the city of Love. Eugene Atget (pronounced "Ah-jay") (1856-1927) was one of the first to use the photograph as a cultural and social document. His images of Paris and its surroundings give poetic witness to the buildings, people and scenes that inhabit and define the city.

The work of Diane Arbus (1923-1971) challenges us as we gaze at others who are deviant,

marginalized or stand out because of the context in which we see their normality. Arbus' lens is unflinching in its honesty. She presents images of strangeness and alienation without condescension or judgment. It's up to us to try to fill in the blanks.

Many of the photographs in Robert Frank's series The Americans depicts groups of people in different situations, including riding a bus, watching a rodeo and listening to a speech. His photo essay on American life is seen through the eyes of an observer, not a participant. Instead of voyeuristic, they give a sense of detachment. Only a few of the figures look directly into the camera or directly at other people in the photo. Frank worked hard to maintain the observer's point of view. Similar to Arbus, the photographs carry overtones of alienation – between the individual and the group. Controversial when first published in the United States in 1959, the book now is seen as one of the most important modern photographic social commentaries.

Color Images

The wider use of color film after 1935 added another dimension to photography. Color can give a stronger sense of reality: the photo looks much like the way we actually see the scene with our eyes. Moreover, the use of color affects the viewer's perception, triggering memory and reinforcing visual details. Photographers can manipulate color and its effects either before or after the picture is taken.

Even though there is no figure present in Grand Canyon, 1973, we observe the landscape through the eyes of the photographer. Joel Meyerowitz makes use of raking light and two sets of complementary colors; orange and blue, yellow and violet giving stark contrast and vibrancy to the photograph. The foreground, bathed in warm light, has details and patterns created by the scrub brush dotting the hill. A bright yellow spike plant rises up out of the desert like a beacon, an exclamation point on a vast, barren landscape. The cool blues and purples in the background soften the plateaus and hills as they disappear on the horizon.

In a final example, the finely meshed screen sporting flies in the foreground dilutes and blurs a warm monochromatic color scheme in Irving Penn's Summer Sleep (1949). Distortion in the center of the photo takes on a blue hue, visually hovering like a mist over the sleeping figure in the background. For its seemingly informal set up, Penn's photo is actually a meticulously arranged composition. And the narrative is just as meticulously crafted: serene, gauzy sleep within while trouble waits just beyond.

Photojournalism

Photography is a medium that has multiple subject placements. It is used as an art medium, in journalism, in advertising, the fashion industry, and we use it to personally document our lives. It is one, if not the most, pervasive form of documentation in the world. These multiple subject placements make it a complex phenomenon to analyze.

The news industry was fundamentally changed with the invention of the photograph. Although pictures were taken of newsworthy stories as early as the 1850's, the photograph needed to be translated into an engraving before being printed in a newspaper. It wasn't until the turn of the nineteenth century that newspaper presses could copy original photographs. Photos from around the world showed up on front pages of newspapers defining and illustrating stories, and the world became smaller as this early mass medium gave people access to up to date information…with pictures!

Photojournalism is a particular form of journalism that creates images in order to tell a news story and is defined by these three elements:

Timeliness — the images have meaning in the context of a recently published record of events.

Objectivity — the situation implied by the images is a fair and accurate representation of the events they depict in both content and tone.

Narrative — the images combine with other news elements to make facts relatable to the viewer or reader on a cultural level.

As visual information, news images help in shaping our perception of reality and the context surrounding them.

Photographs taken by Mathew Brady and Timothy O'Sullivan during the American Civil War (below) gave sobering witness to the carnage it produced. Images of soldiers killed in the field help people realize the human toll of war and desensitize their ideas of battle as being particularly heroic.

Timothy O'Sullivan "The Harvest of Death" Union dead on the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, photographed July 5–6, 1863. Image in Public Domain. Available through US Library of Congress

Photojournalism's "Golden Age" took place between 1930 and 1950, coinciding with advances in the mediums of radio and television.

Margaret Bourke-White's photographs helped define the standards of photojournalism. Her work with *Life* magazine and as the first female war correspondent in Europe produced indelible images of the rise of industry, the effects of the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression and World War Two. Ammonia Storage Tanks (1930) shows masterful composition as she gets four of the massive tanks into the picture. The shadows, industrial grids of metalwork and the inclusion of figures at the top for an indication of scale make a powerful visual statement about the modern industrial landscape. One of her later photographs, A Mile Underground, Kimberly Diamond Mine, South Africa from 1950 frames two black mine workers staring back at the camera lens, their heads high with looks of resigned determination on their faces.

Dorothea Lange was employed by the federal government's Farm Security Administration to document the plight of migrant workers and families dislocated by the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression in America during the 1930's. Migrant Mother, Nipomo Valley, California is an iconic image of its hardships and the human resolve to survive. Like O'Sullivan's civil war photos, Lange's picture puts a face on human tragedy. Photographs like this helped win continued support for president Franklin Roosevelt's social aid programs.

Photojournalism does not always find the story in far away places. More often it is in the urban settings of big cities. Weegee (born Arthur Fellig) made a living as a ubiquitous news photographer on the streets of New York City. He documented the sensational, from murders to entertainment, and kept a police radio in his car so as to be the first on the scene of the action. His photo Simply Add Boiling Water from 1937 shows the Hygrade Frankfurter building in flames while firemen spray water into it. The photo's title is ironic and taken from the sign across the center of the building.

Modern Developments

Edwin Land invented the instant camera, capable of taking and developing a photograph, in 1947, followed by the popular SX-70 instant camera in 1972. The SX-70 produced a 3-inch-square-format positive image that developed in front of your eyes. The beauty of instant development for the artist was that during the two or three minutes it took for the image to appear, the film emulsion stayed malleable and able to manipulate. The artist Lucas Samaras used this technique of manipulation to produce some of the most imaginative and visually perplexing images in a series he termed photo-transformations. Using himself as subject, Samaras explores ideas of self-identity, emotional states and the altered reality he creates on film.

Polaroid SX-70 Instant Camera. Licensed through Creative Commons

Digital cameras appeared on the market in the mid 1980s. They allow the capture and storage of images through electronic means (the charge-coupled device) instead of photographic film. This new medium created big advantages over the film camera: the digital camera produces an image instantly, stores many images on a memory card in the camera, and the images can be downloaded to a computer, where they can be further manipulated by editing software and sent anywhere through cyberspace. This eliminated the time and cost involved in film development and created another revolution in the way we access visual information.

Digital images start to replace those made with film while still adhering to traditional ideas of design and composition. *Bingo Time* by photographer Jere DeWaters (below) uses a digital camera to capture a visually arresting scene within ordinary surroundings. He uses a rational approach to create a geometric order within the format, with contrasting diagonals set up between sloping pickets and ramps, with an implied angle leading from the tire on the lower left to the white window frame in the center and culminating at the clock on the upper right. And even though the sign yells out to us for attention, the black rectangle in the center is what gets it.

Jere DeWaters, Bingo Time, 2006, digital color print. Used by permission.

In addition, digital cameras and editing software let artists explore the notion of staged reality: not just recording what they see but creating a new visual reality for the viewer. Sandy Skogland creates and photographs elaborate tableaus inhabited by animals and humans, many times in cornered, theatrical spaces. In a series of images titled True Fiction Two she uses the digital process – and the irony in the tile to build fantastically colored, dream like images of decidedly mundane places. By straddling both installation and digital imaging, Skoglund blurs the line between the real and the imagined in art.

The photographs of Jeff Wall are similar in content—a blend of the staged and the real, but presented in a straightforward style the artist terms "near documentary."

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Chapter 10: Time Based Media: Film, Video, Digital

Early Developments

With traditional film, what we see as a continuous moving image is actually a linear progression of still photos on a single reel that pass through a lens at a certain rate of speed and are projected onto a screen. We saw a simple form of this process earlier in the pioneering work of Eadweard Muybridge.
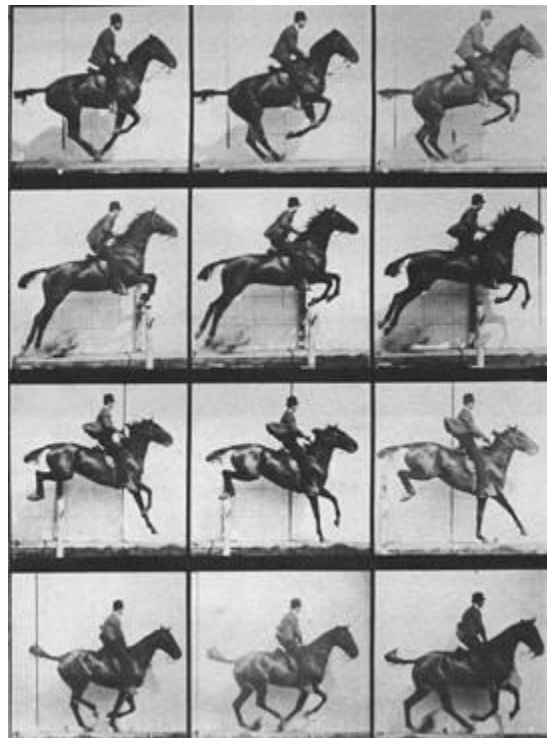
Eadweard Muybridge, Sequence of a Horse Jumping, 1904. Image is in the public domain

The first motion picture cameras were invented in Europe during the late nineteenth century. These early "movies" lacked a soundtrack and were normally shown along with a live pianist, organ player or orchestra in the theatre to provide the musical accompaniment. In the United States, film went from being a novelty to an art form with D. W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation in 1915. Griffith presents a narrative of the Civil War and its aftermath but with a decidedly racist view of American blacks and the Ku Klux Klan.

Film scholars agree it contains many new cinematic innovations and refinements, technical effects and artistic advancements, including a color sequence at the end. It had a formative influence on future films and has had a recognized impact on film history and the development of film as art. In addition, at almost three hours in length, it was the longest film to date (from Filmsite Movie Review: The Birth of a Nation).

Unique to the moving image is its ability to unfold an idea or narrative over time, using the same elements and principles inherent in any artistic medium. Film stills show how dramatic use of

lighting, staging and set compositions are embedded throughout an entire film.

Video Art

Video art, first appearing in the 1960s and 70s, uses magnetic tape to record image and sound together. The advantage of video over film is its instant playback and editing capability. One of the pioneers in using video as an art form was Doris Chase. She began by integrating her sculptures with interactive dancers, using special effects to create dreamlike work, and spoke of her ideas in terms of painting with light. Unlike filmmakers, video artists frequently combine their medium with installation, an art form that uses entire rooms or other specific spaces, to achieve effects beyond mere projection. South Korean video artist Nam June Paik made breakthrough works that comment on culture, technology and politics. Contemporary video artist Bill Viola creates work that is more painterly and physically dramatic, often training the camera on figures within a staged set or spotlighted figures in dark surroundings as they act out emotional gestures and expressions in slow motion. Indeed, his work The Greeting reenacts the emotional embrace seen in the Italian Renaissance painter Jacopo Pontormo's work *The Visitation* below.

Jacopo Pontormo, The Visitation, 1528, oil on canvas. The Church of San Francesco e Michele, Carmignano, Italy. Image is in the public domain.

Digital Arts

Computers and digital technology have, like the camera did over one hundred and fifty years ago, revolutionized the visual art landscape. Some artists now use digital technology to extend the reach of creative possibilities. Sophisticated software allows any computer user the opportunity to create and manipulate images and information. From still images and animation to streaming digital content and digital installations, computers have become high tech creative tools.

In a blending of traditional and new media, artist Chris Finley uses digital templates – software

based composition formats – to create his paintings.

The work of German artist Jochem Hendricks combines digital technology and human sight. His eye drawings rely on a computer interface to translate the process of looking into physical drawings.

Digital technology is a big part of the video and motion picture industries with the capability for high definition images, better editing resources and more areas for exploration to the artist.

The camera arts are relatively new mediums to the world of art, but their contributions are perhaps the most significant of all. They are certainly the most complex. Like traditional mediums of drawing, painting and sculpture they allow creative exploration of ideas and the making of objects and images. The difference is in their avenue of expression: by recording images and experiences through light and electronics they, on the one hand, narrow the gap between the worlds of the 'real' and the 'imagined' and on the other offers us an art form that can invent its own reality with the inclusion of the dimension of time. We watch as a narrative unfolds in front of our eyes. Digital technology has created a whole new kind of spatial dimension: cyberspace.

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Chapter 11: Sculpture

Three-Dimensional Media

Three-dimensional media occupies space defined through the dimensions of height, width and depth. It includes sculpture, installation and performance art, craft and product design. Two processes are responsible for all three-dimensional art: *additive*, in which material is built up to create form, or *subtractive*, where material is removed from an existing mass, such as a chunk of stone, wood or clay. The different categories we'll examine are not necessarily exclusive from each other, and we will look at some examples of three-dimensional art that arguably cross over between categories.

Types of Sculpture

Sculpture is any artwork made by the manipulation of materials resulting in a three-dimensional object. The sculpted figure of the Venus of Berekhat Ram, discovered in the Middle East in 1981, dates to 230,000 years BCE. It is the oldest example of artwork known. The crudely carved stone figure will fit in the palm of your hand. Its name derives from the similarity in form with so-called female fertility figures found throughout Europe, some of which date to 25,000 years ago. For example, the form of the Venus of Willendorf below shows remarkable skill in its carving, including arms draped over exaggerated breasts, an extended abdomen and elaborate patterning on the head, indicating either a braided hairstyle or type of woven cap. Just as remarkable, the figure has no facial detail to indicate identity. The meaning behind these figures is difficult to put into context because of the lack of any written record about them or other supporting materials.

Venus of Willendorf, c.25,000 BCE. Natural History Museum, Vienna. Image in the public domain

These earliest images are indicative of most of the cultural record in sculpture for thousands of years; singular figurative objects made within an iconographic context of myth, ritual or ceremony. It's not until the Old Kingdom period of Egyptian sculpture, between 3100 and 2180 BCE, that we start to see sculpture that reflects a resemblance of specific figures.

Sculpture can be *freestanding*, or self-supported, where the viewer can walk completely around

the work to see it from all sides, or created in *relief*, where the primary form's surface is raised above the surrounding material, such as the image on a coin. ***Bas-relief*** refers to a shallow extension of the image from its surroundings, ***high relief*** is where the most prominent elements of the composition are undercut and rendered at more than half in the round against the background. Rich, animated bas-relief sculpture exists at the Banteay Srei temple near Angor Wat, Cambodia. Here humans and mythic figures combine in depictions from ancient Hindu stories.

Bas-relief sculpture at the temple Banteay Srei, Angor, Cambodia. 10th century. Sandstone. Image in the public domain.

The Shaw Memorial combines freestanding, bas and high relief elements in one masterful sculpture. The work memorializes Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty fourth regiment, the first African-American infantry unit to fight for the north in the civil war.

Methods

Carving

Carving uses the subtractive process to cut away areas from a larger mass, and is the oldest method used for three-dimensional work. Traditionally stone and wood were the most common materials because they were readily available and extremely durable. Contemporary materials include foam, plastics and glass. Using chisels and other sharp tools, artists carve away material until the ultimate form of the work is achieved.

A beautiful example of the carving process is seen in The Water and Moon Guanyin Bodhisattva from 10th century China. The Bodhisattva, a Buddhist figure who has attained Enlightenment but

decides to stay on earth to teach others, is exquisitely carved and painted. The figure is almost eight feet high, seated in an elegant pose on a lotus bloom, relaxed, staring straight ahead with a calm, benevolent look. The extended right arm and raised knee create a stable triangular composition. The sculptor carves the left arm to simulate muscle tension inherent when it supports the weight of the body.

In another example, you can see the high degree of relief carved from an original cedar wood block in the *Earthquake Mask* from the Pacific Northwest Coast Kwakwaka' wakw culture. It's extraordinary for masks to personify a natural event. This and other mythic figure masks are used in ritual and ceremony dances. The broad areas of paint give a heightened sense of character to this mask.
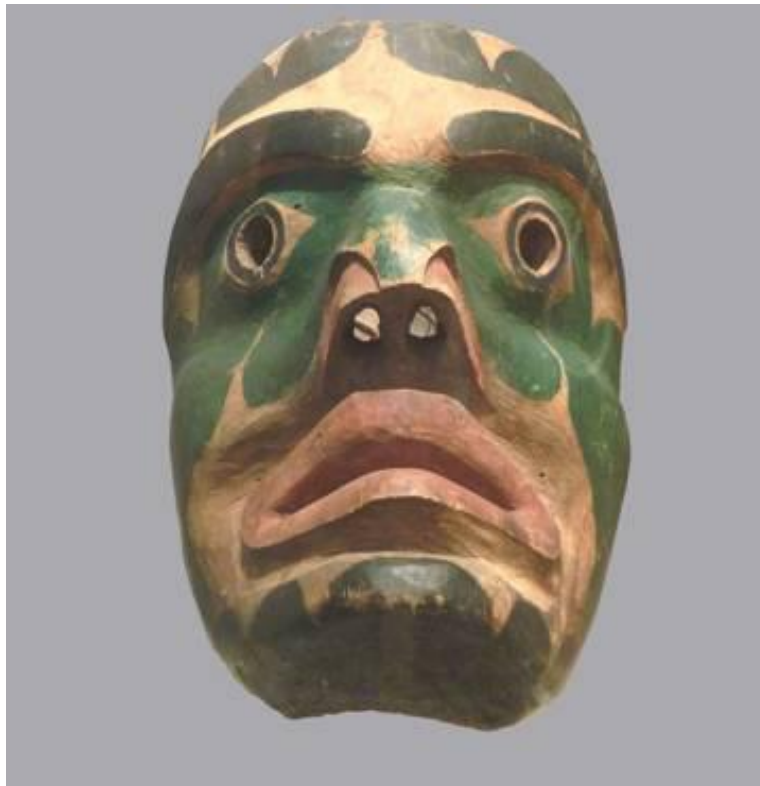
Earthquake Mask, 9" x 7", early 20th century. Kwakwaka' wakw culture, North American Pacific Coast. Burke Museum, University of Washington, Seattle. Used by permission.

Wood sculptures by contemporary artist Ursula von Rydingsvard are carved, glued and even burned. Many are massive, rough vessel forms that carry the visual evidence of their creation.

Michelangelo's masterpiece *Statue of David* from 1501 is carved and sanded to an idealized form that the artist releases from the massive block, a testament to human aesthetic brilliance.

Michelangelo, David, 1501, marble, 17' high. Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence. Image in the public domain

Casting

The additive method of casting has been in use for more than five thousand years. It's a manufacturing process by which a liquid material is usually poured into a mold, which contains a hollow cavity of the desired shape, and then allowed to solidify. One traditional method of bronze casting frequently used today is the lost wax process. Casting materials are usually metals but can be various cold-setting materials that cure after mixing two or more components together; examples are epoxy, concrete, plaster, and clay. Casting is most often used for making complex shapes that would be otherwise difficult or uneconomical to make by other methods. It's a labor-intensive process that allows for the creation of multiples from an original object (similar to the medium of printmaking), each of which is extremely durable and exactly like its predecessor. A mold is usually destroyed after the desired number of castings has been made. Traditionally, bronze statues were placed atop pedestals to signify the importance of the figure depicted. A statue of William Seward (below), the U. S. Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln and who negotiated the purchase of the Alaska territories, is set nearly eight feet high so viewers must look up at him. Standing next to the globe, he holds a roll of plans in his left hand.

Richard Brooks, William Seward, bronze on stone pedestal, c. 1909. Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

More contemporary bronze cast sculptures reflect their subjects through different cultural perspectives. The statue of rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix is set on the ground, his figure cast as if performing on stage. He's on both of his knees, head thrown back, eyes shut and mouth open in mid-wail. His bell-bottom pants, frilly shirt unbuttoned halfway, necklace and headband give us a snapshot of 1960s rock culture but also engage us with the subject at our level.

Daryl Smith, Jimi Hendrix, 1996, bronze. Broadway and Pine, Seattle. Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

Doris Chase was also a strong sculptor. Her large-scale abstract work *Changing Form* from 1971 is cast in bronze and dominates the area around it. The title refers to the visual experience you get walking around the work, seeing the positive and negative shapes dissolve and recombine

with each other.

Doris Chase, Changing Form, 1971. Bronze. Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

Modeling

Modeling is a method that can be both additive and subtractive. The artist uses modeling to build up form with clay, plaster or other soft material that can be pushed, pulled, pinched or poured into place. The material then hardens into the finished work. Larger sculptures created with this method make use of an armature, an underlying structure of wire that sets the physical shape of the work. Although modeling is primarily an additive process, artists do remove material in the process. Modeling a form is often a preliminary step in the casting method. In 2010, Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti's Walking Man (c. 1955), a bronze sculpture first modeled in clay, set a record for the highest price ever paid for a work of art at auction.

Construction/Assemblage

Construction, or Assemblage, uses found, manufactured or altered objects to build form. Artists weld, glue, bolt and wire individual pieces together. Sculptor Debra Butterfield transforms throw away objects into abstract sculptures of horses with scrap metal, wood and other found objects. She often casts these constructions in bronze.

Louise Nevelson used cut and shaped pieces of wood, gluing and nailing them together to form fantastic, complex compositions. Painted in a single tone, (usually black or white), her sculptures are graphic, textural façades of shapes, patterns, and shadow.

Traditional African masks often combine different materials. The elaborate Kanaga Mask from Mali uses wood, fibers, animal hide and pigment to construct an other worldly visage that

changes from human to animal and back again.

Some modern and contemporary sculptures incorporate movement, light and sound. **Kinetic** sculptures use ambient air currents or motors allowing them to move, changing in form as the viewer stands in place. The artist Alexander Calder is famous for his mobiles, whimsical, abstract works that are intricately balanced to move at the slightest wisp of air, while the sculptures of Jean Tinguely are contraption-like and, similar to Nevelson's and Butterfield's works, constructed of scraps often found in garbage dumps. His motorized works exhibit a mechanical aesthetic as they whir, rock and generate noises. Tinguely's most famous work, Homage to New York, ran in the sculpture garden at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1960 as part of a performance by the artist. After several minutes, the work exploded and caught fire.

The idea of generating sound as part of three-dimensional works has been utilized for hundreds of years, traditionally in musical instruments that carry a spiritual reference. Contemporary artists use sound to heighten the effect of sculpture or to direct recorded narratives. The cast bronze fountain by George Tsutakawa (below) uses water flow to produce a soft rushing sound. In this instance the sculpture also attracts the viewer by the motion of the water: a clear, fluid addition to an otherwise hard abstract surface.

George Tsutakawa, Fountain. Bronze, running water. City of Seattle. Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

Doug Hollis's A Sound Garden from 1982 creates sounds from hollow metal tubes atop grid-like structures rising above the ground. In weathervane fashion, the tubes swing into the wind and resonate to specific pitch. The sound extends the aesthetic value of the work to include the sense of hearing and, together with the metal construction, creates a mechanical and psychological basis for the work.

Installation Art

Dan Flavin is one of the first artists to explore the possibilities of light as a sculptural medium. Since the 1960s his work has incorporated fluorescent bulbs of different colors and in various

arrangements. Moreover, he takes advantage of the wall space the light is projected onto, literally blurring the line between traditional sculpture and the more complex medium of installation.

Installation art utilizes multiple objects, often from various media, and takes up entire spaces. It can be generic or site specific. Because of their relative complexity, installations can address aesthetic and narrative ideas on a larger scale than traditional sculpture. Its genesis can be traced to the Dada movement, ascendant after World War I and which predicated a new aesthetic by its unconventional nature and ridicule of established tastes and styles. Sculpture came off the pedestal and began to transform entire rooms into works of art. Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau, begun in 1923, transforms his apartment into an abstract, claustrophobic space that is at once part sculpture and architecture. With installation art the viewer is surrounded by and can become part of the work itself.

British artist Rachel Whiteread's installation *Embankment* from 2005 fills an entire exhibition hall with casts made from various sized boxes. At first appearance a snowy mountain landscape navigated by the viewer is actually a gigantic nod to the idea of boxes as receptacles of memory towering above and stacked around them, squeezing them towards the center of the room.

Rachel Whiteread, Embankment, 2005. Source: Wikipedia, licensed through Creative Commons

Ilya Kabakov mixes together a narrative of political propaganda, humor and mundane existence in his installation The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment from 1984. What we see is the remains of a small apartment plastered with Soviet era posters, a small bed and the makeshift slingshot a man uses to escape the drudgery of his life within the system. A gaping hole in the roof and his shoes on the floor are evidence enough that he made it into space.

Ilya Kabakov, The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment, 1984. Source: www.wikiart.org, Fair Use

Performance art goes a step further, involving the artist as part of the work itself. Some performance artworks are interactive, involving the viewer too. The nature of the medium is in its ability to use live performance in the same context as static works of art: to enhance our understanding of artistic experience. Similar to installation works, performance art had its first manifestations during the Dada art movement, when live performances included poetry, visual art and music, often going on at the same time.

The German artist Joseph Beuys was instrumental in introducing performance art as a legitimate medium in the post World War II artistic milieu. I Like America and America Likes Me from 1974 finds Beuys co-existing with a coyote for a week in the Rene Block Gallery in New York City. The artist is protected from the animal by a felt blanket and a shepherd's staff. Performance art, like installation, challenges the viewer to reexamine the artistic experience from a new level.

In the 1960's Allen Kaprow's **Happenings** invited viewers to be the participants. These events, sometimes rehearsed and other times improvised begin to erase the line between the artist and the audience. Yoko Ono's Cut Piece from 1965 specifically invites members of the audience to interact with her on stage.

This same idea – using the artist's body as subject, is evident in the performance art of Marina Abramovic . In *The Artist is Present* she sits quietly as individual visitors sit across the table from her, exchanging silent glances and stares.

Today we see a new form of performance art happen unexpectedly around us in the form of **Flash Mobs**: groups of people who gather in public spaces to collaborate in short, seemingly spontaneous events that entertain and surprise passersby. Many flash mobs are arranged in advance through the use of social media. An example of flash mob performance is Do Re Mi in the Central Station in Antwerp, Belgium in March of 2009.

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Chapter 12: Craft and Design Media

Craft Media

Craft requires the specific skilled use of tools in creating works of art. These tools can take many forms: words, construction tools, a camera, a paintbrush or even a voice. Traditional studio crafts include ceramics, metal and woodworking, weaving and the glass arts. Crafts are distinguished by a high degree of workmanship and finish. Traditional crafts have their roots in utilitarian purposes: furniture, utensils and other everyday accoutrements that are designed for specific uses and reflect the adage that "form follows function". But human creativity goes beyond simple function to include the aesthetic realm, entered through the doors of embellishment, decoration and an intuitive sense of design.

In the two examples below, a homeowner's yard gate shows off his metal smith skills, becoming a study in ornate symmetry. In another example, a staircase crafted in the Shaker style takes on an elegant form that mirrors the organic spiral shape representing the 'golden ratio'.

Yard gate; metal, concrete and glass. Image used by permission.

Shaker style staircase, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Photo by Jack Boucher, National Parks Service. Image is in the public domain.

Utility is not the sole purpose of craft. The Persian carpet below has its use as a utilitarian object, but the craftsmanship shown in its pattern and design gives it a separate aesthetic value. The decorative element is visually stimulating, as if the artisan uses the carpet as simply a vehicle for his or her own creative imagination.

Antique Tabriz Persian carpet. Licensed through Creative Commons

Quilts made in the rural community of Gee's Bend Alabama show a diverse range of individual patterns within a larger design structure of colorful stripes and blocks, and have a basis in graphic textile designs from Africa.

Even a small tobacco bag from the Native American Sioux culture (below) becomes a work of art with its intricate beaded patterns and floral designs.

Tobacco pouch, Sioux Licensed through Creative Commons

The craftsmanship in glass making is one of the most demanding. Working with an extremely fragile medium presents unique challenges. Challenges aside, the delicate nature of glass gives it exceptional visual presence. A blown glass urn dated to first century Rome is an example. The fact that it has survived the ages intact is testament to its ultimate strength and beauty.

Cinerary Urn, Roman. C. 1st century CE. Blown glass. National Archaeological Museum, Spain. Photo: Luis Garcia Zaqarbal. Image is in the public domain.

Louis Comfort Tiffany introduced many styles of decorative glass between the late 19th and first part of the 20th centuries. His stained-glass window *The Holy City* in Baltimore Maryland has intricate details in illustrations influenced by the Art Nouveau style popular at the turn of the 19th century.

Louis Comfort Tiffany, *The Holy City*, stained glass window, Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, Baltimore, Maryland. 1905. Image is in the public domain.

The artist Dale Chihuly has redefined the traditional craft of glass making over the last forty years, moving it towards the mainstream of fine art with single objects and large scale installations involving hundreds of individual pieces.

Dale Chihuly, *Saffron Tower*. de Young Museum. San Francisco California. Image by Darren Kumasawa Liscense: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Design Media

On any given day, you can look around your surroundings and come in contact with design. Information comes to you in many forms: the graphics on the front of a cereal box, or on the packaging in your cupboards; the information on the billboards and bus shelter posters you pass on your way to work; the graphics on the outside of the cup that holds your double latte; and the printed numbers on the dial of the speedometer in your car. Information is communicated by the numbers on the buttons in an elevator; on the signage hanging in stores; or on the amusing graphics on the front of your friend's T-shirt. So many items in your life hold an image that is created to convey information. And all of these things are designed by someone.

Times Square, New York, New York. Image by Terabass License CC BY-SA 3.0

Traditionally referred to as graphic design, communication design is the process by which messages and images are used to convey information to a targeted audience. Design itself is only the first step. It is important when conceiving of a new design that the entire workflow through to production is taken into consideration. And while most modern graphic design is created on computers, using design software such as the Adobe suite of products, the ideas and concepts don't stay on the computer. To create in-store signage, for instance, the ideas need to be completed in the computer software, then progress to an imaging (traditionally referred to as printing) process. This is a very wide-reaching and varied group of disciplines.

Product Design

Product Design: The dictum "form follows function" represents an organic approach to three-dimensional design. The products and devices we use every day continue to serve the same functions but change in styles. This constant realignment in basic form reflects modern aesthetic considerations and, on a larger scale, become artifacts of the popular culture of a given time period.

The two examples below illustrate this idea. Like Tiffany glass, the chair designed by Henry van de Velde in 1895 reflects the Art Nouveau style in its wood construction with organic, stylized lines and curvilinear form. In comparison, the *Ant Chair* from 1952 retains the basic functional form with more modern design using a triangular leg configuration of tubular steel and a single piece of laminated wood veneer, the cut-out shape suggesting the form of a black ant.

Henry van de Velde, *Chair*, 1895. Wood, woven fiber. Image is in the public domain.

Arne Jacobsen, *Ant Chair*, 1952. Steel and wood. Licensed through Creative Commons.

Conditions and Products of the Industrial Age

Before the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840 in Britain) most aspects of design and all aspects of production were commonly united in the person of the craftsman. The tailor, mason, cobbler, potter, brewer, and any other kind of craftsman integrated their personal design aesthetic into each stage of product development.

The Arts & Crafts movement emerged in the second half of the 19th century in reaction to the social, moral, and aesthetic chaos created by the Industrial Revolution. William Morris was its founder and leader. He abhorred the cheap and cheerful products of manufacturing, the terrible working and living conditions of the poor, and the lack of guiding moral principles of the times. Morris "called for a fitness of purpose, truth to the nature of the materials and methods of production, and individual expression by both artist and worker" (Meggs & Purvis, 2011, p. 160). These philosophical points are still pivotal to the expression of design style and practice to this day. Design styles from the Arts & Crafts movement and on have emphasized, in varying degrees, either fitness of purpose and material integrity, or individual expression and the need for visual subjectivity. Morris based his philosophy on the writings of John Ruskin, a critic of the Industrial Age, and a man who felt that society should work toward promoting the happiness and well-being of every one of its members, by creating a union of art and labor in the service of society. Ruskin admired the medieval Gothic style for these qualities, as well as the Italian aesthetic of medieval art because of its direct and uncomplicated depiction of nature.

Many artists, architects, and designers were attracted to Ruskin's philosophy and began to integrate components of them into their work. Morris, influenced by his upbringing in an agrarian countryside, was profoundly moved by Ruskin's stance on fusing work and creativity, and became determined to find a way to make it a reality for society. This path became his life's work.

In 1860, Morris established an interior design firm with friends based on the knowledge and experiences he had in crafting and building his home. He began transforming not only the look of home interiors but also the design studio. He brought together craftsmen of all kinds under the umbrella of his studio and began to implement Ruskin's philosophy of combining art and craft. In Morris's case, this was focused on making beautiful objects for the home. The craftsmen were encouraged to study principles of art and design, not just production, so they could reintegrate

design principles into the production of their products. The objects they created were made and designed with an integrity a craftsman could feel proud of and find joy in creating, while the eventual owner would consider these products on par with works of art (an existing example is the Morris chair above). The look of the work coming out of the Morris studio was based specifically on an English medieval aesthetic that the British public could connect to. The English look and its integrity of production made Morris's work very successful and sought after. His organizational innovations and principled approach gained attention with craftsmen and artisans, and became a model for a number of craft guilds and art societies, which eventually changed the British design landscape.

Design and New Technologies

The look of graphic design changed through advancements in photography, typesetting, and printing techniques. Designers felt confident in exploring and experimenting with the new technologies as they were well supported by the expertise of the print industry. Designers began to cut up type and images and compose directly on mechanical boards, which were then photographed and manipulated on the press for color experimentation. As well, illustration was once again prized. Conceptual typography also became a popular form of expression.

Milton Glaser, *I Love New York Logo*. Source: Wikimedia Commons License: Public Domain

Milton Glaser, *Dylan.* 1966. Image by David License CC BY 2.0

An excellent example of this expansive style can be found in the design output of New York's Push Pin Studios. Formed by Milton Glaser and Seymour Chwast, Push Pin was a studio that created innovative typographic solutions — I♥NY— brand identities, political posters, books, and albums (such Bob Dylan's album Dylan). It was adept at using and mixing illustration, photography, collage, and typography for unexpected and innovative visual results that were always fresh and interesting as well as for its excellent conceptual solutions. The influence of Push Pin and Late Modern is still alive and has recently experienced a resurgence. Many young designers have adopted this style because of its fresh colors, fine wit, and spontaneous compositions.

Design Today

Apple Store, Opéra, Paris, France. Image by Florian License: CC BY-SA 2.0

The technological revolution of the 1990s brought the mobile phone and computer to every home and office and changed the structure of our current society much as manufacturing in the 1800s changed Britain and the Western world. As with the Industrial Revolution, the change in technology over the last 20 years has affected us environmentally, socially, and economically. Manufacturing has slowly been moved offshore and replaced with technology-based companies. Data has replaced material as the substance we must understand and use effectively and efficiently. The technological development sectors have also begun to dominate employment and wealth sectors and overtake manufacturing's dominance. These changes are ongoing and fast-paced. The design community has responded in many novel ways, but usually its response is anchored by a look and strategy that reduce ornament and overt style while focusing on clean lines and concise messaging. The role of design today is often as a way-finder to help people keep abreast of changes, and to provide instruction. Designers are once again relying on established, historic styles and methods like ITS (International Typographic Style) to connect to audiences because the message is being delivered in a complex visual system. Once the technological shifts we are experiencing settle down, and design is no longer adapting to new forms of delivery, it will begin to develop original and unique design approaches that complement and speak to the new urban landscape.

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Chapter 13: Architecture

Architecture is the art and science of designing structures and spaces for human use. Architectural design in itself is an art form realized through considerations of spatial design and aesthetics. Related to sculpture, architecture creates three-dimensional objects that occupy a given space and create a visual relationship with the space around them. The differences between sculpture and architecture are in their scale and utility. Early human structures provided shelter from the elements. As hunter-gatherer societies transitioned to farming, they made more permanent shelters, eventually formed communities, towns and cities. For thousands of years, architecture reflected the specific environment and materials available in any given region, including rock caves or huts of wood, soil and brick. Many were assemblages of materials like grasses, leaves and animal hides. Nomadic peoples still utilize these materials.

Turkman woman standing at the entry to a grass and hide covered yurt. Collection of the Library of Congress Prints and Images File. Image in the public domain.

In simple design terms, architecture adheres to the dictum that "form follows function". Architecture's function reflects different human needs. For example, warehouses take the shape of large squares or rectangles because they need only to enclose a space that protects and stores products and materials in the most efficient manner. A home is designed with other functions in mind, including cooking, resting, cleaning and entertaining. So, the interior design of a home includes specialized areas for these different functions. A church or school design would have their own set of spatial requirements because they provide for large groups of people at once.

Architecture solves problems concerning the use of space, interior design and the landscape that surrounds it. The limitations imposed on architecture by the laws of physics are solved to a large extent by engineering. The greatest limitations on design are the physical loads exerted by a structure's weight. **Compression** loads refer to vertical weight and **shear** loads travel at an angle or horizontally. Buildings need stable foundations and framing systems that support the spanning of open space.

Traditional Methods and Materials

The basic methods of building design and construction have been used for thousands of years. Stacking stones, laying brick, or lashing wood together in one form or another are still used today

in all parts of the world. But over the centuries, innovations in methods and materials have given new expression to architecture and the human footprint on the landscape. We can look to historical examples for clues that give context to different style periods.

One of the earliest settlements with permanent structures was discovered at Çatalhöyük in Turkey (pictured below). The rich soil that surrounds the settlement indicates the inhabitants relied in part on farming. Dated to about 7500 BCE, the dwellings are constructed from dried mud and brick and show wooden support beams spanning the ceilings. The design of the settlement incorporates a cell-like structure of small buildings either sharing common walls or separated by a few feet. The roofs are flat and were used as pathways between buildings.

Restoration of interior, Catalhoyuk, Turkey. Image licensed under Creative Commons.

A significant advance came with the development of the ***post and lintel*** system. With this, a system of posts–either stone or wood – are placed at intervals and spanned by beams at the tops. The load is distributed down the posts to allow for areas of open space between them. Its earliest use is seen at Stonehenge (below), a prehistoric monument in southern England dating to about 3000 BCE.

Stonehenge, Wiltshire County, England. Image: David Ball. Image licensed under Creative Commons.

Post and Lintel support in contemporary use. Image by Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

A **colonnade** continues the post and lintel method as a series of columns and beams enveloping larger areas of space. Colonnades can be free standing or part of a larger structure. Common in Egyptian, Greek and Roman architectural design, their use creates visual rhythm and implies a sense of grandeur.

The Colonnade of Amenhotep III. Luxor, Egypt. Image by Marc Ryckaert Image licensed under CC BY 3.0
Source

Over time columns became categorized by the capital style at their tops. The smooth and unadorned **Tuscan** and fluted **Doric** columns give way to more elaborate styles: the scrolled **Ionian** and the high relief **Corinthian**.
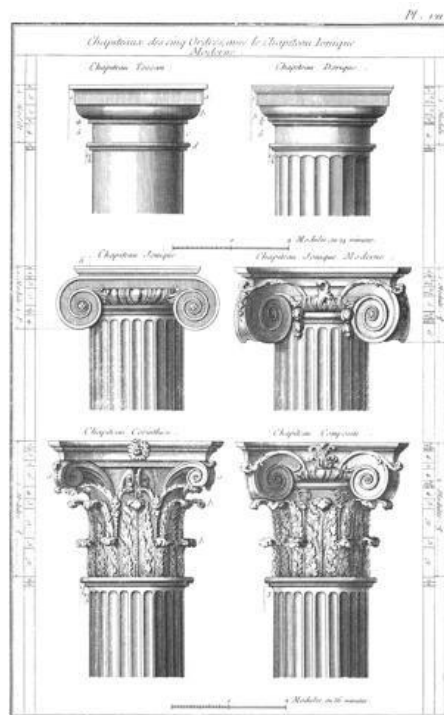
Greek and Roman capitals: Top row: Tuscan, Doric. Middle Row: Ionic. Bottom Row: Corinthian an d a composite Ionic Corinthian. Classical Orders, engraving from the Encyclopédie vol. 18. Public domain.

The Parthenon, a Greek temple dedicated to the mythic goddess Athena, was built in the fifth century BCE in Athens and is part of a larger community of structures in the Acropolis. All are considered pinnacles of classic Greek architecture. Ionic colonnades march across all sides of the Parthenon, the outer boundary of a very ordered interior floor plan.

The Parthenon, Athens, Greece. 447 BCE. Digital image by Steve Swayne and licensed under CC BY 2.0 Source
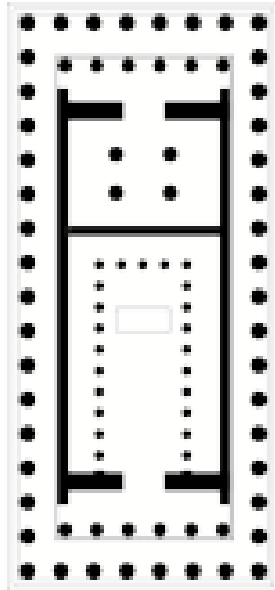
Floor plan of the Parthenon. Licensed through Creative Commons.

Another example of a colonnade is St. Peter's Square in the Vatican, Rome.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Colonnade at St. Peter's Square, the Vatican. 1656–67. Photo by D.F. Malan. Licensed through Creative Commons.

The colonnade is a common structure in our contemporary surroundings too. Parks and other public spaces use them to the same effect: providing visual and material stability in spanning areas of open space.

The development of the *arch* gave architecture new alternatives to post and lintel construction. Arches appeared as early as the 2nd millennium BC in Mesopotamian brick architecture. They supply strength and stability to walls without massive posts and beams because their construction minimizes the shear load imposed on them. This meant walls could go higher without compromising their stability and at the same time create larger areas of open space between arches. In addition, the arch gave buildings a more organic, expressive visual element. The Colosseum in Rome (below), built in the first century CE, uses repeated arches to define an imposing but decidedly airy structure. The fact that it's still standing today is testament to the inherent strength of the arch.

The Colosseum, Rome, Italy. First century CE. Photo by David Iliff. Image licensed through Creative Commons.

Roman aqueducts are another example of how effectively the arch was used. Tall and graceful, the arches support themselves in a colonnade and were used to transport a network of water channels throughout ancient Rome.

Roman aqueduct, c. First century CE. Image in the public domain.

From the arch came two more important developments: extending an arch in a linear direction formed a **vault**, encapsulating tall, narrow spaces with inverted "U" shaped ceilings. The compressive force of the vault required thick walls on each side to keep it from collapsing. Because of this, many vaults were situated underground – essentially tunnels – connecting areas of a larger building or providing covered transport of people, goods and materials throughout the city.

An arch rotated on its vertical axis creates a **dome**, with its curving organic scoop of space reserved for the tops of the most important buildings. The Pantheon in Rome sports a dome with an oculus – a round or elliptical opening at the top, that is the massive building's only light source.

Pantheon, Rome. 126 CE. Image licensed through CC BY-SA 4.0
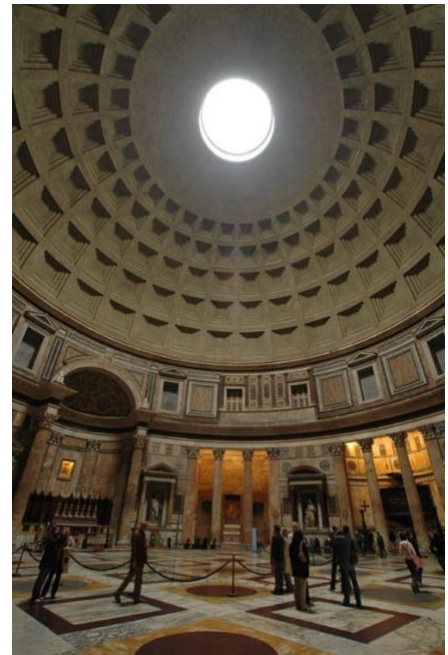
Pantheon (Interior) Dome of the Pantheon with oculus, Rome. 126 CE. Image licensed through CC BY 2.0
Source

These elements combined to revolutionize architectural design throughout Europe and the Middle East in the form of bigger and stronger churches, mosques and even sectarian government buildings. Styles changed with technology. **Romanesque** architecture was popular for nearly three hundred years (800 – 1100 CE). The style is characterized by barrel or groin vault ceilings, thick walls with low exterior buttresses and squared off towers.

Buildings reached a point where they struggled to support their own weight. The architectural solution to the problem was a **flying buttress**, an exterior load-bearing column connected to the main structure by a segmented arch or "flyer."
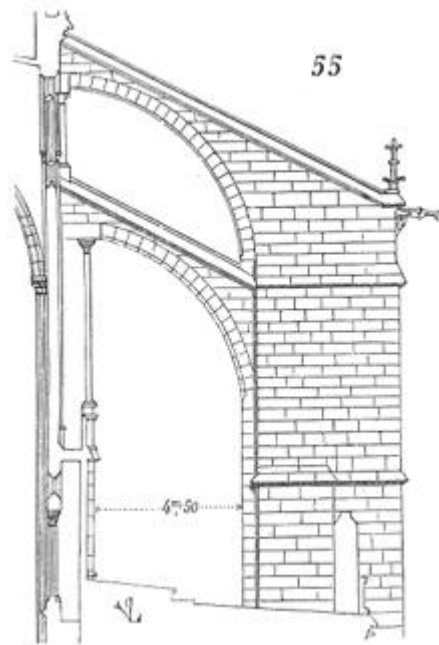
Diagram of a flying buttress from St. Denis basilica, Paris. From the Dictionary of French Architecture from 11th to 16th Century (1856), licensed through Creative Commons.

Flying buttresses became a kind of exoskeleton that transferred the heavy weight of Romanesque stone roofs through their arches and into the ground, away from the building. They became catalysts for the *Gothic* style based on higher, thinner walls, pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and spired towers. Also, the thinner walls of the Gothic style allowed for more stained-glass windows and interior illumination.

Church of St. Denis, France. Seventh–twelfth centuries CE. Image in the public domain

St. Denis basilica in France (above) is one of the first Gothic-style churches, known for its high

vaulted ceilings and extensive use of stained-glass windows. The architecture of the church became a symbol of spirituality itself: soaring heights, magnificently embellished interiors and exteriors, elaborate lighting and sheer grandeur on a massive scale.

The Doges Palace in Venice, Italy (pictured below) housed the political aristocracy of the Republic of Venice for a thousand years. Built in 1309 CE, its rhythmic levels of columns and pointed arches, divided by fractals as they rise, give way to elaborate geometric patterns in the pink brick façade. The ornamental additions at the top edge reinforce the patterns below.

The Doges Palace, 1309 CE, viewed from St. Mark's Square, Venice, Italy. Image by Martti Mustonen and licensed through Creative Commons.

Architecture in China and the Far East

Chinese architecture refers to a style of architecture that has taken shape in East Asia over many centuries. The structural principles of traditional Chinese architecture have remained largely unchanged. Chinese architectural (and aesthetic) design is based on symmetry, a general emphasis on the horizontal and site layouts that reflect a hierarchy of importance. These considerations result in formal and stylistic differences in comparison to the West, and display alternatives in design.

The Chinese have used stone, brick and wood for centuries. *The Great Wall*, begun in the 5th century BCE, was intended to keep nomadic invaders out of Northern China. The stone wall covers 5500 miles in its entirety. The rigid material takes on a more flexible appearance as it conforms to the contours of the landscape surrounding it. Notice in the image below the use of arches in the towers.

The Great Wall, China. Begun 5th century BCE. Stone. Image licensed through Creative Commons

The Zhaozhou Bridge is an example of efficient design and flawless craftsmanship with materials. Built in 595 CE, it uses stone barrel vaults and arches to gracefully span the Xaio River. Today it is the oldest standing bridge in China. The best architectural testament to it is in a poetic inscription left on the bridge by Tang Dynasty officials seventy years after its construction and reads:

> *This stone bridge over the Jiao River is the result of the work of the Sui engineer Li Chun. Its construction is indeed unusual, and no one knows on what principle he made it. But let us observe his marvelous use of stonework. Its convexity is so smooth, and the wedge-shaped stones fit together so perfectly... How lofty is the flying-arch! How large is the opening, yet without piers! Precise indeed are the cross-bondings and joints between the stones, masonry blocks delicately interlocking like mill wheels, or like the walls of wells; a hundred forms (organized into) one. And besides the mortar in the crevices there are slender-waist iron cramps to bind the stones together. The four small arches inserted, on either side two, break the anger of the roaring floods, and protect the bridge mightily. Such a masterwork could never have been achieved if this man had not applied his genius to the building of a work which would last for centuries to come.*

Needham, Joseph. The Shorter Science and Civilization in China. Cambridge University Press, 1994. ISBN 0521292867. Pages 145-147.

Li Chun, *Zhaozhou Bridge*, China. Stone. 595 CE. Image in the Public Domain.

Though Chinese stonemason work is celebrated for its preciseness and ingenuity, the use of wood as a primary construction material is the hallmark of traditional Chinese architecture. Wooden timber, usually large trimmed logs, are used as load-bearing columns and lateral beams for framing buildings and supporting the roofs. These structural timbers are prominently displayed in finished structures. It's not known how the ancient builders raised the huge wooden columns into position. Columns and roof sections were joined together in mortise and tenon joints without the use of glue or nails.

One innovation of Chinese architecture is the ***cantilever*** – an extension or overhang without exterior bracing. This was made possible by using ***corbel brackets*** or ***dougong*** – triangular braces that help support heavy loads at the corners. The cantilever and bracket system were engineered to provide buildings with sweeping roof overhangs that commonly turn upwards at the corners. Cantilevered roofs appear to float above the main structure and reinforce the focus on a horizontal symmetry. The *Hall of Supreme Harmony*, located in the Forbidden City in Beijing, China exemplifies this design characteristic.
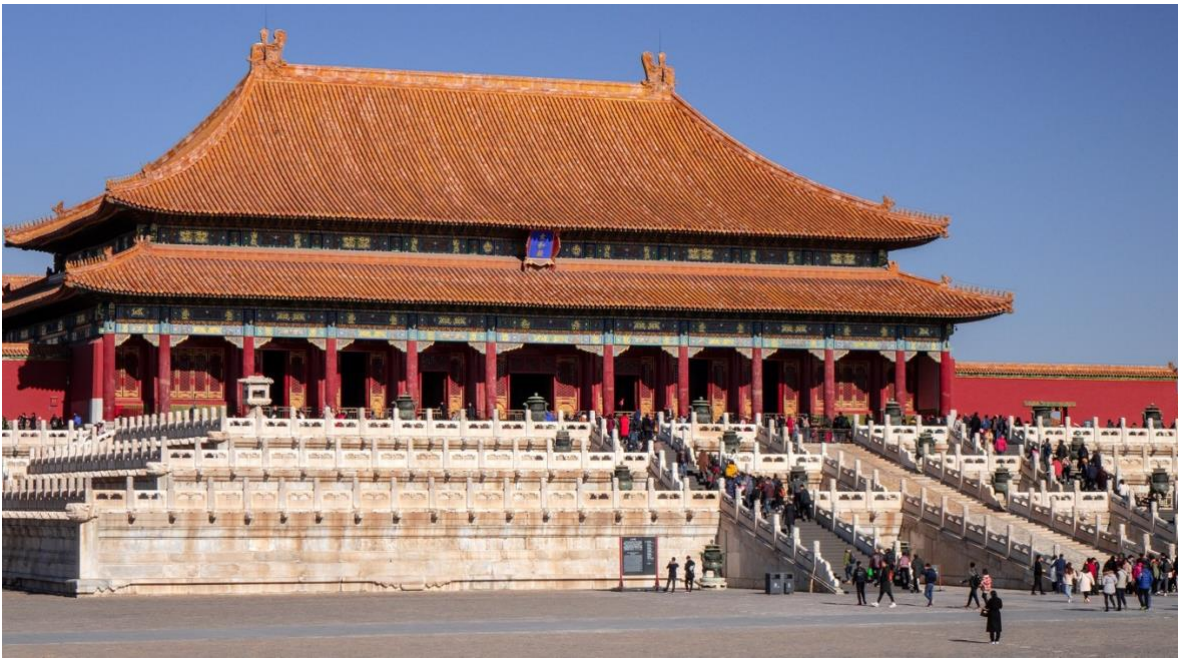
Hall of Supreme Harmony, located in the Forbidden City, Beijing. Image licensed through Creative Commons

Chinese architecture influenced all of East Asian design over hundreds of years. Similar elements and characteristics can be seen in traditional architecture from Japan, the Koreas and Vietnam.

Decoration is implicit in Chinese architecture. Bright colors and intricate designs dominate many traditional buildings and enhance the look of exposed timbers. The Sagami Temple in Japan (below) uses elaborate decoration to intensify the visual effect of a complex corner structure of brackets and overhangs.

Sagami Temple, detail, 745 CE, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan.
Image licensed through Creative Commons

Cross-Cultural Influences

As overland and marine trade routes expanded between Eastern and Western civilizations so did the influence of cultural styles in architecture, religion and commerce. The most important of these passages was the Silk Road, a system of routes that developed over hundreds of years across the European and Asian continents. Along this route are buildings that show cross-cultural influences in their design.

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem offers different cultural influences manifest in one building: a classic Greek colonnade at the main entrance, the gold dome and central turret supporting it, western style arches and colorful Islamic surface embellishment.

The Dome of the Rock, on the Temple Mount, in the Old City of Jerusalem, Photo Credit Andrew Shiva, Image licensed through Creative Commons

The Louvre Palace in Paris, once the official royal residence and now one of the world's biggest museums, had its beginnings in the 12th century but didn't achieve its present form until recently. The building's style is French Renaissance – marked by a formal symmetry, horizontal stability and restrained ornamentation. The Louvre executive board chose architect I. M. Pei's glass pyramid design as the defining element for the new main entry in 1989. The choice was a great success: the pyramid further defines the public space above ground and gives natural light and a sense of openness to the underground lobby beneath it.

Courtyard of the Louvre Paris, France Image licensed through Creative Commons CC BY-SA 3.0

The Industrial Revolution

Beginning in the 18th century the Industrial Revolution made fundamental changes in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation and housing. Architecture changed in response to the new industrial landscape. Prior to the late 19th century, the weight of a multistory building had to be supported principally by the strength of its walls. The taller the building, the more strain this placed on the lower sections. Since there were clear engineering limits to the weight such load-bearing walls could sustain, large designs meant massively thick walls on the ground floors, and definite limits on the building's height.

Forged iron and milled steel began to replace wood, brick and stone as primary materials for large buildings. This change is encapsulated in the Eiffel Tower, built in 1889. Standing on four huge arched legs, the iron lattice tower rises narrowly to just over 1000 feet high. The Eiffel Tower not only became an icon for France but for industry itself – heralding a new age in materials, design and construction methods.

In America, the development of cheap, versatile steel in the second half of the 19th century helped change the urban landscape. The country was in the midst of rapid social and economic growth that made for great opportunities in architectural design. A much more urbanized society was forming, and the society called out for new, larger buildings. By the middle of the 19th century downtown areas in big cities began to transform themselves with new roads and buildings to accommodate the growth. The mass production of steel was the main driving force behind the ability to build skyscrapers during the mid 1880s.

Steel framing was set into foundations of reinforced concrete, concrete poured around a grid of steel rods (re-bar) or other matrices to increase tensile strength in foundations, columns and vertical slabs.

Rebar being set in place for the foundation of a sewage treatment plant pump station. Source: Wikipedia and licensed through Creative Commons.

The people in Midwestern America felt less social pressure to conform to the ways and styles of the architectural past. By assembling a framework of steel girders, architects and builders could suddenly create tall, slender buildings with a strong steel skeleton. The rest of the building's elements — the walls, floors, ceilings, and windows were suspended from the load-bearing steel. This new way of constructing buildings, so-called "***column-frame***" construction, pushed them up rather than out. Building design in major urban centers now placed a premium on vertical space. Like the flying buttress of the 14th century, the steel weight-bearing frame allowed not just for taller buildings, but much larger windows, which meant more daylight reaching interior spaces. Interior walls became thinner creating more usable floor space.

Because steel framing had no precedent, its use would rewrite the rules of design and

engineering of large buildings and along with them a new formal aesthetic. Architect Louis Sullivan's twelve-story *Prudential Building* in Buffalo New York is an early example of column framing. Built in 1894, its tall, sleek brick veneer walls, large windows and gently curved top pediment ushers in a new century with the modern style of the skyscraper.

For all of its new technology and design innovations, The *Prudential Building* still holds some forms from the past. A large arch hovers over the main entrance and the brick façade has extensive ornamentation.

Both photos: Louis Sullivan, *The Prudential Building (Also known as the Guaranty Building),* 1894, Buffalo, NY. Photo: Jack E. Boucher. Collection Historic American Buildings Survey, National Archives, Library of Congress.

Green Architecture

In the last decade there has emerged a strong interest in developing "green" architecture – designs that incorporate ecologically and environmentally sustainable practices in site preparation, materials, energy use and waste systems. Some are simple: buildings oriented to the south or west helps with passive solar heating. Others are more complex: Solar voltaic cells on the roof to generate power to the building. Green roofs are made of sod and other organic material and act as a cooling agent and recycle rainwater too. In addition, technological innovations in lighting, heating and cooling systems have made them more efficient.

A branch of the Seattle Public Library uses green design. A glass curtain wall on the north side makes use of natural lighting. Overhanging wooden roof beams shades harsh light. The whole structure is nestled under a green roof of sod and over 18,000 low water use plants. Seven skylights on the roof provide more natural lighting.

Above: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson Architects, *Ballard Branch*, Seattle Public Library. 2005. Image: Christopher Gildow.Used with permission.

"Green" roof, Ballard branch, Seattle Public Library, with skylights. Image: Christopher Gildow. Used with permission.

The California Academy of Sciences building in San Francisco harbors a living roof. Click on the hyperlink to view a short video and explore how it works.

The Jean Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center on the island of New Caledonia in the South Pacific captures the prevailing winds in sail-like structures that disperse it to the building's interior as passive ventilation. Architect Renzo Piano's design is influenced by the indigenous tribal culture of the island.

Architecture is an art form that reflects how we present ourselves across the earth's landscape, and, like other expressive mediums, it changes with styles, technologies and cultural adaptations. Architecture not only provides worldly needs of shelter, workspace and storage but also represents human ideals in buildings like courthouses and government buildings and manifestations of the spirit in churches and cathedrals. Traditional architecture has survived over thousands of years in one form or another, while contemporary design offers new approaches in how we use materials and technology to shape the look of our environment.

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Periods in Art History

Introduction

We now embark on studying art in historical context. Consider this statement by James W. Loewen about the importance of studying American history:

> Even when an event seems to be new, the causes of the acts and feelings are deeply embedded in the past. Thus, to understand an event—an election, an act of terror, a policy decision about the environment, whatever—we must start in the past (11).

In this sense, artwork can be taken to resemble a kind of event. To develop a deep understanding of art, we must consider it within the trajectory of history and within the most basic contexts—time and place. How is an artwork from one period of history an affirmation, rejection, or some more nuanced continuation of what came before it? Watch this video of a posthumous installation of a work by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Candies (Portrait of Ross in L.A.):

Watch this video online: https://youtu.be/37bSb-aQ4BM

Consider these questions as you work through this section: How do artworks build on what came before them? How is this installation by Gonzalez-Torres a product of the time in which it was created?

Understanding Dates

Circa, often abbreviated as *c. circ. or ca.* simply means approximately. You will often see this next to dates which are not known exactly.

(e.g. c. 1654 – 1672)

BCE and *CE* – You may have noticed these abbreviations used in this textbook. *BCE* stands for *BEFORE COMMON ERA* and *CE* stands for *COMMON ERA*.

These designations are alternatives to *BC (Before Christ)* and *AD (ANNO DOMINI "In the year of the Lord")*.

How to Read a Timeline:

You will notice in the timeline below that "0" marks the division between B.C./B.C.E. and A.D./C.E. All B.C./B.C.E. dates count back from "0", so for example, the date 2000 B.C.E is earlier in time than 1000 B.C.E. On the other hand, all A.D./C.E. dates count up from "0", so for example, the date 2000 C.E. is later in time than 1000 C.E.

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           <--------- B.C. or B.C.E.            A.D. or C.E. --------->

  <---|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---->

    2,000               1,000              0              1,000               2,000
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Chapter 14: The Stone Age

A significant discovery

Apollo 11 Cave Stones, Namibia, quartzite, c. 25,500–25,300 B.C.E. Image courtesy of State Museum of Namibia.

Approximately 25,000 years ago, in a rock shelter in the Huns Mountains of Namibia on the southwest coast of Africa (today part of the Ai-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park), an animal was drawn in charcoal on a hand-sized slab of stone. The stone was left behind, over time becoming buried on the floor of the cave by layers of sediment and debris until 1969 when a team led by German archaeologist W.E. Wendt excavated the rock shelter and found the first fragment (above, left). Wendt named the cave "Apollo 11" upon hearing on his shortwave radio of NASA's successful space mission to the moon. It was more than three years later however, after a subsequent excavation, when Wendt discovered the matching fragment (above, right), that archaeologists and art historians began to understand the significance of the find.

Location of the Huns Mountains of Namibia, © Map Data Google

In total seven stone fragments of brown-grey quartzite, some of them depicting traces of animal figures drawn in charcoal, ocher, and white, were found buried in a concentrated area of the cave floor less than two meters square. While it is not possible to learn the actual date of the fragments, it is possible to estimate when the rocks were buried by radiocarbon dating the archaeological layer in which they were found. Archaeologists estimate that the cave stones were buried between 25,500 and 25,300 years ago during the Middle Stone Age period in southern Africa making them, at the time of their discovery, the oldest dated art known on the African continent and among the earliest evidence of human artistic expression worldwide.
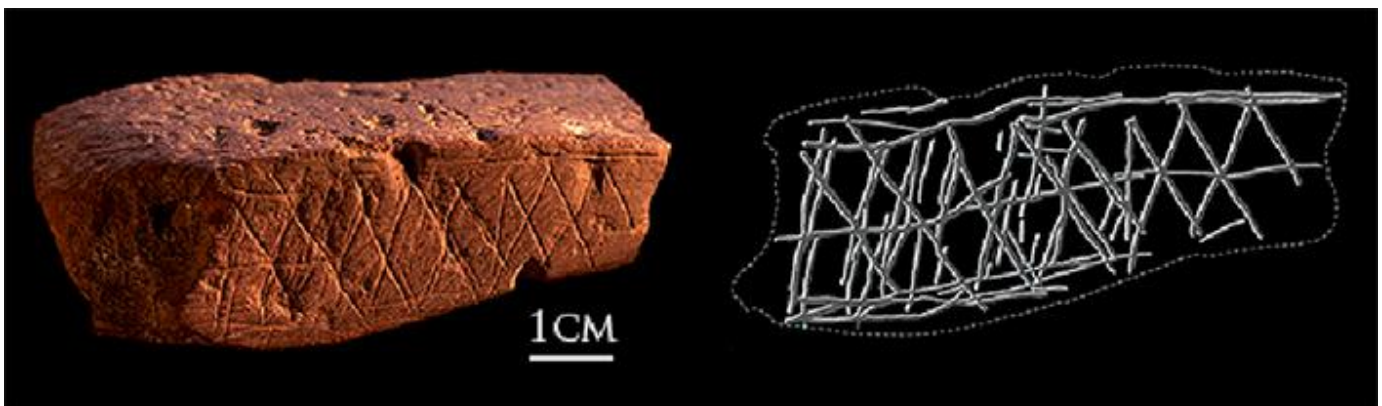
Incised ochre from Blombos Cave, South Africa. Photo by Chris. S. Henshilwood © Chris. S. Henshilwood

While more recent discoveries of much older human artistic endeavors have corrected our understanding (consider the 2008 discovery of a 100,000-year-old paint workshop in the Blombos Cave on the southern coast of Africa), the stones remain the oldest examples of figurative art from the African continent. Their discovery contributes to our conception of early humanity's creative attempts, before the invention of formal writing, to express their thoughts about the world around them.

The origins of art?

Genetic and fossil evidence tells us that Homo sapiens (anatomically modern humans who evolved from an earlier species of hominids) developed on the continent of Africa more than 100,000 years ago and spread throughout the world. But what we do not know—what we have only been able to assume—is that art too began in Africa. Is Africa, where humanity originated, home to the world's oldest art? If so, can we say that art began in Africa?

The global origins of art

In the Middle Stone Age period in southern Africa prehistoric man was a hunter-gatherer, moving from place to place in search of food and shelter. But this modern human also drew an animal form with charcoal—a form as much imagined as it was observed. This is what makes the Apollo 11 cave stones find so interesting: the stones offer evidence that Homo sapiens in the Middle Stone Age—us, some 25,000 years ago—were not only anatomically modern, but behaviorally modern as well. That is to say, these early humans possessed the new and unique capacity for modern symbolic thought, "the human capacity," long before what was previously understood.

The cave stones are what archaeologists term *art mobilier* —small-scale prehistoric art that is moveable. But mobile art, and rock art generally, is not unique to Africa. Rock art is a global phenomenon that can be found across the World—in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North and South America. While we cannot know for certain what these early humans intended by the things that they made, by focusing on art as the product of humanity's creativity and imagination we can begin to explore where, and hypothesize why, art began.

Prehistoric cave painting

The caves at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc (see the image below), Lascaux, Pech Merle, and Altamira contain the best known examples of prehistoric painting and drawing. Here are remarkably evocative renderings of animals and some humans that employ a complex mix of naturalism and abstraction. Archeologists that study Paleolithic (old stone age) era humans, believe that the paintings discovered in 1994, in the cave at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc in the Ardèche valley in France, are more than 30,000 years old. The images found at Lascaux and Altamira are more recent, dating to approximately 15,000 B.C.E. The paintings at Pech Merle date to both 25,000 and 15,000 B.C.E.

Replica of the painting from the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in southern France (Anthropos museum, Brno)

What can we really know about the creators of these paintings and what the images originally meant? These are questions that are difficult enough when we study art made only 500 years ago. It is much more perilous to assert meaning for the art of people who shared our anatomy but had not yet developed the cultures or linguistic structures that shaped who we have become. Do the tools of art history even apply? Here is evidence of a visual language that collapses the more than 1,000 generations that separate us, but we must be cautious. This is especially so if we want to understand the people that made this art as a way to understand ourselves. The desire to speculate based on what we see and the physical evidence of the caves is wildly seductive.

The cave at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc is over 1,000 feet in length with two large chambers. Carbon samples date the charcoal used to depict the two head-to-head Rhinoceroses (see the image above, bottom right) to between 30,340 and 32,410 years before 1995 when the samples were taken. The cave's drawings depict other large animals including horses, mammoths, musk ox, ibex, reindeer, aurochs, megaceros deer, panther, and owl (scholars note that these animals were not then a normal part of people's diet). Photographs show that the drawing shown above

is very carefully rendered but may be misleading. We see a group of horses, rhinos and bison and we see them as a group, overlapping and skewed in scale. But the photograph distorts the way these animal figures would have been originally seen. The bright electric lights used by the photographer create a broad flat scope of vision; how different to see each animal emerge from the dark under the flickering light cast by a flame.

In a 2009 presentation at UC San Diego, Dr. Randell White, Professor of Anthropology at NYU, suggested that the overlapping horses pictured above might represent the same horse over time, running, eating, sleeping, etc. Perhaps these are far more sophisticated representations than we have imagined. There is another drawing at Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc that cautions us against ready assumptions. It has been interpreted as depicting the thighs and genitals of a woman but there is also a drawing of a bison and a lion and the images are nearly intertwined. In addition to the drawings, the cave is littered with the skulls and bones of cave bear and the track of a wolf. There is also a footprint thought to have been made by an eight-year-old boy.

Venus of Willendorf

Venus of Willendorf, c. 24,000-22,000 B.C.E., limestone, 11.1 cm high (Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The artifact known as the *Venus of Willendorf* dates to between 24,000-22,000 B.C.E., making it one of the oldest and most famous surviving works of art. In the absence of writing, art historians rely on the objects themselves to learn about ancient peoples. The form of the *Venus of Willendorf*—that is, what it looks like—may very well inform what it originally meant. The most conspicuous elements of her anatomy are those that deal with the process of reproduction and child rearing. The artist took particular care to emphasize her breasts, which some scholars suggest indicates that she is able to nurse a child. The artist also brought deliberate attention to her pubic region. Traces of a pigment—red ochre—can still be seen on parts of the figurine.

In contrast, the sculptor placed scant attention on the non-reproductive parts of her body. This is particularly noticeable in the figure's limbs, where there is little emphasis placed on musculature or anatomical accuracy. We may infer from the small size of her feet that she was not meant to be free standing, and was either meant to be carried or placed lying down. The artist carved the figure's upper arms along her upper torso, and her lower arms are only barely visible resting upon the top of her breasts. As enigmatic as the lack of attention to her limbs is, the absence of attention to the face is even more striking. No eyes, nose, ears, or mouth remain visible. Instead, our attention is drawn to seven horizontal bands that wrap in concentric circles from the crown of her head. Some scholars have suggested her head is obscured by a knit cap pulled downward, others suggest that these forms may represent braided or beaded hair and that her face, perhaps once painted, is angled downward.

The *Venus of Willendorf* is only one example of dozens of paleolithic figures we believe may have been associated with fertility. Nevertheless, it retains a place of prominence within the history of human art.

The Neolithic Revolution

A Settled Life

When people think of the Neolithic era, they often think of Stonehenge, the iconic image of this early era. Dating to approximately 3000 B.C.E. and set on Salisbury Plain in England, it is a structure larger and more complex than anything built before it in Europe.

Stonehenge is an example of the cultural advances brought about by the Neolithic revolution—the most important development in human history. The way we live today, settled in homes, close to other people in towns and cities, protected by laws, eating food grown on farms, and with leisure time to learn, explore and invent is all a result of the Neolithic revolution, which occurred approximately 11,500-5,000 years ago. The revolution which led to our way of life was the development of the technology needed to plant and harvest crops and to domesticate animals.

Before the Neolithic revolution, it's likely you would have lived with your extended family as a nomad, never staying anywhere for more than a few months, always living in temporary shelters, always searching for food and never owning anything you couldn't easily pack in a pocket or a sack. The change to the Neolithic way of life was huge and led to many of the pleasures (lots of food, friends and a comfortable home) that we still enjoy today.

Stonehenge, c. 3,000 B.C.E., Salisbury Plain, England

Neolithic Art

The massive changes in the way people lived also changed the types of art they made. Neolithic sculpture became bigger, in part, because people didn't have to carry it around anymore; pottery became more widespread and was used to store food harvested from farms. This is when alcohol was invented and when architecture, and its interior and exterior decoration, first appears. In short, people settle down and begin to live in one place, year after year.

It seems very unlikely that Stonehenge could have been made by earlier, Paleolithic, nomads. It would have been a waste to invest so much time and energy building a monument in a place to which they might never return or might only return infrequently. After all, the effort to build it was extraordinary. Stonehenge is approximately 320 feet in circumference and the stones which compose the outer ring weigh as much as 50 tons; the small stones, weighing as much as 6 tons, were quarried from as far away as 450 miles. The use or meaning of Stonehenge is not clear, but the design, planning and execution could have only been carried out by a culture in which authority was unquestioned. Here is a culture that was able to rally hundreds of people to perform very hard work for extended periods of time. This is another characteristic of the Neolithic era.

Plastered Skulls

The Neolithic period is also important because it is when we first find good evidence for religious practice, a perpetual inspiration for the fine arts. Perhaps most fascinating are the plaster skulls found around the area of the Levant, at six sites, including Jericho in Israel. At this time in the Neolithic, c. 7000-6,000 B.C.E., people were often buried under the floors of homes, and in some cases their skulls were removed and covered with plaster in order to create very life-like faces, complete with shells inset for eyes and paint to imitate hair and moustaches.

Skulls with plaster and shell from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B, 6,000-7,000 B.C.E., found at the Yiftah'el archeological site in the Lower Galilee, Israel

The traditional interpretation of these skulls has been that they offered a means of preserving and worshiping male ancestors. However, recent research has shown that among the sixty-one plastered skulls that have been found, there is a generous number that come from the bodies of women and children. Perhaps the skulls are not so much religious objects, but rather powerful images made to aid in mourning lost loved ones. Neolithic peoples didn't have written language, so we may never know. The earliest example of writing develops in Sumer in Mesopotamia in the late 4th millennium B.C.E. However, there are scholars that believe that earlier proto-writing developed during the Neolithic period.

Çatalhöyük

The city of Çatalhöyük points to one of man's most important transformations, from nomad to settled farmer.

Çatalhöyük after the first excavations by James Mellaart and his team (photo: Omar hoftun, CC: BY-SA 3.0)

Çatalhöyük or Çatal Höyük (pronounced "cha-tal hay OOK") is not the oldest site of the Neolithic era or the largest, but it is extremely important to the beginning of art. Located near the modern city of Konya in south central Turkey, it was inhabited 9000 years ago by up to 8000 people who lived together in a large town. Çatalhöyük, across its history, witnesses the transition from exclusively hunting and gathering subsistence to increasing skill in plant and animal domestication. We might see Çatalhöyük as a site whose history is about one of man's most important transformations: from nomad to settler. It is also a site at which we see art, both painting and sculpture, appear to play a newly important role in the lives of settled people.

Çatalhöyük had no streets or foot paths; the houses were built right up against each other and the people who lived in them traveled over the town's rooftops and entered their homes through holes in the roofs, climbing down a ladder. Communal ovens were built above the homes of Çatalhöyük and we can assume group activities were performed in this elevated space as well.

Seated Woman of Çatalhöyük (head is a restoration), The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara, Turkey
(photo: Nevit Dilmen, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Many figurines have been found at the site, the most famous of which illustrates a large woman seated on or between two large felines. The figurines, which illustrate both humans and animals, are made from a variety of materials but the largest proportion are quite small and made of barely fired clay. These casual figurines are found most frequently in garbage pits, but also in oven walls, house walls, floors and left in abandoned structures. The figurines often show evidence of having been poked, scratched or broken, and it is generally believed that they functioned as wish tokens or to ward off bad spirits.

Neolithic Liangzhu culture

A group of Neolithic peoples grouped today as the Liangzhu culture lived in the Jiangsu province of China during the third millennium B.C.E. Their jades, ceramics and stone tools were highly sophisticated.

They used two distinct types of ritual jade objects: a disc, later known as a bi, and a tube, later

known as a cong. The main types of cong have a square outer section around a circular inner part, and a circular hole, though jades of a bracelet shape also display some of the characteristics of cong. They clearly had great significance, but despite the many theories the meaning and purpose of bi and cong remain a mystery. They were buried in large numbers: one tomb alone had 25 bi and 33 cong. Spectacular examples have been found at all the major archaeological sites.

Jade Cong, c. 2500 B.C.E., Liangzhu culture, 3.4 x 12.7 cm, China © 2003 Private Collection © Trustees of the British Museum

Jade disc, or bi, Liangzhu culture, c. 2500 B.C.E., 18 cm in diameter © Private Collection, © Trustees of the British Museum

Jade Cong, c. 2500 B.C.E., 49 cm high, China © Private Collection © Trustees of the British Museum

Video – Jade Cong, c. 2500 B.C.E., Liangzhu culture, Neolithic period, China (British Museum)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=25&v=ld8kHvz1yN4

Japan - Jōmon period (c. 10,500 – c. 300 B.C.E.)

The Jōmon period is Japan's Neolithic period. People obtained food by gathering, fishing, and hunting and often migrated to cooler or warmer areas as a result of shifts in climate. In Japanese, jōmon means "cord pattern," which refers to the technique of decorating Jōmon-period pottery.

As in most Neolithic cultures around the world, women made pots by hand. They would build vessels from the bottom up from coils of wet clay, mixed with other materials such as mica and crushed shells. The pots were then smoothed both inside and out and decorated with geometric patterns. The decoration was achieved by pressing cords on the malleable surface of the still moist clay body. Pots were left to dry completely before being fired at a low temperature (most likely, just reaching 900 degrees Celsius) in an outdoor fire pit.

"Flame-rimmed" deep bowl, Middle Jomon period (c. 3500–2500 B.C.E.), earthenware with cord-marked and incised decoration, 13 inches tall (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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Chapter 15: Ancient Near East

Home to some of the earliest and greatest empires, the Near East is often referred to as the cradle of civilization.

Map of the Ancient Near East (courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)

The Cradle of Civilization

Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (in modern day Iraq), is often referred to as the cradle of civilization because it is the first place where complex urban centers grew. The history of Mesopotamia, however, is inextricably tied to the greater region, which is comprised of the modern nations of Egypt, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, the Gulf states and Turkey. We often refer to this region as the Near or Middle East.

What's in a Name?

Why is this region named this way? What is it in the middle of or near to? It is the proximity of these countries to the West (to Europe) that led this area to be termed "the near east." Ancient Near Eastern Art has long been part of the history of Western art, but history didn't have to be written this way. It is largely because of the West's interests in the Biblical "Holy Land" that ancient Near Eastern materials have been regarded as part of the Western canon of the history of art. An interest in finding the locations of cities mentioned in the Bible (such as Nineveh and Babylon) inspired the original English and French 19th century archaeological expeditions to the Near East. These sites were discovered, and their excavations revealed to the world a style of art which had been lost.
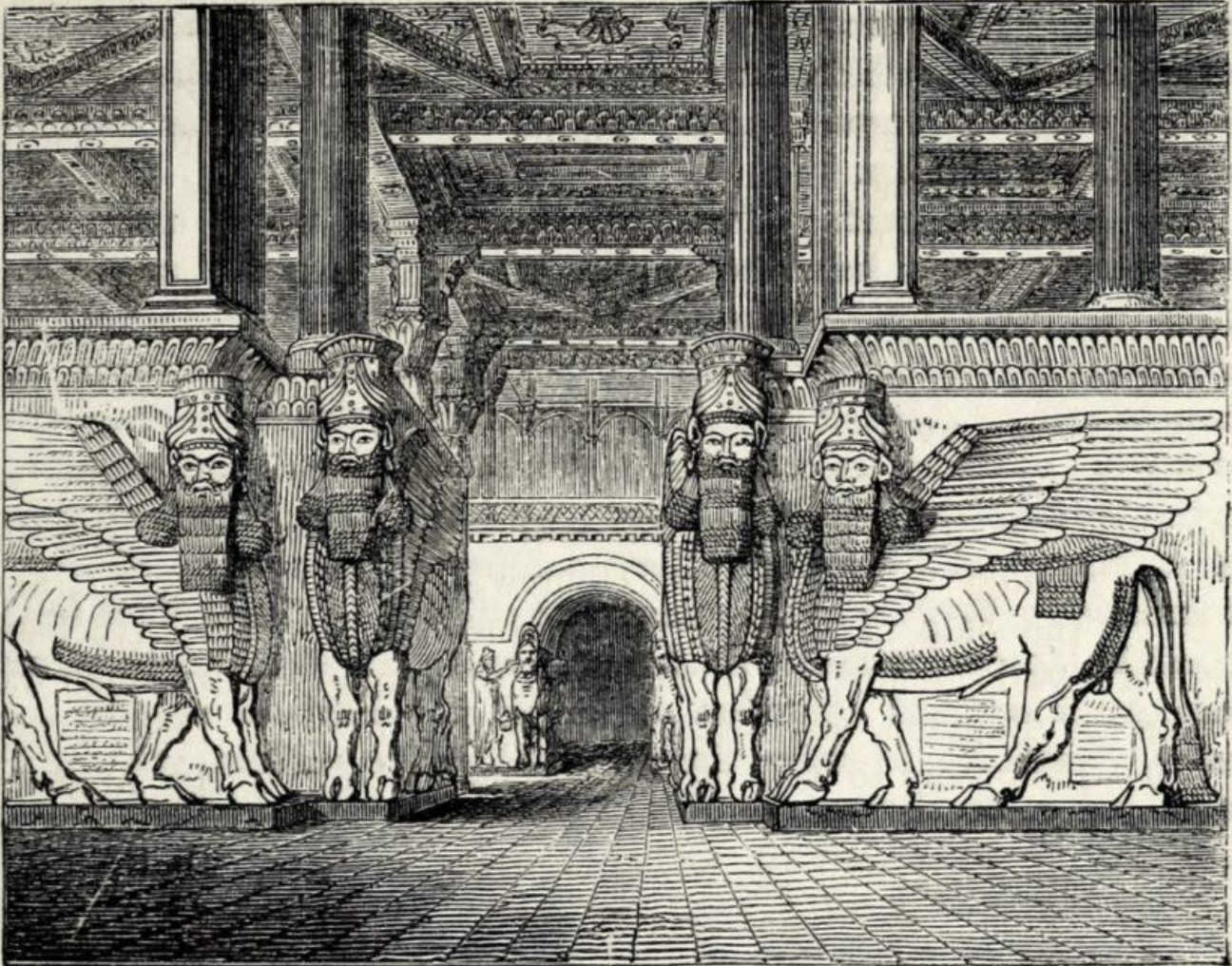
Entrance to Ninevah Court.

Entrance to Ninevah Court, Illustration from: Sir Austen Henry Layard, *The Ninevah Court in the Crystal Palace* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854), p. 39.

The excavations inspired *The Nineveh Court* at the 1851 World's Fair in London and a style of decorative art and architecture called Assyrian Revival. Ancient Near Eastern art remains popular today; in 2007 a 2.25 inch high, early 3rd millennium limestone sculpture, the *Guennol Lioness*, was sold for 57.2 million dollars, the second most expensive piece of sculpture sold at that time.

A Complex History

The history of the Ancient Near East is complex and the names of rulers and locations are often difficult to read, pronounce and spell. Moreover, this is a part of the world which today remains remote from the West culturally while political tensions have impeded mutual understanding. However, once you get a handle on the general geography of the area and its history, the art reveals itself as uniquely beautiful, intimate and fascinating in its complexity.

A fishing boat in the Euphrates Southern Iraq (photo: Aziz1005, CC BY 4.0)

Geography and the Growth of Cities

Mesopotamia remains a region of stark geographical contrasts: vast deserts rimmed by rugged mountain ranges, punctuated by lush oases. Flowing through this topography are rivers and it was the irrigation systems that drew off the water from these rivers, specifically in southern Mesopotamia, that provided the support for the very early urban centers here.

The region lacks stone (for building) and precious metals and timber. Historically, it has relied on the long-distance trade of its agricultural products to secure these materials. The large-scale irrigation systems and labor required for extensive farming was managed by a centralized authority. The early development of this authority, over large numbers of people in an urban center, is really what distinguishes Mesopotamia and gives it a special position in the history of Western culture. Here, for the first time, thanks to ample food and a strong administrative class, the West develops a very high level of craft specialization and artistic production.

Sumer

Sumer was home to some of the oldest known cities, supported by a focus on agriculture. The region of southern Mesopotamia is known as Sumer, and it is in Sumer that we find some of the oldest known cities, including Ur and Uruk.
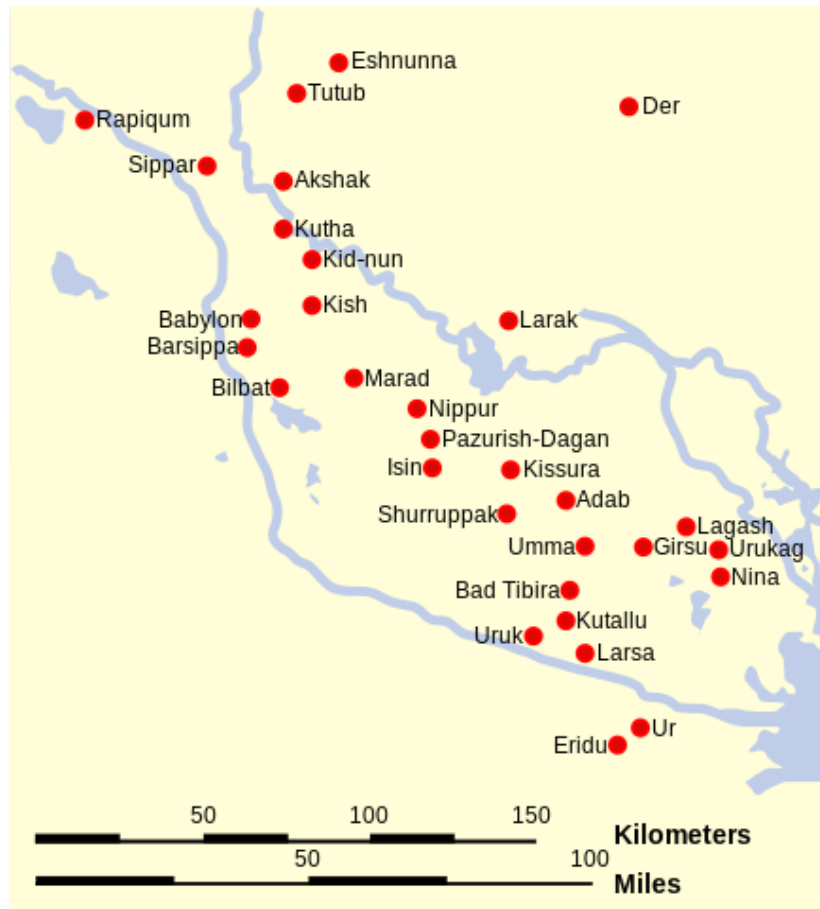
Cities of ancient Sumer, photo (CC BY 3.0)

Uruk

Uruk (modern Warka in Iraq)—where city life began more than five thousand years ago and where the first writing emerged—was clearly one of the most important places in southern Mesopotamia. Within Uruk, the greatest monument was the Anu Ziggurat on which the White Temple was built. Dating to the late 4th millennium B.C.E. (the Late Uruk Period, or Uruk III) and dedicated to the sky god Anu, this temple would have towered well above (approximately 40 feet) the flat plain of Uruk, and been visible from a great distance—even over the defensive walls of the city.

Archaeological site at Uruk (modern Warka) in Iraq (photo: SAC Andy Holmes (RAF)/MOD, Open Government Licence v1.0)

Ziggurats

A ziggurat is a built raised platform with four sloping sides—like a chopped-off pyramid. Ziggurats are made of mud-bricks—the building material of choice in the Near East, as stone is rare. Ziggurats were not only a visual focal point of the city, they were a symbolic one, as well—they were at the heart of the theocratic political system (a theocracy is a type of government where a god is recognized as the ruler, and the state officials operate on the god's behalf). So, seeing the ziggurat towering above the city, one made a visual connection to the god or goddess honored there, but also recognized that deity's political authority.
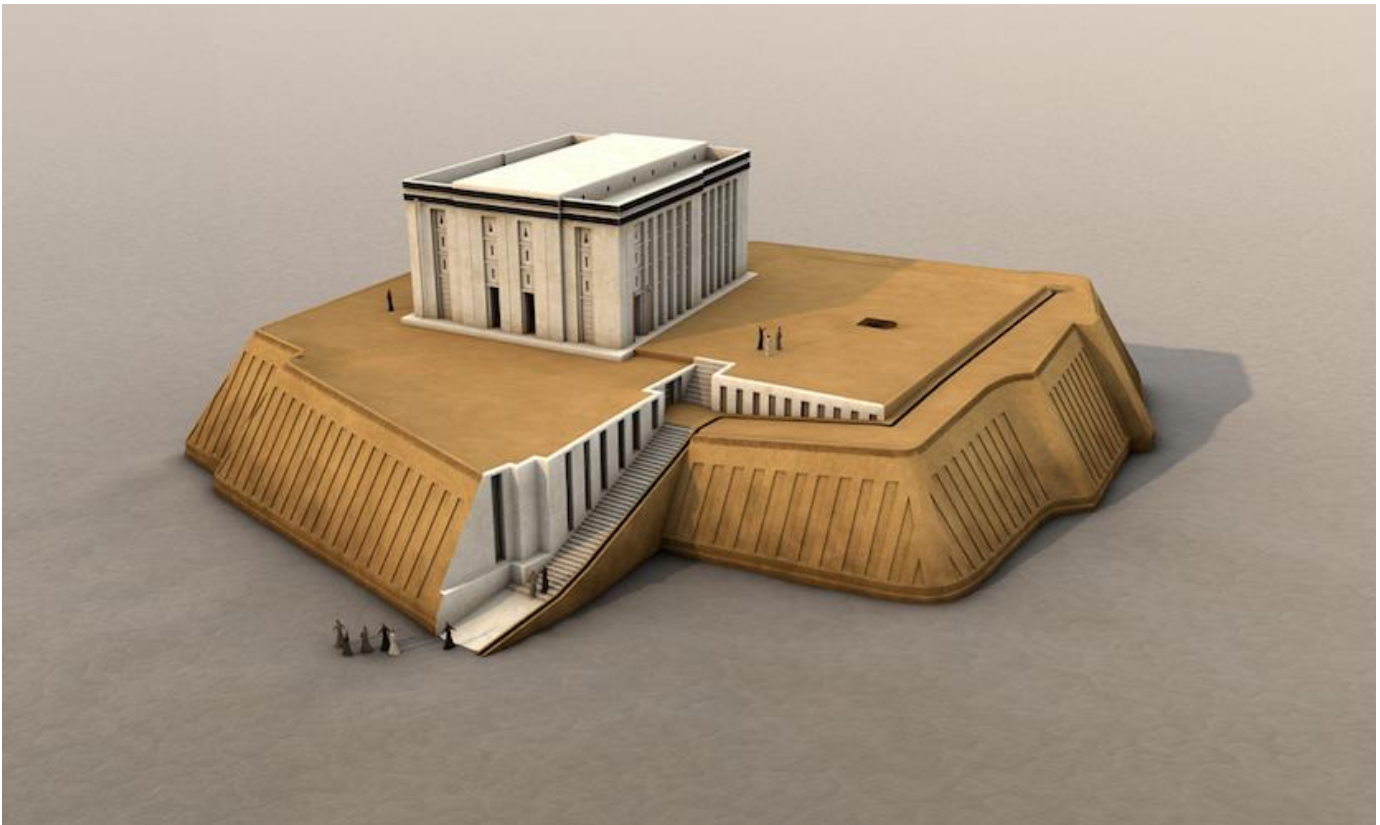
Digital reconstruction of the White Temple and ziggurat, Uruk (modern Warka), c. 3517-3358 B.C.E. © artefacts-berlin.de; scientific material: German Archaeological Institute

Excavators of the White Temple estimate that it would have taken 1500 laborers working on average ten hours per day for about five years to build the last major revetment (stone facing) of its massive underlying terrace (the open areas surrounding the White Temple at the top of the ziggurat). Although religious belief may have inspired participation in such a project, no doubt some sort of force (*corvée* labor—unpaid labor coerced by the state/slavery) was involved as well.

The sides of the ziggurat were very broad and sloping but broken up by recessed stripes or bands from top to bottom (see digital reconstruction, above), which would have made a stunning pattern in morning or afternoon sunlight. The only way up to the top of the ziggurat was via a steep stairway that led to a ramp that wrapped around the north end of the Ziggurat and brought one to the temple entrance. The flat top of the ziggurat was coated with bitumen (asphalt—a tar or pitch-like material similar to what is used for road paving) and overlaid with brick, for a firm and waterproof foundation for the White temple. The temple gets its name for the fact that it was entirely white washed inside and out, which would have given it a dazzling brightness in strong

sunlight.

Remains of the Anu Ziggurat, Uruk (modern Warka), c. 3517-3358 B.C.E. (photo: Geoff Emberling, by permission)

Akkad

Founded by the famed Sargon the Great, Akkad was a powerful military empire. Competition between Akkad in the north and Ur in the south created two centralized regional powers at the end of the third millennium (c. 2334–2193 B.C.E.).

This centralization was military in nature and the art of this period generally became more martial. The Akkadian Empire was begun by Sargon, a man from a lowly family who rose to power and founded the royal city of Akkad (Akkad has not yet been located, though one theory puts it under modern Baghdad).

Head of an Akkadian Ruler

This image of an unidentified Akkadian ruler (some say it is Sargon, but no one knows) is one of the most beautiful and terrifying images in all of Ancient Near Eastern art. The life-sized bronze head shows in sharp geometric clarity, locks of hair, curled lips and a wrinkled brow. Perhaps more awesome than the powerful and somber face of this ruler is the violent attack that mutilated it in antiquity.

Head of Akkadian Ruler, 2250-2200 B.C.E. (Iraqi Museum, Baghdad – looted?)

Ur

The kingdom of Akkad ends with internal strife and invasion by the Gutians from the Zagros mountains to the northeast. The Gutians were ousted in turn and the city of Ur, south of Uruk, became dominant. King Ur-Nammu established the third dynasty of Ur, also referred to as the Ur III period.

Ancient Persia

The heart of ancient Persia is in what is now southwest Iran, in the region called the Fars. In the second half of the 6th century B.C.E., the Persians (also called the Achaemenids) created an enormous empire reaching from the Indus Valley to Northern Greece and from Central Asia to Egypt.

A tolerant empire

Although the surviving literary sources on the Persian empire were written by ancient Greeks who were the sworn enemies of the Persians and highly contemptuous of them, the Persians were in fact quite tolerant and ruled a multi-ethnic empire. Persia was the first empire known to have acknowledged the different faiths, languages and political organizations of its subjects.
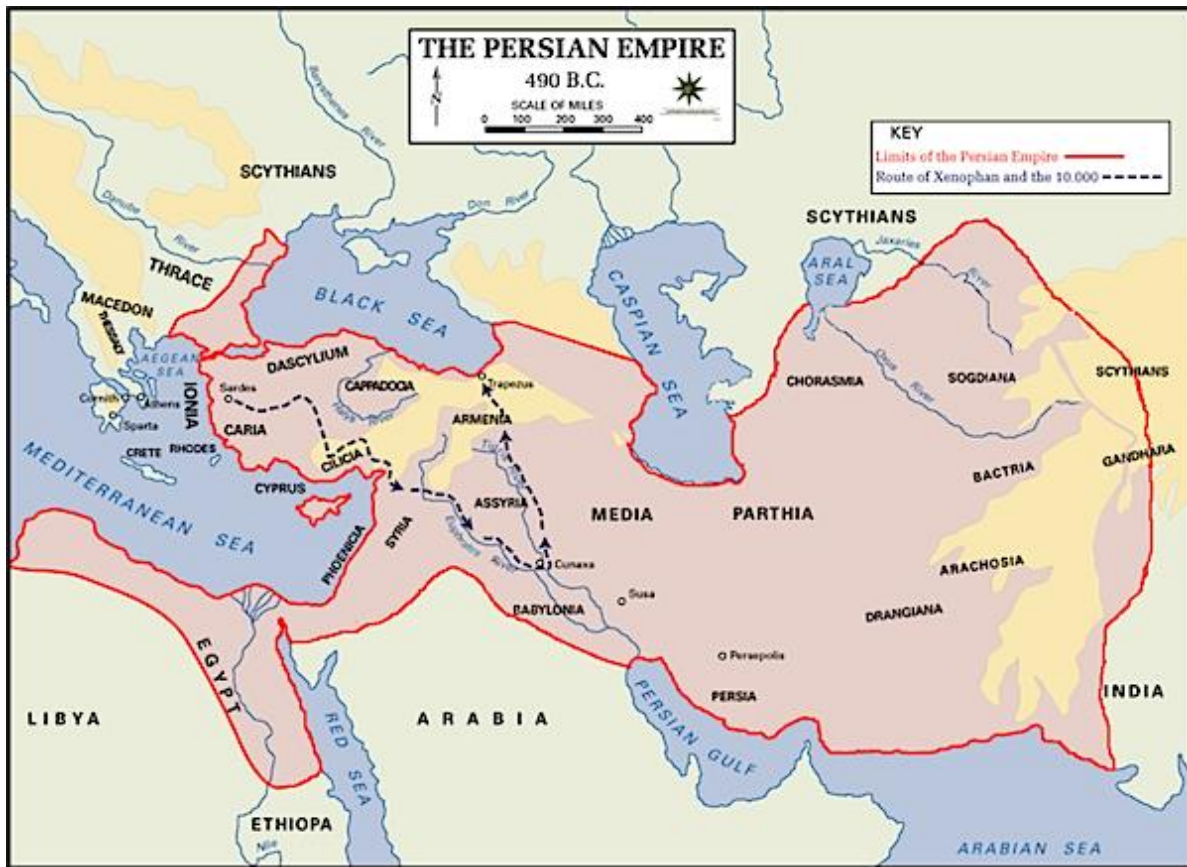
The Persian Empire, 490 B.C.E.

This tolerance for the cultures under Persian control carried over into administration. In the lands which they conquered, the Persians continued to use indigenous languages and administrative structures. For example, the Persians accepted hieroglyphic script written on papyrus in Egypt and traditional Babylonian record keeping in cuneiform in Mesopotamia. The Persians must have been very proud of this new approach to empire as can be seen in the representation of the many different peoples in the reliefs from Persepolis, a city founded by Darius the Great in the 6th century B.C.E.

The Apadana

Persepolis included a massive columned hall used for receptions by the Kings, called the Apadana. This hall contained 72 columns and two monumental stairways.

Assyrians with Rams, Apadana, Persepolis (photo: CC BY-SA 3.0)

The walls of the spaces and stairs leading up to the reception hall were carved with hundreds of figures, several of which illustrated subject peoples of various ethnicities, bringing tribute to the Persian king.

Conquered by Alexander the Great

The Persian Empire was, famously, conquered by Alexander the Great. Alexander no doubt was impressed by the Persian system of absorbing and retaining local language and traditions as he imitated this system himself in the vast lands he won in battle. Indeed, Alexander made a point of burying the last Persian emperor, Darius III, in a lavish and respectful way in the royal tombs near Persepolis. This enabled Alexander to claim title to the Persian throne and legitimize his control over the greatest empire of the Ancient Near East.

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Chapter 16: Ancient Africa

Humankind's origins and the beginnings of cultural expression may be traced to Africa. Recent discoveries in the southern tip of Africa provide remarkable evidence of the earliest stirrings of human creativity. Ocher plaques with engraved designs, made some 70,000 years ago, represent some of humankind's earliest attempts at visual expression. Although much remains to be learned about Africa's ancient civilizations through further archaeological research, such discoveries suggest tantalizing possibilities for rich insights into human as well as artistic evolution.

Rock paintings depicting domesticated animals provide artistic evidence of the existence of agricultural communities that developed in both the Sahara region and southern Africa by around 7000 B.C.E. As the Sahara began to dry up, sometime before 3000 B.C.E., these farming communities moved away. In the north, this led to the emergence of art-producing civilizations based along the Nile, the world's longest river. Egypt, one of the world's earliest nation-states, was unified as a kingdom by 3100 B.C.E. Further south along the Nile, one of the earliest of the Nubian kingdoms was centered at Kerma in present-day Sudan and dominated trade networks linking central Africa to Egypt for almost one thousand years beginning around 2500 B.C.E.

A corpus of sophisticated terracotta sculptures found over a broad geographic area in present-day Nigeria provides the earliest evidence of a settled community with ironworking technology south of the Sahara. The artistic creations of this culture are referred to as Nok, after the village where the first terracotta was discovered, and date to 500 B.C.E. to 200 C.E., a period of time coinciding with ancient Greek civilization. Although Nok terracottas continue to be unearthed, no organized excavations have been undertaken and little is known about the culture that produced these sculptures.

Terracotta heads, buried around 500 C.E., have also been found in north eastern South Africa. These important ancient artistic traditions are underrepresented in Western museums today, including the Metropolitan, due to restrictions regarding the export of archaeological materials.

The first millennium C.E. witnessed the urbanization of a number of societies just south of the Sahara, in the broad stretch of savanna referred to as the western Sudan.

The strategic location of the Inland Niger Delta, lying in a fertile region between the Bani and Niger rivers, contributed to its emergence as an economic and cultural force in the area. Excavations there at the site of Jenne- jeno ("Old Jenne," also known as Djenne-jeno) suggest the presence of an urban center populated as early as 2,000 years ago. The city continued to thrive for many centuries, becoming an important crossroads of a trans-Saharan trading network. Terracotta figures and fragments unearthed in the region reveal the rich sculptural heritage of a sophisticated urban culture (see the *Seated Figure*, above).

Ancient Egypt

Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, Old Kingdom, c. 2675-2625 B.C.E. Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert

Egypt's impact on later cultures was immense. You could say that Egypt provided the building blocks for Greek and Roman culture, and, through them, influenced all of the Western tradition. Today, Egyptian imagery, concepts, and perspectives are found everywhere; you will find them in architectural forms, on money, and in our day to day lives. Many cosmetic surgeons, for example, use the silhouette of Queen Nefertiti (whose name means "the beautiful one has come") in their advertisements.

Longevity

Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for more than 3000 years and showed an incredible amount

of continuity. That is more than 15 times the age of the United States and consider how often our culture shifts; less than 10 years ago, there was no Facebook, Twitter, or Youtube.

While today we consider the Greco-Roman period to be in the distant past, it should be noted that Cleopatra VII's reign (which ended in 30 BCE) is closer to our own time than it was to that of the construction of the pyramids of Giza. It took humans nearly 4000 years to build something–anything–taller than the Great Pyramids. Contrast that span to the modern era; we get excited when a record lasts longer than a decade.

Consistency and Stability

Egypt's stability is in stark contrast to the Ancient Near East of the same period, which endured an overlapping series of cultures and upheavals with amazing regularity.

The earliest royal monuments, such as the Narmer Palette carved around 3100 B.C.E., display identical royal costumes and poses as those seen on later rulers, even Ptolemaic kings on their temples 3000 years later.

Palette of Narmer, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E. (left) and Ramses III smiting at Medinet Habu (1160 B.C.E.) (right)

A vast amount of Egyptian imagery, especially royal imagery that was governed by decorum (a sense of what was 'appropriate'), remained remarkably consistent throughout its history. This is why, especially to the untrained eye, their art appears extremely static—and in terms of symbols, gestures, and the way the body is rendered, it was. It was intentional. The Egyptians were aware of their consistency, which they viewed as stability, divine balance, and clear evidence of the correctness of their culture.

This consistency was closely related to a fundamental belief that depictions had an impact beyond the image itself—tomb scenes of the deceased receiving food, or temple scenes of the king performing perfect rituals for the gods—were functionally causing those things to occur in the divine realm. If the image of the bread loaf was omitted from the deceased's table, they had no bread in the Afterlife; if the king was depicted with the incorrect ritual implement, the ritual was incorrect and this could have dire consequences. This belief led to an active resistance to change in codified depictions.

Geography

Egypt is a land of duality and cycles, both in topography and culture. The geography is almost entirely rugged, barren desert, except for an explosion of green that straddles either side of the

Nile as it flows the length of the country. The river emerges from far to the south, deep in Africa, and empties into the Mediterranean Sea in the north after spreading from a single channel into a fan-shaped system, known as a delta, at its northernmost section.

The influence of this river on Egyptian culture and development cannot be overstated—without its presence, the civilization would have been entirely different, and most likely entirely elsewhere. The Nile provided not only a constant source of life-giving water but created the fertile lands that fed the growth of this unique (and uniquely resilient) culture.

View from the high peak of the Theban hills showing the sharp delineation between the lush Valley and the barren desert. Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Each year, fed by melting snows in the far-off headlands, the river overflowed its banks in an annual flood that covered the ground with a rich, black silt and produced incredibly fertile fields. The Egyptians referred to this as *Kemet*, the "black lands", and contrasted this dense, dark soil against the *Deshret*, the "red lands" of the sterile desert; the line between these zones was (and in most cases still is) a literal line. The visual effect is stark, appearing almost artificial in its precision.

Early Development: The Predynastic Period

The civilization of Egypt obviously did not spring fully formed from the Nile mud; although the massive pyramids at Giza may appear to the uninitiated to have appeared out of nowhere, they were founded on thousands of years of cultural and technological development and experimentation. 'Dynastic' Egypt—sometimes referred to as 'Pharaonic' (after 'pharaoh', the Greek title of the Egyptian kings derived from the Egyptian title *per aA*, 'Great House') which was the time when the country was largely unified under a single ruler, begins around 3100 B.C.E.

The period before this, lasting from about 5000 B.C.E. until unification, is referred to as Predynastic by modern scholars. Prior to this were thriving Paleolithic and Neolithic groups, stretching back hundreds of thousands of years, descended from northward migrating homo

erectus who settled along the Nile Valley. During the Predynastic period, ceramics, figurines, mace heads, and other artifacts such as slate palettes used for grinding pigments, begin to appear, as does imagery that will become iconic during the Pharaonic era—we can see the first hints of what is to come.

Dynasties

It is important to recognize that the dynastic divisions modern scholars use were not used by the ancients themselves. These divisions were created in the first Western-style history of Egypt, written by an Egyptian priest named Manetho in the 3rd century BCE. Each of the 33 dynasties included a series of rulers usually related by kinship or the location of their seat of power. Egyptian history is also divided into larger chunks, known as 'kingdoms' and 'periods', to distinguish times of strength and unity from those of change, foreign rule, or disunity.

Period	Dates
Old Kingdom (the 'pyramid age')	c. 2649 – 2150 B.C.E.
First Intermediate Period	c. 2150 – 2030 B.C.E.
Middle Kingdom	c. 2030 – 1640 B.C.E.
Second Intermediate Period (Northern Delta region ruled by Asiatics)	c. 1640 – 1540 B.C.E.
New Kingdom	c. 1550 – 1070 B.C.E.
Third Intermediate Period	c. 1070 – 713 B.C.E.
Late Period (a series from foreign dynasties, including Nubian, Libyan and Persian rulers)	c. 712 – 332 B.C.E.
Ptolemaic Period (ruled by Greco-Romans)	c. 332-30 B.C.E.

The Pharaoh—Not Just a King

Kings in Egypt were complex intermediaries that straddled the terrestrial and divine realms. They were, obviously, living humans, but upon accession to the throne, they also embodied the eternal office of kingship itself. The ka, or spirit, of kingship was often depicted as a separate entity standing behind the human ruler. This divine aspect of the office of kingship was what gave authority to the human ruler.The living king was associated with the god Horus, the powerful, virile falcon-headed god who was believed to bestow the throne to the first human king.
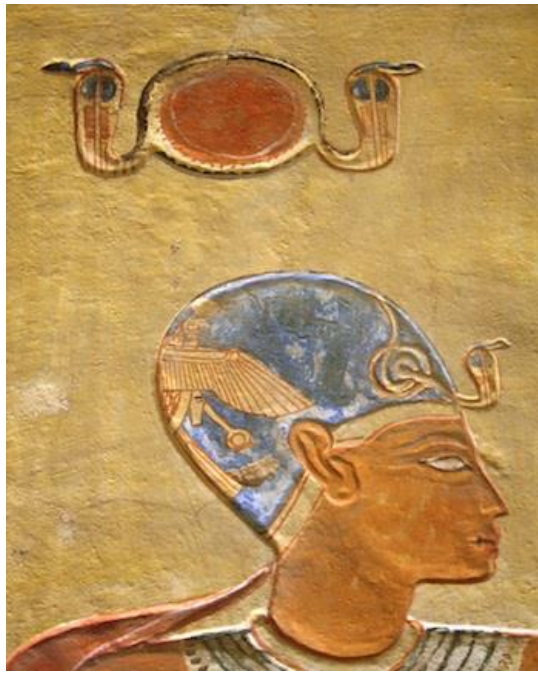
Horus is regularly shown guarding and guiding the living ruler; as in this image of a falcon (Horus) wrapped behind the head of Ramses III in the tomb of Khaemwaset (above). Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Horus's immensely important father, Osiris, was the lord of the underworld. One of the original divine rulers of Egypt, this deity embodied the promise of regeneration. Cruelly murdered by his brother Seth, the god of the chaotic desert, Osiris was revived through the potent magic of his wife Isis. Through her knowledge and skill, Osiris was able to sire the miraculous Horus, who avenged his father and threw his criminal uncle off the throne to take his rightful place.

Osiris (above; from QV44 in the Valley of the Queens). Photo: Dr Amy Calvert, CC BY-NC

Osiris became ruler of the realm of the dead, the eternal source of regeneration in the Afterlife. Deceased kings were identified with this god, creating a cycle where the dead king fused with the divine king of the dead and his successor 'defeated' death to take his place on the throne as Horus.

The Great Pyramids of Giza

One of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world

The last remaining of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the great pyramids of Giza are perhaps the most famous and discussed structures in history. These massive monuments were unsurpassed in height for thousands of years after their construction and continue to amaze and enthrall us with their overwhelming mass and seemingly impossible perfection. Their exacting orientation and mind-boggling construction has elicited many theories about their origins, including unsupported suggestions that they had extra-terrestrial impetus. However, by examining the several hundred years prior to their emergence on the Giza plateau, it becomes clear that these incredible structures were the result of many experiments, some more successful than others, and represent an apogee in the development of the royal mortuary complex.

Pyramid of Khafre (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Three pyramids, three rulers

The three primary pyramids on the Giza plateau were built over the span of three generations by the rulers Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. Each pyramid was part of a royal mortuary complex that also included a temple at its base and a long stone causeway (some nearly 1 kilometer in length)

leading east from the plateau to a valley temple on the edge of the floodplain.

View up the causeway from Khafre's valley temple towards his pyramid (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Other (smaller) pyramids, and small tombs

In addition to these major structures, several smaller pyramids belonging to queens are arranged as satellites. A major cemetery of smaller tombs, known as mastabas (Arabic for 'bench' in reference to their shape—flat-roofed, rectangular, with sloping sides), fills the area to the east and west of the pyramid of Khufu and were constructed in a grid-like pattern for prominent members of the court. Being buried near the pharaoh was a great honor and helped ensure a prized place in the afterlife.
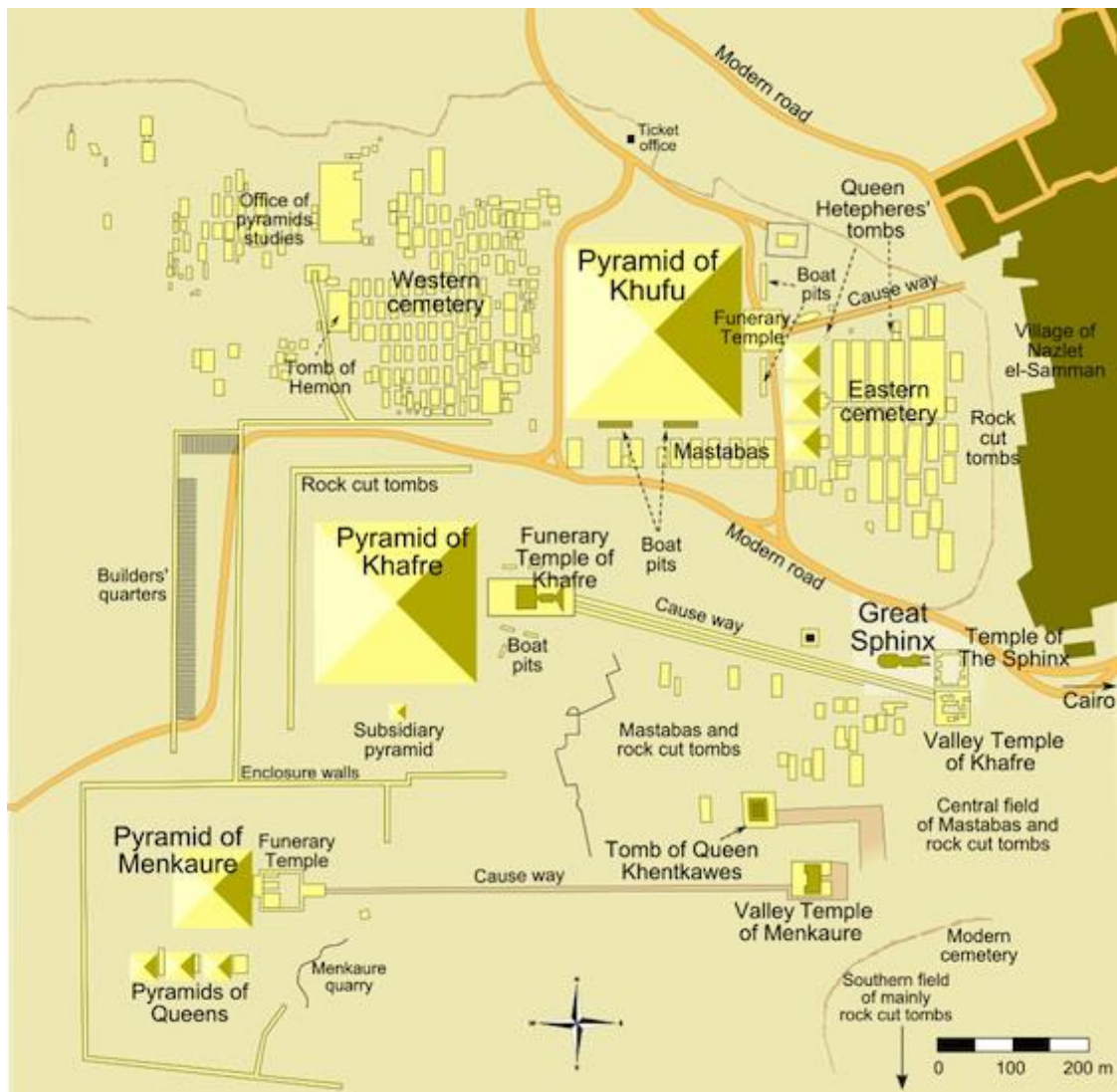
Giza Pyramid Complex

Tutankhamun

Tutankhamun was only the age of nine when he became king of Egypt during the 18th dynasty of the New Kingdom (c. 1332–1323 B.C.E.). His story would have been lost to history if it were not for the discovery of his tomb in 1922 by the archaeologist Howard Carter in the Valley of the Kings. His nearly intact tomb held a wealth of objects that give us unique insights into this period of ancient Egyptian history

Death Mask from innermost coffin, Tutankhamun's tomb, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, c. 1323 B.C.E., gold with inlay of enamel and semiprecious stones (Egyptian Museum, Cairo) (photo Bjørn Christian Tørrissen, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The death mask of Tutankhamun

The death mask (above) is considered one of the masterpieces of Egyptian art. It originally rested directly on the shoulders of the mummy inside the innermost gold coffin. It is constructed of two sheets of gold that were hammered together and weighs 22.5 pounds (10.23 kg). Tutankhamen is depicted wearing the striped nemes headdress (the striped head-cloth typically worn by pharaohs in ancient Egypt) with the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet depicted again protecting his brow. He also wears a false beard that further connects him to the image of a god as with the inner coffin. He wears a broad collar, which ends in terminals shaped as falcon heads. The back of the mask is covered with Spell 151b from the Book of the Dead, which the Egyptians used as a road map for the afterlife. This particular spell protects the various limbs of Tutankhamun as he moves into the underworld.

The kingdom of Aksum

One of the four greatest powers in the world

Aksum was the name of a city and a kingdom which is essentially modern-day northern Ethiopia (Tigray province) and Eritrea. Research shows that Aksum was a major naval and trading power from the 1st to the 7th centuries C.E. As a civilization it had a profound impact upon the people of Egypt, southern Arabia, Europe and Asia, all of whom were visitors to its shores, and in some cases were residents.

Aksum developed a civilization and empire whose influence, at its height in the 4th and 5th centuries C.E., extended throughout the regions lying south of the Roman Empire, from the fringes of the Sahara in the west, across the Red Sea to the inner Arabian desert in the east. The Aksumites developed Africa's only indigenous written script, Ge'ez. They traded with Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, and Arabia.

Despite its power and reputation—it was described by a Persian writer as one of the four greatest powers in the world at the time—very little is known about Aksum. Written scripts existed, but no histories or descriptions have been found to make this African civilization come alive.

Aksum provides a counterpoint to the Greek and Roman worlds and is an interesting example of

a sub-Saharan civilization flourishing towards the end of the period of the great Mediterranean empires. It provides a link between the trading systems of the Mediterranean and the Asiatic world and shows the extent of international commerce at that time. It holds the fascination of being a "lost" civilization, yet one that was African, Christian, with its own script, coinage, and international reputation. It was arguably as advanced as the Western European societies of the time.

Aksumite Stelae
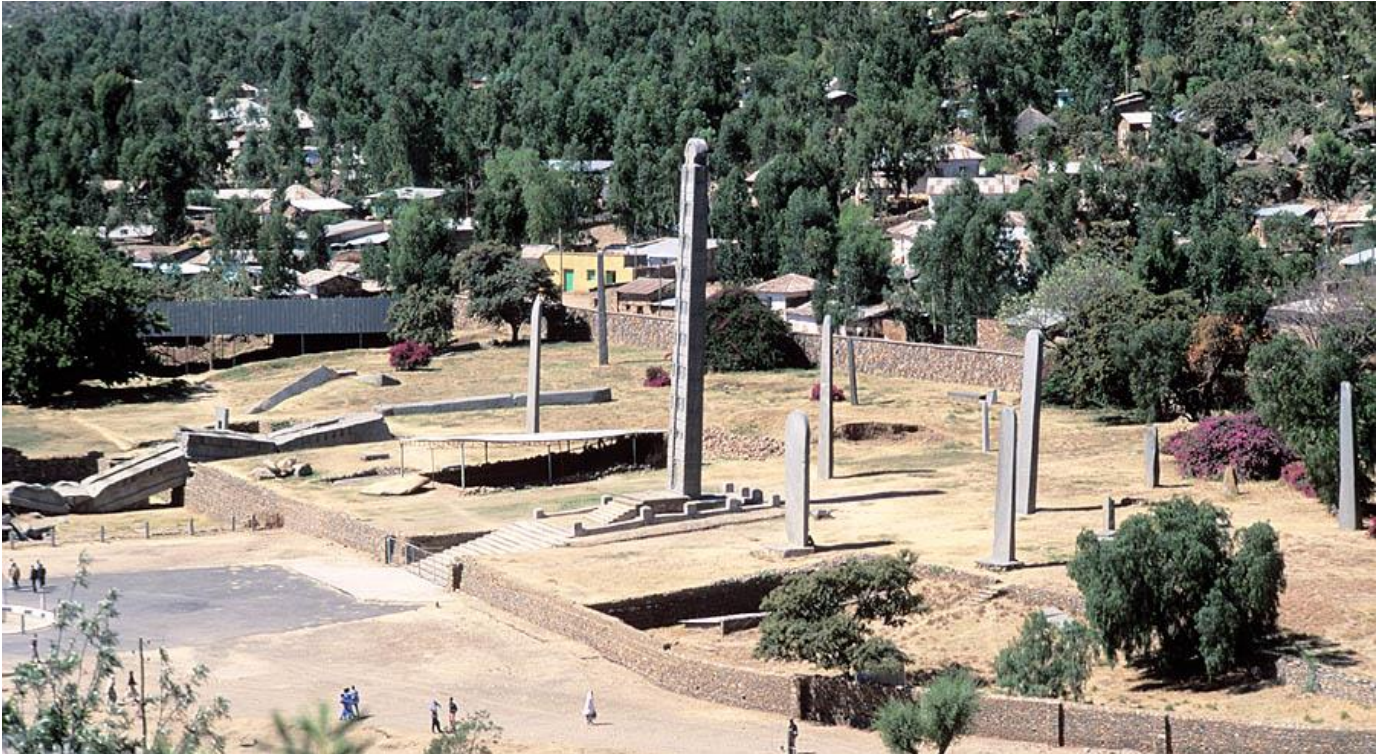
The Northern Stelae Park in Axum, Ethiopia with the King Ezana's Stele at the centre and the Great Stele lying broken. (photo Jialiang Gao CC BY-SA 3.0)

The ruins of the ancient Aksumite Civilization covered a wide area in the Tigray Plateau. The most impressive monuments are the monolithic obelisks, royal tombs and the palace ruins dating to the 6th and 7th centuries AD.

Several stelae survive in the town of Aksum dating between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The largest standing obelisk rises to a height of over 23 meters and is exquisitely carved to represent a nine-story building of the Aksumites. It stands at the entrance of the main stelae area. The largest obelisk of some 33 meters long lies where it fell, perhaps during the process of erection. It is possibly the largest monolithic stele that ancient human beings ever attempted to erect.

The Rome Stele (known also as the Aksum Obelisk) in Aksum (Tigray Region, Ethiopia). (photo Ondřej Žváček CC BY 2.5)

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Chapter 17: Ancient Mediterranean

Ancient Greece

A shared language, religion, and culture

Ancient Greece can feel strangely familiar. From the exploits of Achilles and Odysseus, to the treatises of Aristotle, from the exacting measurements of the Parthenon to the rhythmic chaos of the Laocoön (image below), ancient Greek culture has shaped our world. Thanks largely to notable archaeological sites, well-known literary sources, and the impact of Hollywood (Clash of the Titans, for example), this civilization is embedded in our collective consciousness—prompting visions of epic battles, erudite philosophers, gleaming white temples, and limbless nudes (we now know the sculptures—even the ones that decorated temples like the Parthenon—were brightly painted, and, of course, the fact that the figures are often missing limbs is the result of the ravages of time).

Athanadoros, Hagesandros, and Polydoros of Rhodes, Laocoön and his Sons, early first century C.E., marble, 7'10-1/2″ high (Vatican Museums)

Dispersed around the Mediterranean and divided into self-governing units called *poleis* or *city-states*, the ancient Greeks were united by a shared language, religion, and culture. Strengthening these bonds further were the so-called "Panhellenic" sanctuaries and festivals that embraced "all Greeks" and encouraged interaction, competition, and exchange (for example the Olympics, which were held at the Panhellenic sanctuary at Olympia). Although popular modern understanding of the ancient Greek world is based on the classical art of fifth century B.C.E. Athens, it is important to recognize that Greek civilization was vast and did not develop overnight.

The Dark Ages (c. 1100 – c. 800 B.C.E.) to the Orientalizing Period (c. 700 – 600 B.C.E.)

Following the collapse of the Mycenaean citadels of the late Bronze Age, the Greek mainland was traditionally thought to enter a "Dark Age" that lasted from c. 1100 until c. 800 B.C.E. Not only did the complex socio-cultural system of the Mycenaeans disappear, but also its numerous achievements (i.e., metalworking, large-scale construction, writing). The discovery and continuous excavation of a site known as Lefkandi, however, drastically alters this impression. Located just north of Athens, Lefkandi has yielded an immense apsidal structure (almost fifty meters long), a massive network of graves, and two heroic burials replete with gold objects and valuable horse sacrifices. One of the most interesting artifacts, ritually buried in two separate graves, is a centaur figurine (see photos below). At fourteen inches high, the terracotta creature is composed of an equine (horse) torso made on a potter's wheel and hand-formed human limbs and features. Alluding to mythology and perhaps a particular story, this centaur embodies the cultural richness of this period.

Centaur, c. 900 B.C.E. (Proto-Geometric period), terracotta, 14 inches high, the head was found in tomb 1 and the body was found in tomb 3 in the cemetery of Toumba, Lefkandi, Greece (detail of head photo: Dan Diffendale CC BY-NC-SA 2)

Similar in its adoption of narrative elements is a vase-painting likely from Thebes dating to c. 730 B.C.E. (see image below). Fully ensconced in the Geometric Period (c. 800-700 B.C.E.), the imagery on the vase reflects other eighth-century artifacts, such as the Dipylon Amphora, with its geometric patterning and silhouetted human forms. Though simplistic, the overall scene on this vase seems to record a story. A man and woman stand beside a ship outfitted with tiers of rowers. Grasping at the stern and lifting one leg into the hull, the man turns back towards the female and takes her by the wrist. Is the couple Theseus and Ariadne? Is this an abduction? Perhaps Paris and Helen? Or, is the man bidding farewell to the woman and embarking on a journey as had Odysseus and Penelope? The answer is unattainable.

Late Geometric Attic spouted krater (vessel for mixing water and wine), possibly from Thebes, c. 730 B.C.E., 30.5 cm high (The British Museum, London), photo: Egisto Sani CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

In the Orientalizing Period (700-600 B.C.E.), alongside Near Eastern motifs and animal processions, craftsmen produced more nuanced figural forms and intelligible illustrations. For example, terracotta painted plaques from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon (c. 625 B.C.E.) are some of the earliest evidence for architectural decoration in Iron Age Greece. Once ornamenting the surface of this Doric temple (most likely as metopes), the extant panels have preserved various imagery (watch this video to learn about the Doric order). On one plaque (see image below), a male youth strides towards the right and carries a significant attribute under his right arm—the severed head of the Gorgon Medusa (her face is visible between the right hand and right hip of the striding figure). Not only is the painter successful here in relaying a particular story, but also the figure of Perseus shows great advancement from the previous century. The limbs are fleshy, the facial features are recognizable, and the hat and winged boots appropriately equip the hero for fast travel.
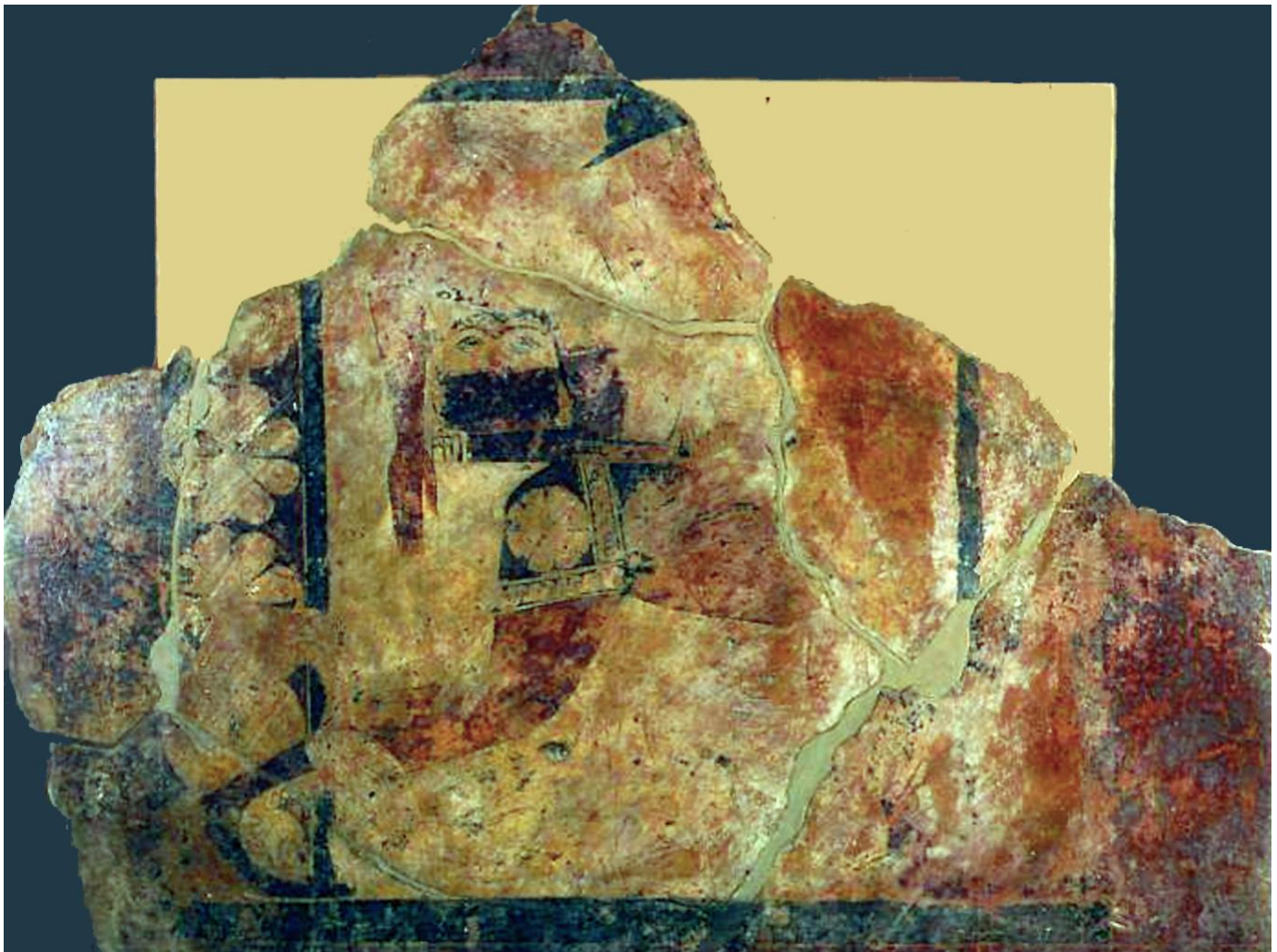
Fragment showing Perseus with the head of Medusa likely from a metope from the Temple of Apollo at Thermon, c. 630 B.C.E., painted terracotta, 87.8 cm high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

The Archaic Period (c. 600-480/479 B.C.E.)

While Greek artisans continued to develop their individual crafts, storytelling ability, and more realistic portrayals of human figures throughout the Archaic Period, the city of Athens witnessed the rise and fall of tyrants and the introduction of democracy by the statesman Kleisthenes in the years 508 and 507 B.C.E.

Visually, the period is known for large-scale marble kouros (male youth) and kore (female youth) sculptures (see below). Showing the influence of ancient Egyptian sculpture (like this example of the Pharaoh Menkaure and his wife in the MFA, Boston), the kouros stands rigidly with both arms extended at the side and one leg advanced. Frequently employed as grave markers, these sculptural types displayed unabashed nudity, highlighting their complicated hairstyles and abstracted musculature (below left). The kore, on the other hand, was never nude. Not only was her form draped in layers of fabric, but she was also ornamented with jewelry and adorned with a crown. Though some have been discovered in funerary contexts, like *Phrasiklea* (below right), a vast majority were found on the Acropolis in Athens (for the Acropolis korai, click here). Ritualistically buried following desecration of this sanctuary by the Persians in 480 and 479 B.C.E., dozens of korai were unearthed alongside other dedicatory artifacts. While the identities of these figures have been hotly debated in recent times, most agree that they were originally intended as votive offerings to the goddess Athena.

Left: Anavysos (Kroisos) Kouros, c. 530 B.C.E., marble, 6′ 4″ (National Archaeological Museum, Athens), photo: Steven Zucker Right: Aristion of Paros, Phrasikleia Kore, c. 550 – 540 B.C.E. Parian marble with traces of pigment, 211 cm high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens), photo: Asaf Braverman CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

The Classical Period (480/479-323 B.C.E.)

Though experimentation in realistic movement began before the end of the Archaic Period, it was not until the Classical Period that two- and three-dimensional forms achieved proportions and postures that were naturalistic. The "Early Classical Period" (480/479 – 450 B.C.E., also known as the "Severe Style") was a period of transition when some sculptural work displayed archaizing holdovers. As can be seen in the Kritios Boy, c. 480 B.C.E., the "Severe Style" features realistic anatomy, serious expressions, pouty lips, and thick eyelids. For painters, the development of perspective and multiple ground lines enriched compositions, as can be seen on the Niobid Painter's vase in the Louvre (image below).

Niobid Painter, Niobid Krater, Attic red-figure calyx-krater, c. 460-50 B.C.E., 54 x 56 cm (Musée du Louvre, Paris)

During the "High Classical Period" (450-400 B.C.E.), there was great artistic success: from the innovative structures on the Acropolis to Polykleitos' visual and cerebral manifestation of idealization in his sculpture of a young man holding a spear, the Doryphoros or "Canon" (image below). Concurrently, however, Athens, Sparta, and their mutual allies were embroiled in the Peloponnesian War, a bitter conflict that lasted for several decades and ended in 404 B.C.E. Despite continued military activity throughout the "Late Classical Period" (400-323 B.C.E.), artistic production and development continued apace. In addition to a new figural aesthetic in the fourth century known for its longer torsos and limbs, and smaller heads (for example, the Apoxyomenos), the first female nude was produced. Known as the *Aphrodite of Knidos*, c. 350 B.C.E., the sculpture pivots at the shoulders and hips into an S-Curve and stands with her right hand over her genitals in a *pudica* (or modest Venus) pose (see a Roman copy in the Capitoline Museum in Rome here). Exhibited in a circular temple and visible from all sides, the Aphrodite of Knidos became one of the most celebrated sculptures in all of antiquity.

Polykleitos, *Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer)* or The Canon, c. 450-40 B.C.E., ancient Roman marble copy found in Pompeii of the lost bronze original, 211 cm (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli)

The Hellenistic Period and Beyond (323 B.C.E. – 31 B.C.E.)

Following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E., the Greeks and their influence stretched as far east as modern India. While some pieces intentionally mimicked the Classical style of the previous period such as Eutychides' Tyche of Antioche (Louvre), other artists were more interested in capturing motion and emotion. For example, on the Great Altar of Zeus from Pergamon (below) expressions of agony and a confused mass of limbs convey a newfound interest in drama.

Athena defeats Alkyoneus (detail), The Pergamon Altar, c. 200-150 B.C.E. (Hellenistic Period), 35.64 x 33.4 meters, marble (Pergamon Museum, Berlin)

Architecturally, the scale of structures vastly increased, as can be seen with the Temple of Apollo at Didyma, and some complexes even terraced their surrounding landscape in order to create spectacular vistas as can be seem at the Sanctuary of Asklepios on Kos. Upon the defeat of Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt and, simultaneously, the Hellenistic Period came to a close. With the Roman admiration of and predilection for Greek art and culture, however, Classical aesthetics and teachings continued to endure from antiquity to the modern era. https://smarthistory.org/greek_intro/

Ancient Rome

Roman art: when and where

Roman art is a very broad topic, spanning almost 1,000 years and three continents, from Europe into Africa and Asia. The first Roman art can be dated back to 509 B.C.E., with the legendary founding of the Roman Republic, and lasted until 330 C.E. (or much longer, if you include Byzantine art). Roman art also encompasses a broad spectrum of media including marble, painting, mosaic, gems, silver and bronze work, and terracottas, just to name a few. The city of Rome was a melting pot, and the Romans had no qualms about adapting artistic influences from the other Mediterranean cultures that surrounded and preceded them. For this reason, it is common to see Greek, Etruscan and Egyptian influences throughout Roman art. This is not to say that all of Roman art is derivative, though, and one of the challenges for specialists is to define what is "Roman" about Roman art.

Map of the Roman empire during the reign of the Emperor Trajan

Greek art certainly had a powerful influence on Roman practice; the Roman poet Horace famously said that "Greece, the captive, took her savage victor captive," meaning that Rome (though it conquered Greece) adapted much of Greece's cultural and artistic heritage (as well as importing many of its most famous works). It is also true that many Romans commissioned versions of famous Greek works from earlier centuries; this is why we often have marble versions of lost Greek bronzes such as the *Doryphoros* by Polykleitos.

The Romans did not believe, as we do today, that to have a copy of an artwork was of any less value that to have the original. The copies, however, were more often variations rather than direct copies, and they had small changes made to them. The variations could be made with humor, taking the serious and somber element of Greek art and turning it on its head. So, for example, a famously gruesome Hellenistic sculpture of the satyr Marsyas being flayed was converted in a Roman dining room to a knife handle (currently in the National Archaeological Museum in Perugia). A knife was the very element that would have been used to flay the poor satyr, demonstrating not only the owner's knowledge of Greek mythology and important statuary, but also a dark sense of humor. From the direct reporting of the Greeks to the utilitarian and humorous luxury item of a Roman enthusiast, Marsyas made quite the journey. But the Roman artist was not simply copying. He was also adapting in a conscious and brilliant way. It is precisely this ability to adapt, convert, combine elements and add a touch of humor that makes Roman art Roman.

Republican Rome

The mythic founding of the Roman Republic is supposed to have happened in 509 B.C.E., when the last Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus, was overthrown. During the Republican period, the Romans were governed by annually elected magistrates, the two consuls being the most important among them, and the Senate, which was the ruling body of the state. Eventually the system broke down and civil wars ensued between 100 and 42 B.C.E. The wars were finally brought to an end when Octavian (later called Augustus) defeated Mark Antony in the Battle of

Actium in 31 B.C.E.

In the Republican period, art was produced in the service of the state, depicting public sacrifices or celebrating victorious military campaigns (like the Monument of Aemilius Paullus at Delphi). Portraiture extolled the communal goals of the Republic; hard work, age, wisdom, being a community leader and soldier. Patrons chose to have themselves represented with balding heads, large noses, and extra wrinkles, demonstrating that they had spent their lives working for the Republic as model citizens, flaunting their acquired wisdom with each furrow of the brow. We now call this portrait style veristic, referring to the hyper-naturalistic features that emphasize every flaw, creating portraits of individuals with personality and essence.
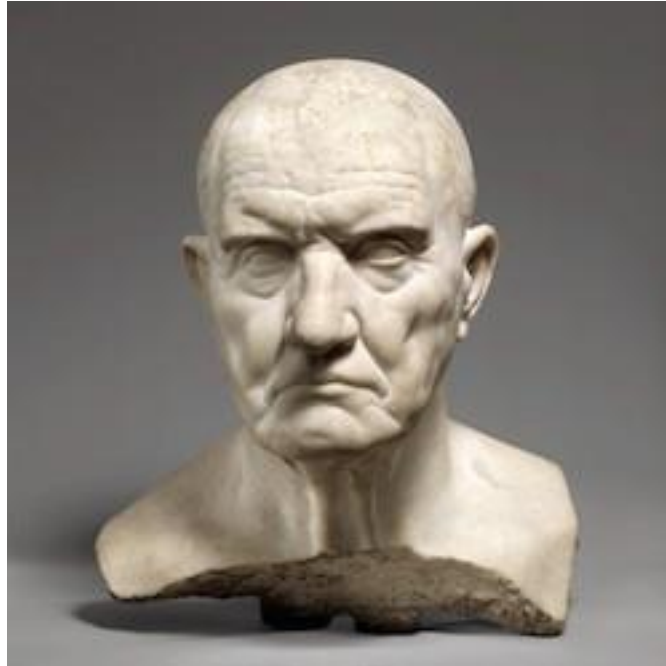
Marble bust of a man, mid 1st century, marble, 14 3/8 inches (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Imperial Rome

Augustus's rise to power in Rome signaled the end of the Roman Republic and the formation of Imperial rule. Roman art was now put to the service of aggrandizing the ruler and his family. It was also meant to indicate shifts in leadership. The major periods in Imperial Roman art are named after individual rulers or major dynasties, they are:

Augustan (27 B.C.E.-14 C.E.)
Julio-Claudian (14-68 C.E.)
Flavian (69-98 C.E.)
Trajanic (98-117 C.E.)
Hadrianic (117-138 C.E.)
Antonine (138-193 C.E.)
Severan (193-235 C.E.)
Soldier Emperor (235-284 C.E.)
Tetrarchic (284-312 C.E.)
Constantinian (307-337 C.E.)

Relief from the *Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Augustan Peace)*, 9 B.C.E. monument is dedicated, marble (Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Imperial art often hearkened back to the Classical art of the past. "Classical", or "Classicizing," when used in reference to Roman art refers broadly to the influences of Greek art from the Classical and Hellenistic periods (480-31 B.C.E.). Classicizing elements include the smooth lines, elegant drapery, idealized nude bodies, highly naturalistic forms and balanced proportions that the Greeks had perfected over centuries of practice.
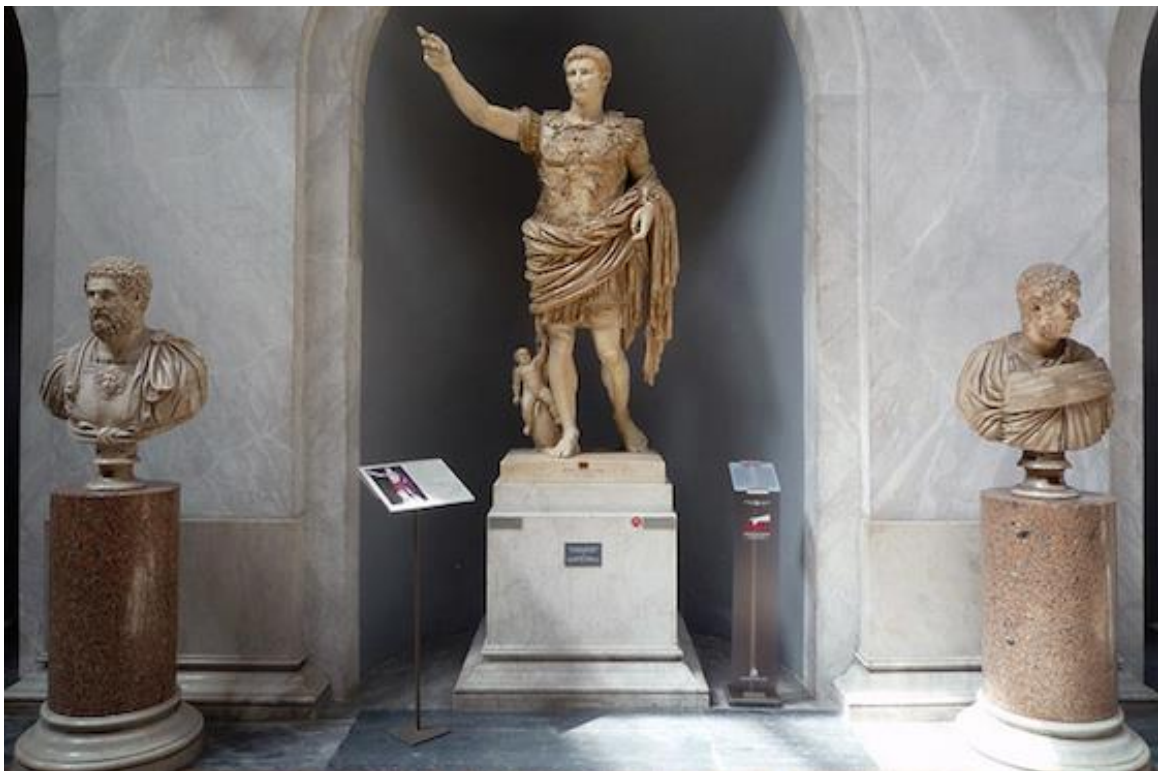
Augustus of Primaporta, 1st century C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Augustus and the Julio-Claudian dynasty were particularly fond of adapting Classical elements into their art. The *Augustus of Primaporta* was made at the end of Augustus's life, yet he is represented as youthful, idealized and strikingly handsome like a young athlete; all hallmarks of Classical art. The emperor Hadrian was known as a philhellene, or lover of all things Greek. The emperor himself began sporting a Greek "philosopher's beard" in his official portraiture, unheard of before this time. Décor at his rambling Villa at Tivoli included mosaic copies of famous Greek paintings, such as *Battle of the Centaurs* and *Wild Beasts* by the legendary ancient Greek painter Zeuxis.

Pair of Centaurs Fighting Cats of Prey from Hadrian's Villa, mosaic, c. 130 C.E. (Altes Museum, Berlin)

The eighth wonder of the ancient world

The Pantheon in Rome is a true architectural wonder. Described as the "sphinx of the Campus Martius"—referring to enigmas presented by its appearance and history, and to the location in Rome where it was built—to visit it today is to be almost transported back to the Roman Empire itself. The Roman Pantheon probably doesn't make popular shortlists of the world's architectural icons, but it should: it is one of the most imitated buildings in history. For a good example, look at the library Thomas Jefferson designed for the University of Virginia.

The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125

While the Pantheon's importance is undeniable, there is a lot that is unknown. With new evidence and fresh interpretations coming to light in recent years, questions once thought settled have been reopened. Most textbooks and websites confidently date the building to the Emperor Hadrian's reign and describe its purpose as a temple to all the gods (from the Greek, pan = all, theos = gods), but some scholars now argue that these details are wrong and that our knowledge of other aspects of the building's origin, construction, and meaning is less certain than we had thought.

Art of Late Antiquity

Later Imperial art moved away from earlier Classical influences, and Severan art signals the shift to art of Late Antiquity. The characteristics of Late Antique art include frontality, stiffness of pose and drapery, deeply drilled lines, less naturalism, squat proportions and lack of individualism. Important figures are often slightly larger or are placed above the rest of the crowd to denote importance.

Chariot procession of Septimus Severus, relief from the attach of the Arch of Septimus Severus, Leptis Magna, Libya, 203 C.E., marble, 5; 6" high (Castle Museum, Tripoli)

In relief panels from the *Arch of Septimius Severus* from Lepcis Magna, Septimius Severus and his sons, Caracalla and Geta ride in a chariot, marking them out from an otherwise uniform sea of repeating figures, all wearing the same stylized and flat drapery. There is little variation or individualism in the figures, and they are all stiff and carved with deep, full lines. There is an ease to reading the work; Septimius is centrally located, between his sons and slightly taller; all the other figures direct the viewer's eyes to him.

Relief from the Arch of Constantine, 315 C.E., Rome (photo: F. Tronchin, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Constantinian art continued to integrate the elements of Late Antiquity that had been introduced in the Severan period, but they are now developed even further. For example, on the oratio relief

panel on the Arch of Constantine, the figures are even more squat, frontally oriented, similar to one another, and there is a clear lack of naturalism. Again, the message is meant to be understood without hesitation: Constantine is in power.

Another sculpture demonstrating the authority of Constantine and the shift towards stylization during this period is the *Colossus of Constantine.* This monumental sculpture once stood about 40 feet tall, hence the name colossus. The head and fragments of the body are all that remain.

The Colossus of Constantine, c. 312-15 (Palazzo dei Conservatori, Musei Capitolini, Rome) photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Who made Roman art?

We don't know much about who made Roman art. Artists certainly existed in antiquity but we know very little about them, especially during the Roman period, because of a lack of documentary evidence such as contracts or letters. What evidence we do have, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, pays little attention to contemporary artists and often focuses more on the Greek artists of the past. As a result, scholars do not refer to specific artists but consider them generally, as a largely anonymous group.

Painted Garden, removed from the triclinium (dining room) in the Villa of Livia Drusilla, Prima Porta, fresco, 30-20 B.C.E. (Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, Rome)

What did they make?

Roman art encompasses private art made for Roman homes as well as art in the public sphere. The elite Roman home provided an opportunity for the owner to display his wealth, taste and education to his visitors, dependents, and clients. Since Roman homes were regularly visited and were meant to be viewed, their decoration was of the utmost importance. Wall paintings, mosaics, and sculptural displays were all incorporated seamlessly with small luxury items such as bronze figurines and silver bowls. The subject matter ranged from busts of important ancestors to mythological and historical scenes, still-lifes, and landscapes—all to create the idea of an erudite patron steeped in culture.

Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus: Battle of Romans and Barbarians, c. 250-260 C.E., preconneus marble, 150 cm high (Palazzo Altemps: Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome).

When Romans died, they left behind imagery that identified them as individuals. Funerary imagery often emphasized unique physical traits or trade, partners or favored deities. Roman funerary art spans several media and all periods and regions. It included portrait busts, wall reliefs set into working-class group tombs (like those at Ostia), and elite decorated tombs (like the Via delle Tombe at Pompeii). In addition, there were painted Faiyum portraits placed on mummies and sarcophagi. Because death touched all levels of society—men and women, emperors, elites, and freedmen—funerary art recorded the diverse experiences of the various peoples who lived in the Roman empire

The public sphere is filled with works commissioned by the emperors such as portraits of the imperial family or bath houses decorated with copies of important Classical statues. There are also commemorative works like the triumphal arches and columns that served a didactic as well as a celebratory function. The arches and columns (like the Arch of Titus or the Column of Trajan), marked victories, depicted war, and described military life. They also revealed foreign lands and enemies of the state. They could also depict an emperor's successes in domestic and foreign policy rather than in war, such as Trajan's Arch in Benevento. Religious art is also included in this category, such as the cult statues placed in Roman temples that stood in for the deities they represented, like Venus or Jupiter. Gods and religions from other parts of the empire also made their way to Rome's capital including the Egyptian goddess Isis, the Persian god Mithras and ultimately Christianity. Each of these religions brought its own unique sets of imagery to inform proper worship and instruct their sect's followers.

Column of Trajan, Carrera marble, completed 113 C.E., Rome, dedicated to Emperor Trajan in honor of his victory over Dacia (now Romania) 101-02 and 105-06 C.E. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

It can be difficult to pinpoint just what is Roman about Roman art, but it is the ability to adapt, to take in and to uniquely combine influences over centuries of practice that made Roman art distinct.

License and Attributions

Chapter 18: Ancient South Asia

The Indus Valley Civilization

Between 2600 and 1900 B.C.E., several settlements (see map below) thrived around the river Indus which extends from the Tibetan plateau and flows into the Arabian Sea. These settlements — Indus cities have been excavated in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan — are known collectively as the Indus Valley Civilization.
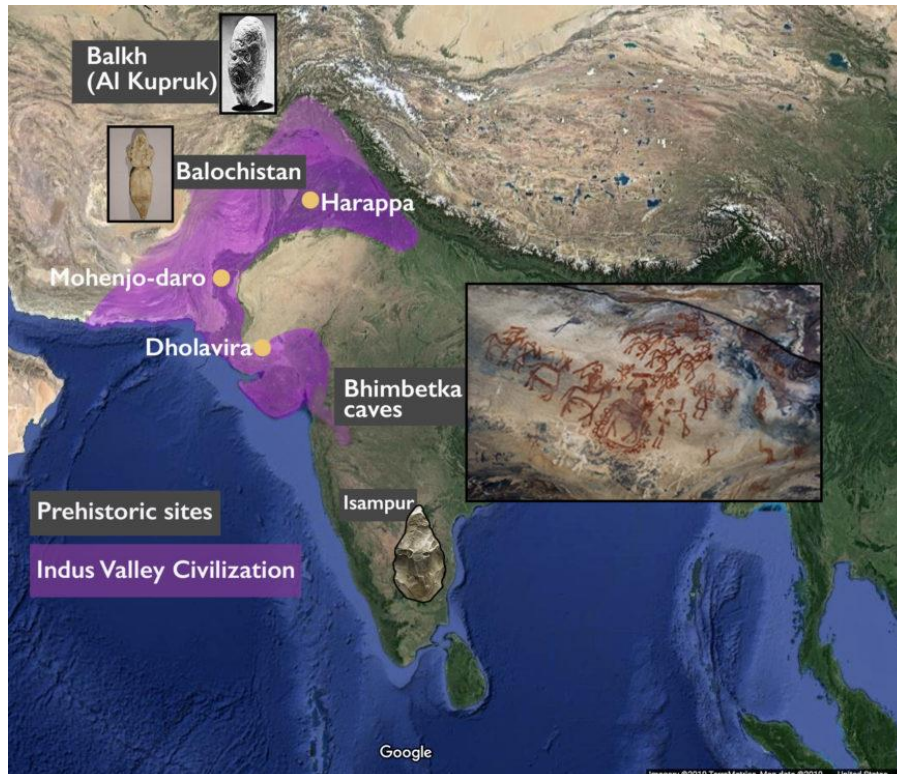
Large sites such as Mohenjo-daro and Harappa in Pakistan have revealed highly efficient urban-planning, well-designed homes and neighborhoods laid out on a grid pattern, granaries, and public buildings all built with uniformly sized bricks. The Indus people were skilled in the management of natural resources; the site of Dholavira in Gujarat, India for instance, had a sophisticated system of water management. A complex writing system was also in use in this period, although sadly, the Indus script remains undeciphered.

Excavated ruins of Mohenjo-daro, with the Great Bath in the foreground and the granary mound in the background (photo: Saqib Qayyum, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Miniature terracotta figurines of a range of animals including the rhinoceros, birds, and dogs, and bullock drawn carts with drivers (see below) have been excavated from Indus sites. Whether they represent votive images or are simply children's toys is as yet undecided. Board games, jewelry made of shells and beads, and stone and bronze figurines have also been discovered as have many steatite seals. These seals may have been used in trade and ritual and are distinguishable by their engravings of animals, humans, possibly divine beings, and, on occasion, unicorns!

Stamp seal and modern impression: unicorn and incense burner (?), c. 2600 – 1900 B.C.E., Indus (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Terracotta figures, c. 2500 B.C.E. Indus Valley Culture, Chanhu Daro, Pakistan (Brooklyn Museum)

Miniature terracotta figurines of a range of animals including the rhinoceros, birds, and dogs, and bullock drawn carts with drivers (see below) have been excavated from Indus sites. Whether they represent votive images or are simply children's toys is as yet undecided. Board games, jewelry made of shells and beads, and stone and bronze figurines have also been discovered as have many steatite seals. These seals may have been used in trade and ritual and are

distinguishable by their engravings of animals, humans, possibly divine beings, and, on occasion, unicorns!

The Vedic period

By c. 1300 B.C.E., speakers of Sanskrit (known as the Aryas) had settled in the northwest region of the Indian subcontinent. The *Rigveda*, the earliest of four *Vedas* (Sanskrit for "knowledge") — a compendium of sacred scriptures on ritual, liturgy, and moral principles — is dated to this period. [1] The *Vedas* were a significant influence on the development of the Hindu religion. Like the material artifacts from the Indus Civilization above, the *Vedas* also carry glimpses of life in the Vedic period. We learn of the people who lived in the region prior to the arrival of the Aryas, as well as details on societal relationships, daily life, and the worship of gods and goddesses from Vedic hymns.

Scholars have been able to discern the eventual movement of people to the Gangetic plains of India (see map 5 below) from the three later *Vedas* — the *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. [2] Another important set of sacred texts, collectively known as the *Upanishad*, were composed sometime between the seventh and the fifth centuries B.C.E. and served as an elucidation of the *Vedas*. [3]

Buddhism

The Magadha region (roughly centered around Bihar and northeastern India, would become a place of socio-religious debate and the birthplace of two major religions — Buddhism and Jainism — that were born in critical reaction to Vedic traditions. Some scholars have suggested that existing spiritual traditions in Magadha — the belief in rebirth and karma, for instance, was absorbed into Brahmanism (a precursor to Hinduism), Buddhism, and Jainism. [4]

Born Siddhartha Gautama in Lumbini, in present-day Nepal, the exact date of the Buddha's birth is not known, but scholarly consensus dates his death around c. 400 B.C.E. [5] The Buddha's teachings offered people a new path to salvation that was different from the ritual-based practices of the Vedic religion.

Buddhist monastic sites were adorned with narrative panels that celebrated the life of the Buddha — first in aniconic form (refers to a symbolic representation, as opposed to "iconic" which refers to representation in human form) and later in iconic form — as well as with a wealth of sculptural representations of men, women, animals, architecture, plants, and nature spirits, including *yakshis*(female goddesses), *yakshas* (male gods), and *mithuna* (couples) in a nod to pre-Buddhist traditions of reverence for fertility spirits.
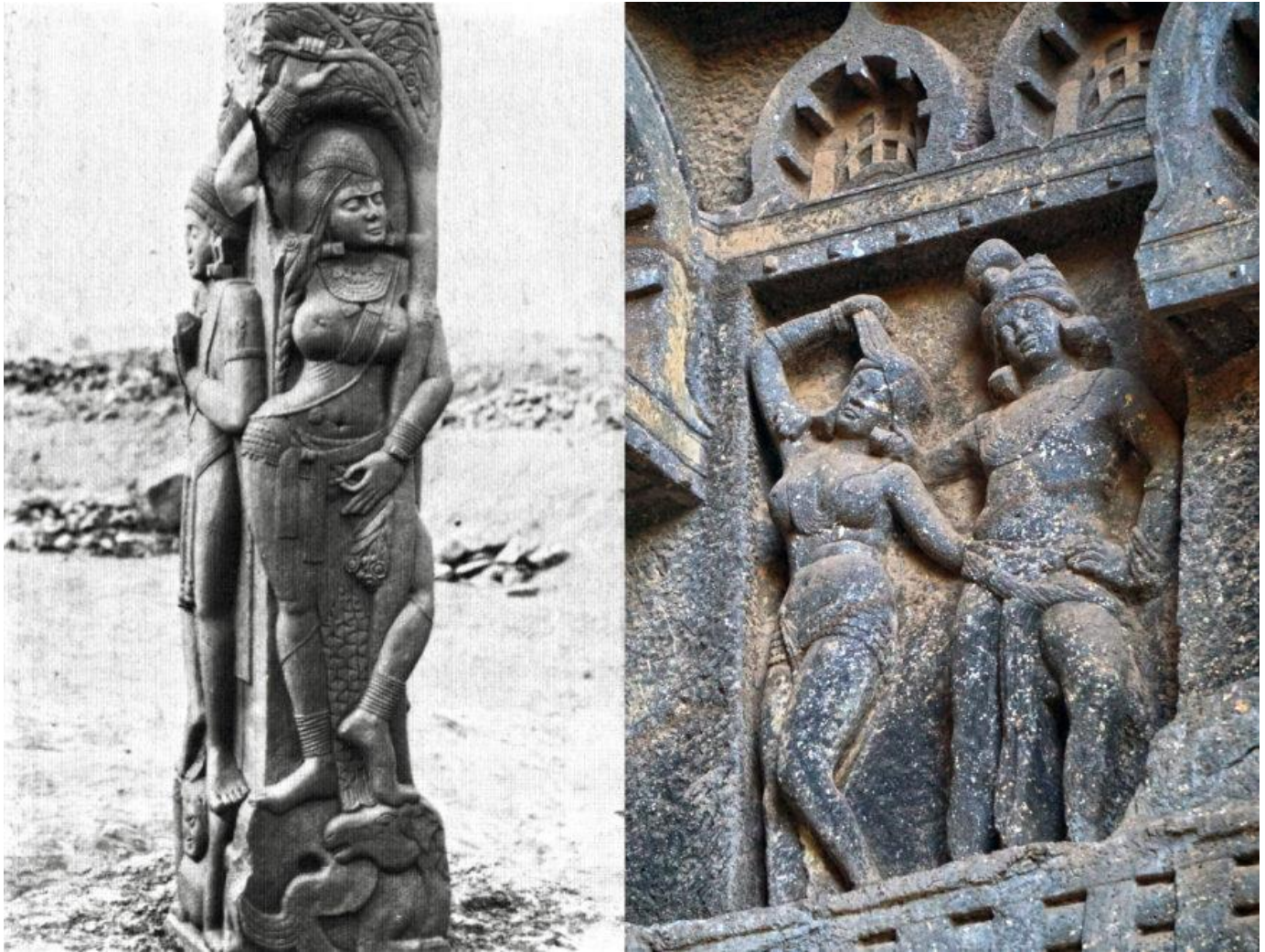
Left: A *yakshi* and *yaksha* at Bharhut stupa, 1st century B.C.E., Madhya Pradesh (photo: public domain); Right: Mithuna, Karle Caves, Maharashtra, 2nd century (photo: Photo Dharma, CC BY-2.0).

According to tradition, on his death, the Buddha's cremated remains were distributed amongst nine clans. These relics came to be deposited in stupas (burial mounds) where they were then worshipped by the Buddha's followers. By the early centuries of the Common Era, Buddhist sites were found throughout India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (see map below).

Jainism

The founder of the Jain religion, Mahavira, is believed to be a contemporary of the Buddha. Like Buddhism, Jainism offered a path to salvation that was unencumbered by ritual. In Jain tradition, the twenty-four *Jinas* (Sanskrit for "victor") who have overcome *karma* (the sum of a person's actions) through a life of spirituality and goodness serve as role models for Jains and the path to salvation. Mahavira was the twenty-fourth and final *Jina*.

Left: Head of Jina, 2nd century, Kushan period, Mathura, red mottled sandstone, 8 1/2 x 7 3/16 inches (Cleveland Museum of Art); Right: Jain Svetambara Tirthankara in Meditation, 11th century, Solanki period, marble, 39 inches high (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Jinas are often shown in the meditative posture — either seated or standing — and emphasize austerity, immobility, and asceticism. Jain sacred imagery also involves images of nature deities as well as gods and goddesses such as Indra and Saraswati who are important deities in Hinduism. Images of the *Jina* may have the *srivatsa* (an ancient symbol) marked on their chest (see image on right, above), which distinguishes them from sometimes visually congruent images of the Buddha.

The Mauryas

In c. 326 B.C.E., Alexander of Macedonia invaded the Indian subcontinent. Alexander reached as far as the river Beas in present-day Punjab, India before he was forced to acquiesce the exhaustion of his army and their wish to return home. Alexander's incursions had a lasting impact on South Asian history. One of his generals, Seleucus Nicator, would become the ruler of the Seleucid Empire which stretched from Anatolia to Afghanistan and Pakistan, including parts of the Indus Valley. Seleucus's ambitions for more territory was curbed, however, by Chandragupta of the Maurya dynasty.

A treatise on war and diplomacy composed by the minister Kautilya in Chandragupta's court offers a remarkable glimpse into the Mauryan kingdom and its policies. Along with rules for military regiments and economic strategy, this treatise, the *Arthashastra*, details policies on the exemption of taxes in times of disaster, guidelines for the use of state resources for the care of elephants and horses, and the protection of natural resources such as forests.

Pillar capital from Pataliputra, the capital of the Maurya dynasty in Bihar, c. 3rd century B.C.E., Patna Museum (photo: Nalanda001, CC BY-SA-4.0). Very little survives from the Mauryan period.

We have far more information about Chandragupta's grandson, the emperor Ashoka. Ashoka too was a formidable ruler, but he vowed to rule, later in life, through non-violent means in adherence with the teachings of the Buddha. Ashoka helped spread Buddhism across the entire Indian subcontinent with the installation of pillars that proclaimed *dhamma* (Buddhist law). In addition to Buddhist philosophy, these edicts also detailed state provisions on social welfare for both people and animals.

Buddhist Monastic Sites

A now broken Ashokan pillar at the great stupa at Sanchi, a Buddhist complex associated with the patronage of the emperor, was retained when the stupa was expanded to twice its size and faced with stone in the first century B.C.E. Stupas are quintessential monuments to the memory of the Buddha and are burial mounds for the relics of other important persons. Stupas were often built in the midst of large monastic settlements known as *samgha(s).*
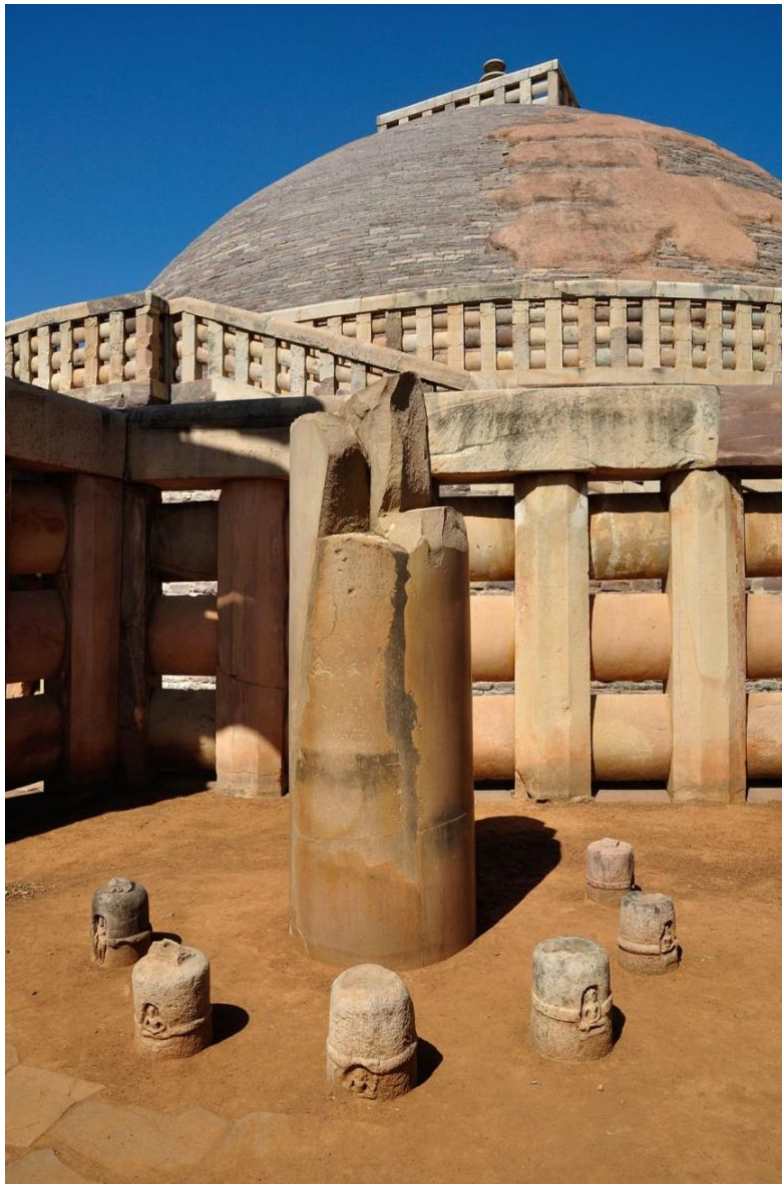
Ashokan pillar near Sanchi stupa, c. 3rd century B.C.E., Madhya Pradesh (photo: Biswarup Ganguly, CC BY-3.0)

As Buddhism spread, monastic complexes were established in sites in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Nepal. The stupa of Jetavanaramaya is located in one of the oldest known *samghas* in Sri Lanka, and dates to the third century C.E. It is believed, however, that the oral Buddhist canon was written down during the reign of Sri Lankan king Vatthagamini (29 – 17 B.C.E.). [6] Other examples of well-known and early Buddhist sites include Amaravati, Bharhut, and Nagarjunakonda in India, Takht-i-bahi in Pakistan, and Mes Aynak in Afghanistan.
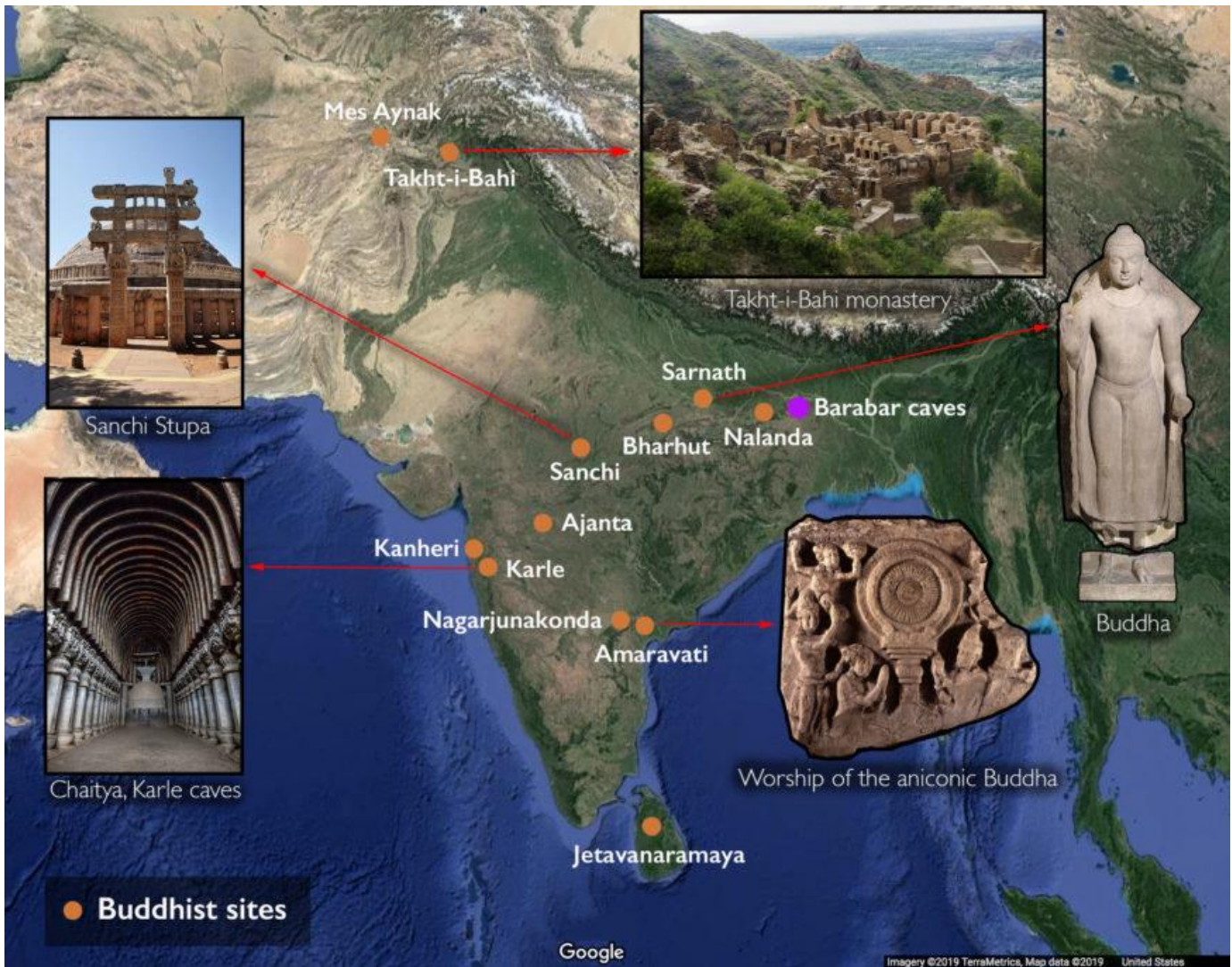
Select Buddhist rock-cut caves, stupas, and monasteries. Clockwise from left: Rock-cut chaitya, c. 120, Karle (photo: Kevin Standage, CC BY-SA-2.0); Sanchi stupa, c. 3rd century B.C.E., Madhya Pradesh (photo: Biswarup Ganguly, CC BY-3.0); Takht-i-Bahi Buddhist monastery, 2nd century (photo: Asif Nawaz, CC BY-SA-3.0); Buddha, 5th c, sandstone, Sarnath (The British Museum); Fragment of a dome slab showing the worship of the aniconic Buddha from Amaravati stupa, 2nd century, Andhra Pradesh (The British Museum).

Buddhist sites regularly received the patronage of both Buddhist and Hindu kings, as well as that of ordinary people, including Buddhist monks and nuns, merchants, and travelers. Sanchi is remarkable for the information it preserves on ordinary people. Inscribed on the great stupa are 631 donative inscriptions that tell us about the people — from merchants to monks to nuns — who contributed to the reconstruction and beautification of the stupa in the first century B.C.E. [7]

Great Stupa at Sanchi, 3rd century – 1st century B.C.E., Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh (photo: AyushDwivedi1947, CC BY-SA 4.0; Tushar Pokle, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The stupa's four extraordinary gateways (*torana*), once carried six images each of *yakshis*. These figures served as architectural brackets and as symbols of fertility — in obeisance to the auspicious quality associated with images of women on sacred structures. [8]

The golden age

By the early centuries of the first millennium, the Vedic religion had evolved into the Hindu religion. While a core tenet of Hinduism — the concept of the Brahman (omnipresent consciousness) — had already been formulated in the *Upanishads*, many of the gods and goddesses that we see in Hindu art are found in the *Puranas* (ancient stories) that were composed in this period.

Vishnu, 5th century, Gupta period, Mathura, red sandstone, 109 x 67 x 22 cm, National Museum, New Delhi (photo: Jen, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The rise of the Gupta dynasty (c. 320 – 647) marked an important time for art, architecture, and literature. It was also a period of strong global trade; scholars believe that the Gupta sculptural and temple-building style can be found in the early medieval remnants of Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture in Southeast Asia. A coin shows king Samudragupta, one of the Gupta dynasty's most successful rulers and one who greatly expanded the dynasty's power and territories. The inclusion of a goddess on the reverse side of the coin implies divine kingship in an effort to suggest that the king's rule was mandated by the gods.
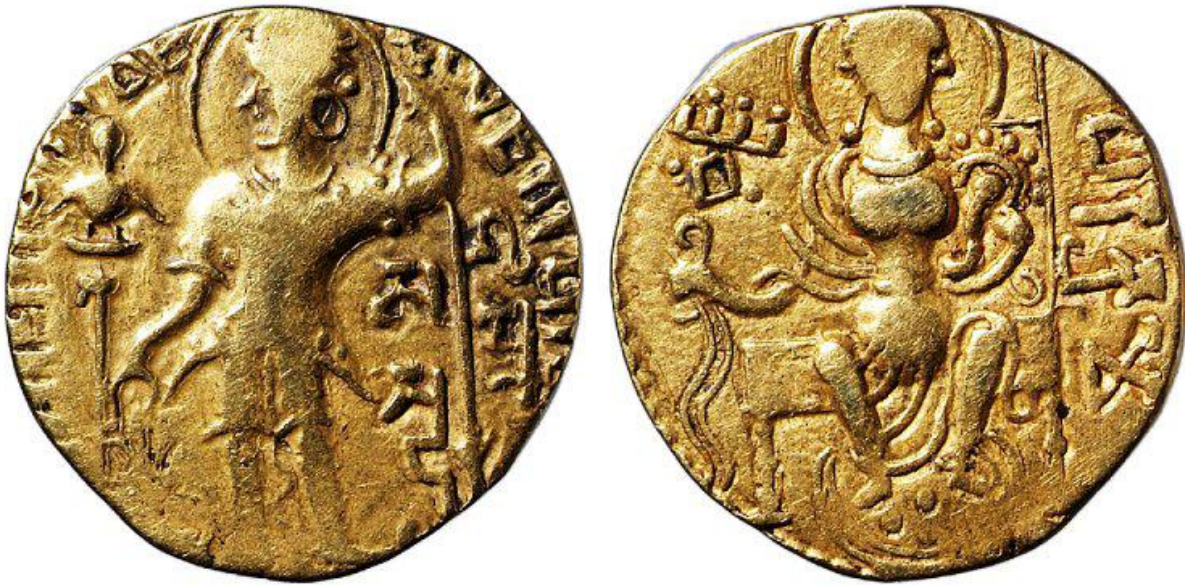
Coin showing the ruler Samudragupta (left) and a goddess (right), 330 – 376 C.E., gold (The British Museum)

It was also during the Gupta period that a new type of Buddha image — the Gupta Buddha emerged. Buddha images in this period continued to be produced in Mathura, but also in Sarnath and in Nalanda (see map above). Each area had access to quarries of a specific type of stone which have helped art historians determine where an image may have been produced.
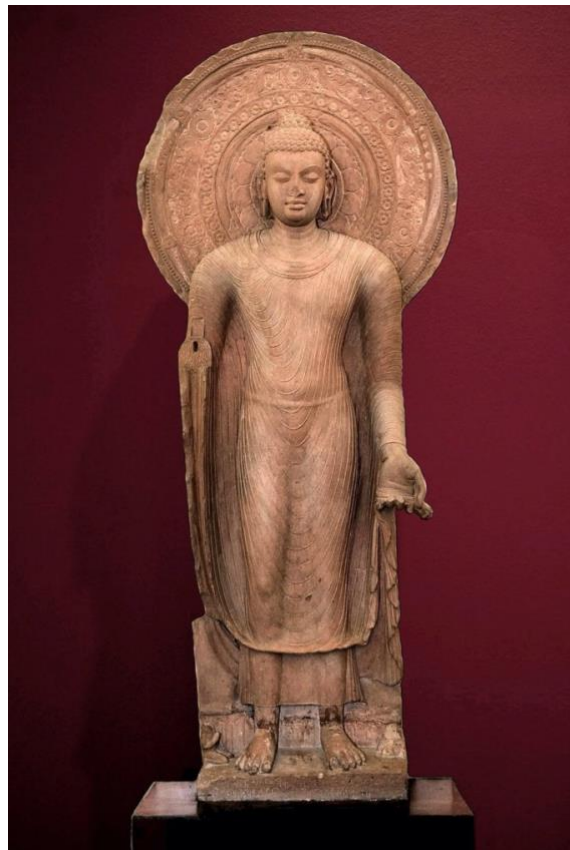
Standing Buddha, 5th century, Gupta period, Mathura, Mathura Museum (photo: Biswarup Ganguly, CC BY-2.0)

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Chapter 19: Ancient East Asia

China

Imperial Chinese history is marked by the rise and fall of many dynasties and occasional periods of disunity, but overall the age was remarkably stable and marked by a sophisticated governing system that included the concept of a meritocracy. Each dynasty had its own distinct characteristics and in many eras encounters with foreign cultural and political influences through territorial expansion and waves of immigration also brought new stimulus to China. China had a highly literate society that greatly valued poetry and brush-written calligraphy, which, along with painting, were called the Three Perfections, reflecting the esteemed position of the arts in Chinese life. Imperial China produced many technological advancements that have enriched the world, including paper and porcelain.

Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism were the dominant teachings or religions in Imperial China and most individuals combined all three in their daily lives.

Shang Dynasty

In China, writing is first seen as inscriptions on oracle bones, a hallmark of the Shang dynasty (1700-1027 B.C.E.). Made of the shoulder blades of oxen or the underbellies of turtles, oracle bones — as their designation indicates — were used for divination (foretelling the future). Up to that point, China had already developed a rich culture ranging from pottery and clay figurines to carved jade and bronze ritual vessels — the latter of which would have a lasting influence on Chinese art and design. Also, a central motif of Chinese art — the paired dragon and tiger, symbolizing water and wind in Chinese cosmology — first appears during this period. The earliest known example is a river-shell mosaic representation from c. 5300 B.C.E., excavated in a royal grave at Xishuipo, Henan province.
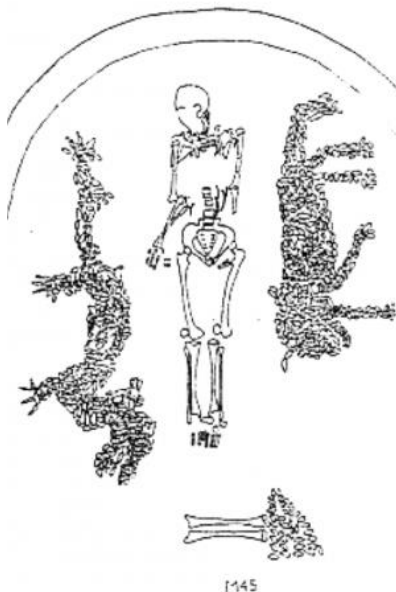
Representations of dragon and tiger, mosaic of river clam shells, c. 5300 B.C.E., royal grave no. 45, Xishuipo, Henan province (diagram: Feng Shi, "Henan Puyang Xishuipo 45 Hao Mu de Tianwenxue Yanjiu," Wenwu, vol. 3, pp. 52-69).

Qin Dynasty

The Terracotta Army of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi

The first emperor of China was Qin Shi Huangdi. First, he became king of the Qin (pronounced "Chin") state at the age of thirteen. Eventually he defeated the rulers of all the competing Chinese states, unifying China and declaring himself "First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty" (Qin Shi Huangdi). He began the construction of his vast tomb as soon as he took the throne, and it took 38 years to finish, even with a reported 700,000 convicts laboring for the last 13 years of construction. These great numbers are, themselves, displays of the tremendous power of the emperor, and the work clearly bears the imprint of their astounding labors.

As emperor, he was repressive —banning and burning Confucian books and executing the scholars who wrote and studied them. Not surprisingly there were at least two attempts to assassinate him.

When his tomb was completed, it was covered in grass and trees, so that it would appear like a natural part of the landscape.

Mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi today, (photo: CC BY-SA 3.0)

Today, from the outside, Qin Shi Huangdi's burial mound looks like a hill. This explains how the huge tomb could have remained hidden until 1974 when rural villagers accidentally discovered it while digging a well. It blended into its surroundings, looking like a foothill of the Li Mountains.
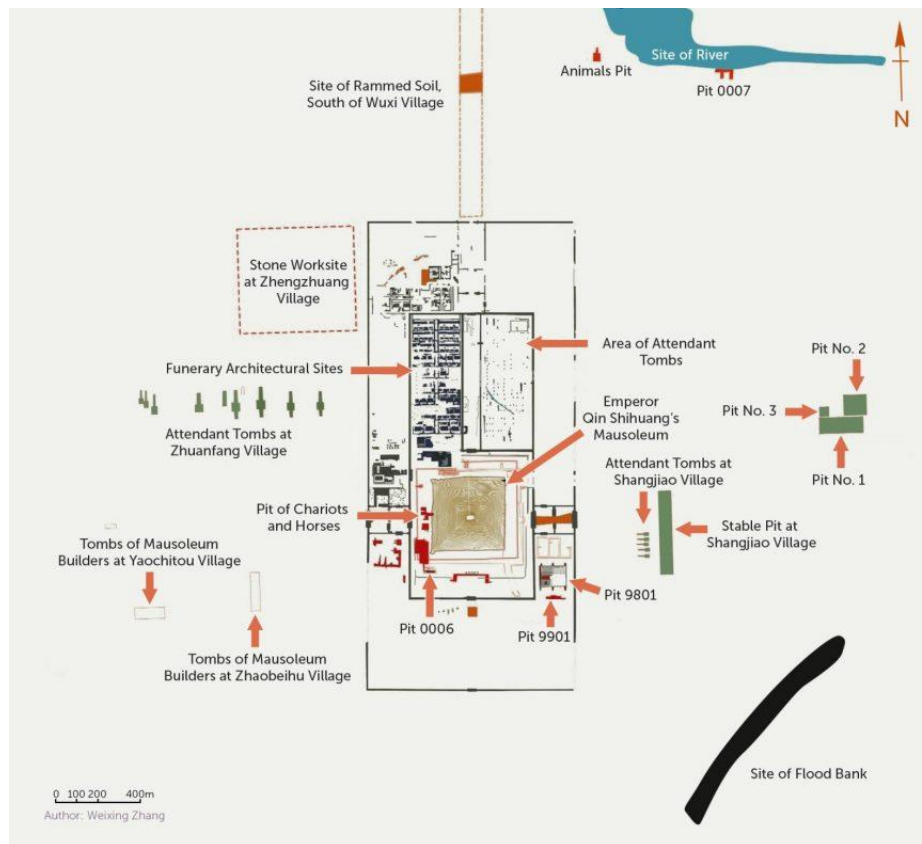
Plan of the tomb complex, Mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi (diagram Weixing Zhang)

As the plan of the tomb complex shows, the tomb itself was surrounded by a large number of other burials, including three pits containing warriors made from terracotta (which are known today as the "Terracotta Army") There was also a pit filled with the remains of exotic animals, and the graves of followers executed at the time of the burial.

So far, approximately 7,000 figures made from terracotta and 100 wooden chariots have been discovered in Pits 1, 2 and 3.

Pit 1, Army of the First Emperor, Qin dynasty, Lintong, China, c. 210 B.C.E., painted terracotta (photo: mararie, CC BY-SA 2.0,

When we look at the vast rows of the 6,000 soldiers of the army in Pit 1 (the largest yet found) we see a view that no one had seen for more than two thousand years — from the time that the tombs were sealed until the excavations of the 1970s. The figures were set into paved channels of earth, reinforced with wooden planks and then buried.

The soldiers are arranged in battle formation, with a vanguard of archers surrounding the bulk of the army. The hands of the archers are now empty, but they originally held wooden bows, of which some traces survive. These wooden bows, along with bronze weapons held by other soldiers, would have given the soldiers a more naturalistic appearance.

Front and back view of Kneeling Archer, Mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi

But why would an emperor wish to be buried with a terracotta army, with bronze chariots and teams of horses, and even with his concubines?

In ancient China, death was seen not as the complete end to an individual but rather, a new stage in life. Therefore, the army was intended not only to demonstrate the emperor's power in this life, but also to extend that same power into the world of the dead.

Han Dynasty

Maybe you *can* bring it with you…if you are rich enough. The elite men and women of the Han dynasty (China's second imperial dynasty, 206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) enjoyed an opulent lifestyle that could stretch into the afterlife. Today, the well-furnished tombs of the elite give us a glimpse of the luxurious goods they treasured and enjoyed. For instance, a wealthy official could afford beautiful silk robes in contrast to the homespun or paper garments of a laborer or peasant. Their tombs also inform us about their cosmological beliefs.

Marquis of Dai, Lady Dai, and a son

Three elite tombs, discovered in 1972, at Mawangdui, Hunan Province (eastern China) rank amongst the greatest archeological discoveries in China during the twentieth century. They are the tombs of a high-ranking Han official civil servant, the Marquis of Dai, Lady Dai (his wife), and their son.

Nesting coffins of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui), 2nd century B.C.E., wood, lacquered exteriors and interiors, 256 x 118 x 114 cm, 230 x 92 x 89 cm and 202 x 69 x 63cm, from tomb 1 (Hunan Provincial Museum)

In Lady Dai's tomb, archaeologists found a painted silk banner over six feet long in excellent condition. The T-shaped banner was on top of the innermost of four nesting coffins. Although scholars still debate the function of these banners, we know they had some connection with the afterlife. They may be "name banners" used to identify the dead during the mourning ceremonies, or they may have been burial shrouds intended to aid the soul in its passage to the afterlife. Lady Dai's banner is important for two primary reasons. It is an early example of pictorial (representing naturalistic scenes not just abstract shapes) art in China. Secondly, the banner features the earliest known portrait in Chinese painting.

registers

heavenly realm

Lady Dai and her attendants

body of Lady Dai with mourners

underworld

Diagram of *Funeral Banner of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui)*, 2nd century B.C.E., silk, 205 x 92 x 47.7 cm (Hunan Provincial Museum)

Lady Dai and her attendants (detail), *Funeral banner of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui)*, 2nd century B.C.E., silk, 205 x 92 x 47.7 cm (Hunan Provincial Museum)

Japan

Yayoi Period

People from the Asian continent who were cultivating crops migrated to the Japanese islands. Archaeological evidence suggests that these people gradually absorbed the Jōmon hunter-gatherer population and laid the foundation for a society that cultivated rice in paddy fields, produced bronze and iron tools, and was organized according to a hierarchical social structure. The Yayoi period's name comes from a neighborhood of Tokyo, Japan's capital, where artifacts from the period were first discovered.

Jar, Yayoi period, c. 100-300 C.E., earthenware with incised decoration, 10 inches tall. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Yayoi-period artifacts include ceramics that are stylistically very different from the cord-marked Jōmon-period ceramics. Although the same techniques were used, Yayoi pottery has sharper and cleaner shapes and surfaces, including smooth walls, sometimes covered in slip (a liquid clay mixture used in the production and decoration of pottery), and bases on which the pots could stand without being suspended by rope. Burnished surfaces, finer incisions, and sturdy constructions that suggest an interest in symmetry are characteristic of Yayoi pots.

Kofun Period

The Kofun 古墳 period is so named after the burial mounds of the ruling class. The practice of building tomb mounds of monumental proportions and burying treasures with the deceased arrived from the Asian continent during the 3rd century. Originally unadorned, these tombs became increasingly ornate; by the 6th century, burial chambers had painted decorations. The

burial mounds were encircled with stones; hollow clay earthenware, known in Japanese as haniwa 埴輪, were scattered for protection on the land surrounding the mounds. *Kofun* were typically keyhole-shaped, had several tiers, and were surrounded by moats. The resulting structure amounted to an impressive display of power, advertising the control of the ruling families. The largest *kofun* is the Nintoku mausoleum, measuring 486 meters!

The Nintoku mausoleum in Sakai, Osaka prefecture, Japan, part of the Mozu-Furuichi group of ancient burial sites known as kofun (image: KYODO, Japan Times)

The hollow clay objects, *haniwa*, that were scattered around burial mounds in the Kofun period, have a fascinating history in their own right. Initially simple cylinders, *haniwa* became representational over the centuries, first modeled as houses and animals and ultimately as human figures, typically warriors. The later pieces have been of great help to anthropologists and historians as tokens of the material culture of the Kofun period, offering a glimpse into that society. Whether offerings for the dead or protective barriers meant to guard the tombs, *haniwa* have a strong aesthetic identity that continues to be a source of inspiration for Japanese ceramists.

Haniwa. Left to right: Cylindrical haniwa, 5th century, excavated in Kaga-shi, Ishikawa, earthenware (Tokyo National Museum, image: Steven Zucker); haniwa house, 5th century, excavated in Sakura-shi, Nara, earthenware (Tokyo National Museum); haniwa horse, 5th-6th century, Japan, earthenware, partially restored, H. 94 cm (Tokyo National Museum); haniwa of a female shrine attendant, 6th-7th century, Japan, earthenware, 88.9 cm high (Yale University Art Gallery)

Shinto Shrine, Ise, Japan

In Japan, the Shinto religion is focused on kami, deities that can inhabit aspects of nature like trees, rocks, waterfalls, and animals, which then become sites of worship.

Originally, Shinto was not a codified religion, though it later became more firmly based on rituals. The Shinto Shrine at Ise, officially known as the Ise Jingu, one of the most famous religious sites in Japan and Shinto's central one, embodies, in its design, many aspects of this religion's intimate connection to nature. It is built entirely of natural materials, with walls and beams made of Japanese cypress and a thatched roof made of reed and short, rounded logs. Scholars believe that it was originally built in the first century C.E., and then rebuilt in a time of cultural change in the seventh century. Since then, craftsmen who train for a lifetime rebuild it every twenty years. Their work of periodically rebuilding it is an act of devotion that reaffirms spiritual and cultural bonds. The techniques and materials are consciously old-fashioned, but the resulting shrine appears fresh, if only because of the visibly new materials used in its construction. It was last rebuilt in 2013 and will be rebuilt again in 2033. This might be seen as a reflection of the core Shinto practice of ritual purification as a form of renewal.

The shape of the shrine is based on raised granaries used for food storage, which became standard for Shinto shrines. The shrine at Ise is dedicated to Amaterasu-o-mi-kami, the sun goddess and mythical ancestor of Japan's imperial family. Since its establishment, the Ise shrine complex has housed several sacred objects, including a mirror associated with Amaterasu, and a symbol of wisdom and truth. These same values are emphasized by the consciously simple materials of the shrine. Still, with over 125 shrine structures in a complex that is home to over 1,500 yearly rituals, Jingu is nothing short of impressive.
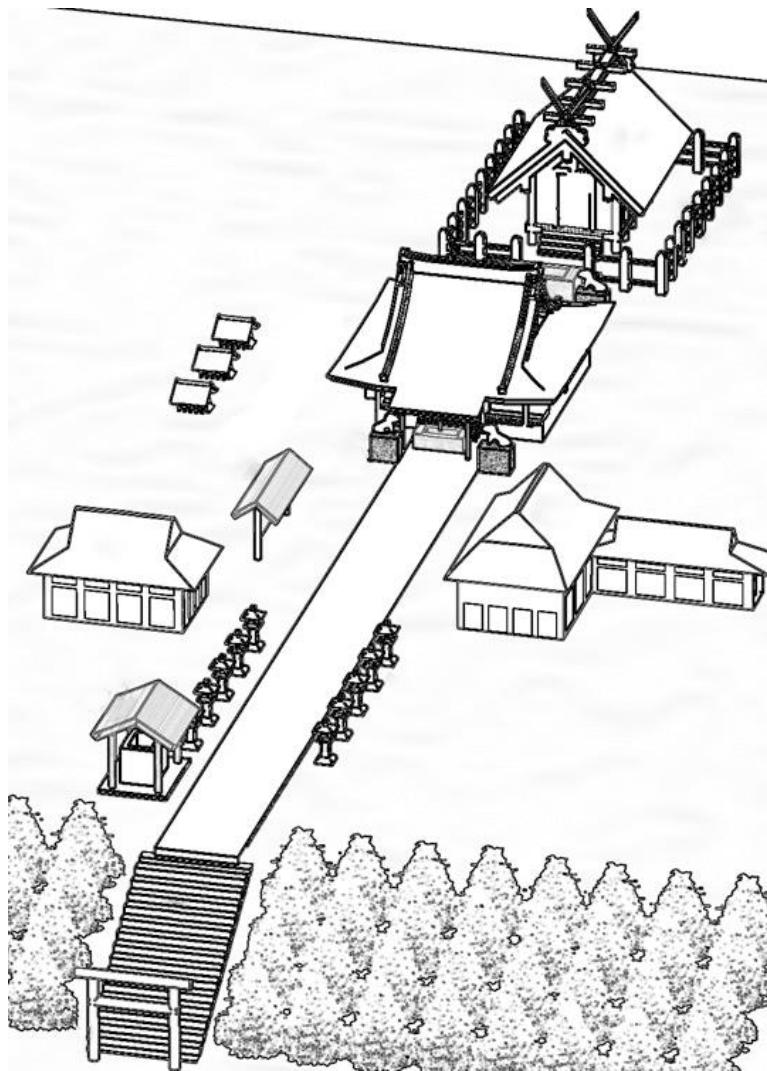
Plan of a Shinto shrine

Like most high-status religious structures, the main shrine is symmetrical, which makes it seem stable and dignified. It is set at the end of a long path, behind a series of gates that provide a sense of entering into a sacred space for those permitted within.

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Chapter 20: Early Art of Oceania and the Americas

Oceania

Terracotta fragments, Lapita people

Terracotta fragments, Lapita people, c. 1000 B.C.E., red-slip earthenware, Santa Cruz Islands, south-east of Solomon Islands (Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland, CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

Archaeologists get very excited when they find pieces of Lapita pottery. Why? Because the sequential depositing of potsherds (fragments of pottery) in an easterly direction across the island groups of the Pacific has become the pivotal evidence that tells the extraordinary story of the peopling of the vast Pacific Ocean. Pieces of the distinctive red-slipped pottery of the Lapita people have been recovered from sites spanning thousands of miles across the Pacific from the outer reaches of Southeast Asia, through the island groups often referred to as Micronesia and Melanesia, and into the central Pacific and Polynesia.
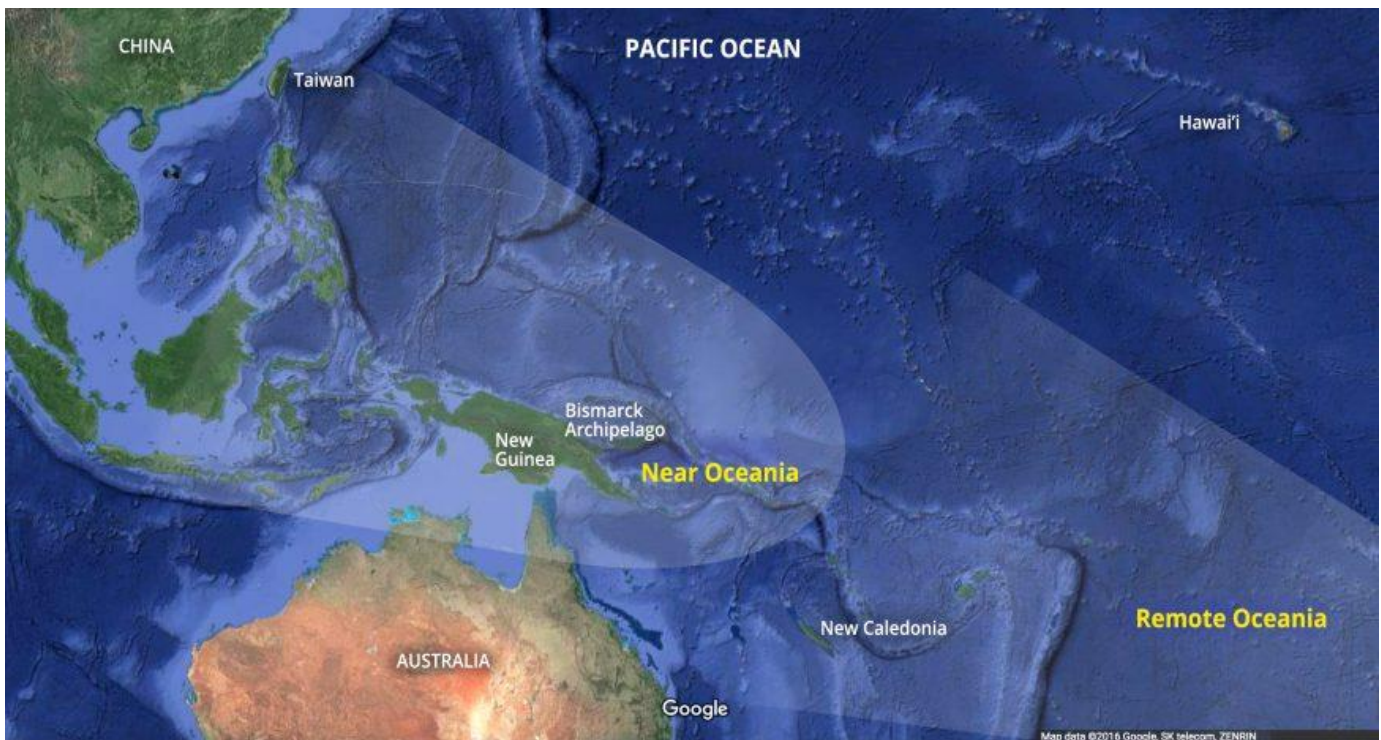
Archaeologists now believe that, somewhere between 4,000 and 3,500 years ago, a group of people who had sailed from the area around Taiwan in Southeast Asia arrived by canoe to the beaches of the Bismarck Archipelago. The new arrivals, who we now know as the Lapita people (named for the beach on the island of New Caledonia where a large number of pottery sherds were found), spoke a different language than the people they would have encountered there. These local people had been living on the large island now known as New Guinea and the surrounding islands for between 60,000 and 40,000 years [1]. Aside from their language and different genetic stock, the Lapita were different to those they encountered because they had sophisticated seafaring and navigation capability—and they manufactured and decorated ceramics in very particular ways. We can only theorize about the political and environmental pressures that drove these people to set out to sea in search of new places to live. Nevertheless, the pieces of broken but stylistically related potsherds distributed across thousands of miles of islands, laid down in datable stratigraphic layers, have revealed important information about the ancestors of the contemporary peoples of the central Pacific.

Terracotta fragments, Lapita people, red-slip earthenware, Watom Island, Bismarck Archipelago (photo: Merryjack CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Lapita pottery was shaped by hand, and perhaps using a paddle-and-anvil technique to thin the walls, but without the aid of a potter's wheel. It is low-fire earthenware (no evidence of Lapita kilns have been found). This means that the dry clay pots would likely have been placed in open fires to harden—the descendants of the Lapita people in Fiji and other areas still make pottery in this way. There is some geographical variation in the shapes and sizes of the pottery, but most were simple bowls, some had pedestal feet, and others were flat-bottomed vessels. We know that the pottery was generally not used for cooking because carbon residues are not normally found on the potsherds. Rather, the evidence suggests that much of the pottery was used for serving food, while larger vessels were likely used for storage.

Ambum Stone

The *Ambum Stone* is a masterfully crafted stone carving, created around 3,500 years ago in the highlands of the island we now know as New Guinea. Who actually carved it and for what original purpose is not known. Nevertheless, the *Ambum Stone* had a life as a religious object for a group of people in Papua New Guinea before becoming an aesthetically beautiful and intriguing artifact of exotica in a Western gallery. More recently it suffered a mishap that left it broken, and the publicity around this thrust the *Ambum Stone* into ongoing political debates about who owns historical artifacts. Every chapter of this carving's history has been entangled with personal and political intrigue and chronicles a bigger story about colonization and shifting and evolving structures of power.

Ambum Stone, c. 1500 B.C.E., greywacke, 20 x 7.5 x 14 cm, Ambum Valley, Enga Province, Papua New Guinea (Australia National Gallery, Canberra)

There are 12 recorded artifacts like the *Ambum Stone*: ancient stone mortars and pestles excavated from New Guinea, usually from the mountains of its interior. A mortar is a bowl and a pestle is an object used to grind against the sides of the mortar when preparing food. The smoothly curved neck and head of the *Ambum Stone* suggest its possible utility as a pestle when we consider its size—at about 8 inches high, the "neck" of the creature it depicts can be held in the hand, and its fat base could have been used to pound food and other materials. The tops of other ancient pestles from New Guinea are distinguished by human or bird heads, or by fully sculpted birds, while the mortars also include geometric imagery alongside avian (bird) and

anthropomorphic (human) depictions.

Carved in the form of some kind of animal, its features are rounded and include a freestanding neck, elegantly curved head and long nose, and upper limbs that hug its torso and appear to enclose a cupped space above its belly. Stylized eyes, ears and nostrils are depicted in relief, and shoulder blades and what could be an umbilicus suggest the maker's understanding of anatomy. While it is possibly a fetal-form of a spiny anteater known as an echidna, which is thought to have been valued for its fat prior to the introduction of pigs, it might also be a bird or a fruit bat, and some have speculated that it represents a now extinct mega-sized marsupial.

North America

Clovis Culture

The first clear evidence of human activity in North America are spear heads like this. They are called Clovis points. These spear tips were used to hunt large game. The period of the Clovis people coincides with the extinction of mammoths, giant sloth, camels and giant bison in North America. The extinction of these animals was caused by a combination of human hunting and climate change.

Clovis Spear Point, c. 11,000 B.C.E., flint, 2.98 x 8.5 x 0.7 cm, found Arizona © Trustees of the British Museum

North America was one of the last continents in the world to be settled by humans after about 15,000 BC. During the last Ice Age, water, which previously flowed off the land into the sea, was frozen up in vast ice sheets and glaciers so sea levels dropped. This exposed a land bridge that enabled humans to migrate through Siberia to Alaska. These early Americans were highly adaptable and Clovis points have been found throughout North America. It is remarkable that over such a vast area, the distinctive characteristics of the points hardly vary.

Fort Ancient Culture: Great Serpent Mound

The Great Serpent Mound in rural, southwestern Ohio is the largest serpent effigy in the world. Numerous mounds were made by the ancient Native American cultures that flourished along the fertile valleys of the Mississippi, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers a thousand years ago, though many were destroyed as farms spread across this region during the modern era. They invite us to contemplate the rich spiritual beliefs of the ancient Native American cultures that created them.

Aerial view of the Great Serpent Mound, c. 1070, Adams County, Ohio

The Great Serpent Mound measures approximately 1,300 feet in length and ranges from one to three feet in height. The complex mound is both architectural and sculptural and was erected by settled peoples who cultivated maize, beans and squash and who maintained a stratified society with an organized labor force but left no written records.
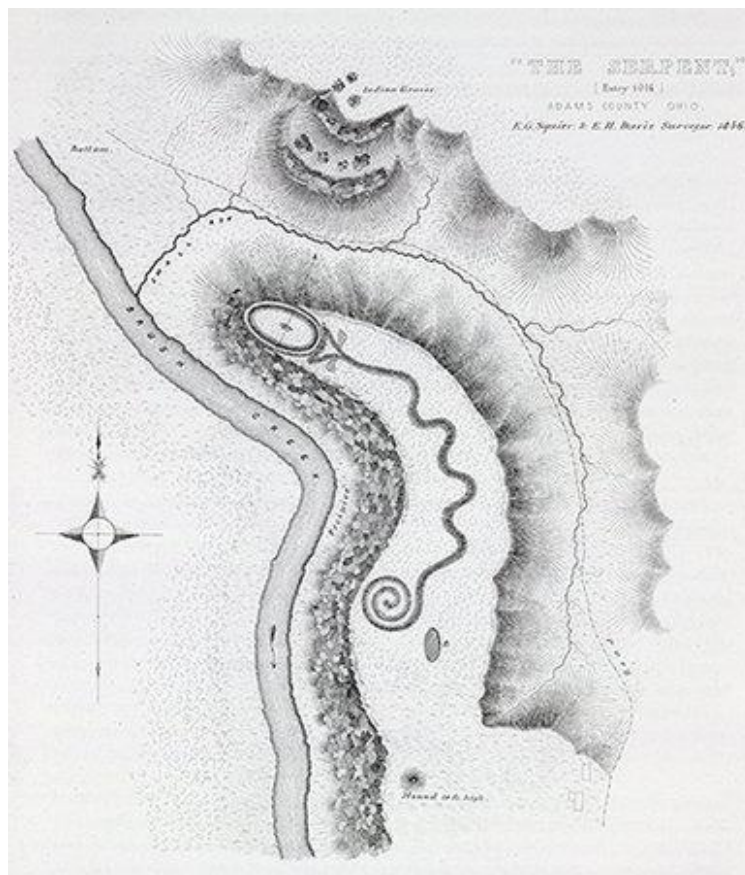
Ephraim George Squier and E. H. Davis, "The Serpent;" entry 1014, Adams County Ohio. Pl. XXXV, *Ancient monuments of the Mississippi Valley: comprising the results of extensive original surveys and explorations*, Washington: Smithsonian institution, 1848

The serpent is slightly crescent-shaped and oriented such that the head is at the east and the tail at the west, with seven winding coils in between. The shape of the head perhaps invites the most speculation. Whereas some scholars read the oval shape as an enlarged eye, others see a hollow egg or even a frog about to be swallowed by wide, open jaws. But perhaps that lower jaw is an indication of appendages, such as small arms that might imply the creature is a lizard rather than a snake. Many native cultures in both North and Central America attributed supernatural powers to snakes or reptiles and included them in their spiritual practices. The native peoples of the Middle Ohio Valley in particular frequently created snake-shapes out of copper sheets.

View of the *Great Serpent Mound*, 1070(?), Adams County, Ohio (photo: Katherine T. Brown)

Whether this impressive monument was used as a way to mark time, document a celestial event, act as a compass, serve as a guide to astrological patterns, or provide a place of worship to a supernatural snake god or goddess, we may never know with certainty. One scholar has recently suggested that the mound was a platform or base for totems or other architectural structures that are no longer extant, perhaps removed by subsequent cultures. All to say, scholarly debate continues, based on on-going archaeological evidence and geological research. But without a doubt, the mound is singular and significant in its ability to provide tangible insights into the cosmology and rituals of the ancient Americas.

Central and South America

Olmec stone mask, c. 900-400 B.C.E. Olmec, greenstone, 13 x 11.3 x 5.7 cm © Trustees of the British Museum

This mask was probably worn around the neck as a pendant and may have given the wearer a new identity, perhaps that of an ancestor or a god. It was made by the Olmecs, the earliest known settled civilization of Central America.

The Olmec

The Olmecs lived in the low-lying Gulf Coast area of what is now Mexico in about 1200-400 B.C.E. at sites such as San Lorenzo, Tres Zapotes, Laguna de los Cerros and La Venta.

These and the other Olmec centers were well planned and included many of the features that would be associated with later civilization in Central America including the Mexica (Aztecs) and Maya. Alongside impressive public spaces and large platform-mounds made of earth, there is evidence of a ceremonial ball game and complex astrological calendars.

Olmec art is very distinctive and clearly reflects their religion. Jaguars feature prominently because the Olmecs believed that, in the distant past, a union between a woman and a jaguar produced an earlier race of were-jaguars.

The Olmecs worked mainly in stone and particularly favored jade, or greenstone, which they believed had distinctive properties linked with fertility and procreation. These sought-after materials were brought into the region through long distance trade networks.

Earliest known writing in America

Side of mask showing gylphs (detail), Olmec stone mask , c. 900-400 B.C.E., Olmec, greenstone, 13 x 11.3 x 5.7 cm © Trustees of the British Museum

The head above is made from a dark green stone called serpentinite and would have been worked by skilled craftspeople using hand tools.

On either side of the mouth (detail above) there are two Olmec glyphs (picture signs). Olmec glyphs are the earliest known writing in America. These fine-line motifs symbolically define the four quarters of the human world with the king as ruler at the center. The Olmec art style is found on objects as far afield as the Valley of Mexico to the north and the Pacific coast of Chiapas to the south. This suggests a widely-shared set of beliefs that was to have a profound influence on many later Mesoamerican stylistic traditions.

Teotihuacan

Pyramid of the Moon seen from the Avenue of the Dead with Cerro Gordo in the distance, Teotihuacan, Mexico

An impressive city of 125,000-200,000 inhabitants, by the 6th century, Teotihuacan was the first large metropolis in the Americas. Teotihuacan, as the city is called, is a Náhuatl name that means "the place where the gods were created" and was given by the Aztec centuries after it was abandoned in the 7th century. The Aztecs attributed names and significance to its buildings but had no contact with this earlier culture. Very little is known of the people who built Teotihuacan, and as a result much of our knowledge of the site, its art, and Teotihuacan culture is derived from Aztec sources. Largely created before 250 C.E., Teotihuacan is a testament to the ambition of its people, who built the first American city on a grid plan.

Pyramid of the Sun and the Avenue of the Dead, Teotihuacan, Mexico

Due to an absence of (or as of yet undiscovered) royal palaces and graves, the lack of evidence for a cult of personality, and the as-of-yet undeciphered hieroglyphs, the governing system of Teotihuacan remains largely elusive to scholars. Nevertheless, the dramatic monumental architecture and dense urban fabric reveal a complex environment carefully planned to support a large population but also structured by the surrounding natural environment and in relation to specific constellations and planetary events. In keeping with the stratified nature of other Mesoamerican societies, Teotihuacan also benefitted from rulers, or a ruling elite, who commissioned massive architectural landmarks such as the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, and who spread Teotihuacan's sphere of influence throughout Mesoamerica—even into the Maya region as far away as Guatemala.

Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl (feathered serpent), Teōtīhuacān

The Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent occupies a prominent place in the *Ciudadela*, a large open space that offers a respite from the massive presence of the Pyramid of the Sun and Pyramid of the Moon. Like so much else at Teotihuacan, the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent was built in the talud-tablero style (a sloping wall, talud, that is surmounted by a vertical wall, tablero). The temple stands out for its sculptural ornamentation depicting the feathered serpent, known by its Aztec name Quetzalcoatl. The feathered serpent is associated with water imagery and is depicted numerous times on the exterior of the temple as an undulating snake navigating among seashells (above). Two faces project outwards, one of which depicts the feathered serpent (above left). The identification of the other head is more challenging. One interpretation is that it represents an early version of the Aztec god Tlaloc (known for his goggled eyes) and associated with rain and warfare (above right). However, some scholars identify the head as an early precedent of Xiuhcoatl, or Fire Serpent, and who was associated with warfare, fire, and time (or the calendar). Most scholars agree that the temple was associated with warfare and human sacrifice, as confirmed by numerous skeletal remains (presumably of warriors) that were discovered by archeologists in the 1980s. Speculation has also arisen about whether the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent may have contained the body of a ruler.

Archeologists have dated the city's collapse to the seventh century when many of Teotihuacan's buildings were destroyed.

The Maya

Map showing the extent of the Maya civilization (red), compared to all other Mesoamerica cultures (black). Today, these sites are located in the countries of Mexico, Belize, Honduras and Guatemala (image: CC BY-SA 3.0)

The Maya are a culturally affiliated people that continue to speak their native languages and still often use the ancient 260-day ritual calendar for religious practices. The ancient Maya were united by belief systems, cultural practices that included a distinct architectural style, and a writing system. They were also joined by political interaction in the form of warfare and intermarriage. They left an artistic legacy that ranges from intricately carved monolithic sculptures to complex mural cycles. The ancient Maya are credited with creating the most advanced Mesoamerican writing system, which was logo-syllabic, meaning that it consists of pictorial symbols or glyphs that represent either entire words or syllables. It is the only pre-Hispanic writing system of Mesoamerica that has been largely deciphered (see image below).

The Maya are also known for their advanced understanding of time, which they acquired through their study of astronomy and which allowed for the development of a complex calendrical system.

Public inscriptions—which decorated temples and palaces—have also contributed to our knowledge of the Maya, providing archeologists with important dates, names, and ritual information.

Glyphs from Lintel 25, c. 725, Structure 23, Yaxchilán, Classic Maya, limestone, 121 x 85.5 x 13.5 cm (The British Museum)

Periods in Maya history

Historians divide Maya history into three periods:

Pre-Classic: 1000 B.C.E.-250 C.E.
Classic: 250-900 C.E.
Post-Classic: 900-1521 C.E.

The Yaxchilán Lintels

Yaxchilán is located on the south bank of the Usumacinta River, in Chiapas, Mexico. It was a significant Maya center during the Classic period (250-900 C.E.) and a number of its buildings stand to this day. Many of the exteriors had elaborate decorations, but it is the carved stone lintels above their doorways which have made this site famous. These lintels, commissioned by the rulers of the city, provide a lengthy dynastic record in both text and image.

Yaxchilán lintel 24, structure 23, after 709 C.E., Maya, Late Classic period, limestone, 109 x 78 x 6 cm, Mexico © Trustees of the British Museum

The limestone lintel above, considered one of the masterpieces of Maya art, is one of a series of three panels from Structure 23 at Yaxchilán, where it was set above the left (south-east) doorway.

The scene represents a bloodletting ritual performed by the king of Yaxchilán, Shield Jaguar the Great (681-742), and his wife, Lady K'ab'al Xook (Itzamnaaj Bahlen III).

Lady K'abal Xook pulling a thorned rope through her tongue (detail), *Yaxchilán lintel 24*, after 709 C.E., Maya, Late Classic period, limestone, 109 x 78 x 6 cm, Mexico © Trustees of the British Museum

Wearing an exquisitely woven "huipil," Lady K'abal Xook pulls a thorned rope through her tongue in the principal form of blood sacrifice perfomed by royal women. The rope falls on to an open codex. Her pierced tongue allowed her blood to flow as part of a ritual communication with gods and spirits. This sacrifice mirrored the Maya story of creation, when the gods let their blood to create the human race. By choosing to take part in the ritual, the queen demonstrated both her moral and physical strength to the people, and her suitability as a Maya royal. Scrolls of blood can be seen around her mouth. She kneels in front of Shield Jaguar who holds a great torch described in the text as a "burning spear" illuminating a ritual that was probably held at night or set in the dark recess of a private chamber.

Bloodletting was a common practice in Maya life from the Late Preclassic period (400 B.C.E.-250 C.E.) onwards, and an essential part of rulership and of all public rituals.

Ancient Andean Art

Map of South America showing the Andes (map: Mapswire, CC BY 4.0)

The Andes region encompasses the expansive mountain chain that runs nearly 4,500 miles north to south, covering parts of modern-day Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. The pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Andes developed a stunning visual tradition that lasted over 10,000 years before the Spanish invasion of South America in 1532.

The Andes was home to thousands of cultural groups that spoke different languages and dialects, and who ranged from nomadic hunter-gatherers to sedentary farmers. As such, the artistic traditions of the Andes are highly varied.

While Andean art is perhaps most notable for its diversity, it also possesses many unifying characteristics. Andean artists across the South American continent often endowed their works with a life force or sense of divinity. This translated into a process-oriented artistic practice that privileged an object's inner substance over its appearance.

Border fragment, Paracas, 4th-3rd century B.C.E., cotton and camelid fiber, 1.43 x 12.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Andean art is also characterized by its environmental specificity; pre-Columbian art and architecture was intimately tied to the natural environment. Textiles produced by the Paracas culture, for instance, contained vivid depictions of local birds that could be found throughout the desert peninsula.

Hummigbird, Nasca geoglyph, over 300 feet in length, created approximately 2000 years ago (photo: Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The nearby Nasca culture is best known for its monumental earthworks in the shape of various aquatic and terrestrial animals that may have served as pilgrimage routes. Located in the desert on the South Coast of Peru, the Nasca Geoglyphs are among the world's largest drawings. Also referred to as the Nasca Lines, they are more accurately called geoglyphs, which are designs formed on the earth. Geoglyphs are usually constructed from strong natural material, such as stone, and are notably large in scale.

From textiles to ceramics, metalwork, and architecture, Andean cultures produced art and architecture that responded to their natural environment and reflected their beliefs and social structures. We can learn much about these ancient traditions through the artifacts and sites that survive, as well as the many ways that these practices—such as weaving—persist today.

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Chapter 21: Medieval Europe and Byzantium

The dark ages?

So much of what the average person knows, or thinks they know, about the Middle Ages comes from film and tv. The word "medieval" may call to mind Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Blackadder, The Sword in the Stone, lusty wenches, feasting, courtly love, the plague, jousting and chain mail.

Perhaps someone who had seen (or better yet read) *The Name of the Rose* or *Pillars of the Earth* would add cathedrals, manuscripts, monasteries, feudalism, monks and friars. Petrarch, an Italian poet and scholar of the fourteenth century, famously referred to the period of time between the fall of the Roman Empire (c. 476) and his own day (c. 1330s) as the Dark Ages.

Petrarch believed that the Dark Ages was a period of intellectual darkness due to the loss of the classical learning, which he saw as light. Later historians picked up on this idea and ultimately the term Dark Ages was transformed into Middle Ages. Broadly speaking, the Middle Ages is the period of time in Europe between the end of antiquity in the fifth century and the Renaissance, or rebirth of classical learning, in the fifteenth century and sixteenth centuries.

Not so dark after all

Characterizing the Middle Ages as a period of darkness falling between two greater, more intellectually significant periods in history is misleading. The Middle Ages was not a time of ignorance and backwardness, but rather a period during which Christianity flourished in Europe. Christianity, and specifically Catholicism in the Latin West, brought with it new views of life and the world that rejected the traditions and learning of the ancient world.

During this time, the Roman Empire slowly fragmented into many smaller political entities. The geographical boundaries for European countries today were established during the Middle Ages. This was a period that heralded the formation and rise of universities, the establishment of the rule of law, numerous periods of ecclesiastical reform and the birth of the tourism industry. Many works of medieval literature, such as the Canterbury Tales, the Divine Comedy, and The Song of Roland, are widely read and studied today.

The visual arts prospered during the Middles Ages, which created its own aesthetic values. The wealthiest and most influential members of society commissioned cathedrals, churches, sculpture, painting, textiles, manuscripts, jewelry and ritual items from artists. Many of these commissions were religious in nature but medieval artists also produced secular art. Few names of artists survive and fewer documents record their business dealings, but they left behind an impressive legacy of art and culture.

Early Christian Art

The beginnings of an identifiable Christian art can be traced to the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century. Considering the Old Testament prohibitions against

graven images, it is important to consider why Christian art developed in the first place. The use of images will be a continuing issue in the history of Christianity. The best explanation for the emergence of Christian art in the early church is due to the important role images played in Greco-Roman culture.

As Christianity gained converts, these new Christians had been brought up on the value of images in their previous cultural experience and they wanted to continue this in their Christian experience. For example, there was a change in burial practices in the Roman world away from cremation to inhumation. Outside the city walls of Rome, adjacent to major roads, catacombs were dug into the ground to bury the dead. Families would have chambers or cubicula dug to bury their members. Wealthy Romans would also have sarcophagi or marble tombs carved for their burial. The Christian converts wanted the same things. Christian catacombs were dug frequently adjacent to non-Christian ones, and sarcophagi with Christian imagery were apparently popular with the richer Christians.

Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, 359 C.E., marble (Treasury of Saint Peter's Basilica)

Junius Bassus, a Roman praefectus urbi or high ranking government administrator, died in 359 C.E. Scholars believe that he converted to Christianity shortly before his death accounting for the inclusion of Christ and scenes from the Bible. (Photograph above shows a plaster cast of the original.)

Early representations of Christ and the apostles

An early representation of Christ found in the Catacomb of Domitilla shows the figure of Christ flanked by a group of his disciples or students. Those experienced with later Christian imagery

might mistake this for an image of the Last Supper, but instead this image does not tell any story. It conveys rather the idea that Christ is the true teacher.

Christ and the Apostles, Catacombs of Domitilla, 4th century C.E., Rome

Christ draped in classical garb holds a scroll in his left hand while his right hand is outstretched in the so-called *ad locutio* gesture, or the gesture of the orator. The dress, scroll, and gesture all establish the authority of Christ, who is placed in the center of his disciples. Christ is thus treated like the philosopher surrounded by his students or disciples.
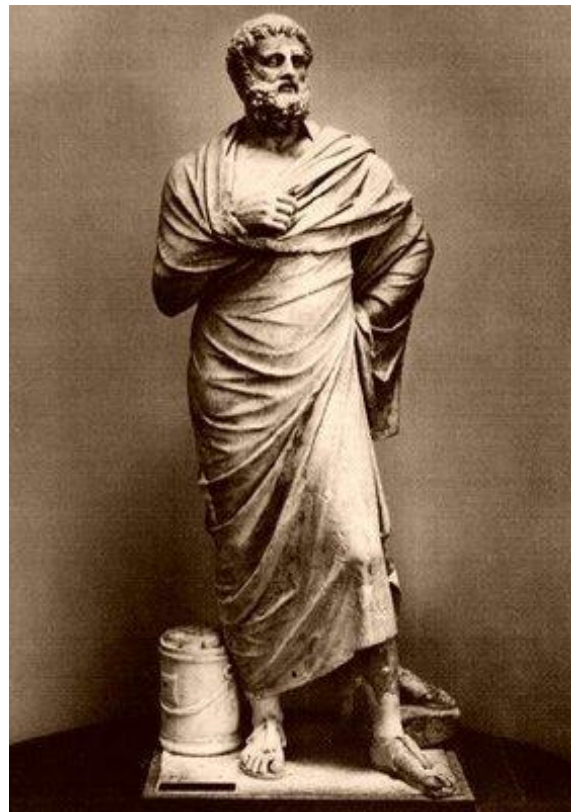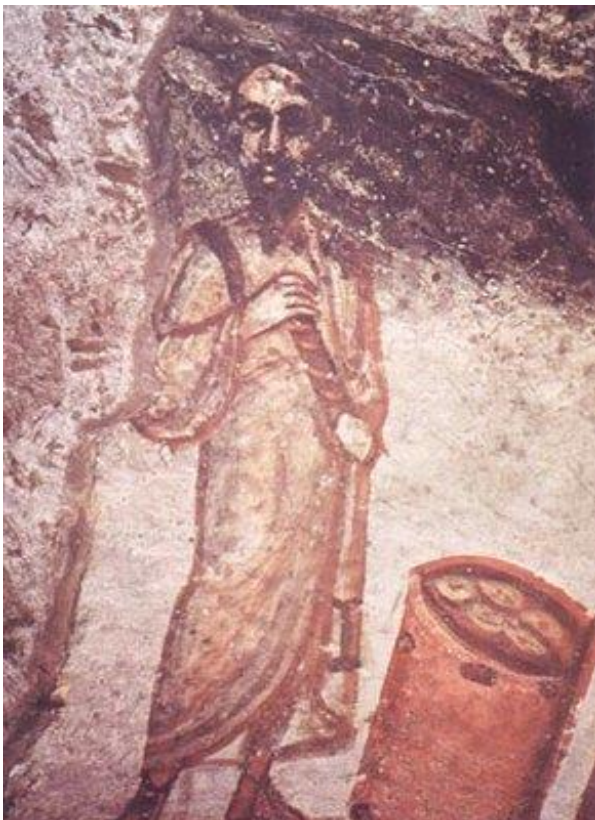
Comparably, an early representation of the apostle Paul (left), identifiable with his characteristic

pointed beard and high forehead, is based on the convention of the philosopher, as exemplified by a Roman copy of a late fourth century B.C.E. portrait of the fifth century B.C.E. playwright Sophocles (right).

Byzantine Art

The Byzantine Empire near its peak under the Emperor Justinian, c. 550 C.E.

To speak of "Byzantine Art" is a bit problematic, since the Byzantine empire and its art spanned more than a millennium and penetrated geographic regions far from its capital in Constantinople. Thus, Byzantine art includes work created from the fourth century to the fifteenth century and encompassing parts of the Italian peninsula, the eastern edge of the Slavic world, the Middle East, and North Africa. So, what is Byzantine art, and what do we mean when we use this term?

Isidore of Miletus & Anthemius of Tralles for Emperor Justinian, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, 532-37 (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

It's helpful to know that Byzantine art is generally divided up into three distinct periods:

- **Early Byzantine (c. 330–750)**
- **Middle Byzantine (c. 850–1204)**
- **Late Byzantine (c. 1261–1453)**

Early Byzantine (c. 330–750)

The Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity and in 330 moved his capital from Rome to Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), at the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. Christianity flourished and gradually supplanted the Greco-Roman gods that had once defined Roman religion and culture. This religious shift dramatically affected the art that was created across the empire.

The earliest Christian churches were built during this period, including the famed Hagia Sophia (above), which was built in the sixth century under Emperor Justinian. Decorations for the interior of churches, including icons and mosaics, were also made during this period. Icons, such as the *Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George*, served as tools for the faithful to access the spiritual world—they served as spiritual gateways.

Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George, sixth or early seventh century, encaustic on wood, 2′ 3″ x 1′ 7 3/8″ (St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt)

Similarly, mosaics, such as those within the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, sought to evoke the heavenly realm. In this work, ethereal figures seem to float against a gold background that is representative of no identifiable earthly space. By placing these figures in a spiritual world, the mosaics gave worshipers some access to that world as well. At the same time, there are real-world political messages affirming the power of the rulers in these mosaics. In this sense, art of the Byzantine Empire continued some of the traditions of Roman art.

Emperor Justinian Mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna, c. 546-56

Generally speaking, Byzantine art differs from the art of the Romans in that it is interested in depicting that which we cannot see—the intangible world of Heaven and the spiritual. Thus, the Greco-Roman interest in depth and naturalism is replaced by an interest in flatness and mystery.

Middle Byzantine (c. 850–1204)

The Middle Byzantine period followed a period of crisis for the arts called the Iconoclastic Controversy, when the use of religious images was hotly contested. Iconoclasts (those who worried that the use of images was idolatrous), destroyed images, leaving few surviving images from the Early Byzantine period. Fortunately for art history, those in favor of images won the fight and hundreds of years of Byzantine artistic production followed.

The stylistic and thematic interests of the Early Byzantine period continued during the Middle Byzantine period, with a focus on building churches and decorating their interiors. There were some significant changes in the empire, however, that brought about some change in the arts. First, the influence of the empire spread into the Slavic world with the Russian adoption of Orthodox Christianity in the tenth century. Byzantine art was therefore given new life in the Slavic lands.

Architecture in the Middle Byzantine period overwhelmingly moved toward the centralized cross-in-square plan for which Byzantine architecture is best known.
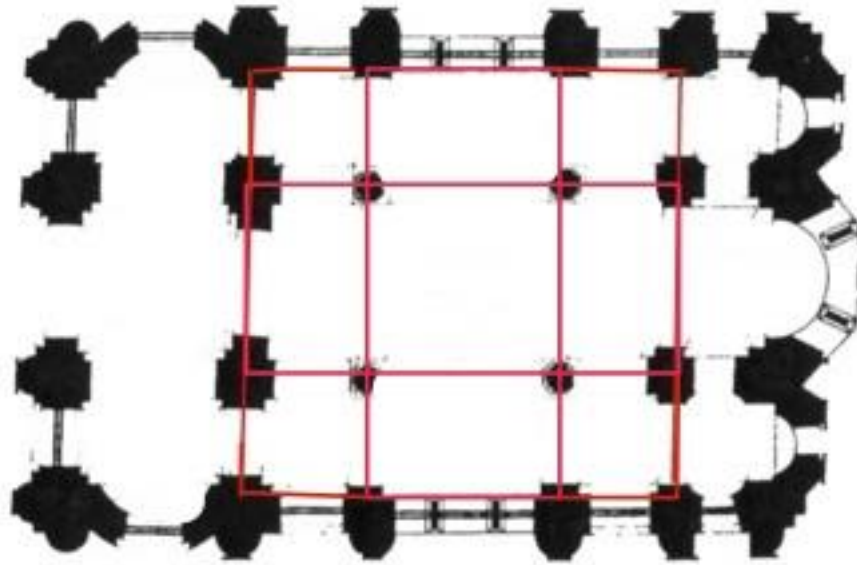
Plan of a typical cross-in-square church (cross in square indicated by red lines)

Hosios Loukas, Greece, early 11th century (photos: Jonathan Khoo, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

These churches were usually on a much smaller-scale than the massive Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, but, like Hagia Sophia, the roofline of these churches was always defined by a dome or domes. This period also saw increased ornamentation on church exteriors. A particularly good

example of this is the tenth-century Hosios Loukas Monastery in Greece (above).

Harbaville Triptych, ivory, traces of polychromy, 28.2 x 24.2 cm (Louvre)

This was also a period of increased stability and wealth. As such, wealthy patrons commissioned private luxury items, including carved ivories, such as the celebrated *Harbaville Tryptich*, which was used as a private devotional object. Like the sixth-century icon discussed above *(Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George),* it helped the viewer gain access to the heavenly realm. Interestingly, the heritage of the Greco-Roman world can be seen here, in the awareness of mass and space. See for example the subtle breaking of the straight fall of drapery by the right knee that projects forward in the two figures in the bottom register of the *Harbaville Triptych*. This interest in representing the body with some naturalism is reflective of a revived interest in the classical past during this period. So, as much as it is tempting to describe all Byzantine art as "ethereal" or "flattened," it is more accurate to say that Byzantine art is diverse. There were many political and religious interests as well as distinct cultural forces that shaped the art of different periods and regions within the Byzantine Empire.

Late Byzantine (c. 1261– 1453)

Between 1204 and 1261, the Byzantine Empire suffered another crisis: the Latin Occupation. Crusaders from Western Europe invaded and captured Constantinople in 1204, temporarily toppling the empire in an attempt to bring the eastern empire back into the fold of western Christendom. (By this point Christianity had divided into two distinct camps: eastern [Orthodox]

Christianity in the Byzantine Empire and western [Latin] Christianity in the European west.)

Anastasis (Harrowing of Hell), c. 1310-20, fresco, Church of the Holy Savior of Chora/Kariye Museum, Istanbul

By 1261 the Byzantine Empire was free of its western occupiers and stood as an independent empire once again, albeit markedly weakened. The breadth of the empire had shrunk, and so had its power. Nevertheless, Byzantium survived until the Ottomans took Constantinople in 1453. In spite of this period of diminished wealth and stability, the arts continued to flourish in the Late Byzantine period, much as it had before.

Icon of St. George ('The Black George'), c. 1400-1450, tempera on panel, 77.4 x 57 cm (The British Museum)

Although Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453—bringing about the end of the Byzantine Empire—Byzantine art and culture continued to live on in its far-reaching outposts, as well as in Greece, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire, where it had flourished for so long. The Russian Empire, which was first starting to emerge around the time Constantinople fell, carried on as the heir of Byzantium, with churches and icons created in a distinct "Russo-Byzantine" style (above). Similarly, in Italy, when the Renaissance was first emerging, it borrowed heavily from the traditions of Byzantium. Cimabue's *Madonna Enthroned* of 1280–1290 is one of the earliest examples of the Renaissance interest in space and depth in panel painting. But the painting relies on Byzantine conventions and is altogether indebted to the arts of Byzantium.

So, while we can talk of the end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, it is much more difficult to draw geographic or temporal boundaries around the empire, for it spread out to neighboring regions and persisted in artistic traditions long after its own demise.

Romanesque Art

The first international style since antiquity

The term "Romanesque," meaning in the manner of the Romans, was first coined in the early nineteenth century. Today it is used to refer to the period of European art from the second half of the eleventh century throughout the twelfth (with the exception of the region around Paris where the Gothic style emerged in the mid-twelfth century). In certain regions, such as central Italy, the Romanesque continued to survive into the thirteenth century. The Romanesque is the first international style in Western Europe since antiquity—extending across the Mediterranean and as far north as Scandinavia. The transmission of ideas was facilitated by increased travel along

the pilgrimage routes to shrines such as Santiago de Compostela in Spain (a pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place) or as a consequence of the crusades which passed through the territories of the Byzantine empire. There are, however, distinctive regional variants—Tuscan Romanesque art (in Italy) for example is very different from that produced in northern Europe.

Painting + sculpture + architecture

The relation of art to architecture—especially church architecture—is fundamental in this period. For example, wall-paintings may follow the curvature of the apse of a church as in the apse wall-painting from the church of San Clemente in Taüll, and the most important art form to emerge at this period was architectural sculpture—with sculpture used to decorate churches built of stone.

Master of Taüll, apse painting, San Clemente in Taüll, c. 1123 (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya – MNAC, Barcelona)

Many sculptors may have begun their career as stone masons, and there is a remarkable coherence between architecture and sculpture in churches at this period. The two most important sculptural forms to emerge at this time were the tympanum (the lunette-shaped space above the entrance to a church), and the historiated capital (a capital incorporating a narrative element usually an episode from the Bible or the life of a saint). One of the most famous tympanums is on the west entrance to Autun Cathedral (below) which represents—appropriately for this part of the church—the Last Judgment. An inscription (*Gislebertus hoc fecit" "Gislebertus made me"*), at the base of the giant immobile figure of Christ at the center, records the name of the artist or head of the workshop which produced it, though it has been suggested that it may

refer to the original patron who was responsible for bringing the relics of Lazurus to Autun in the Carolingian period.

Last Judgment Tympanum, c. 1130-46, Central Portal, West Façade, Cathedral of St. Lazare, Autun, France

The influence of ancient Rome

One influence on the Romanesque is, as the name implies, ancient Roman art—especially sculpture—which survived in large quantities particularly in southern Europe. This can be seen, for example, in a marble relief representing the calling of St. Peter and St. Andrew from the front frieze of the abbey church of Sant Pere de Rodes on the Catalonian coast. The imprint of the antique can be seen in the deep undercutting in the drapery folds, an effect achieved by the Roman device of the drill, and the individualization of the faces.

Calling of St. Peter and St. Andrew, c. 1160, Sant Pere de Rodes monstery, Spain

Classical influence was also frequently mediated through an intermediary—most importantly Byzantine art (especially textiles and painting), but also through earlier medieval styles which had absorbed elements of the classical tradition such as Ottonian art.

Gothic Architecture

East end of Salisbury Cathedral.

Forget the association of the word "Gothic" to dark, haunted houses, *Wuthering Heights*, or ghostly pale people wearing black nail polish and ripped fishnets. The original Gothic style was actually developed to bring sunshine into people's lives, and especially into their churches. To get past the accrued definitions of the centuries, it's best to go back to the very start of the word Gothic, and to the style that bears the name.

The Goths were a so-called barbaric tribe who held power in various regions of Europe, between the collapse of the Roman Empire and the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire (so, from roughly the fifth to the eighth century). They were not renowned for great achievements in architecture. As with many art historical terms, "Gothic" came to be applied to a certain architectural style after the fact.
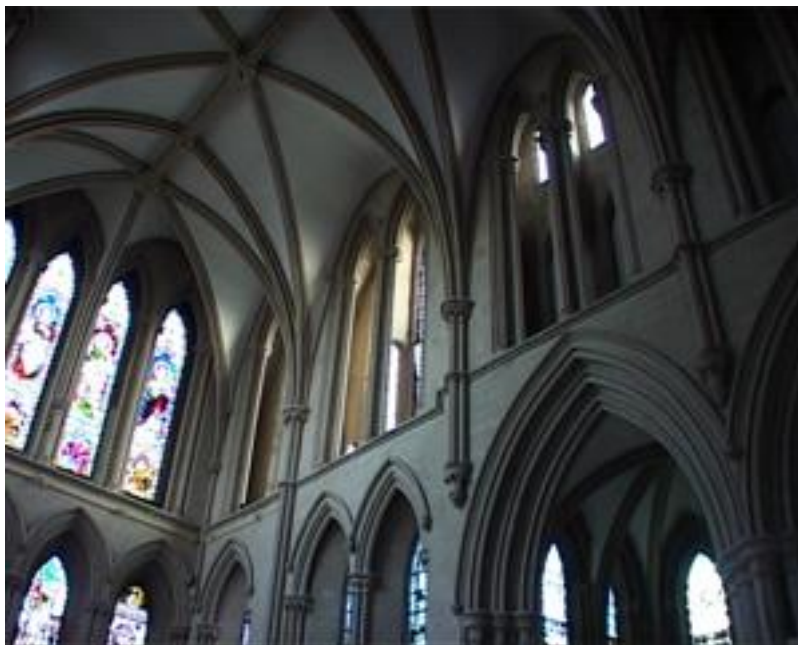
Early Gothic arches, Southwell Minster.

The style represented giant steps away from the previous, relatively basic building systems that had prevailed. The Gothic grew out of the Romanesque architectural style, when both prosperity and relative peace allowed for several centuries of cultural development and great building

schemes. From roughly 1000 to 1400, several significant cathedrals and churches were built, particularly in Britain and France, offering architects and masons a chance to work out ever more complex and daring designs.

The most fundamental element of the Gothic style of architecture is the pointed arch, which was likely borrowed from Islamic architecture that would have been seen in Spain at this time. The pointed arch relieved some of the thrust, and therefore, the stress on other structural elements. It then became possible to reduce the size of the columns or piers that supported the arch.

So, rather than having massive, drum-like columns as in the Romanesque churches, the new columns could be more slender. This slimness was repeated in the upper levels of the nave, so that the gallery and clerestory would not seem to overpower the lower arcade. In fact, the column basically continued all the way to the roof and became part of the vault.

Nave of Salisbury Cathedral.

In the vault, the pointed arch could be seen in three dimensions where the ribbed vaulting met in the center of the ceiling of each bay. This ribbed vaulting is another distinguishing feature of Gothic architecture. However, it should be noted that prototypes for the pointed arches and ribbed vaulting were seen first in late-Romanesque buildings.

The new understanding of architecture and design led to more fantastic examples of vaulting and ornamentation, and the Early Gothic or Lancet style (from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) developed into the Decorated or Rayonnant Gothic (roughly fourteenth century). The ornate stonework that held the windows–called tracery–became more florid, and other stonework even more exuberant.

Open tracery at Southwell Minster.

The ribbed vaulting became more complicated and was crossed with *lierne* ribs into complex webs, or the addition of cross ribs, called *tierceron*. As the decoration developed further, the Perpendicular or International Gothic took over (fifteenth century). Fan vaulting decorated half-conoid shapes extending from the tops of the columnar ribs.

Lierne vaults Gloucester Cathedral.

The slender columns and lighter systems of thrust allowed for larger windows and more light. The windows, tracery, carvings, and ribs make up a dizzying display of decoration that one encounters in a Gothic church. In late Gothic buildings, almost every surface is decorated. Although such a building as a whole is ordered and coherent, the profusion of shapes and patterns can make a sense of order difficult to discern at first glance.

Gothic windows at Gloucester Cathedral.

After the great flowering of Gothic style, tastes again shifted back to the neat, straight lines and rational geometry of the Classical era. It was in the Renaissance that the name Gothic came to be applied to this medieval style that seemed vulgar to Renaissance sensibilities. It is still the term we use today, though hopefully without the implied insult, which negates the amazing leaps of imagination and engineering that were required to build such edifices.

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Chapter 22: Arts of the Islamic World

Origins and the life of Muhammad the Prophet

Islam, Judaism and Christianity are three of the world's great monotheistic faiths. They share many of the same holy sites, such as Jerusalem, and prophets, such as Abraham. Collectively, scholars refer to these three religions as the Abrahamic faiths, since Abraham and his family played vital roles in the formation of these religions.

Islam was founded by Muhammad (c. 570-632 C.E.), a merchant from the city of Mecca, now in modern-day Saudi Arabia. Mecca was a well-established trading city. The Kaaba (in Mecca) is the focus of pilgrimage for Muslims.

The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, provides very little detail about Muhammad's life; however, the hadiths, or sayings of the Prophet, which were largely compiled in the centuries following Muhammad's death, provide a larger narrative for the events in his life. Muhammad was born in 570 C.E. in Mecca, and his early life was unremarkable. He married a wealthy widow named Khadija. Around 610 C.E., Muhammad had his first religious experience, where he was instructed to recite by the Angel Gabriel. After a period of introspection and self-doubt, Muhammad accepted his role as God's prophet and began to preach word of the one God, or Allah in Arabic. His first convert was his wife.

The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra), Umayyad, stone masonry, wooden roof, decorated with glazed ceramic tile, mosaics, and gilt aluminum and bronze dome, 691-2, with multiple renovations, patron the Caliph Abd al-Malik, Jerusalem (photo: Brian Jeffery Beggerly, CC BY 2.0))

Interior of the Dome of the Rock (photo: Robert Smythe Hitchens, public domain)

Muhammad's divine recitations form the Qur'an; unlike the Bible or Hindu epics, it is organized into verses, known as ayat. During one of his many visions, in 621 C.E., Muhammad was taken on the famous Night Journey by the Angel Gabriel, travelling from Mecca to the farthest mosque in Jerusalem, from where he ascended into heaven. The site of his ascension is believed to be the stone around which the Dome of the Rock was built. Eventually in 622, Muhammad and his followers fled Mecca for the city of Yathrib, which is known as Medina today, where his community was welcomed. This event is known as the hijra, or emigration. 622, the year of the hijra (A.H.), marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar, which is still in use today.

Between 625-630 C.E., there were a series of battles fought between the Meccans and Muhammad and the new Muslim community. Eventually, Muhammad was victorious and reentered Mecca in 630.
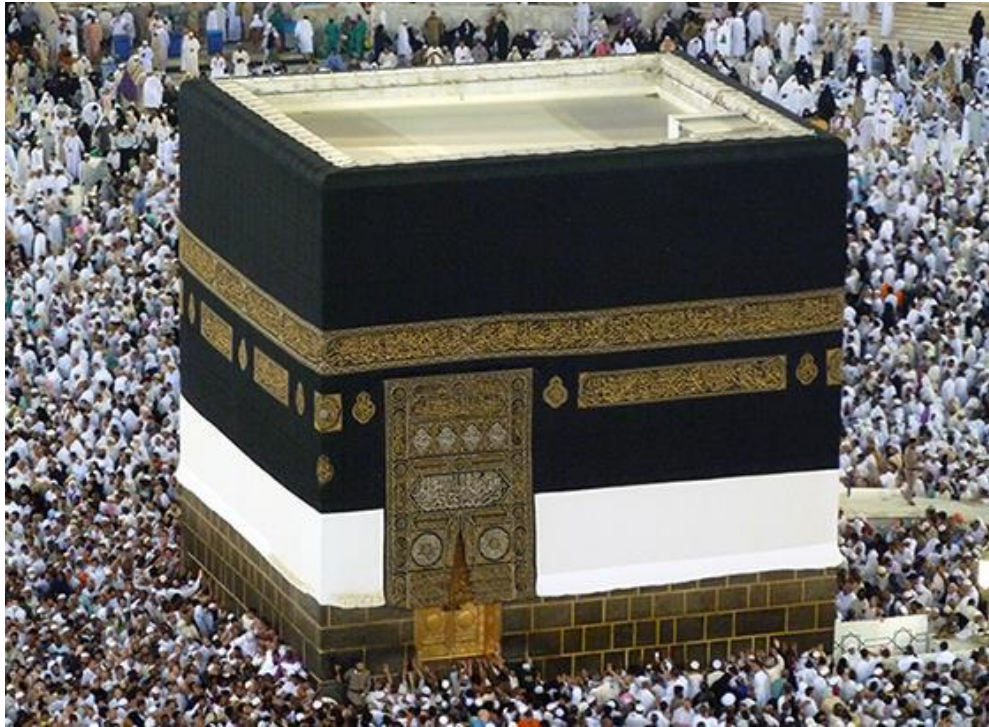
The Kaaba, granite masonry, covered with silk curtain and calligraphy in gold and silver-wrapped thread, pre-Islamic monument, rededicated by Muhammad in 631-32 C.E., multiple renovations, Mecca, Saudi Arabia (photo: The Kaaba in the Masjid el Haram, 2010 Tab59, CC BY-SA 2.0)

One of Muhammad's first actions was to purge the Kaaba of all of its idols (before this, the Kaaba was a major site of pilgrimage for the polytheistic religious traditions of the Arabian Peninsula and contained numerous idols of pagan gods). The Kaaba is believed to have been built by Abraham (or Ibrahim as he is known in Arabic) and his son, Ishmael. The Arabs claim descent from Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar. The Kaaba then became the most important center for pilgrimage in Islam.

In 632, Muhammad died in Medina. Muslims believe that he was the final in a line of prophets, which included Moses, Abraham, and Jesus.

After Muhammad's death

The century following Muhammad's death was dominated by military conquest and expansion. Muhammad was succeeded by the four "rightly-guided" Caliphs (khalifa or successor in Arabic): Abu Bakr (632-34 C.E.), Umar (634-44 C.E.), Uthman (644-56 C.E.), and Ali (656-661 C.E.). The Qur'an is believed to have been codified during Uthman's reign. The final caliph, Ali, was married to Fatima, Muhammad's daughter and was murdered in 661. The death of Ali is a very important event; his followers, who believed that he should have succeeded Muhammad directly, became known as the Shi'a, meaning the followers of Ali. Today, the Shi'ite community is composed of several different branches, and there are large Shi'a populations in Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain. The Sunnis, who do not hold that Ali should have directly succeeded Muhammad, compose the largest branch of Islam; their adherents can be found across North Africa, the Middle East, as

well as in Asia and Europe.

During the seventh and early eighth centuries, the Arab armies conquered large swaths of territory in the Middle East, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and Central Asia, despite on-going civil wars in Arabia and the Middle East. Eventually, the Umayyad Dynasty emerged as the rulers, with Abd al-Malik completing the Dome of the Rock, one of the earliest surviving Islamic monuments, in 691/2 C.E. The Umayyads reigned until 749/50 C.E., when they were overthrown, and the Abbasid Dynasty assumed the Caliphate and ruled large sections of the Islamic world. However, with the Abbasid Revolution, no one ruler would ever again control all of the Islamic lands.

Expansion under the Prophet Mohammad, 622-632
Expansion during the Rashidun Caliphate, 632-661
Expansion during the Umayyad Dynasty, 661-750
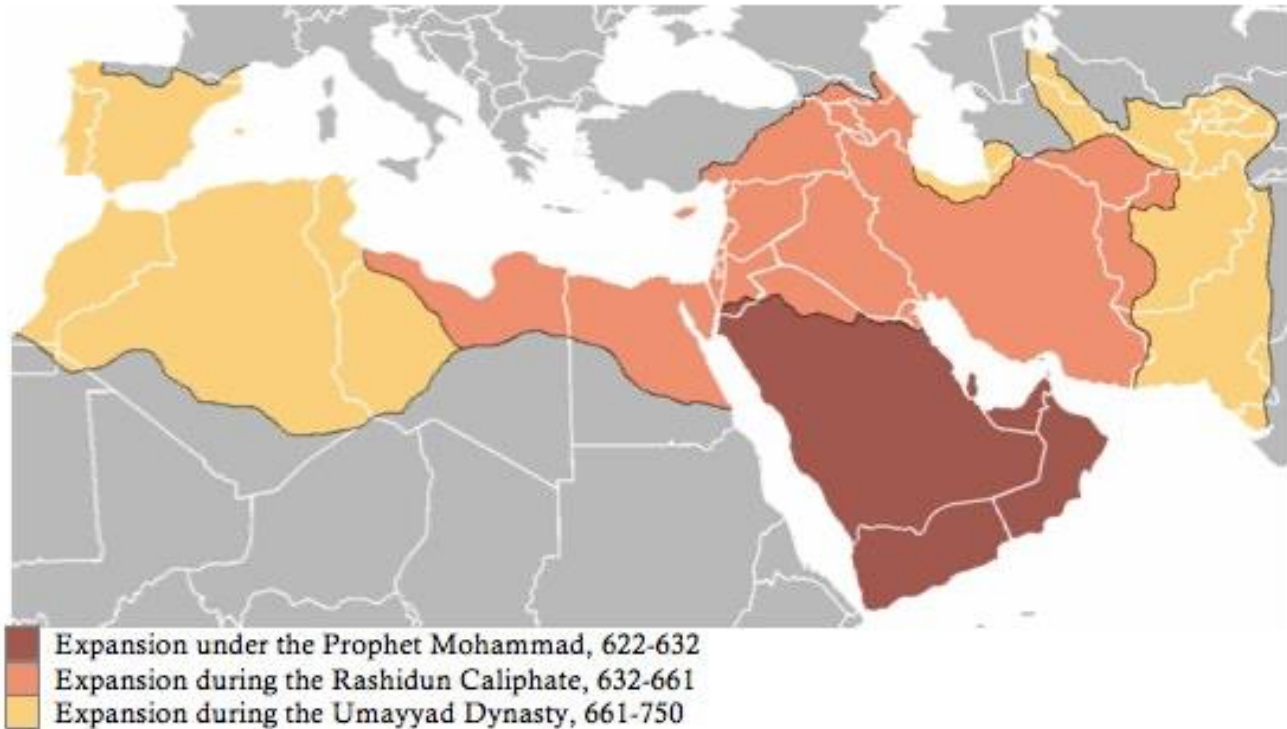
Folio from a Qur'an
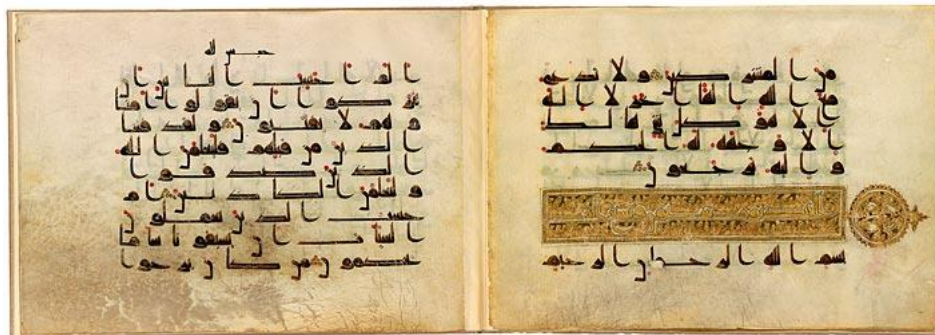
Qu'ran fragment, in Arabic, before 911, vellum, MS M. 712, fols 19v-20r, 23 x 32 cm, possibly Iraq (The Morgan Library and Museum, New York)

The Qur'an is the sacred text of Islam, consisting of the divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic. Over the course of the first century and a half of Islam, the form of the manuscript was adapted to suit the dignity and splendor of this divine revelation. However, the

word Qur'an, which means "recitation," suggests that manuscripts were of secondary importance to oral tradition. In fact, the 114 *suras* (or chapters) of the Qur'an were compiled into a textual format, organized from longest to shortest, only after the death of Muhammad, although scholars still debate exactly when this might have occurred.

Mosque architecture

From Indonesia to the United Kingdom, the mosque in its many forms is the quintessential Islamic building. The mosque, masjid in Arabic, is the Muslim gathering place for prayer. Masjid simply means "place of prostration." Though most of the five daily prayers prescribed in Islam can take place anywhere, all men are required to gather together at the mosque for the Friday noon prayer.

Mimar Sinan, courtyard of the Süleymaniye Mosque, İstanbul, 1558

Mosques are also used throughout the week for prayer, study, or simply as a place for rest and reflection. The main mosque of a city, used for the Friday communal prayer, is called a jami masjid, literally meaning "Friday mosque," but it is also sometimes called a congregational mosque in English. The style, layout, and decoration of a mosque can tell us a lot about Islam in general, but also about the period and region in which the mosque was constructed.

The home of the Prophet Muhammad is considered the first mosque. His house, in Medina in modern-day Saudi Arabia, was a typical 7th-century Arabian style house, with a large courtyard surrounded by long rooms supported by columns. This style of mosque came to be known as a hypostyle mosque, meaning "many columns." Most mosques built in Arab lands utilized this style for centuries.
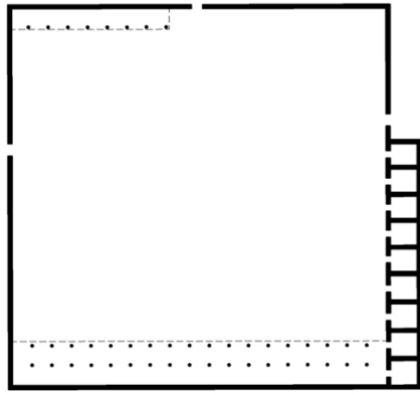
Diagram reconstruction of the Prophet's House, Medina, Saudi Arabia

Common features

The architecture of a mosque is shaped most strongly by the regional traditions of the time and place where it was built. As a result, style, layout, and decoration can vary greatly. Nevertheless, because of the common function of the mosque as a place of congregational prayer, certain architectural features appear in mosques all over the world.

Sahn (courtyard)

The most fundamental necessity of congregational mosque architecture is that it be able to hold the entire male population of a city or town (women are welcome to attend Friday prayers, but not required to do so). To that end congregational mosques must have a large prayer hall. In many mosques this is adjoined to an open courtyard, called a sahn. Within the courtyard one often finds a fountain, its waters both a welcome respite in hot lands, and important for the ablutions (ritual cleansing) done before prayer.

Sahn (courtyard) and minaret, Great Mosque of Kairouan, Tunisia c. 836-75 (photo: Andrew Watson, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Mihrab (niche)

Another essential element of a mosque's architecture is a mihrab—a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which all Muslims pray. Mecca is the city in which the Prophet Muhammad was born, and the home of the most important Islamic site, the Kaaba. The direction of Mecca is called the qibla, and so the wall in which the mihrab is set is called the qibla wall. No matter where a mosque is, its mihrab indicates the direction of Mecca (or as near that direction as science and geography were able to place it). Therefore, a mihrab in India will be to the west, while a one in Egypt will be to the east. A mihrab is usually a relatively shallow niche, as in the example from Egypt, below.

Mihrab & minbar, Mosque of Sultan Hassan, Cairo, 1356-63 (photo: Dave Berkowitz, CC BY 2.0)

Minaret (tower)

One of the most visible aspects of mosque architecture is the minaret, a tower adjacent or attached to a mosque, from which the call to prayer is announced. Minarets take many different forms—from the famous spiral minaret of Samarra, to the tall, pencil minarets of Ottoman Turkey. Not solely functional in nature, the minaret serves as a powerful visual reminder of the presence of Islam.
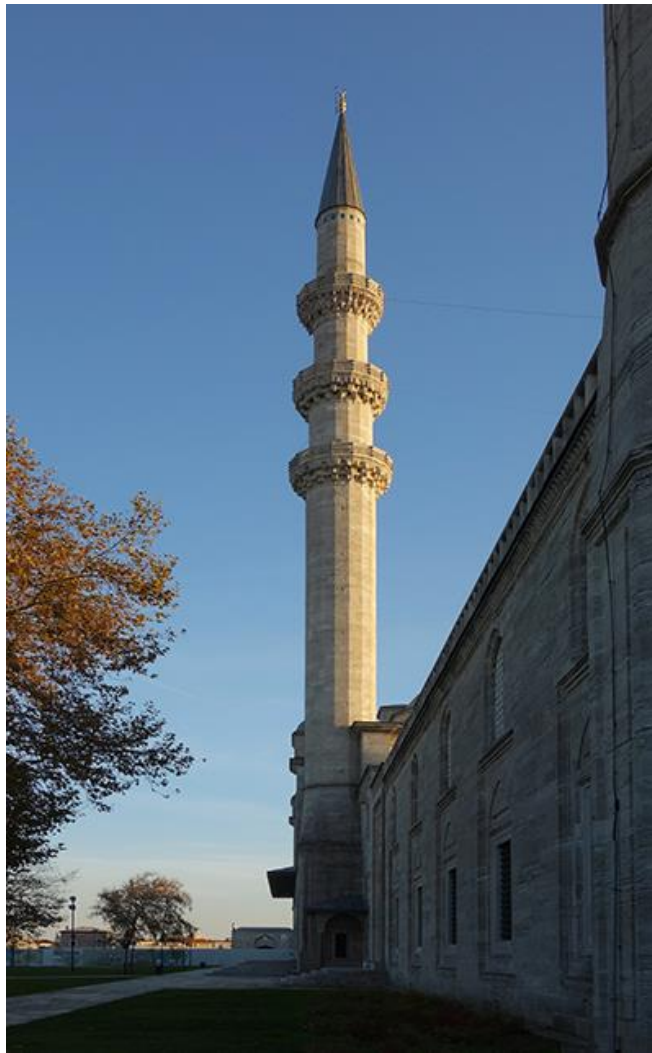
Mimar Sinan, Minaret, Süleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul, 1558

Qubba (dome)

Most mosques also feature one or more domes, called qubba in Arabic. While not a ritual requirement like the mihrab, a dome does possess significance within the mosque—as a symbolic representation of the vault of heaven. The interior decoration of a dome often emphasizes this symbolism, using intricate geometric, stellate, or vegetal motifs to create breathtaking patterns meant to awe and inspire. Some mosque types incorporate multiple domes into their architecture (as in the Ottoman Süleymaniye Mosque pictured at the top of the page), while others only feature one. In mosques with only a single dome, it is invariably found surmounting the qibla wall, the holiest section of the mosque. The Great Mosque of Kairouan, in Tunisia (not pictured) has three domes: one atop the minaret, one above the entrance to the prayer hall, and one above the qibla wall.

Three-dimensional views of the Great Mosque of Kairouan
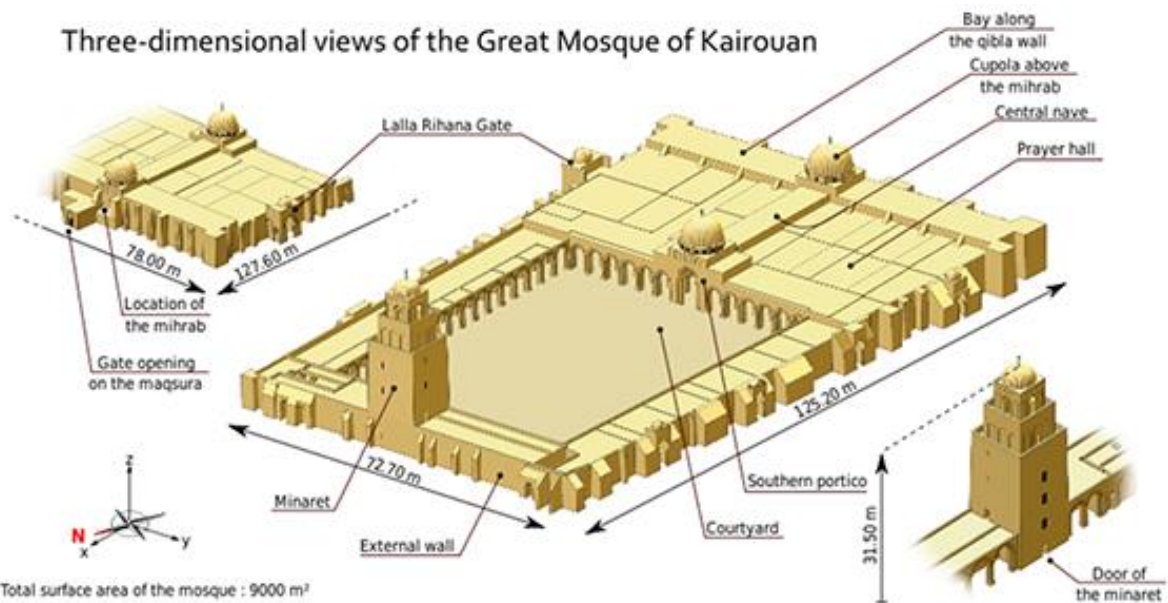
Rendering of the Great Mosque of Kairouan, Tunisia. From left to right: zoom on the south wall (seen from the outside), global view of the mosque, zoom on the minaret seen from the court (graphic: Tachymètre)

Spain

Following the overthrow of his family (the Umayyads) in Damascus by the incoming Abbasids, Prince Abd al-Rahman I escaped to southern Spain. Once there, he established control over almost all of the Iberian Peninsula and attempted to recreate the grandeur of Damascus in his new capital, Cordoba. He sponsored elaborate building programs, promoted agriculture, and even imported fruit trees and other plants from his former home. Orange trees still stand in the courtyard of the Mosque of Cordoba, a beautiful, if bittersweet reminder of the Umayyad exile.
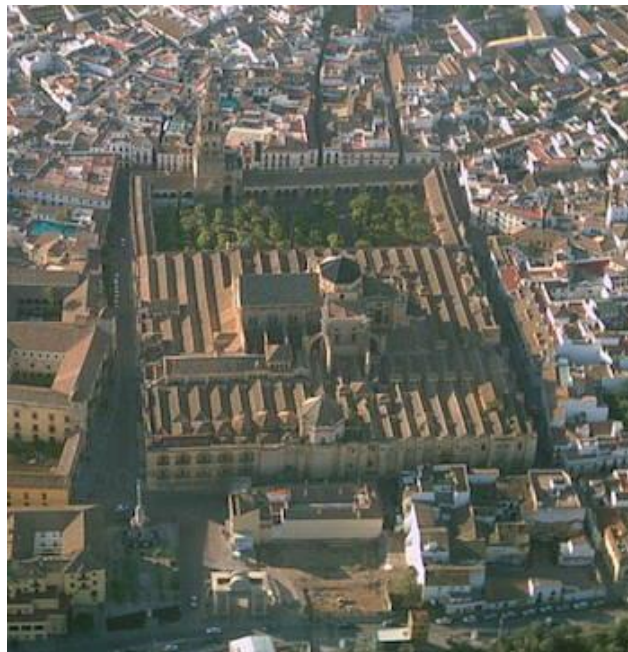
Great Mosque of Cordoba from the Air, Cordoba, Spain, begun 786 and enlarged during the 9th and 10th centuries (photo: Ulamm, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The Great Mosque of Cordoba

The building itself was expanded over two hundred years. It is comprised of a large hypostyle prayer hall (hypostyle means, filled with columns), a courtyard with a fountain in the middle, an orange grove, a covered walkway circling the courtyard, and a minaret that is now encased in a squared, tapered bell tower. The expansive prayer hall seems magnified by its repeated geometry. It is built with recycled ancient Roman columns from which sprout a striking combination of two-tiered, symmetrical arches, formed of stone and red brick.

Hypostyle hall, Great Mosque at Cordoba, Spain, begun 786 and enlarged during the 9th and 10th centuries

The horseshoe-style arch was common in the architecture of the Visigoths, the people that ruled this area after the Roman empire collapsed and before the Umayyads arrived. The horseshoe arch eventually spread across North Africa from Morocco to Egypt and is an easily identified characteristic of Western Islamic architecture (though there are some early examples in the East as well).

The Great Mosque of Cordoba is a prime example of the Muslim world's ability to brilliantly develop architectural styles based on pre-existing regional traditions. Here is an extraordinary combination of the familiar and the innovative, a formal stylistic vocabulary that can be recognized as "Islamic" even today.

Persia

The Ardabil Carpet

Medallion Carpet, The Ardabil Carpet, Unknown artist (Maqsud Kashani is named on the carpet's inscription), Persian: Safavid Dynasty, silk warps and wefts with wool pile (25 million knots, 340 per sq. inch), 1539-40 C.E., Tabriz, Kashan, Isfahan or Kirman, Iran (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Old, beautiful and important

The Ardabil Carpet is exceptional; it is one of the world's oldest Islamic carpets, as well as one of the largest, most beautiful and historically important. It is not only stunning in its own right, but it is bound up with the history of one of the great political dynasties of Iran.

The Ardabil Carpet at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

About carpets

Carpets are among the most fundamental of Islamic arts. Portable, typically made of silk and wools, carpets were traded and sold across the Islamic lands and beyond its boundaries to Europe and China. Those from Iran were highly prized. Carpets decorated the floors of mosques, shrines and homes, but they could also be hung on walls of houses to preserve warmth in the winter.

Medallion Carpet, The Ardabil Carpet, Unknown artist (Maqsud Kashani is named on the carpet's inscription), Persian: Safavid Dynasty, silk warps and wefts with wool pile (25 million knots, 340 per sq. inch), 1539-40 C.E., Tabriz, Kashan, Isfahan or Kirman, Iran (Victoria and Albert Museum)

Ardabil and a 14th century saint

The carpet takes its name from the town of Ardabil in north-west Iran. Ardabil was the home to the shrine of the Sufi saint, Safi al-Din Ardabili, who died in 1334 (Sufism is Islamic mysticism). He was a Sufi leader who trained his followers in Islamic mystic practices. After his death, his following grew, and his descendants became increasingly powerful. In 1501 one of his descendants, Shah Isma'il, seized power, united Iran, and established Shi'a Islam as the official religion. The dynasty he founded is known as the Safavids. Their rule, which lasted until 1722, was one of the most important periods for Islamic art, especially for textiles and for manuscripts.

Design and pattern

The rich geometric patterns, vegetative scrolls, floral flourishes, so typical of Islamic art, reach a fever pitch in this remarkable carpet, encouraging the viewer to walk around and around, trying to absorb every detail of design.

That the design of the carpet was not arbitrary or piecemeal but was well-organized and thoughtful can be seen throughout. Considering the immense size of the carpet—10.51m x 5.34m (34′ 6″ x 17′ 6″)—this is impressive. A central golden medallion dominates the carpet; it is surrounded by a ring of multi-colored, detailed ovals. Lamps appear to hang at either end.

The carpet's border is made up of a frame with a series of cartouches (rectangular-shaped spaces for calligraphy), filled with decoration. The central medallion design is also echoed by the four corner-pieces.

Detail of lamp, Ardabil Carpet

Art historians have debated the meaning of the two lamps that appear to hang from the medallion. They are of different sizes and some scholars have proposed that this was done to create a perspective effect, meaning that both lamps appear to be the same size when one sat next to the smaller lamp. Yet, there is no evidence for the use of this type of perspective in Iran in the 1530s, nor does this explain why the lamps were included. Perhaps they were included to mimic lamps found in mosques and shrines, helping the viewer to look deeply into the carpet below them and then above them, to the ceiling where similar lamps would have hung, creating visual unity within the shrine.

Detail, Ardabil Carpet

The design of the Ardabil carpet and its skillful execution is a testament to the great skill of the artisans at work in north-west Iran in the 1530s.

The Court of Gayumars

Whole page left, and detail, right: Sultan Muhammad, *The Court of Gayumars,* c.1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

The Shahnama

This sumptuous page, The Court of Gayumars (also spelled Kayumars— see top of page, details below and large image here), comes from an illuminated manuscript of the Shahnama (Book of Kings)—an epic poem describing the history of kingship in Persia (what is now Iran). Because of its blending of painting styles from both Tabriz and Herat, its luminous pigments, fine detail, and complex imagery, this copy of the Shahnama stands out in the history of the artistic production in Central Asia.

The Shahnama was written by Abu al-Qāsim Ferdowsi around the year 1000 and is a masterful example of Persian poetry. The epic chronicles kings and heroes who pre-date the introduction of Islam to Persia as well as the human experiences of love, suffering, and death. The epic has

been copied countless times—often with elaborate illustrations (see another example here).

King of the world

There are several interpretive issues to keep in mind when analyzing Persianate paintings. As with many of the workshops of early modern West Asia, producing a page such as the Court of Gayumars often entailed the contributions of many artists. It is also important to remember that a miniature painting from an illuminated manuscript should not be thought of in isolation. The individual pages that we today find in museums, libraries, and private collections must be understood as but one sheet of a larger book—with its own history, conditions of production, and dispersement. To make matters even more complex, the relationship of text to image is rarely straightforward in Persianate manuscripts. Text and image, within these illuminations, do not always mirror each other.[1] Nevertheless, the framed calligraphic *nasta'liq* (hanging)—the Persian text at the top and bottom of the frame (image above) can be roughly translated as follows:

> *When the sun reached the lamb constellation,[2] when the world became glorious,*
> *When the sun shined from the lamb constellation to rejuvenate the living beings entirely,*
> *It was then when Gayumars became the King of the World.*
> *He first built his residence in the mountains.*
> *His prosperity and his palace rose from the mountains, and he and his people wore leopard pelts.*
> *Cultivation began from him, and the garments and food were ample and fresh.*
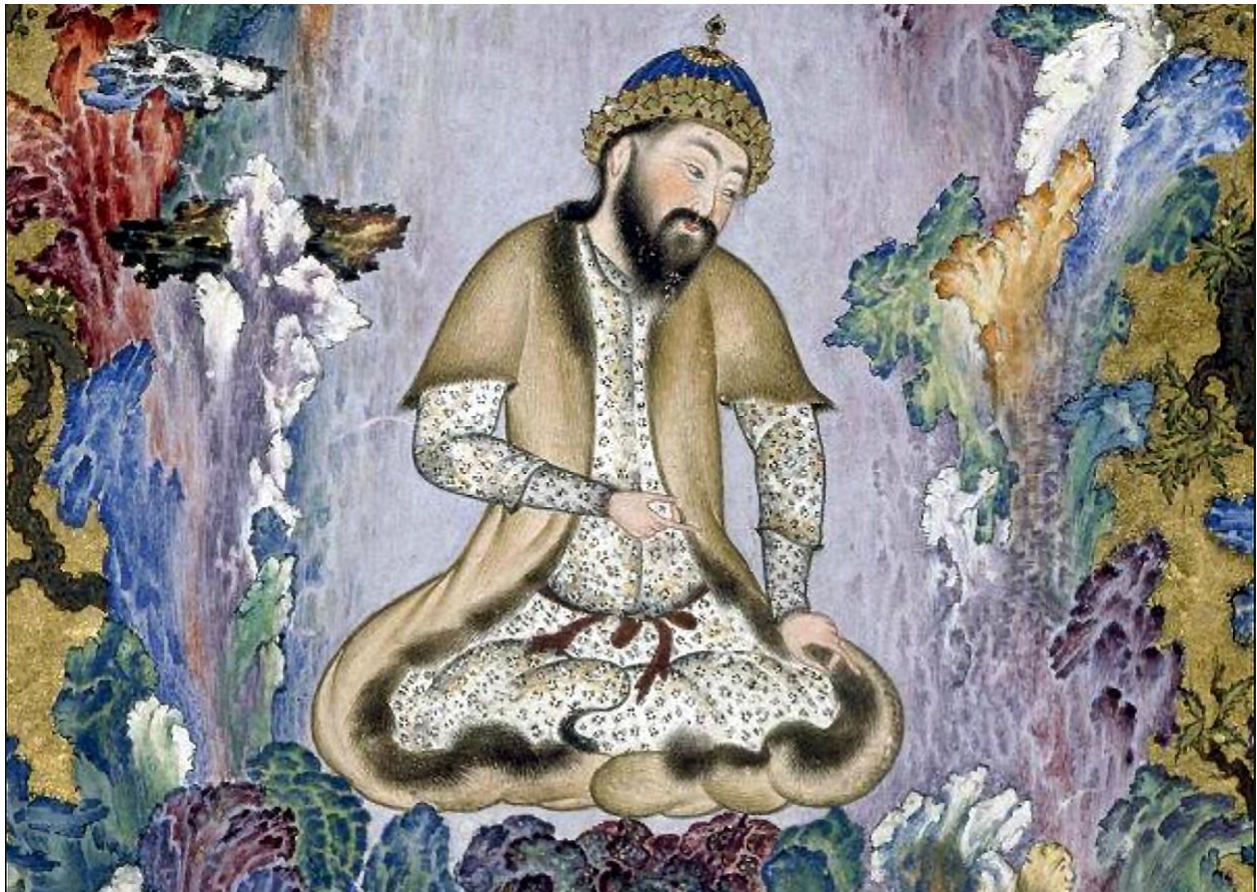
King Gayumars (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto).

Dense with detail

In this folio (page), we can see some parallels between the content of the calligraphic text and the painting itself. Seated in a cross-legged position, as if levitating within this richly vegetal and mountainous landscape, King Gayumars rises above his courtiers, who are gathered around at the base of the painting. According to legend, King Gayumars was the first king of Persia, and he ruled at a time when people clothed themselves exclusively in leopard pelts, as both the text and the represented subjects' speckled garments indicate.

King Gayumars, Siyamak, and Hushang (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

Perched on cliffs beside the King are his son, Siyamak (left, standing), and grandson Hushang (right, seated). Onlookers can be seen to surreptitiously peer out from the scraggly, blossoming branches onto King Gayumars from the upper left and right. The miniature's spatial composition is organized on a vertical axis with the mountain behind the king in the distance, and the garden below in the foreground. Nevertheless, there are multiple points of perspective, and perhaps even multiple moments in time—rendering a scene dense with details meant to absorb and enchant the viewer.

India

The Mughal Empire (c. 1526–1858)

Though Islam had been introduced in India centuries before, the Mughals were responsible for some of the greatest works of art produced in the canons of both Indian and Islamic art. The empire established itself when Babur, himself a Timurid prince of Turkish and Central Asian descent, came to Hindustan and defeated the existing Islamic sultanate in Delhi.

Tracing their roots to Central Asia, the Mughals produced art, music and poetry that was highly influenced by Persian and Central Asian aesthetics. This is evident in the style and importance given to miniature paintings, created to illustrate manuscripts. The most grandiose of these was the Akbarnama, created to record the conquests of Akbar, widely regarded as the greatest Mughal emperor. The art and architecture created during his reign demonstrate a synthesis of indigenous Indian temple architecture with structural and design elements derived from Islamic sources farther West. The Mughals developed a unique architectural style which, in the years after Akbar's reign, began to feature scalloped arches and stylized floral designs in white marble. The most famous example is the Taj Mahal, constructed by Shah Jahan from 1632-1653.

The Taj Mahal

Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: Mathew Knott, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Shah Jahan was the fifth ruler of the Mughal dynasty. During his third regnal year, his favorite wife, known as Mumtaz Mahal, died due to complications arising from the birth of their fourteenth child. Deeply saddened, the emperor started planning the construction of a suitable, permanent resting place for his beloved wife almost immediately. The result of his efforts and resources was the creation of what was called the Luminous Tomb in contemporary Mughal texts and is what the world knows today as the Taj Mahal.

In general terms, Sunni Muslims favor a simple burial, under an open sky. But notable domed mausolea for Mughals (as well as for other Central Asian rulers) were built prior to Shah Jahan's rule, so in this regard, the Taj is not unique. The Taj is, however, exceptional for its monumental scale, stunning gardens, lavish ornamentation, and its overt use of white marble.

Paradise on Earth

Entry to the Taj Mahal complex via the forecourt, which in the sixteenth century housed shops, and through a monumental gate of inlaid and highly decorated red sandstone made for a first impression of grand splendor and symmetry: aligned along a long water channel through this gate is the Taj—set majestically on a raised platform on the north end. The rectangular complex runs roughly 1860 feet on the north-south axis, and 1000 feet on the east-west axis.

Entrance, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53

Aerial view from Google Earth, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53

The white-marble mausoleum is flanked on either side by identical buildings in red sandstone. One of these serves as a mosque, and the other, whose exact function is unknown, provides architectural balance.

The marble structure is topped by a bulbous dome and surrounded by four minarets of equal height. While minarets in Islamic architecture are usually associated with mosques—for use by the muezzin who leads the call to prayer—here, they are not functional, but ornamental, once again underscoring the Mughal focus on structural balance and harmony.

The interior floor plan of the Taj exhibits the *hasht bishisht* (eight levels) principle, alluding to the eight levels of paradise. Consisting of eight halls and side rooms connected to the main space in a cross-axial plan—the favored design for Islamic architecture from the mid-fifteenth century— the center of the main chamber holds Mumtaz Mahal's intricately decorated marble cenotaph on a raised platform. The emperor's cenotaph was laid down beside hers after he died three decades later—both are encased in an octagon of exquisitely carved white-marble screens. The coffins bearing their remains lie in the spaces directly beneath the cenotaphs.
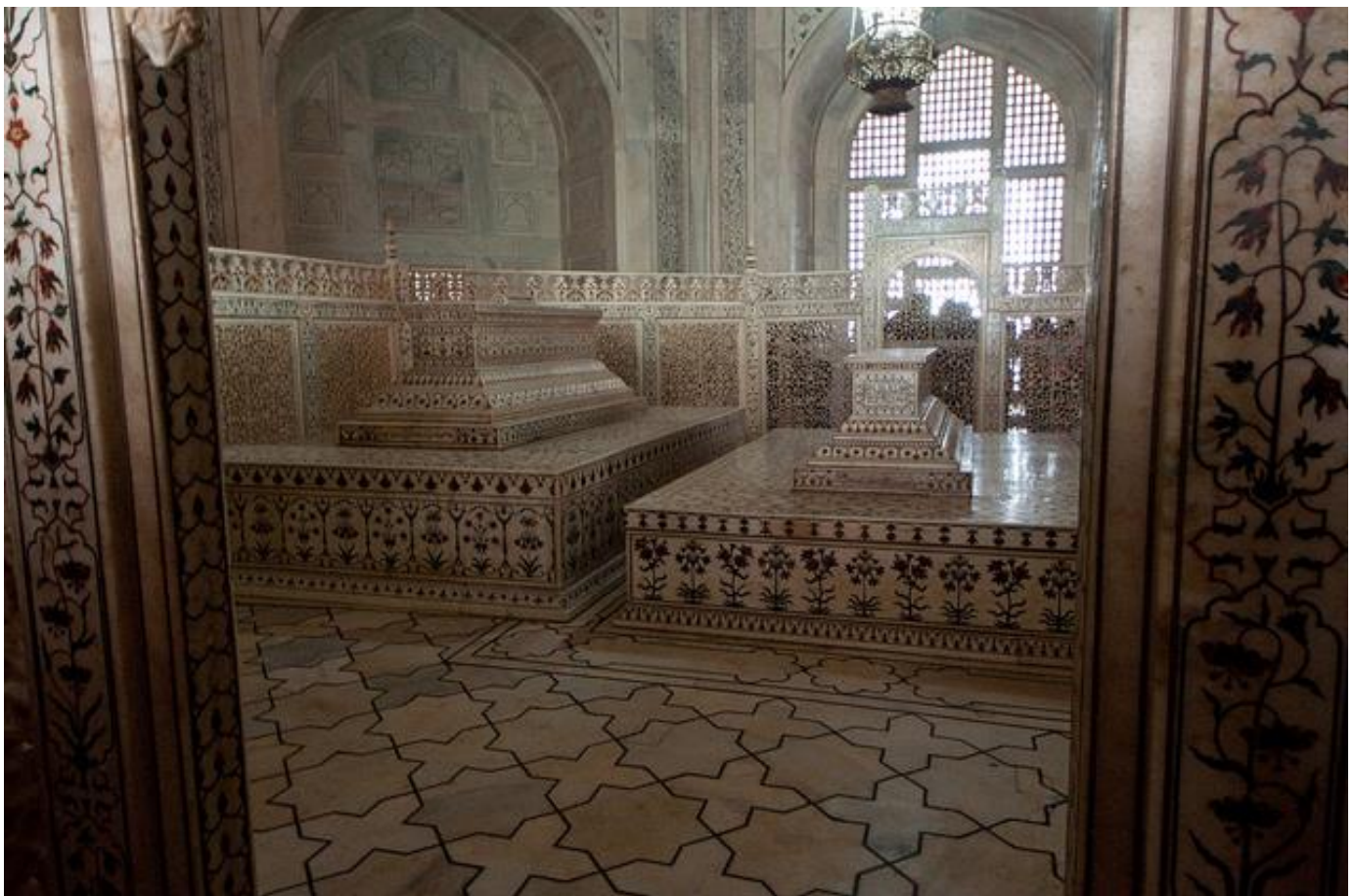
Cenotaphs, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: Derek A Young, CC BY-NC 2.0)

What the Taj Mahal represents

When Mumtaz Mahal died at age 38 in 1631, the emperor is reported to have refused to engage in court festivities, postponed two of his sons' weddings, and allegedly made frequent visits to his wife's temporary resting place (in Burhanpur) during the time it took for the building of the Taj to be completed. Stories like these have led to the Taj Mahal being referred to as an architectural

"symbol of love" in popular literature. But there are other theories: one suggests that the Taj is not a funeral monument, and that Shah Jahan might have built a similar structure even if his wife had not died. Based on the metaphoric specificity of Qur'anic and other inscriptions and the emperor's love of thrones, another theory maintains that the Taj Mahal is a symbolic representation of a Divine Throne—the seat of God—on the Day of Judgment. A third view holds that the monument was built to represent a replica of a house of paradise. In the "paradisiacal mansion" theory, the Taj was something of a vanity project, built to glorify Mughal rule and the emperor himself.

If his accession to the throne was smooth, Shah Jahan's departure from it was not. The emperor died not as a ruler, but as a prisoner. Relegated to Agra Fort under house arrest for eight years prior to his death in 1666, Shah Jahan could enjoy only a distant view of the Taj Mahal. But the resplendent marble mausoleum he built "with posterity in mind" endures, more than 350 years after it was constructed, and is believed to be the most recognizable sight in the world today. Laid to rest beside his beloved wife in the Taj Mahal, the man once called Padshah—King of the World—enjoys enduring fame, too, for having commissioned the world's most extravagant and memorable mausoleum.

Although historians generally agree that the major Islamic dynasties end in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Islamic art and culture have continued to flourish. Muslim artists and Muslim countries are still producing art. Some art historians consider such work as simply modern or contemporary art while others see it within the continuity of Islamic art.

License and Attributions

Chapter 23: Arts of Asia: 5th – 15th Centuries

Hindu Art and Architecture

Unlike Christianity or Buddhism, Hinduism did not develop from the teachings of a single founder. Moreover, it has diverse traditions, owing to its long history and continued development over the course of more than 3000 years. The term Hindu originally referred to those living on the other side of the Indus River, and by the thirteenth century it simply referred to those living in India. It was only in the eighteenth century that the term Hindu became specifically related to an Indic religion generally.

Hindus adhere to the principles of the Vedas, which are a body of Sanskritic texts that date as early as 1700 B.C.E. However, unlike the Christian or Islamic traditions, which have the Bible and the Koran, Hinduism does not adhere to a single text. The lack of a single text, among other things, also makes Hinduism a difficult religion to define.

Hinduism is neither monotheistic nor is it polytheistic. Hinduism's emphasis on the universal spirit, or Brahman, allows for the existence of a pantheon of divinities while remaining devoted to a particular god. It is for this reason that some scholars have referred to Hinduism as a henotheistic religion (the belief in and worship of a single god while accepting the existence or possible existence of other deities). Hinduism can also be described as a religion that appreciates orthopraxy—or right praxis. Because doctrinal views vary so widely among Hindus, there is no norm based on orthodoxy or right belief. By contrast, ritualized acts are consistent among differing Hindu groups.

Chola Dynasty: A bronze Shiva

Shiva constitutes a part of a powerful triad of divine energy within the cosmos of the Hindu religion. There is Brahma, the benevolent creator of the universe; there is Vishnu, the sagacious preserver; then there is Shiva, the destroyer. "Destroyer" in this sense is not an entirely negative force, but one that is expansive in its impact. In Hindu religious philosophy all things must come to a natural end so they can begin anew, and Shiva is the agent that brings about this end so that a new cycle can begin.

The Metropolitan Museum's *Shiva Nataraja* was made some time in the eleventh century during the Chola Dynasty (ninth-thirteenth centuries C.E.) in south India, in what is now the state of Tamil Nadu. One of the longest lasting empires of south India, the Chola Dynasty heralded a golden age of exploration, trade, and artistic development. A great area of innovation within the arts of the Chola period was in the field of metalwork, particularly in bronze sculpture. The expanse of the Chola empire stretched south-east towards Sri Lanka and gave the kingdom access to vast copper reserves that enabled the proliferation of bronze work by skilled artisans.

During this period a new kind of sculpture is made, one that combines the expressive qualities of stone temple carvings with the rich iconography possible in bronze casting. This image of Shiva is taken from the ancient Indian manual of visual depiction, the *Shilpa Shastras* (The Science or Rules of Sculpture), which contained a precise set of measurements and shapes for the limbs

and proportions of the divine figure. Arms were to be long like stalks of bamboo, faces round like the moon, and eyes shaped like almonds or the leaves of a lotus. The *Shastras* were a primer on the ideals of beauty and physical perfection within ancient Hindu ideology.

Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja), c. 11th century, Copper alloy, Chola period, 68.3 x 56.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

A dance within the cosmic circle of fire

Here, Shiva embodies those perfect physical qualities as he is frozen in the moment of his dance within the cosmic circle of fire that is the simultaneous and continuous creation and destruction of the universe. The ring of fire that surrounds the figure is the encapsulated cosmos of mass, time, and space, whose endless cycle of annihilation and regeneration moves in tune to the beat of Shiva's drum and the rhythm of his steps.

In his upper right hand he holds the *damaru*, the drum whose beats syncopate the act of creation

and the passage of time.

His lower right hand with his palm raised and facing the viewer is lifted in the gesture of the *abhaya mudra*, which says to the supplicant, "Be not afraid, for those who follow the path of righteousness will have my blessing."
Shiva's lower left hand stretches diagonally across his chest with his palm facing down towards his raised left foot, which signifies spiritual grace and fulfillment through meditation and mastery over one's baser appetites.

In his upper left hand, he holds the *agni* (below), the flame of destruction that annihilates all that the sound of the *damaru* has drummed into existence.

Shiva's upper left hand holding the agni, the flame of destruction (detail), Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja), c. 11th century, Copper alloy, Chola period, 68.3 x 56.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Shiva's right foot stands upon the huddled dwarf, the demon Apasmara, the embodiment of ignorance.

Shiva's foot on Apasmara (detail), Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja), c. 11th century, Copper alloy, Chola period, 68.3 x 56.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Shiva's hair, the long hair of the yogi, streams out across the space within the halo of fire that constitutes the universe. Throughout this entire process of chaos and renewal, the face of the god remains tranquil, transfixed in what the historian of South Asian art Heinrich Zimmer calls, "the mask of god's eternal essence."

Shiva's tranquil expression with long hair streaming (detail), Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja), c. 11th century, Copper alloy, Chola period, 68.3 x 56.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Chandella Dynasty: The Lakshmana temple

The Lakshmana temple was the first of several temples built by the Chandella kings in their newly-created capital of Khajuraho. Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, the Chandellas

patronized artists, poets, and performers, and built irrigation systems, palaces, and numerous temples out of sandstone. At one time over 80 temples existed at this site, including several Hindu temples dedicated to the gods Shiva, Vishnu, and Surya. There were also temples built to honor the divine teachers of Jainism (an ancient Indian religion). Approximately 30 temples remain at Khajuraho today.

Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, India, dedicated 954 C.E. (Chandella period), sandstone (photo: Christopher Voitus, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The original patron of the Lakshmana temple was a leader of the Chandella clan, Yashovarman, who gained control over territories in the Bundelkhand region of central India that was once part of the larger Pratihara Dynasty. Yashovarman sought to build a temple to legitimize his rule over these territories, though he died before it was finished. His son Dhanga completed the work and dedicated the temple in 954 C.E.

Vaikuntha Vishnu, womb chamber (*garba griha*), Lakshmana temple. 1076-1099 C.E., sandstone (photo: Christine Chauvin, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The central deity at the Lakshmana temple is an image of Vishnu in his three-headed form known as Vaikuntha who sits inside the temple's inner womb chamber also known as *garba griha* (above)—an architectural feature at the heart of all Hindu temples regardless of size or location. The womb chamber is the symbolic and physical core of the temple's shrine. It is dark, windowless, and designed for intimate, individualized worship of the divine—quite different from large congregational worshipping spaces that characterize many Christian churches and Muslim mosques.
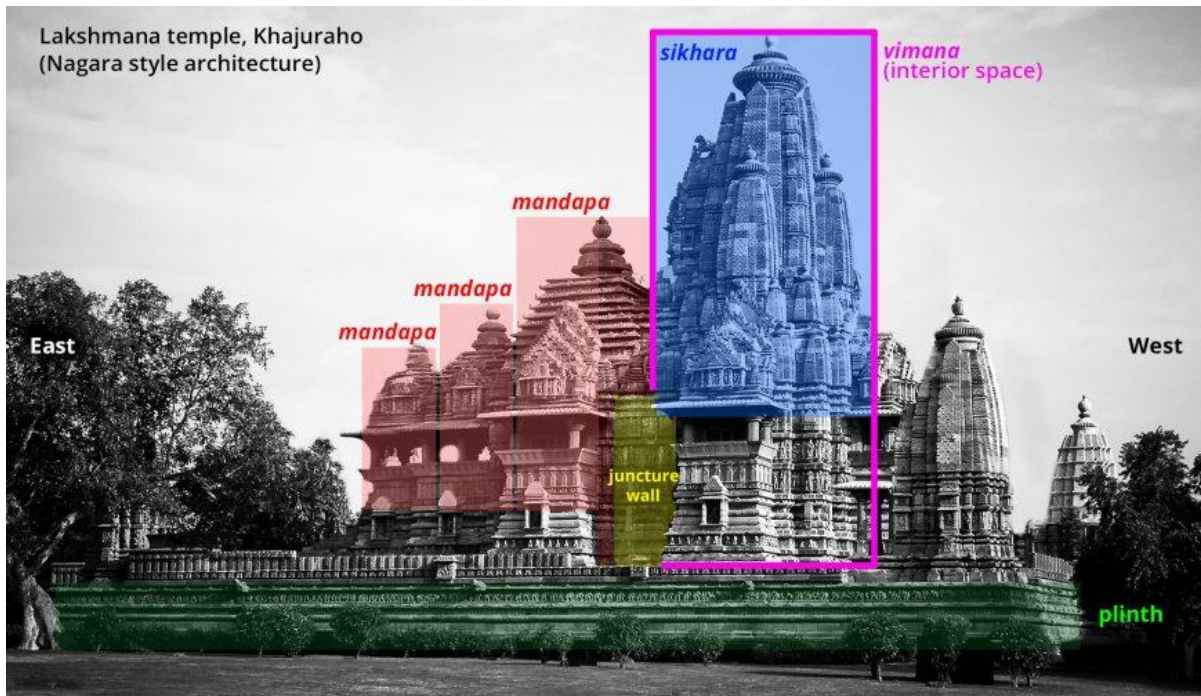
The Lakshmana Temple is an excellent example of Nagara style Hindu temple architecture. In general, there are two main styles of Hindu temple architecture: the Nagara style, which dominates temples from the northern regions of India, and the Dravida style, which appears more often in the South.In its most basic form, a Nagara temple consists of a shrine known as *vimana* (essentially the shell of the womb chamber) and a flat-roofed entry porch known as *mandapa*. The shrine of Nagara temples include a base platform and a large superstructure known as *sikhara* (meaning mountain peak), which viewers can see from a distance. The Lakshmana temple's superstructure appears like the many rising peaks of a mountain range.

Southeast Asia

Borobudur, Indonesia

Borobudur, Indonesia (photo: Claire André, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Located on the island of Java in Indonesia, the rulers of the Śailendra Dynasty built the Temple of Borobudur around 800 C.E. as a monument to the Buddha (exact dates vary among scholars). The temple (or candi in Javanese, pronounced "chandi") fell into disuse roughly one hundred years after its completion when, for still unknown reasons, the rulers of Java relocated the governing center to another part of the island. The British Lieutenant Governor on Java, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, only rediscovered the site in 1814 upon hearing reports from islanders of an incredible sanctuary deep within the island's interior.[1]

Bodobudur, photo: Wilson Loo Kok Wee (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Candi Borobudur's design was conceived of by the poet, thinker, and architect Gunadharma, considered by many today to be a man of great vision and devotion. The temple has been described in a number of ways. Its basic structure resembles that of a pyramid, yet it has been also referred to as a caitya (shrine), a stupa (reliquary), and a sacred mountain. In fact, the name Śailendra literally means "Lord of the Mountain." While the temple exhibits characteristics of all these architectural configurations, its overall plan is that of a three-dimensional mandala—a diagram of the cosmos used for meditation—and it is in that sense where the richest understanding of the monument occurs.
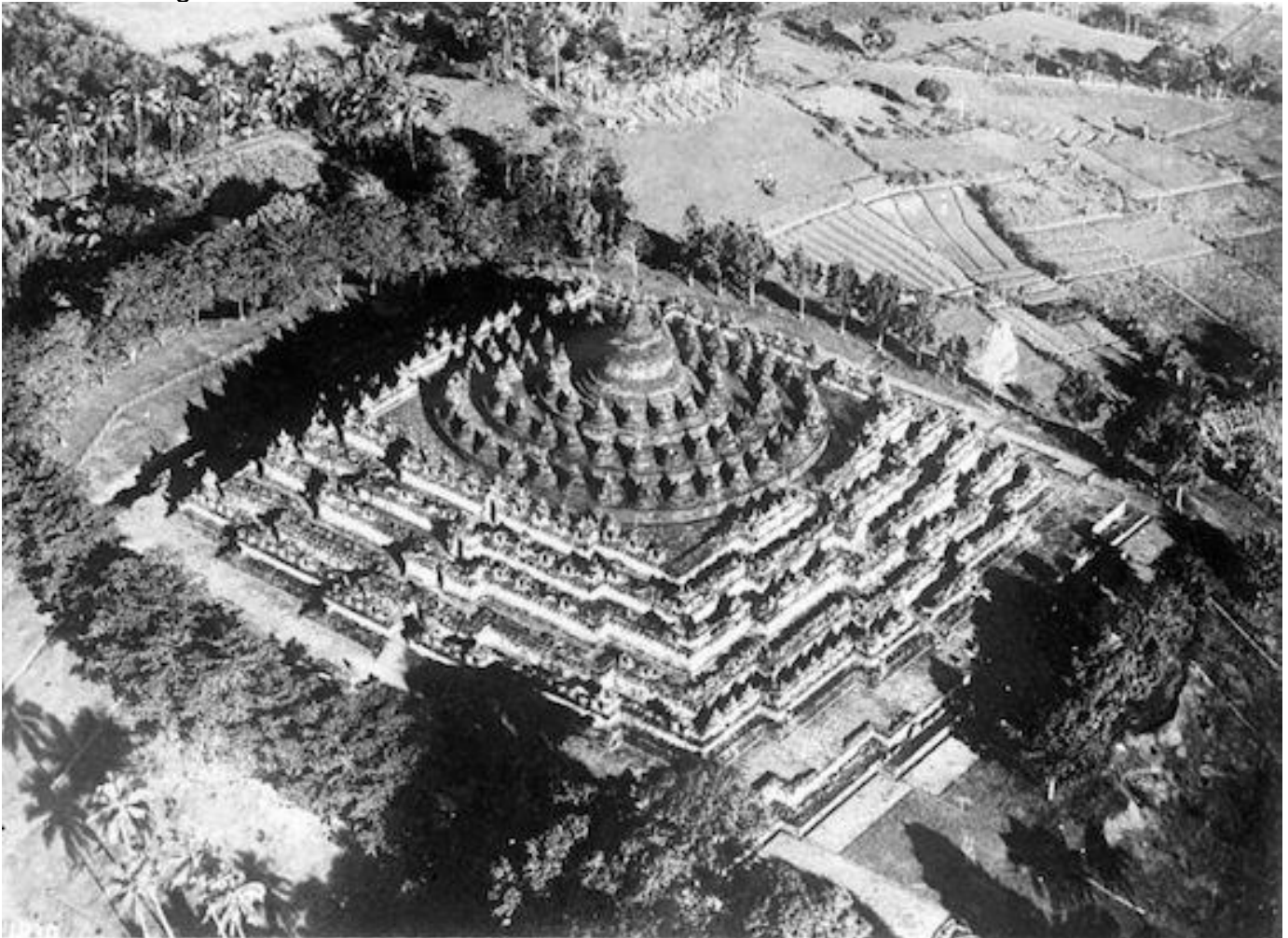
Aerial photo of Borobudur (Tropenmuseum Collection)

Set high upon a hill vertically enhanced by its builders to achieve a greater elevation, Borobudur

consists of a series of open-air passageways that radiate around a central axis mundi (cosmic axis). Devotees circumambulate clockwise along walkways that gradually ascend to its uppermost level. At Borobudur, geometry, geomancy, and theology all instruct adherents toward the ultimate goal of enlightenment. Meticulously carved relief sculptures mediate a physical and spiritual journey that guides pilgrims progressively toward higher states of consciousness.

Borobudur, Indonesia (photo: Wilson Loo Kok Wee, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The entire site contains 504 statues of the Buddha. 1460 stone reliefs on the walls and opposite balustrades decorate the first four galleries, with an additional 1212 decorative reliefs augmenting the path. The relief sculptures narrate the Buddha's teachings (the Dharma), depict various events related to his past lives (Jatakas), and illustrate didactic stories taken from important Buddhist scriptures (sutras). Interestingly, another 160 relief sculptures adorn the base of the monument but are concealed behind stone buttresses that were added shortly after the building's construction in order to further support the structure's weight. The hidden narrative reliefs were photographed when they were discovered in the late 19th century before the stones were put back to help ensure the temple's stability.

Borobudur, Indonesia (photo: Gildardo Sánchez, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Moving past the base and through the four galleries, the devotee emerges onto the three upper terraces, encountering 72 stupas each containing a three-dimensional sculpture of a seated Buddha within a stone latticework. At the temple's apex sits the large central stupa, a symbol of the enlightened mind.

Borobudur, Indonesia, central stupa at the temple's apex in the distance (photo: pierre c. 38, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Angkor Wat, Cambodia

Aerial view, Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 1116-1150 (photo: Peter Garnhum, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Angkor Wat is dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu who, as you may recall, is one of the three principal gods in the Hindu pantheon (Shiva and Brahma are the others). Among them he is known as the "Protector." The major patron of Angkor Wat was King Suryavarman II, whose name translates as the "protector of the sun." Many scholars believe that Angkor Wat was not only a temple dedicated to Vishnu but that it was also intended to serve as the king's mausoleum in death.

The construction of Angkor Wat likely began in the year 1116 C.E.—three years after King Suryavarman II came to the throne—with construction ending in 1150, shortly after the king's death. Evidence for these dates comes in part from inscriptions, which are vague, but also from the architectural design and artistic style of the temple and its associated sculptures.

Churning of the Ocean of Milk (detail), Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 1116-1150 (photo: John Brennan, CC BY-ND 2.0)

An aerial view of Angkor Wat demonstrates that the temple is made up of an expansive enclosure wall, which separates the sacred temple grounds from the protective moat that surrounds the entire complex (the moat is visible in the photograph below). The temple proper is comprised of three galleries (a passageway running along the length of the temple) with a central sanctuary, marked by five stone towers.

Aerial view, Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 1116-1150 (photo: shankar s., CC BY 2.0)

The five stone towers are intended to mimic the five mountain ranges of Mt. Meru—the mythical home of the gods, for both Hindus and Buddhists. The temple mountain as an architectural design was invented in Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian architects quite literally envisioned temples dedicated to Hindu gods on earth as a representation of Mt. Meru. The galleries and the empty spaces that they created between one another and the moat are envisioned as the mountain ranges and oceans that surround Mt. Meru. Mt. Meru is not only home to the gods; it is also considered an axis-mundi. In designing Angkor Wat in this way, King Suryavarman II and his architects intended for the temple to serve as the supreme abode for Vishnu. Similarly, the symbolism of Angkor Wat serving as an axis-mundi was intended to demonstrate the Angkor Kingdom's and the king's central place in the universe. In addition to envisioning Angkor Wat as Mt. Meru on earth, the temple's architects, of whom we know nothing, also ingeniously designed the temple so that embedded in the temple's construction is a map of the cosmos (mandala) as well as a historical record of the temple's patron.

China

Neo-Confucianism and Fan Kuan, *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*

Daoist mountain man, hermit, rustic, wine-lover—Fan Kuan has the reputation of having been truly unconventional. We know very little about this great artist, yet he painted the most majestic landscape painting of the early Song period. Everything about *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, which is possibly the only surviving work by Fan Kuan, is an orderly statement reflecting the artist's worldview.

Fan Kuan, *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, ink on silk hanging scroll, c. 1000, 206.3 x 103.3 cm. (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

Fan Kuan's masterpiece is an outstanding example of Chinese landscape painting. Long before Western artists considered landscape anything more than a setting for figures, Chinese painters had elevated landscape as a subject in its own right. Bounded by mountain ranges and bisected by two great rivers—the Yellow and the Yangzi—China's natural landscape has played an important role in the shaping of the Chinese mind and character. From very early times, the Chinese viewed mountains as sacred and imagined them as the abode of immortals. The term for landscape painting (shanshui hua) in Chinese is translated as "mountain water painting."

After the long period of political disunity (the Five Dynasties period), Fan Kuan lived as a recluse and was one of many poets and artists of the time who were disenchanted with human affairs. He turned away from the world to seek spiritual enlightenment. Through his painting *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, Fan Kuan expressed a cosmic vision of man's harmonious existence in

a vast but orderly universe. The Neo-Confucian search for absolute truth in nature as well as self-cultivation reached its climax in the 11th century and is demonstrated in this work. Fan Kuan's landscape epitomizes the early Northern Song monumental style of landscape painting. Nearly seven feet in height, the hanging scroll composition presents universal creation in its totality and does so with the most economic of means.

Gnarled pine trees (detail), Fan Kuan, *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, c. 1000, ink on silk hanging scroll, 206.3 x 103.3 cm. (National Palace Museum, Taipei)


Temple in the forest (detail), Fan Kuan, *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, c. 1000, ink on silk hanging scroll, 206.3 x 103.3 cm. (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

Immense boulders occupy the foreground and are presented to the viewer at eye level. Just beyond them one sees crisp, detailed brushwork describing rocky outcroppings, covered with

trees. Looking closely, one sees two men driving a group of donkeys loaded with firewood and a temple partially hidden in the forest. In the background, a central peak rises from a mist-filled chasm and is flanked by two smaller peaks. This solid screen of gritty rock takes up nearly two-thirds of the picture. The sheer height of the central peak is accentuated by a waterfall plummeting from a crevice near the summit and disappearing into the narrow valley.

Fan Kuan looked to nature and carefully studied the world around him. He expressed his own response to nature. As Fan Kuan sought to describe the external truth of the universe visually, he discovered at the same time an internal psychological truth. The bold directness of Fan's painting style was thought to be a reflection of his open character and generous disposition. His grand image of the beauty and majesty of nature reflects Fan Kuan's humble awe and pride.

Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*
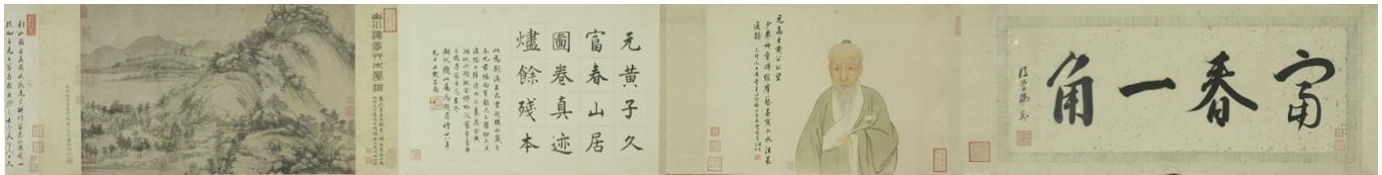
"The Remaining Mountain" (first part of the scroll), Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 31.8 x 51.4 cm (Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou)

"The Master Wuyong Scroll" (second part of the scroll), Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x 636.9 cm (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

Who was Huang Gongwang?

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains is a legendary *shanshui* (landscape) painting created by the Yuan dynasty painter, Huang Gongwang. Huang was a Han, an ethnic group of China. He also belonged to the social class of literati. The literati were educated elites who were interested in painting, calligraphy and poetry. Many literati in the Yuan dynasty, a dynasty founded by the Mongolians, were Han Chinese like Huang. They did not serve the non-Han court and lived a reclusive life. Painting to them was a kind of self-cultivation. Their intended audience was not the general public, but their circles of friends. Their paintings often emphasized the expression of the painters' temperaments rather than visual resemblance to forms.

How to view a handscroll

To view a handscroll one must begin by holding it in your hands. The handscroll is held by your left hand while the opening end of the handscroll is held by the right. The scroll is unrolled towards the left, shoulder width and at arms length so that the first section can be viewed. The right hand then rolls the start of the scroll to the left to re-roll the viewed section. The left hand then unrolls further towards the left until the new section is revealed for viewing. The right hand again re-rolls the viewed section. Section after section the process is repeated until the entire scroll is viewed. The process is then reversed to re-roll the entire scroll so that the first section is in correct position for the next viewing.

The subject

"The Remaining Mountain," Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 31.8 x 51.4 cm (Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou)

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains is a landscape painting. The journey starts with a robust mountain viewed from a high angle, looking at the lush vegetation and rocks. This is in "the Remaining Mountain" section of the scroll, which is the shorter of the two sections (image above).

"The Master Wuyong Scroll," Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x 636.9 cm (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

We now move to "The Master Wuyong Scroll," in which you experience the scenery of lower slopes (image above). There are different forms of trees in the lower half of the composition with lots of empty space.

"The Master Wuyong Scroll," Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x 636.9 cm (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

Gradually, after the vast initial view, your eye rises as if you are ascending to a point from which you can see farther to the distant mountains (image above). There is a spectacular panorama in front of you. There are rounded mountains with lush trees and grass, houses and paths in the valleys. Further on, we see a figure fishing in a boat, and to the left, under the shade of some trees in the foreground, we see pavilions beside water (image below).

"The Master Wuyong Scroll," Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x 636.9 cm (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

Descending to a lower altitude, there is a nearby shore rendered in dry brushstrokes (on the far right) and groups of trees characterized by wet horizontal dots with great variations of ink tones (image below).

"The Master Wuyong Scroll," Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x 636.9 cm (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

Approaching the end of the scroll, a majestic peak echoes the robust mountain that we saw at the very beginning of the scroll. In an elegant finale, the journey ends with low-lying mountains rendered in pale ink washes that taper into blank space (image below).

"The Master Wuyong Scroll," Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x 636.9 cm (National Palace Museum, Taipei)

The format of the handscroll allows for multiple perspectives in the same painting, embracing the landscape's breadth and depth along the river and mountains as a continuous journey progressing through time and space.

While respecting tradition and past masters, Huang's handscroll created a dynamic composition and achieved a vitality that surpassed previous painters. Huang's influence on later generations of literati painters was enormous. In the wider context of Chinese art history, his work is considered a national treasure.

Japan

Horyuji Temple, Nara, Japan

By the time Buddhism reached Japan, it had spread from India to China and had undergone several changes in imagery and styles. In Japan, Buddhism profoundly influenced indigenous culture, but it was equally shaped by it, resulting in new forms and modes of expression. The imperial household embarked on major Buddhist commissions. One of the earliest and most spectacular is a temple in Nara, Hōryūji or the "temple of flourishing law." The founding of Hōryūji is attributed to the ailing emperor Yomei, who died before seeing the temple completed; Yomei's consort, empress Suiko, and regent Prince Shōtoku (574-622) carried out the late emperor's

wishes. Given the influence of empress Suiko's Buddhist patronage, the Asuka period is also referred to as the Suiko period. Prince Shōtoku, too, is celebrated as one of the earliest champions of Buddhism in Japan. In fact, a century after his death, he began to be worshipped as an incarnation of the historical Buddha.

5-story pagoda and main hall, Hōryūji, Nara (image: Wikimedia Commons)

Like the enduring legend and legacy of Prince Shōtoku, Hōryūji has had a long and complex life well past the Asuka Period. With structures that vanished in fires and earthquakes as early as the 7th century to the temple's pagoda that was dismantled and reassembled during World War II, Hōryūji underwent numerous changes and its buildings currently date from the Asuka period to the late 16th century! A complex site with some of the world's oldest wooden structures, Hōryūji exemplifies ancient Japanese architectural techniques and strategies, including the slight midpoint bulging of round columns, which has been compared to the similar practice of entasis in ancient Greek architecture.

Art from the Kamakura Period (1185-1333)

It is hard to imagine an image of war that matches the visceral and psychological power of the *Night Attack on the Sanjô Palace*. This thirteenth-century portrayal of a notorious incident from a century earlier appears on a hand scroll, a common East Asian painting format in Japan called an *emaki*. It also is a prime example of the action-packed *otoko-e*, "men's paintings," created in the Kamakura period.

Burning Palace (detail), *Night Attack on the Sanjô Palace*, Illustrated Scrolls of the Events of the Heiji Era (*Heiji monogatari emaki*) Japanese, Kamakura period, second half of the 13th century, 45.9 x 774.5 x 7.6 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Night Attack on the Sanjô Palace fully unrolled (right side above, left side below), Illustrated Scrolls of the Events of the Heiji Era (*Heiji monogatari emaki*) Japanese, Kamakura period, second half of the 13th century, 45.9 x 774.5 x 7.6 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Designed to be unrolled in sections for close-up viewing, it shows the basic features of this pictorial form: a bird's eye view of action moves right-to-left (between a written introduction and conclusion). In vibrant outline and washes of color, the story (one event in an insurrection) unfolds sequentially, so the main characters appear multiple times. The attention to detail is so exact that historians consider it a uniquely valuable reference for this period: from the royal mansion's walled gateways, unpainted wooden buildings linked by corridors, bark roofs, large shutters and bamboo blinds that open to verandas, to the scores of foot soldiers, cavalry, courtiers, priests, imperial police, and even the occasional lady—each individualized by gesture and facial expression from horror to morbid humor, robes, armor, and weaponry easily identifiable according to rank, design, and type.

In sculpture, portrayals of revered monks reach an unprecedented degree of realism, whether modeled on the depicted figures or simply imagined. Sometimes the statues would have rock-

crystal inlaid eyes, which heightened the immediacy of the figure's presence.

The sculptor Unkei and his successors, especially Jōkei, created Buddhist sculptures, carved from multiple blocks of wood, whose facial and bodily features expressed not only an interest in lifelikeness, but also a sense of monumentality, sheer energy, and visceral force.

Anonymous sculptor, portrait of Buddhist monk Chōgen, 1206, polychrome wood (Tōdaiji, image: Wikimedia Commons)

Unkei, Muchaku (Asanga), c. 1208-1212, polychrome wood (Kōfukuji, Nara, image: Sutori)

Sesshū Tōyō

The most influential Japanese ink master, the 15th-century painter and Zen monk Sesshū Tōyō combined, in his works, Zen principles and lessons learned from Song-dynasty Chinese ink painting—most notably a double sense of austerity and immediacy, highly admired by the Ashikaga shōguns and the samurai class who embraced Zen Buddhism.

Sesshū, *Splashed-Ink Landscape* (or *Broken-Ink Landscape, haboku sansui* zu破墨山水図), 1495, ink on paper, 148.6 × 32.7 cm (full scroll) (Tokyo National Museum, image: Wikimedia Commons)

Sesshū was a celebrated artist in his own lifetime and continued to be revered as a model by later generations of painters. He became a Zen Buddhist monk at a young age and his master taught him both about Zen and about Chinese ink painting. To perfect his understanding of both, Sesshū traveled to China, where he was honored as a distinguished guest. It is believed that he painted in both palatial and monastic contexts. Upon his return to Japan, he laid the foundation for a new era of Japanese ink painting that straddled religious and lay patronage and combined Chinese and Japanese stylistic elements.

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Chapter 24: Arts of Africa: 5th – 15th Centuries

Detail, *Linguist Staff (Okyeame),* 19th-early 20th century, Ghana, Akan peoples, Asante, gold foil, wood, nails, 156.5 x 14.6 x 5.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

By the ninth century, trade across the Sahara had intensified, contributing to the rise of large state societies with diverse cultural traditions along trade routes in the western Sudan as well as introducing Islam into the region. Initially traversed by camel caravans beginning around the fifth century, established trans-Saharan trade routes ensured the lucrative exchange of gold mined in southern West Africa and salt from the Sahara, as well as other goods. Ghana, one of the earliest known kingdoms in this region, grew powerful by the eighth century through its monopoly

over gold mines until its eventual demise in the twelfth century (see the Linguist Staff).

The present-day nation of Ghana takes its name from this ancient empire, although there is no historical or geographic connection.

A view of the Great Mosque of Djenné, designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988 along with the old town of Djenné, in the central region of Mali. (UN Photo/Marco Dormino, taken on March 25, 2015, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

In the early thirteenth century, the kingdom of Mali ascended under the leadership of Sundiata Keita, who is still revered as a culture hero in the Mande-speaking world. At its height, this Islamic empire, which flourished until the seventeenth century, encompassed an area larger than western Europe and established Africa's first university in Timbuktu. Under the Songhai empire of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one of the largest in Africa, the cities of Timbuktu and Jenne (also known as Djenne) prospered as major centers of Islamic learning (image above).

Beyond the kingdoms of the western Sudan, other centers of cultural and artistic activity emerged elsewhere in western Africa. The art of metalworking flourished as early as the ninth century at a site called Igbo-Ukwu, in what is now southern Nigeria. Hundreds of intricate copper alloy castings discovered there provide artistic evidence of a sophisticated and technically accomplished culture.

Shrine head, Yoruba, Nigeria, 12th-14th century, terracotta, 31.1 x 14.6 x 18.4 cm (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

Nearby to the west, the ancient site of Ife, considered the cradle of Yoruba civilization, emerged as a major metropolis by the eleventh century. Artists working for the royal court in Ife produced a large and diverse corpus of masterful work, including magnificent bronze and terracotta sculptures renowned for their portrait-like naturalism (image above). The rich artistic traditions of the Yoruba continue to thrive in the present day.

Head of an Oba, Nigeria, Court of Benin, 16th century, brass, 23.5 x 21.9 c 22.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The neighboring kingdom of Benin, which traces its origins to Ife, established its present dynasty in the fourteenth century. Over the next 500 years, specialist artisans working for the Benin king created several thousand works, mostly made of luxury materials such as ivory and brass, that offer insights into life at the royal court (image above). Other state societies emerged in the eastern and southern parts of the continent.

The Aksum empire (also known as Axum), one of the earliest Christian states in Africa, flourished from the first century C.E. into the eleventh century, producing remarkable stone palaces and enormous granite funerary monoliths.

Bete Giyorgis Church, Lalibela, Ethiopia, c. 1220 (photo: Henrik Berger Jørgensen, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Christian faith inspired the artistic creations of later dynasties, including the extraordinary churches of Lalibela hewn from solid rock in the thirteenth century, and the illuminated manuscripts and other liturgical arts of the later Solomonic era.

Notable among the kingdoms that emerged in southern Africa is Mapungubwe in present-day Zimbabwe, a stratified society that arose in the eleventh century and grew wealthy through trade with Muslim merchants along the eastern African coast.

Just to the north are the remains of an ancient city known as Great Zimbabwe, considered one of the oldest and largest architectural structures in sub-Saharan Africa. This massive complex of stone buildings, spread over 1,800 acres, was constructed over 300 years beginning in the eleventh century.

Wall and tower, Great Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, 14th century (photo: Ross Huggett, CC BY 2.0)

In the fifteenth century, the age of exploration ushered in a period of sustained engagement between Europe and Africa. The Portuguese, and later the Dutch and English, began trade with cities along the western coast of Africa around 1450. They returned from Africa with favorable accounts of powerful kingdoms as well as examples of African artistry commissioned from local sculptors. These exquisitely carved ivory artifacts, now known as the "Afro-Portuguese" ivories, were brought back from early visits to the continent and became part of the curiosity cabinets of the Renaissance nobles who sponsored exploration and trade.

Lidded Saltcellar, 15th-16th century, Sierra Leone, Sapi-Portugese, ivory, 29.8 x 10.8 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Through trade, African artists were also introduced to new materials, forms, and ideas. Although historically glass and shell beads were made indigenously, trade with Europe in the sixteenth century introduced large quantities of manufactured glass beads that became widely used throughout Africa (see a later example here). European imports of copper and coral made these luxury materials more plentiful, and artists used them in greater quantities (as in the *Head of an Oba*, above). Artifacts of European manufacture, such as canes and chairs, served as

prototypes for the development of new prestige items for regional leaders (as in the Linguist's Staff, above). Along with goods imported from Europe, the travelers also brought with them their systems of belief, including Christianity. In some cases, such as in the central African kingdom of Kongo, Christianity was embraced, and its iconography integrated into the artistic repertoire. In other parts of Africa, the foreign traders themselves were sometimes represented in artworks.

Crucifix, 16th-17th century, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Angola; Republic of the Congo, Kong Peoples, Kongo Kingdom, solid cast brass, 27.3 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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Chapter 25: Oceania and the Americas: 5th – 15th Centuries

Oceania

The *Moai* of Rapa Nui

View of the northeast of the exterior slopes of the quarry, with several moai (human figure carving) on the slopes; a young South American man with a horse is standing in the foreground for scale, Easter Island, photograph, 8.2 x 8.2 cm © Trustees of the British Museum
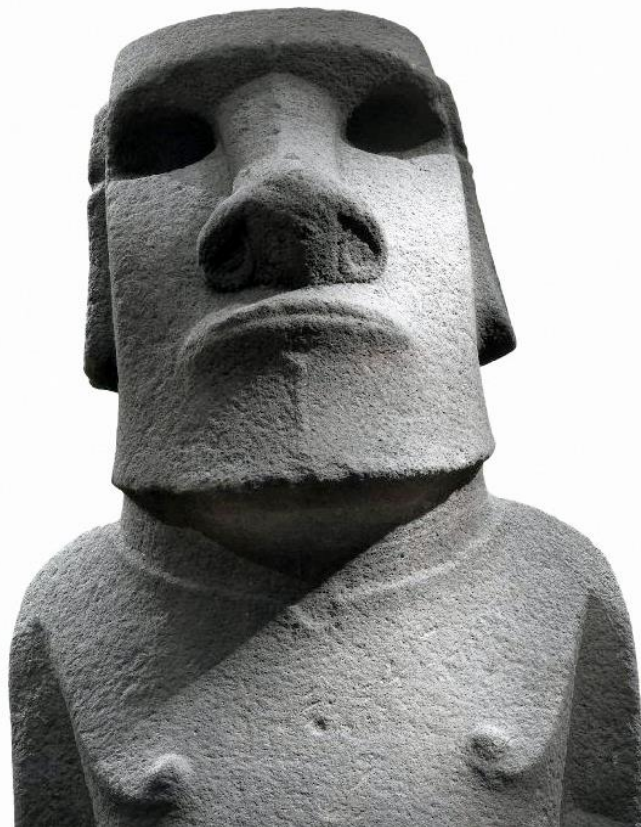

Three views of *Hoa Hakananai'a ('lost or stolen friend'),* Moai (ancestor figure), c. 1200 C.E., 242 x 96 x 47 cm, basalt (missing paint, coral eye sockets, and stone eyes), likely made in Rano Kao, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), found

Easter Island is famous for its stone statues of human figures, known as *moai* (meaning "statue"). The island is known to its inhabitants as Rapa Nui. The *moai* were probably carved to commemorate important ancestors and were made from around 1000 C.E. until the second half of the seventeenth century. Over a few hundred years the inhabitants of this remote island quarried, carved and erected around 887 *moai*. The size and complexity of the moai increased over time, and it is believed that *Hoa Hakananai'a* (below) dates to around 1200 C.E. It is one of only fourteen *moai* made from basalt, the rest are carved from the island's softer volcanic tuff. With the adoption of Christianity in the 1860s, the remaining standing *moai* were toppled.

Their backs to the sea

Bust (detail), *Hoa Hakananai'a ('lost or stolen friend'),* Moai (ancestor figure), c. 1200 C.E., 242 x 96 x 47 cm, basalt (missing paint, coral eye sockets, and stone eyes), likely made in Rano Kao, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), found in the ceremonial center Orongo © The Trustees of the British Museum

This example was probably first displayed outside on a stone platform (*ahu*)on the sacred site of Orongo, before being moved into a stone house at the ritual center of Orongo. It would have stood with giant stone companions, their backs to the sea, keeping watch over the island. Its eyes sockets were originally inlaid with red stone and coral and the sculpture was painted with red and white designs, which were washed off when it was rafted to the ship, to be taken to Europe in 1869. It was collected by the crew of the English ship HMS Topaze, under the command of Richard Ashmore Powell, on their visit to Easter Island in 1868 to carry out surveying work. Islanders helped the crew to move the statue, which has been estimated to weigh around four tons. It was moved to the beach and then taken to the Topaze by raft. The crew recorded the islanders' name for the statue, which is thought to mean "stolen or hidden

friend."

Hoa Hakananai'a is similar in appearance to a number of Easter Island *moai*. It has a heavy eyebrow ridge, elongated ears and oval nostrils. The clavicle is emphasized, and the nipples protrude. The arms are thin and lie tightly against the body; the hands are hardly indicated.

Later carving on the back

The figure's back is covered with ceremonial designs believed to have been added at a later date, some carved in low relief, others incised. These show images relating to the island's birdman cult, which developed after about 1400 C.E. The key birdman cult ritual was an annual trial of strength and endurance, in which the chiefs and their followers competed. The victorious chief then represented the creator god, Makemake, for the following year.

Back (detail), *Hoa Hakananai'a ('lost or stolen friend'),* Moai (ancestor figure), c. 1200 C.E., 242 x 96 x 47 cm, basalt (missing paint, coral eye sockets, and stone eyes), likely made in Rano Kao, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), found in the ceremonial center Orongo © The Trustees of the British Museum

Carved on the upper back and shoulders are two birdmen, facing each other. These have human

hands and feet, and the head of a frigate bird. In the center of the head is the carving of a small fledgling bird with an open beak. This is flanked by carvings of ceremonial dance paddles known as *'ao*, with faces carved into them. On the left ear is another *'ao*, and running from top to bottom of the right ear are four shapes like inverted 'V's representing the female vulva. These carvings are believed to have been added at a later date.

Collapse

Around 1500 C.E. the practice of constructing *moai* peaked, and from around 1600 C.E. statues began to be toppled, sporadically. The island's fragile ecosystem had been pushed beyond what was sustainable. Over time only sea birds remained, nesting on safer offshore rocks and islands. As these changes occurred, so too did the Rapanui religion alter—to the birdman religion. This sculpture bears witness to the loss of confidence in the efficacy of the ancestors after the deforestation and ecological collapse, and most recently a theory concerning the introduction of rats, which may have ultimately led to famine and conflict. After 1838 at a time of social collapse following European intervention, the remaining standing *moai* were toppled.

Maori Meeting House
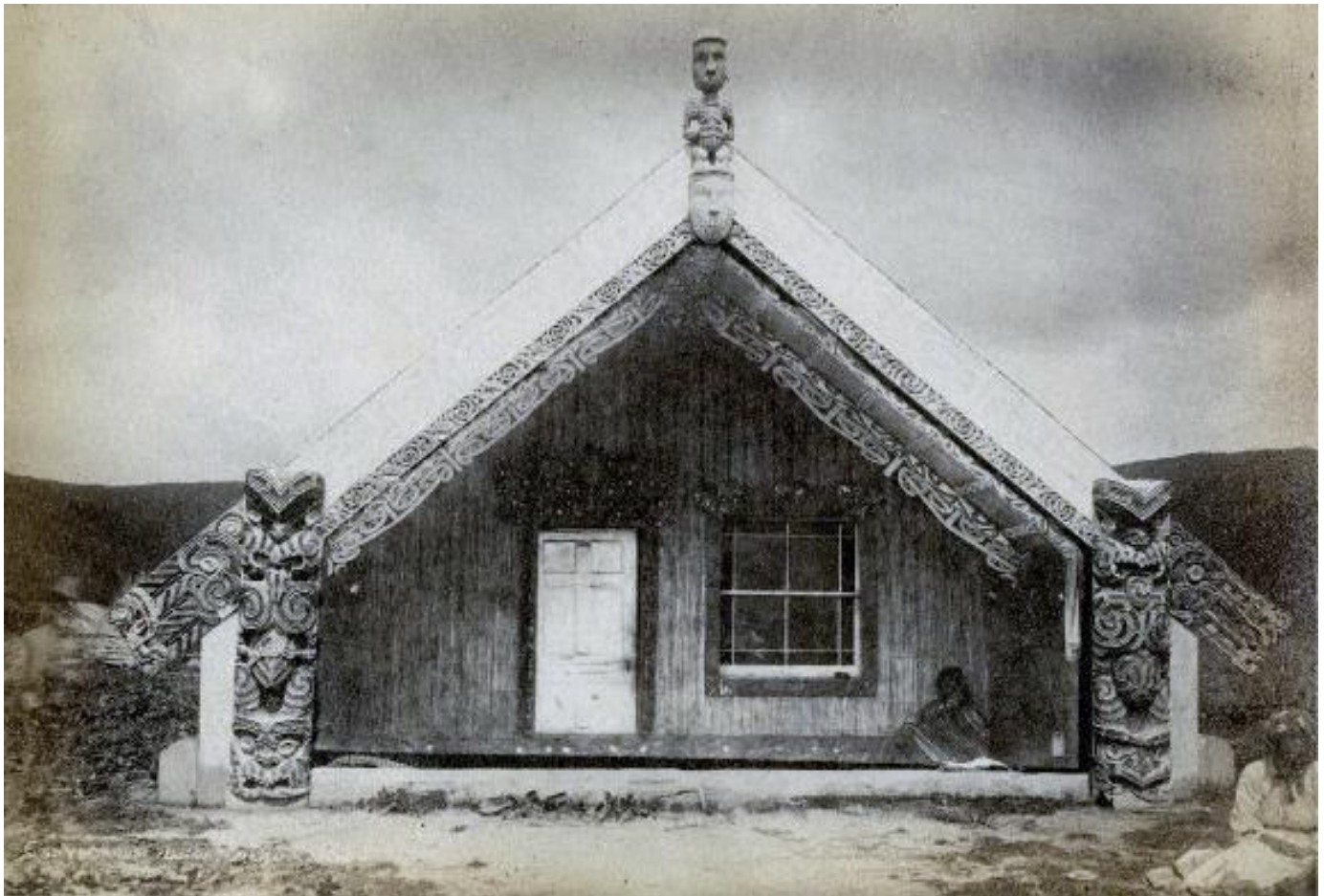
Josiah Martin, Exterior of a Maori marae (community meeting house), Hinemihi, in the village of Te Wairoa, 1881, albumen print, 15.3 x 20.5 cm © Trustees of the British Museum. Front of the house with carved end posts on either side of the veranda, maihi (carved barge-boards), raparapa(projecting boards at the end of the maihi), tekoteko (figurative carving at the front of the apex of the roof), koruru (carved mask depicting the ancestor the house is named for, placed below thetekoteko), pare (carved lintel above doorway window)

Marae

The Maori built meeting houses before the period of contact with Europeans. The early structures appear to have been used as the homes of chiefs, though they were also used for accommodating guests. They did not exist in every community. From the middle of the nineteenth century, however, they started to develop into an important focal point of local society. Larger meeting houses were built, and they ceased to be used as homes. The open space in front of the house, known as a *marae*, is used as an assembly ground. They were, and still are, used for entertaining, for funerals, religious and political meetings. It is a focus of tribal pride and is treated with great respect.

Pare

The meeting house is regarded as sacred. Some areas are held as more sacred than others, especially the front of the house. The lintel (*pare*) above the doorway is considered the most important carving, marking the passage from the domain of one god to that of another. Outside the meeting house is often referred to as the domain of Tumatauenga, the god of war, and thus of hostility and conflict. The calm and peaceful interior is the domain of Rongo, the god of agriculture and other peaceful pursuits.

Wooden openwork lintel (pare), c. late 1840s, wood stained black, haliotis shells, 131.5 x 43.5 x 5.5 cm, Bay of Plenty, North Island, New Zealand © Trustees of the British Museum. Three *wheku* figures, unsexed, with haliotis shell eyes, raised arms, surface decoration of spirals and *pakura*, separated and flanked by *takarangi* spirals. Solid base with bands *ofrauponga*, central *rauponga* spiral and two terminal *manaia* with haliotis-shell eyes under feet of outer *wheku* figures.

The example above illustrates one of the two main forms of door lintel. The three figures, with eyes inlaid with rings of haliotis shell, are standing on a base which symbolizes Papa or Earth. The scene refers to the moment of the creation of the world as the three figures push the sky god Rangi and earth apart. The three figures are Rangi and Papa's children, the central one probably representing Tane, god of the forests. The two large spirals represent light and knowledge entering the world. The lintel was probably carved in the Whakatane district of the Bay of Plenty in the late 1840s.

Amo

House-board (amo), Maori, 1830-60 C.E., wood, haliotis shell, 152 x 43 x 15 cm, Poverty Bay district, New Zealand
© Trustees of the British Museum

This is a side post or *amo* from the front of a meeting house. A pair of *amo* would have supported the sloping barge boards of the house. The two carved figures represent named ancestors of the tribal group who owned the meeting house. The figures are male but the phalluses have been removed, probably after they were collected. Their eyes are inlaid with rings of haliotis shell. They are carved in relief with *rauponga* patterns, a style of Maori carved decoration in which a notched ridge is bordered by parallel plain ridges and grooves. Roger Neich, an expert on the subject of Maori carving, has identified the style of the carving of the post as that of the district of Poverty Bay in the East Coast area of the North Island.

This is one of a group of seven carvings purchased from Lady Sudeley in 1894. They were collected in New Zealand by her uncle, the Hon. Algernon Tollemache, probably between 1850 and 1873. This board and another from the same collection form a pair.

Central and South America

The Aztecs (Mexica)

During the twelfth century C.E. the Aztec (or Mexica*) were a small and obscure tribe searching for a new homeland. Eventually they settled in the Valley of Mexico and founded their capital, Tenochtitlan, in 1345. At the beginning of the sixteenth century it was one of the largest cities in the world.

Turquoise mosaic mask (human face), 1400-1521 C.E., cedrela wood, turquoise, pine resin, mother-of-pearl, conch shell, 16.5 x 15.2 cm, Mexico © Trustees of the British Museum

The Mexica were a migrant people from the desert north who arrived in Mesoamerica in the 1300s. This previously nomadic tribe was not welcomed by the local inhabitants who viewed them as inferior and undeveloped. Legend tells that as a result the Mexica wandered waiting for a sign to indicate where they should settle. It is said that in 1325 C.E. this sign, an eagle and serpent fighting on a cactus, was seen at Lake Texcoco prompting the Mexica to found their capital city, Tenochtitlan.

The Templo Mayor

The city of Tenochtitlan was established in 1325 on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco (much of which has since been filled in to accommodate Mexico City which now exists on this site), and with the city's foundation the original structure of the Templo Mayor was built. Between

1325 and 1519, the Templo Mayor was expanded, enlarged, and reconstructed during seven main building phases, which likely corresponded with different rulers, or tlatoani ("speaker"), taking office. Sometimes new construction was the result of environmental problems, such as flooding.
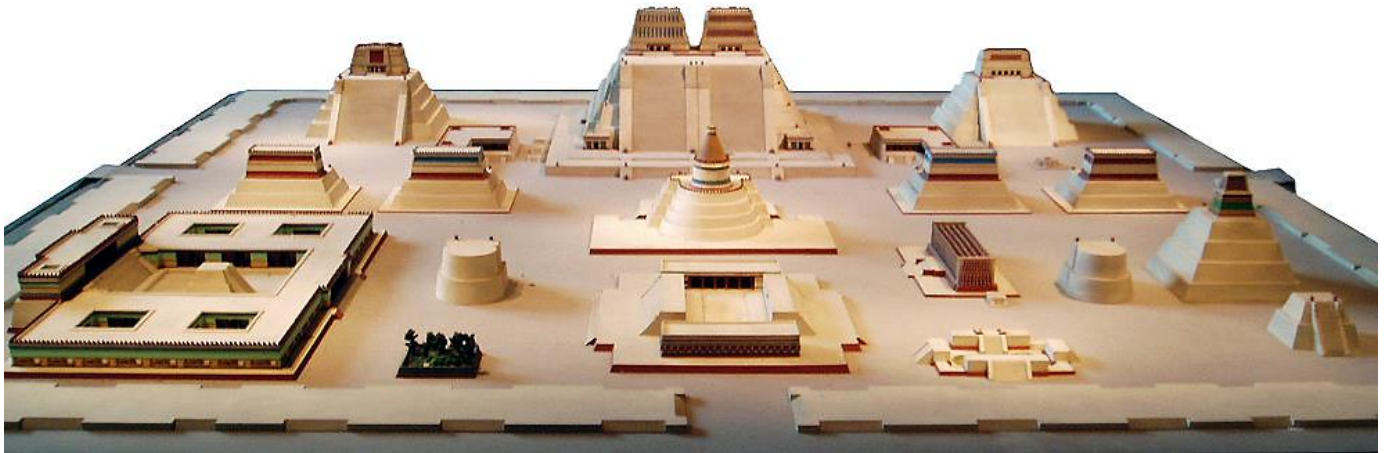
Model of the sacred precinct in Tenochtitlan (National Anthropological Museum, Mexico City) (photo (edited), Steve Cadman, CC BY-SA 2.0)
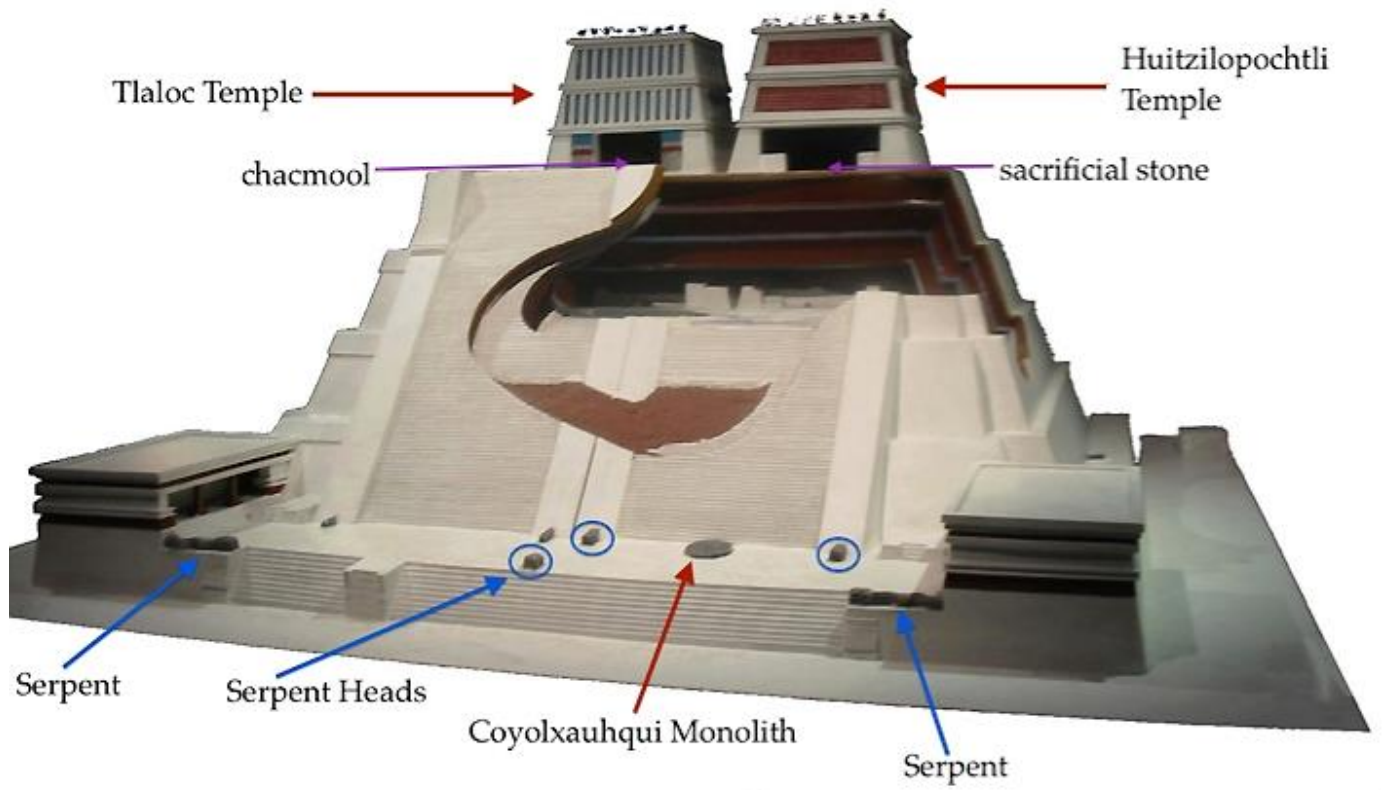
Templo Mayor (reconstruction), Tenochtitlan, 1375–1520 C.E.

Located in the sacred precinct at the heart of the city, the Templo Mayor was positioned at the

center of the Mexica capital and thus the entire empire. The capital was also divided into four main quadrants, with the Templo Mayor at the center. This design reflects the Mexica cosmos, which was believed to be composed of four parts structured around the navel of the universe, or the *axis mundi*.

At the top center of the Tlaloc temple is a sculpture of a male figure on his back painted in blue and red. The figure holds a vessel on his abdomen likely to receive offerings. This type of sculpture is called a *chacmool*, and is older than the Mexica. It was associated with the rain god, in this case Tlaloc.

Chacmool on Tlaloc temple platform (photo (edited): Adriel A. Macedo Arroyo, CC BY-SA 3.0)

At the base of the Tlaloc side of the temple, on the same axis as the chacmool, are stone sculptures of two frogs with their heads arched upwards. This is known as the Altar of the Frogs. The croaking of frogs was thought to herald the coming of the rainy season, and so they are connected to Tlaloc.

Altar of the Frogs (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

While Huiztilopochtli's temple symbolized Coatepec, Tlaloc's temple was likely intended to symbolize the Mountain of Sustenance, or Tonacatepetl. This fertile mountain produced high amounts of rain, thereby allowing crops to grow.

Aztec calendars

The Aztecs had two different calendars: a 260-day ritual calendar called the *tonalpohualli* (day count), and a 360-day (plus 5 extra days) calendar called the *xiuhpohualli* (year count). The *xiuhpohualli* was divided into eighteen months of twenty days each, and each of these months had a festival that honored a specific deity or deities.

Illustration of Ochpaniztli from Bernardino de Sahagún and indigenous collaborators, *Codices matritenses (Primeros Memoriales),* 1558-85, f251v (Royal Library, Madrid)

These festivals often included music, dancing, offerings, and sacrifice (whether self-sacrifice or human sacrifice). For instance, the eleventh month had the festival of Ochpaniztli ("sweeping of the roads"), which occurred sometime between August to September (or September to October by some accounts), and was intended to celebrate the fall harvest. It honored the earth goddess(es) Tlazolteotl and Toci, and involved sweeping. Sweeping here related literally to cleaning, but also symbolically to fertility, because Tlazolteotl was a goddess associated with filth, but also childbirth. She was a patron of midwives and adulterers.

The Spanish conquest

The Aztec empire crumbled after the defeat of Tenochtitlan in 1521. Cortés and his men, along with thousands of indigenous allies who despised the Aztecs, eventually defeated them after cutting off their water supply. People in the capital city fell sick largely because they lacked immunity to European diseases, and their military forces were weakened.

Aztec culture did not disappear, however. Mesoamerican traditions and art continued into what we call the colonial or viceregal era. Even though some forms disappeared, others were transformed, and still others continued unchanged.

Ongoing excavations in and around Mexico City continue to alter our understanding of this diverse and fascinating culture as they reveal more Mexica art and architecture. Recent

excavations near the Templo Mayor uncovered the largest Aztec monolith to date, called the Tlaltecuhtli Monolith. It is believed that this monolith may mark the spot of a huey tlatoani's tomb, and some of the items discovered underneath this monolith are helping us to rewrite what we know about Aztec culture and art.

The Inka

The Inka, like the Aztecs (or Mexica) of Mesoamerica, were relative newcomers to power at the time of European contact. When Francisco Pizarro took the Inka ruler (or Sapa Inka) Atahualpa hostage in 1532, the Inka empire had existed fewer than two centuries. Also like the Aztecs, the Inka had developed a complex culture deeply rooted in the traditions that came before them. Their textiles, ceramics, metal- and woodwork, and architecture all reflect the materials, environment, and cultural traditions of the Andes, as well as the power and ambitions of the Inka empire.

An Empire of Roads—and Cords

The Inka empire at its greatest extent sprawled from the modern-day city of Quito in Ecuador to Santiago in Chile. The Inka called their empire *Tawantinsuyu*, usually translated as "Land of the Four Quarters" in their language, Quechua. At the center of the empire was the capital city of Cusco. The empire was connected by a road system—the Qhapaq Ñan—that was used for official Inka business only. Soldiers, officials, and llama caravans carrying food, ceramics, textiles, and other items used the roads, and so did message runners. These runners were stationed at regular intervals along the roads, so that messages could travel swiftly throughout the empire.

Map of the Qhapaq Ñan (Inka road system) (map: Manco Capac, CC BY-SA 3.0)

However, the messages that these runners carried were not written in the way we would expect. They were not made of marks on paper, stone, or clay. They were, instead, encoded into a knotted string implement called a *quipu*. Our knowledge of *quipu* remains limited. We have been able to determine only some of the ways that the *quipu* were used. Researchers continue to investigate this unique system of communication. The knots along the various cords recorded numbers, so that a knot with 5 loops could represent the number 5. The position on the cord could then determine what the number meant in a decimal system, so that a 5-loop knot could represent the number 5, or 50, or 500, and so forth.
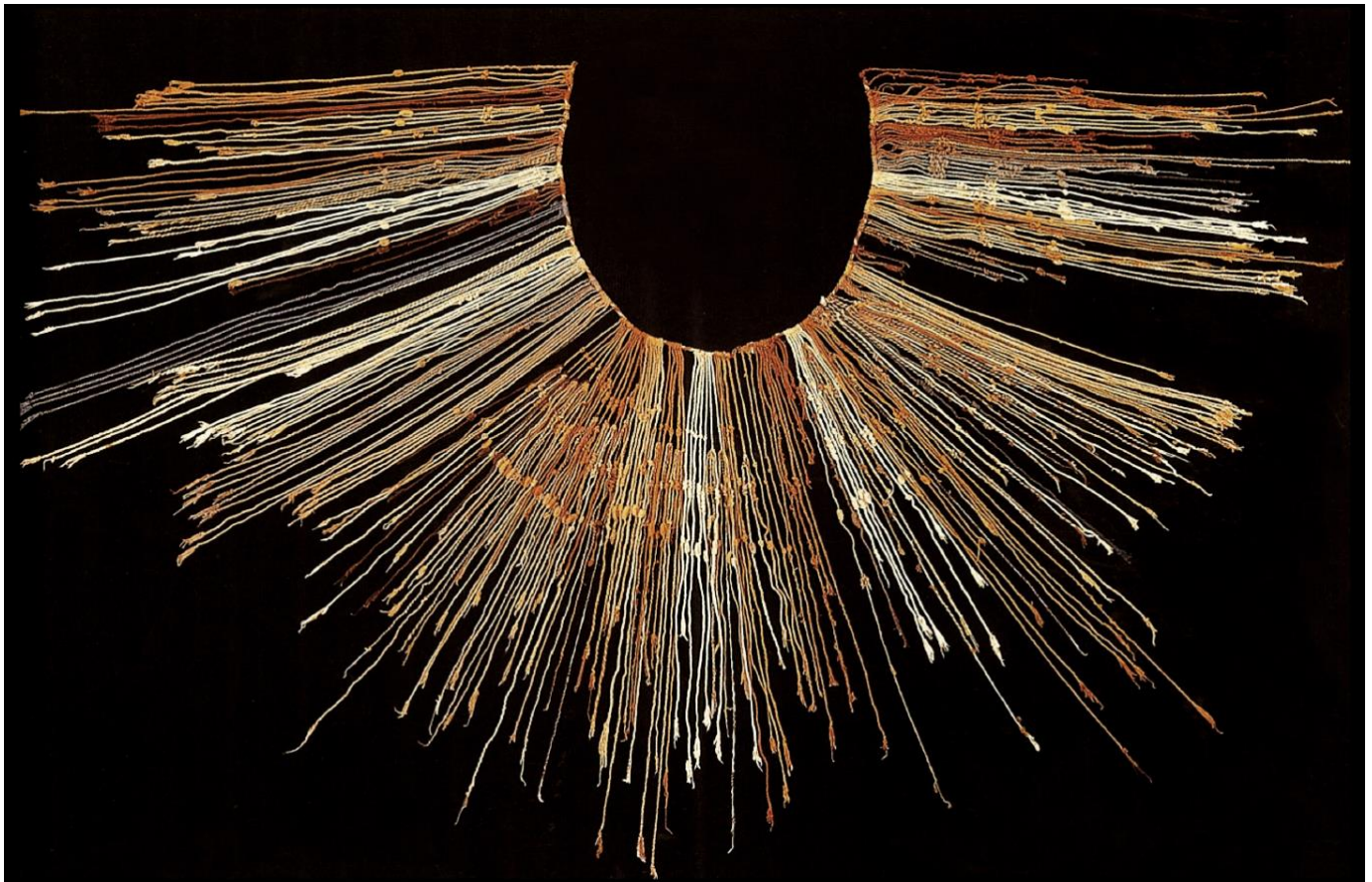
Inka *quipu* (Museo Larco, Lima, Peru)

The cords of *quipus* are frequently composed of different natural and dyed colors, but the reason or meaning behind those colors so far eludes scholars. The numbers encoded in the *quipus* helped the Inka keep track of the tax-paying obligations of their subjects, record population numbers, harvest yields, herds of livestock, and other important information. Also recorded on the *quipu* were stories—histories of the Inka and other social information. However, scholars today still don't know how that information was encoded into the *quipu*.

More valuable than gold

Quipus and other Inka fiber objects were made from yarn spun from alpaca fibers. Llamas and alpacas are the domesticated relatives of the wild camelids of the Andes, the guanaco and vicuña, and all of them are related to the camel. Alpacas and llamas were important to the functioning of the Inka empire, but they had been essential to the lives of Andeans for millennia. Llamas provided meat as well as acting as beasts of burden—an adult male llama can carry up to 100 pounds. Alpacas provided soft, strong wool for textiles and rope-making.

All-T'oqapu Tunic, Inka, 1450–1540, camelid fiber and cotton, 90.2 x 77.15 cm (Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.)

When the Spaniards encountered the Inka, they were confused by the fact that they considered textiles more valuable than gold. Textiles were integral to the structure of the Inka empire. *Acllas*, or "chosen women," were kept in seclusion by the Inka to weave fine textiles (called *qompi*). These textiles mostly took the form of tunics and mantles. Some were distributed as high-status gifts by the Sapa Inka to cement the loyalty of local lords throughout the empire. Others were burned as sacrifices to Inti, the sun god and divine ancestor of the Inka ruling class. This shows us just how highly the Inka regarded textiles: they were fit for a god.

The *acllas* were not the only ones who wove. People of all ages spun, dyed, and wove textiles. The quality of wool, the fineness of its spinning, the relative rarity of the dye, and the skill of its weaving all determined the value of a textile. Some kinds of textiles were reserved for nobility or for warriors. The super-fine wool of wild guanacos and vicuñas was reserved only for the Sapa Inka's garments.
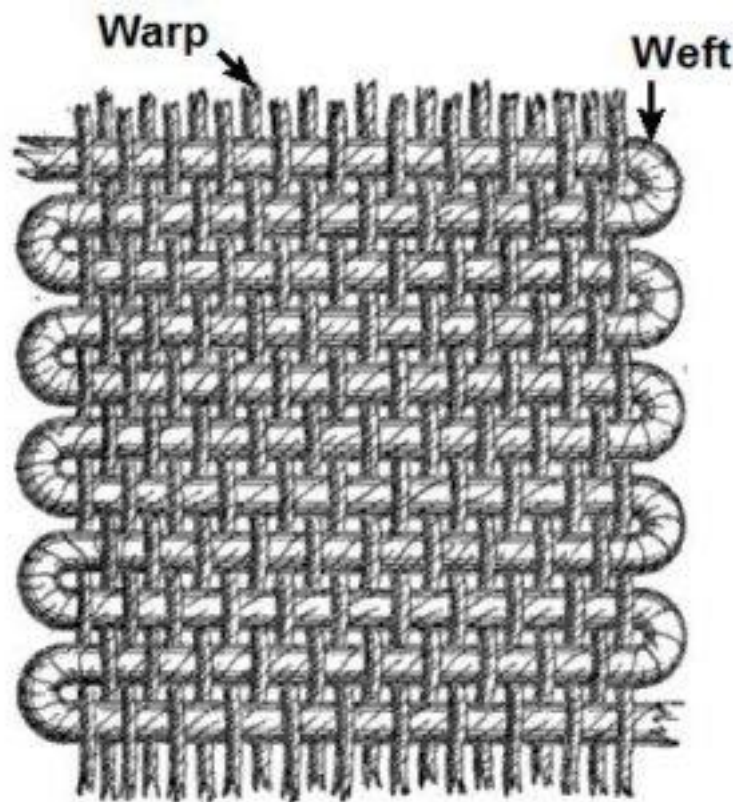
Diagram of warp and weft, (image: Ryj, CC BY-SA 3.0)

A textile is created using a grid of warp (usually vertical) threads, which act as the support or skeleton of the fabric, and weft (usually horizontal) threads, which are passed under and over the warp threads. Where the weft threads cover the warp creates the surface design of the textile, somewhat like pixels in a computer image. The "pixel size" is determined by thread fineness. Decoration on Inka textiles was based in this grid structure, resulting in geometric designs.

Inka architecture

Perhaps the most well-known Inka art is their architecture. The Inka built everywhere they conquered, and their architectural style helped mark areas as belonging to the empire. Inka architecture is based on stone walls, fitted together in a very distinctive way. Instead of cutting stones into blocks and then laying those blocks together in rows, in some cases, the Inka would fit individual stones of varying sizes and shapes against each other, fitting them together like a puzzle. The stones would fit so closely that the Spanish remarked that a person could not even insert a knife blade between them.

Twelve-sided stone, Cusco, c. 1440-1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Each stone was shaped so that it had a slight bulge or a slight indentation on the side where it would lay against another block. These bulges and indentations would slot together, holding the stones in place. It also allowed the stones to shift if they needed to—and they did need to, because Peru is seismically active and has frequent earthquakes.
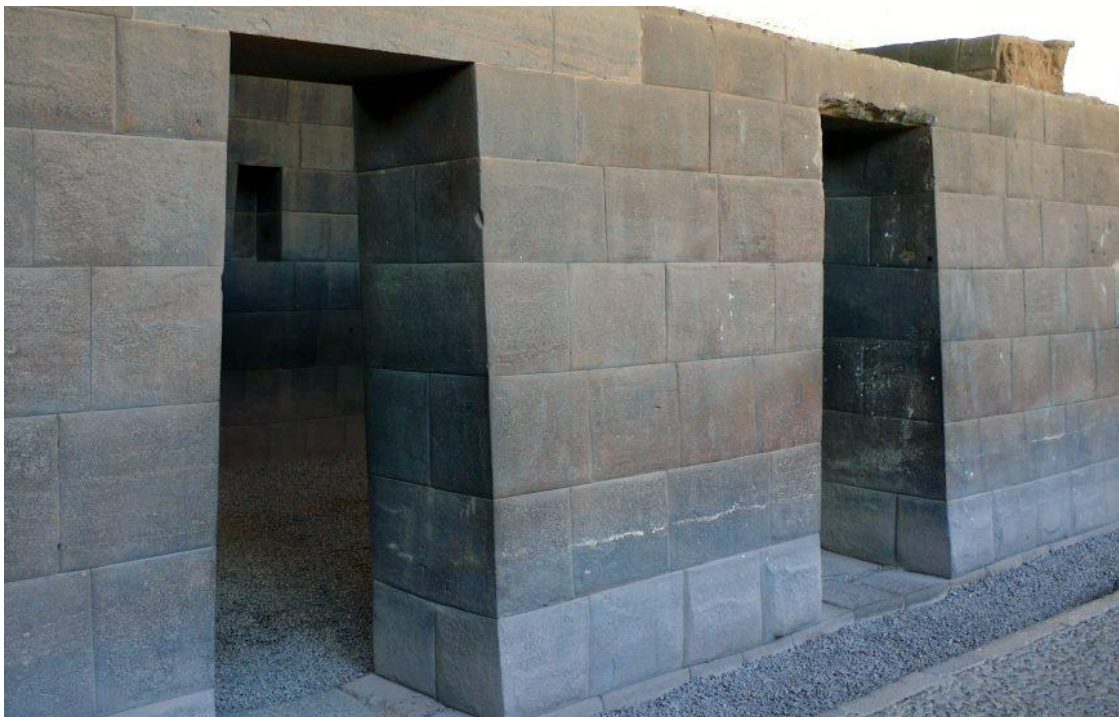
Stone doorways, Qoricancha, Cusco (photo: Jean Robert Thibault, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The doorways, windows, and niches placed in Inka walls have a signature vertical trapezoid shape, a recognizable and distinctive aspect of their architecture. Sometimes referred to as a

keyhole shape, it is thought that this form is also something that helps stabilize the architecture during earthquakes. The roofs of these buildings were made of wood and thatch (straw, leaves, or a similar organic material).

Machu Picchu, a royal estate

Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540, terraces can be seen to the left (photo: Max Reiser, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Machu Picchu is often described as "mysterious," but in fact a great deal is known about its construction and purpose. It was built as a royal estate for the first Inka emperor, Pachacuti Inka Yupanqui, in the middle of the 15th century, on a mountain saddle overlooking the Urubamba River (in modern day Peru). The location was approximately three days' walk from the Inka capital of Cusco, and nearly 3,000 feet lower in elevation (7,972 feet / 2,430 meters), with a pleasant climate. It was intended as a place where the Inka emperor and his family could host feasts, perform religious ceremonies, and administer the affairs of empire, while also establishing a claim to land that would be owned by his lineage after his death. The site was chosen and situated for its relationship to the Andean landscape, including sight lines to other mountain peaks, called *apus*, which have long been considered ancestral deities throughout the Andes. The site contains housing for elites, retainers, and maintenance staff, religious shrines, fountains, and terraces, as well as carved rock outcrops, a signature element of Inka art.

Stone walls and trapezoid-shaped windows, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Jill /Blue Moonbeam Studio, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Inka traditions survive

With their defeat at the hands of the Spaniards, the Inka lost their place as divinely-descended leaders of their people. However, Inka nobles petitioned for and often won the right to be treated as elites in colonial Spanish society, and celebrated their heritage at Christian festivals, such as Corpus Christi. The privileges the nobles received did not translate to the rest of the population, though, and many people were deprived of their lands and personal freedom, required to pay taxes through often arduous labor.

Rebellions vying for a return to Inka rule occurred throughout the colonial period, the last of which took place in the 1780s. Peru finally achieved independence from Spanish rule in the 1820s, establishing a republican government. Modern residents of Cusco and its surrounding areas are still proud of their Inka heritage, and modern religious celebrations often incorporate parts of native culture into Christian practices.

License and Attributions

Chapter 26: Renaissance and Baroque Europe

The Renaissance really gets going in the early years of the fifteenth century in Florence. In this period, which we call the Early Renaissance, Florence is not a city in the unified country of Italy, as it is now. Instead, Italy was divided into many city-states (Florence, Milan, Venice etc.), each with its own government (some were ruled by despots, and others were republics).

Why did the Renaissance begin in Florence?

There are several answers to that question: Extraordinary wealth accumulated in Florence during this period among a growing middle and upper class of merchants and bankers. With the accumulation of wealth often comes a desire to use it to enjoy the pleasures of life—and not an exclusive focus on the hereafter.

Florence saw itself as the ideal city state, a place where the freedom of the individual was

guaranteed, and where many citizens had the right to participate in the government (this must have been very different than living in the Duchy of Milan, for example, which was ruled by a succession of Dukes with absolute power). In 1400 Florence was engaged in a struggle with the Duke of Milan. The Florentine people feared the loss of liberty and respect for individuals that was the pride of their Republic.

Luckily for Florence, the Duke of Milan caught the plague and died in 1402. Then, between 1408 and 1414 Florence was threatened once again, this time by the King of Naples, who also died before he could successfully conquer Florence. And in 1423 the Florentine people prepared for war against the son of the Duke of Milan who had threatened them earlier. Again, luckily for Florence, the Duke was defeated in 1425. The Florentine citizens interpreted these military "victories" as signs of God's favor and protection. They imagined themselves as the "New Rome" — in other words, as the heirs to the Ancient Roman Republic, prepared to sacrifice for the cause of freedom and liberty.

The Florentine people were very proud of their form of government in the early fifteenth century. A republic is, after all, a place that respects the opinions of individuals, individualism was a critical part of the Humanism that thrived in Florence in the fifteenth century.

The Early Renaissance

A new style emerges

During the late thirteenth century, artists in a handful of Italian cities began to move away from the Italo-Byzantine style. The Roman artist Pietro Cavallini created frescoes and mosaics featuring solid, monumentalizing figures; the sculptor Nicola Pisano studied ancient Roman sculpture; Sienese artists seem to have broken new ground in exploring perspective.
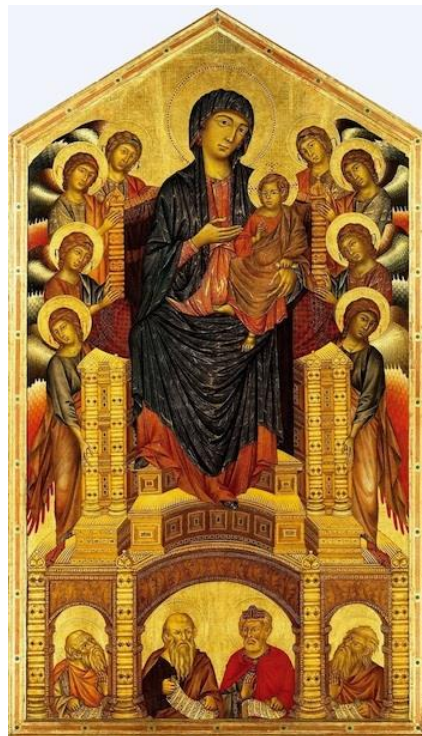
Cimabue, *Santa Trinita Madonna (Madonna and Child Enthroned),* 1280-90, tempera on panel (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

Meanwhile, back in Florence, Cimabue's paintings showed more interest in depicting space and modeling figures with gradations of light and shade. These ideas spread as artists travelled throughout Italy and southern France in search of work, creating a network of artistic centers that all exerted influence on one another.

Giotto

As the new century opened, the painter Giotto di Bondone observed many of these currents and forged them into something distinctively Florentine and enormously influential.

Giotto di Bondone, *The Ognissanti Madonna*, 1306-10, tempera on panel, 128 x 80 1/4″ or 325 x 204 cm (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

Where earlier works of art engage us with the embellished splendor of the heavenly, Giotto's paintings capture our attention by representing holy figures and stories as if in a majestic but earthly realm. Bold modeling of draperies and the bodies beneath them gives his figures greater volume and a sense of sculptural relief. Clever kinds of perspective create the illusion that a space is opening up in front of the viewer, as if we might be peering onto a stage.

Giotto, *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, c. 1305 (Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel, Padua)

Perhaps just as importantly, Giotto was a master of visual storytelling—a skill evident in his most important surviving project, the frescoes in the Arena Chapel in Padua (c. 1305). Here the monumentality of the figures, the quiet dignity of their movements, and the way architectural and landscape settings seem to echo the action all conjure up a solemn aura of the sacred. Like many of the narrative paintings attributed to Giotto, the scenes use closely observed human gestures and careful composition to enhance the drama and emotion of the moment depicted.

The High Renaissance

When you think of the Renaissance, the names that come to mind are probably the artists of this period (the High Renaissance): Leonardo and Michelangelo, for instance. And when you think of the greatest work of art in the western world, Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling might come to mind. This is a period of big, ambitious projects.

How is the High Renaissance different from the Early Renaissance?

As the Humanism of the Early Renaissance develops, a problem arises. Have a look at Fra Filippo Lippi's *Madonna and Child with Angels*. We see a Madonna and Christ Child that have become so real—the figures appear so human—that in some ways we can hardly tell that these are divine figures (except perhaps for the faint outline of a halo, and Mary's sorrowful expression and hands clasped in prayer). On the other hand, in the Middle Ages, the need to create transcendent spiritual figures, meant a move toward abstraction—toward flatness and elongation.

Fra Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child with Two Angels*, ca. 1455 – 1466, tempera on wood (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

In the Early Renaissance then, a tension arises. To create spiritual figures, your image can't look very real, and if you want your image to appear real, then you sacrifice some spirituality. In the late 15th century though, Leonardo da Vinci creates figures who are physical and real (just as real as Lippi's or Masaccio's figures) and yet they have an undeniable and intense spirituality. We could say that Leonardo unites the real and spiritual, or soul and substance.

Andrea del Verrocchio (with Leonardo), *Baptism of Christ*, 1470-75, oil and tempera on panel, 70 3/4 x 59 3/4″ / 180 x 152 cm (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

The best way to see this is in this painting by Verrocchio—an important Early Renaissance artist who Leonardo was apprenticed to when he was young. Verocchio asked Leonardo to paint one of the angels in his painting of the *Baptism of Christ* (above).

Can you tell which angel is Leonardo's? One angel should look more like a boy—that's the Early Renaissance angel (the one painted by Verrocchio) and the other angel should look like truly divine, sent by God from heaven (that's Leonardo's angel).

Andrea del Verrocchio (with Leonardo), *Baptism of Christ*, 1470-75, oil and tempera on panel, 70 3/4 x 59 3/4″ / 180 x 152 cm (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

The angel on the left is Leonardo's.

Leonardo's angel is ideally beautiful and moves in a graceful and complex way, twisting her upper body to the left but raising her head up and to the right. Figures that move elegantly and that are ideally beautiful are typical of the High Renaissance.

Leonardo, *Mona Lisa*

The most recognized painting in the world

The *Mona Lisa* has become an icon of the Renaissance—perhaps the most recognized painting in the world. The *Mona Lisa* is likely a portrait of the wife of a Florentine merchant. For some reason however, the portrait was never delivered to its patron, and Leonardo kept it with him when he went to work for Francis I, the King of France.

Leonardo da Vinci, *Portrait of Lisa Gherardini (known as the Mona Lisa),* c. 1503–19, oil on poplar panel, 77 x 53 cm (Musée du Louvre)

The *Mona Lisa's* mysterious smile has inspired many writers, singers, and painters. Here's a passage about the *Mona Lisa*, written by the Victorian-era writer Walter Pater:

> *We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least. The presence that thus rose so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed!*

A recent discovery

An important copy of the *Mona Lisa* was recently discovered in the collection of the Prado in Madrid. The background had been painted over, but when the painting was cleaned, scientific analysis revealed that the copy was likely painted by another artist who sat beside Leonardo and copied his work, brushstroke by brushstroke. The copy gives us an idea of what the *Mona Lisa* might look like if layers of yellowed varnish were removed.

Left: Unknown, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503-05, oil on panel (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid); right: Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503-19, oil on panel 30-1/4 x 21″ (Musée du Louvre)

Michelangelo: sculptor, painter, architect, and poet

For the 16th century, Michelangelo (1475-1564) lived a very long life (he lived to be 89), and therefore left us an incredible breadth of work in painting, sculpture, architecture, and poetry.

Sculpture

When Michelangelo was in his late 20s, he sculpted the 17-foot tall David for Florence. This colossus seemed to his contemporaries to rival or even surpass ancient Greek and Roman sculpture. David—and his later sculptures such as Moses and the two sculptures known as the Bound Slave and Dying Slave—demonstrated Michelangelo's astounding ability to make marble seem like living flesh and blood. So much so, it is difficult to imagine that these were created with a hammer and chisel. But it wasn't simply fidelity to the body, Michelangelo conveyed through his painting and sculpture humanity's nobility, dissolving the distinction between our earthly realm and the divine.

Michelangelo, *David*, marble, 1501-04 (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Painting

In painting, if we look at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome, with its elegant nudes and powerful seated figures, and the now-iconic image of the *Creation of Adam*, Michelangelo set a new standard for painting the human figure, one in which the body was not just an actor in a narrative, but emotionally and spiritually expressive on its own.
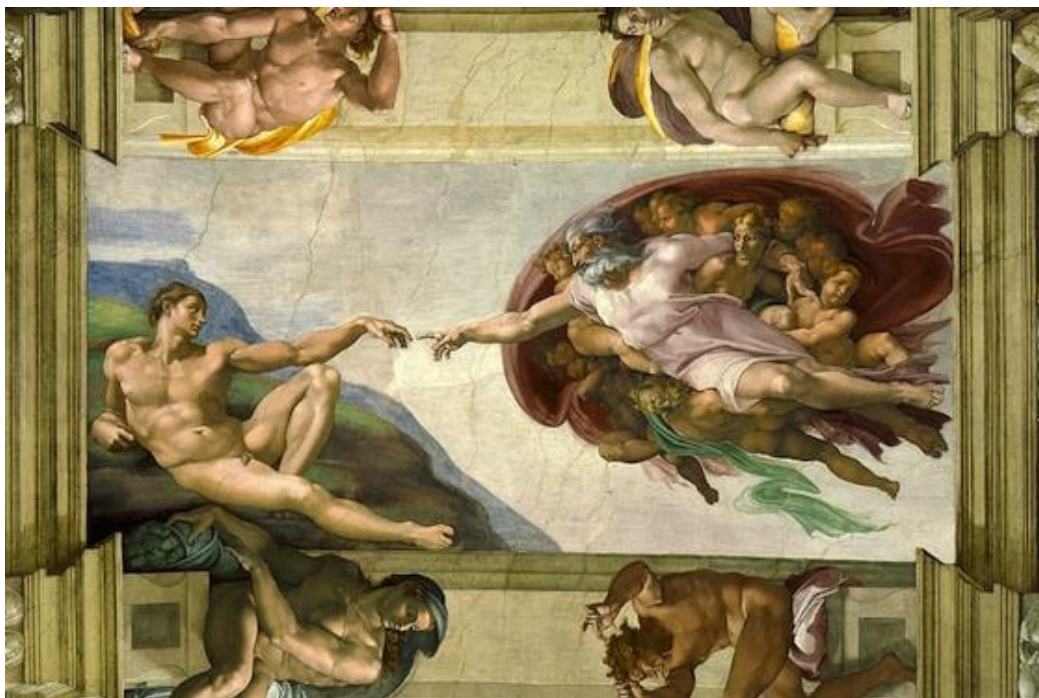
Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, 1508-1512, fresco (Vatican City, Rome)

Architecture

And then there is his architecture, where Michelangelo reordered ancient forms in entirely new and dramatic ways. It is no wonder that Giorgio Vasari, who knew Michelangelo, wrote how Michelangelo excelled in all three arts: painting, sculpture and architecture:

> *the great Ruler of Heaven looked down and…resolved…to send to earth a genius universal in each art…He further endowed him with true moral philosophy and a sweet poetic spirit, so that the world should marvel at the singular eminence of his life and works and all his actions, seeming rather divine than earthy.*

> Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects*, translated by Gaston Du C. de Vere

Michelangelo, Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, 1526-33, marble, 630 x 420 cm (Sagrestia Nuova, San Lorenzo, Florence, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Michelangelo was also a poet. In the poem below, Michelangelo gives us a sense of the co-existence in his art of a love of both the human (particularly male) body and God.

> *Sculpture, the first of arts, delights a taste*
> *Still strong and sound: each act, each limb, each bone*
> *Are given life and, lo, man's body is raised,*
> *Breathing alive, in wax or clay or stone.*
> *But oh, if time's inclement rage should waste,*
> *Or maim, the statue that man builds alone,*
> *Its beauty still remains, and can be traced*
> *Back to the source that claims it as its own.*

> from *The Complete Poems of Michelangelo*, translated by J. Tusiani (1960)

Raphael, *School of Athens*

Discover more about the artist Raphael and his painting *School of Athens* by watching the following video: https://smarthistory.org/raphael-school-of-athens/

The Northern Renaissance

Traditional accounts of the Renaissance favor a narrative that places the birth of the Renaissance in Florence, Italy. In this narrative, Italian art and ideas migrate North from Italy (largely because of the travels of the great German artist Albrecht Dürer who studied, admired, and was inspired by Italy, and he carried his Italian experiences back to Germany).

However, so much changed in northern Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that the era deserves to be evaluated on its own terms. So, we use the term "Northern Renaissance" to refer to the Renaissance that occurred in Europe north of the Alps.

Some of the most important changes in northern Europe include the:

- invention of the printing press, c. 1450
- advent of mechanically reproducible media such as woodcuts and engravings
- formation of a merchant class of art patrons that purchased works in oil on panel
- Protestant Reformation and the translation of the Bible from the original languages into the vernacular or common languages such as German and French
- international trade in urban centers

The fifteenth century: van Eyck

In the fifteenth century, northern artists such as Jan van Eyck introduced powerful and influential changes, such as the perfection of oil paint and almost impossible representation of minute detail, practices that clearly distinguish Northern art from Italian art as well as art from the preceding centuries. Jan and Hubert van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432 (Church of Saint Bavo, Ghent) exemplifies the grand scale and minute detail of Northern painting.

Jan (and Hubert?) Van Eyck, *Ghent Altarpiece or The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, 1432, tempera and oil on panel, 11′ 5″ x 7′ 3″ (open) (Cathedral of Saint Bavo, Ghent, Belgium)

This public, religious picture has an opened and closed position. On the interior (above) we see such holy figures as the Virgin, Christ, saints and angels. It also showcases the largesse of the donors (below), depicted kneeling on the lowest corners of the exterior, who employed the van Eyck brothers to immortalize them in this very public work of art.

Jan (and Hubert?) Van Eyck, *Ghent Altarpiece or The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, 1432, tempera and oil on panel, 11′ 5″ x 7′ 3″ (closed) (Cathedral of Saint Bavo, Ghent, Belgium)

Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Double Portrait* (1434) shows a well-to-do couple in a tasteful, bourgeois interior. The text in the back of the image identifies the date and Jan van Eyck as the artist. Art historians disagree about what is actually happening in the image, whether this is a betrothal or a marriage, or perhaps something else entirely. One of the most important aspects of this painting is the symbolic meanings of the objects, for instance that the dog may symbolize fidelity ("Fido") or that the fruit on the windowsill may signify either wealth or temptation. This painting is a touchstone for the study of iconography, a method of interpreting works of art by deciphering symbolic meaning.

Jan Van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, tempera and oil on wood, 1434, 82.2 x 60 cm (National Gallery, London)

Though Jan van Eyck did not invent oil paint, he used the medium to greater effect than any other artist to date. Oil would become a predominant medium for painting for centuries, favored in art academies into the nineteenth century and beyond. The Arnolfinis counted as middle class because their wealth came from trade rather than inherited titles and land. The power of the merchant-class patrons of northern Europe cultivated a taste for art made for domestic display. Decorating one's home is still a powerful motivation for art patrons. Museum visitors repeatedly comment, "well, I wouldn't want it in my living room."

Baroque Art

Gian Lorenzo Bernini, View to Cathedra Petri (or Chair of St. Peter), 1647-53, gilded bronze, gold, wood, stained glass (Apse of Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, Rome) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Rome: From the "Whore of Babylon" to the resplendent bride of Christ

When Martin Luther tacked his 95 theses to the doors of Wittenberg Cathedral in 1517 protesting the Catholic Church's corruption, he initiated a movement that would transform the religious, political, and artistic landscape of Europe. For the next century, Europe would be in turmoil as new political and religious boundaries were determined, often through bloody military conflicts. Only in 1648, with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia, did the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics subside in continental Europe.

Martin Luther focused his critique on what he saw as the Church's greed and abuse of power. He called Rome, the seat of papal power, "the whore of Babylon" decked out in finery of expensive art, grand architecture, and sumptuous banquets. The Church responded to the crisis in two ways: by internally addressing issues of corruption and by defending the doctrines rejected by the Protestants. Thus, while the first two decades of the 16th century were a period of lavish spending for the Papacy, the middle decades were a period of austerity. As one visitor to Rome noted in the 1560s, the entire city had become a convent. Piety and asceticism ruled the day.

By the end of the 16th century, the Catholic Church was once again feeling optimistic, even triumphant. It had emerged from the crisis with renewed vigor and clarity of purpose. Shepherding the faithful—instructing them on Catholic doctrines and inspiring virtuous behavior—took center stage. Keen to rebuild Rome's reputation as a holy city, the Papacy embarked on extensive building and decoration campaigns aimed at highlighting its ancient

origins, its beliefs, and its divinely sanctioned authority. In the eyes of faithful Catholics, Rome was not an unfaithful whore, but a pure bride, beautifully adorned for her union with her divine spouse.

The art of persuasion: To instruct, to delight, to move

While the Protestants harshly criticized the cult of images, the Catholic Church ardently embraced the religious power of art. The visual arts, the Church argued, played a key role in guiding the faithful. They were certainly as important as the written and spoken word, and perhaps even more important, since they were accessible to the learned and the unlearned alike. In order to be effective in its pastoral role, religious art had to be clear, persuasive, and powerful. Not only did it have to instruct, it had to inspire. It had to move the faithful to feel the reality of Christ's sacrifice, the suffering of the martyrs, the visions of the saints.

Caravaggio, *The Crowning with Thorns*, 1602-04, oil on canvas, 165.5 x 127 cm (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

The Church's emphasis on art's pastoral role prompted artists to experiment with new and more direct means of engaging the viewer. Artists like Caravaggio turned to a powerful and dramatic realism, accentuated by bold contrasts of light and dark, and tightly-cropped compositions that enhance the physical and emotional immediacy of the depicted narrative.

View of the Cerasi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome with Annibale Carracci's altarpiece, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1600-01, oil on canvas, 96 × 61″, and paintings by Caravaggio on the side walls (*The Crucifixion of St. Peter* on the left, and *The Conversion of Paul* on the right)

Other artists, like Annibale Carracci (who also experimented with realism), ultimately settled on a more classical visual language, inspired by the vibrant palette, idealized forms, and balanced compositions of the High Renaissance (see image above). Still others, like Giovanni Battista Gaulli, turned to daring feats of illusionism that blurred not only the boundaries between painting, sculpture, and architecture, but also those between the real and depicted worlds. In so doing, the divine was made physically present and palpable. Whether through shocking realism, dynamic movement, or exuberant ornamentation, seventeenth-century art is meant to impress. It aims to convince the viewer of the truth of its message by impacting the senses, awakening the emotions, and activating, even sharing the viewer's space.

Giovanni Battista Gaulli, also known as il Baciccio, *The Triumph of the Name of Jesus*, 1672-1685, Il Gesù ceiling fresco (Rome, Italy)

The Catholic monarchs and their territories

The monarchs of Spain, Portugal, and France also embraced the more ornate elements of seventeenth century art to celebrate Catholicism. In Spain and its colonies, rulers invested vast resources on elaborate church facades, stunning, gold-covered chapels and tabernacles, and strikingly-realistic polychrome sculpture.

In the Spanish Netherlands, where sacred art had suffered terribly as a result of the Protestant iconoclasm (the destruction of art), civic and religious leaders prioritized the adornment of churches as the region reclaimed its Catholic identity. Refurnishing the altars of Antwerp's churches kept Peter Paul Rubens' workshop busy for many years. Europe's monarchs also adopted this artistic vocabulary to proclaim their own power and status. Louis XIV, for example, commissioned the splendid buildings and gardens of Versailles as a visual expression of his divine right to rule.

Peter Paul Rubens, *Elevation of the Cross*, 1610, oil on wood, 15′ 1-7/8″ x 11′ 1-1/2″ (originally for Saint Walpurgis, Antwerp (destroyed), now in Antwerp Cathedral)

The Protestant North
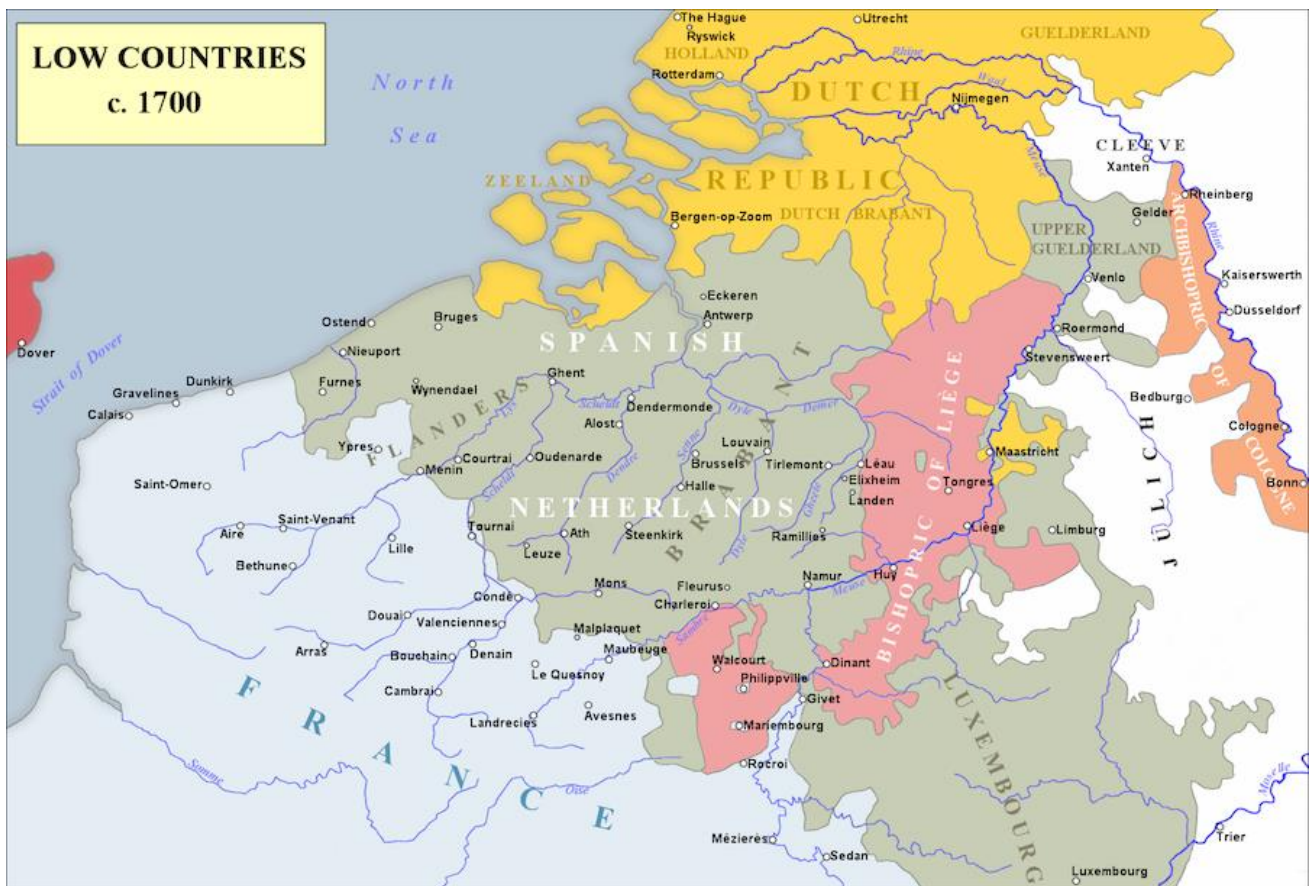
In the Protestant countries, and especially in the newly-independent Dutch Republic (modern-day Holland), the artistic climate changed radically in the aftermath of the Reformation. Two of the wealthiest sources of patronage—the monarchy and the Church—were now gone. In their stead arose an increasingly prosperous middle class eager to express its status, and its new sense of national pride, through the purchase of art.

By the middle of the 17th century a new market had emerged to meet the artistic tastes of this class. The demand was now for smaller scale paintings suitable for display in private homes. These paintings included religious subjects for private contemplation, as seen in Rembrandt's poignant paintings and prints of biblical narratives, as well as portraits documenting individual likenesses.
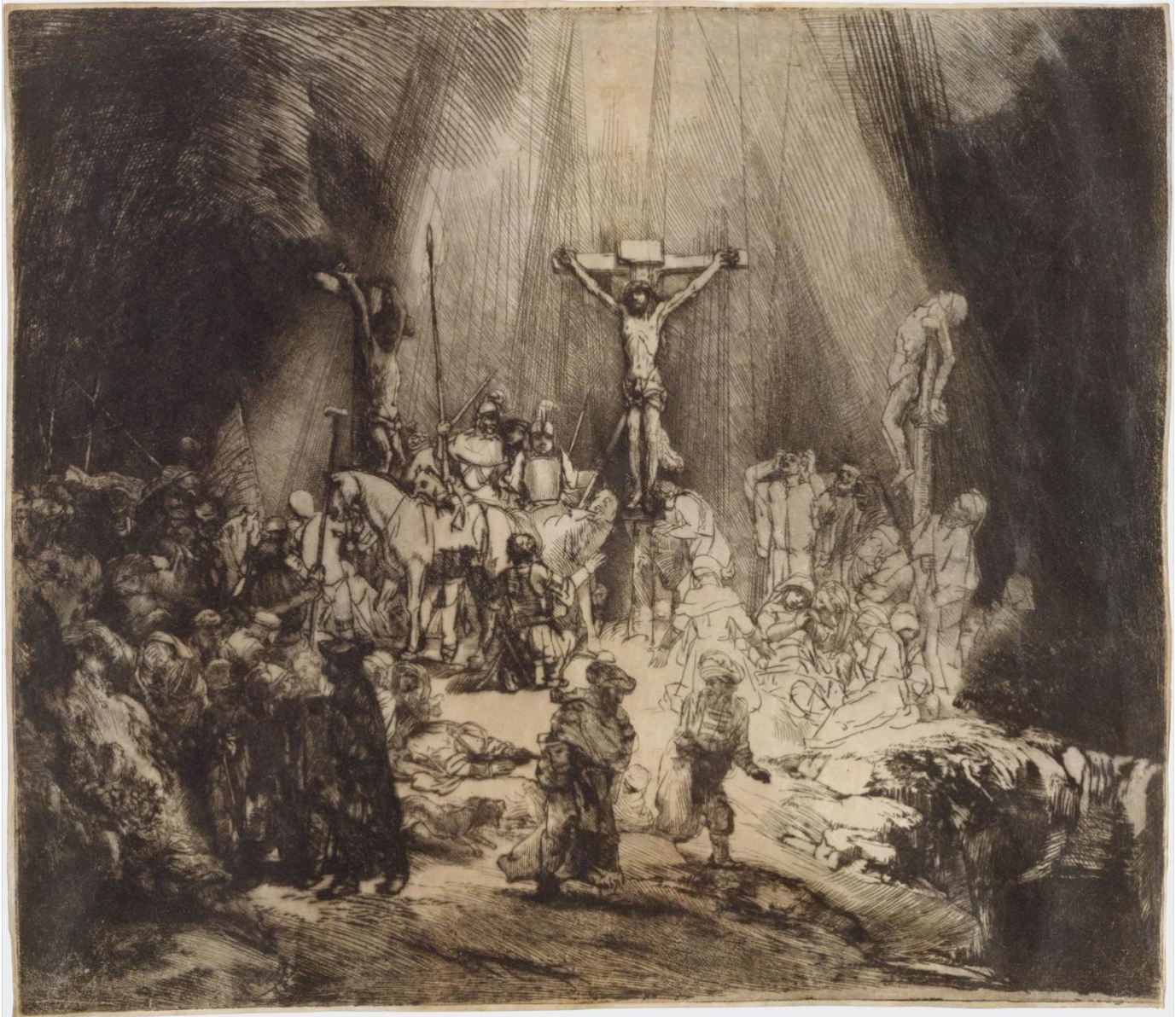
Rembrandt (Rembrandt van Rijn), *Christ Crucified between the Two Thieves: The Three Crosses*, 1653, Drypoint printed on vellum. This image is in the Public Domain

But, the greatest change in the market was the dramatic increase in the popularity of landscapes, still-lifes, and scenes of everyday life (known as genre painting). Indeed, the proliferation of these subjects as independent artistic genres was one of the 17th century's most

significant contributions to the history of Western art.

Judith Leyster, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1630, oil on canvas, 651 x 746 cm (National Gallery of Art, Washington)

In all of these genres, artists revealed a keen interest in replicating observed reality—whether it be the light on the Dutch landscape, the momentary expression on a face, or the varied textures and materials of the objects the Dutch collected as they reaped the benefits of their expanding mercantile empire. These works demonstrated as much artistic virtuosity and physical immediacy as the grand decorations of the palaces and churches of Catholic Europe.

In the context of European history, the period from c. 1585 to c. 1700/1730 is often called the Baroque era. The word "baroque" derives from the Portuguese and Spanish words for a large, irregularly-shaped pearl ("barroco" and "barrueco," respectively). Eighteenth century critics were the first to apply the term to the art of the 17th century. It was not a term of praise. To the eyes of these critics, who favored the restraint and order of Neoclassicism, the works of Bernini, Borromini, and Pietro da Cortona appeared bizarre, absurd, even diseased—in other words, misshapen, like an imperfect pearl.

Rococo Art

The beginnings of Rococo

In the early years of the 1700s, at the end of the reign of Louis XIV (who dies in 1715), there was a shift away from the classicism and "Grand Manner" (based on the art of Poussin) that had governed the art of the preceding 50 years in France, toward a new style that we call Rococo. The Palace of Versailles (a royal chateau that was the center of political power) was abandoned

by the aristocracy, who once again took up residence in Paris. A shift away from the monarchy, toward the aristocracy characterizes the art of this period.

Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV*, 1701, oil on canvas, 114 x 62 5/8 in (The J. Paul Getty Museum)

What kind of lifestyle did the aristocracy lead? Remember that the aristocracy had enormous political power as well as enormous wealth. Many chose leisure as a pursuit and became involved themselves in romantic intrigues. Indeed, they created a culture of luxury and excess that formed a stark contrast to the lives of most people in France. The aristocracy—only a small percentage of the population of France—owned over 90% of its wealth. A small but growing middle class will not sit still with this for long (remember the French Revolution of 1789).

Fragonard's *The Swing*

As with most Rococo paintings, the subject of Fragonard's *The Swing* is not very complicated. Two lovers have conspired to get an older fellow to push the young lady in the swing while her lover hides in the bushes. Their idea is that—as she goes up in the swing, she can part her legs, and her lover can get a tantalizing view up her skirt.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing*, 1767, oil on canvas, 81 x 64.2 cm (Wallace Collection, London)

The figures are surrounded by a lush, overgrown garden. A sculptured figure to the left puts his fingers to his mouth, as though saying "hush," while another sculpture in the background shows two cupid figures cuddled together. The colors are pastel pale pinks and greens, and although we have a sense of movement and a prominent diagonal line—the painting lacks the seriousness of a baroque painting.

If you look closely you can see the loose brushstrokes in the pink silk dress—and as she opens her legs, we get a glimpse of her stockings and garter belt. It was precisely this kind of painting that the philosophers of the Enlightenment were soon to condemn. They demanded a new style of art, one that showed an example of moral behavior, of human beings at their most noble.

Female figure (detail), Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing*, 1767, oil on canvas, 81 x 64.2 cm (Wallace Collection, London)

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Chapter 27: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The Asante Kingdom of West Africa

The Asante kingdom, part of the larger Akan culture was formed around 1700 under the leadership of Osei Tutu. Osei Tutu brought together a confederation of states that had grown wealthy and powerful as a result of the area's lucrative trade in gold, sold to both northern merchants across the Sahara and European navigators. The centralized system of government that emerged was a complex network of chiefs and court officials under a single paramount leader. A variety of gold regalia was used to distinguish rank and position within the court.

Among the Asante (or Ashanti), a popular legend relates how two young men—Ota Karaban and his friend Kwaku Ameyaw—learned the art of weaving by observing a spider weaving its web. One night, the two went out into the forest to check their traps, and they were amazed by a beautiful spider's web whose many unique designs sparkled in the moonlight. The spider, named Ananse, offered to show the men how to weave such designs in exchange for a few favors. After completing the favors and learning how to weave the designs with a single thread, the men returned home to Bonwire (the town in the Asante region of Ghana where kente weaving originated), and their discovery was soon reported to Asantehene Osei Tutu. The asantehene (title of the Asante monarch) adopted their creation, named *kente*, as a royal cloth reserved for special occasions, and Bonwire became the leading kente weaving center for the asantehene and his court.

Asantehene Osei Tutu II wearing kente cloth, 2005 (photo: Retlaw Snellac, CC BY 2.0)

Originally, the use of kente was reserved for Asante royalty and limited to special social and sacred functions. Even as production has increased and kente has become more accessible to those outside the royal court, it continues to be associated with wealth, high social status, and cultural sophistication. Kente is also found in Asante shrines to the deities, or *abosom*, as a mark of their spiritual power.

Patterns each have a name, as does each cloth in its entirety. Names can be inspired by historical events, proverbs, philosophical concepts, oral literature, moral values, human and animal behavior, individual achievements, or even individuals in pop culture. In the past, when purchasing a cloth, the aesthetic and social appeal of the cloth's was as important as—or sometimes even more important than—its visual pattern or color.

The King has Boarded the Ship (Asante kente cloth), c. 1985, rayon (collection of Dr. Courtnay Micots)

This cloth is named *The King Has Boarded the Ship*, and it includes both warp and weft patterns. The warp pattern, consisting of two multicolor stripes on blue, relates to the proverb "*Fie buo yE buna,*" meaning the head of the family has a difficult task. The weft patterns vary throughout the cloth; these examples are "*NkyEmfrE,*" a broken pot, and "*Kwadum Asa,*" an empty gunpowder keg.

The King has Boarded the Ship (details), left: "Broken Pot" pattern; right: "Empty Powder Keg" pattern, c. 1985, rayon (collection of Dr. Courtnay Micots)

Social changes and modern living have brought about significant changes in how kente is used. It is no longer only the privilege of royalty; anyone who can afford it can buy kente. The old tradition of not cutting the cloth has also long been set aside, and it may be sewn into other forms such as dresses, shirts, or shoes. Printed versions of kente are mass produced and marketed, and both woven and printed versions are used by fashion designers in Ghana and abroad.

Kente print bag, 1990s (photo: Huzzah Vintage, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Kente is more than just a cloth. It is an iconic visual representation of the history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, religious belief, social values, and political thought of West Africa. Kente is exported as one of the key symbols of African heritage and pride in African ancestry throughout

the diaspora. In spite of the proliferation of both the hand-woven and machine-printed kente, the design is still regarded as a symbol of social prestige, nobility, and cultural sophistication.

Europe and the Age of Enlightenment

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century a shift in thinking occurred. This shift is known as the Enlightenment. You have probably already heard of some important Enlightenment figures, like Rousseau, Diderot and Voltaire. It is helpful to think about the word "enlighten" here—the idea of shedding light on something, illuminating it, making it clear.

Jean-Antoine Houdon, Voltaire, 1778, marble (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) (photo: Sara Stierch, CC BY 2.0)

The thinkers of the Enlightenment, influenced by the scientific revolutions of the previous century, believed in shedding the light of science and reason on the world in order to question traditional ideas and ways of doing things. The scientific revolution (based on empirical observation, and not on metaphysics or spirituality) gave the impression that the universe behaved according to universal and unchanging laws (think of Newton here). This provided a model for looking rationally on human institutions as well as nature.

The French Revolution and Neoclassicism

The Enlightenment encouraged criticism of the corruption of the monarchy in France (at this

point King Louis XVI), and the aristocracy. Enlightenment thinkers condemned Rococo art for being immoral and indecent, and called for a new kind of art that would be moral instead of immoral and teach people right and wrong.

In opposition to the frivolous sensuality of Rococo painters like Jean-Honoré Fragonard and François Boucher, the Neoclassicists looked back to the French painter Nicolas Poussin for their inspiration (Poussin's work exemplifies the interest in classicism in French art of the seventeenth century). The decision to promote "Poussiniste" painting became an ethical consideration—they believed that strong drawing was rational, therefore morally better. They believed that art should be cerebral, not sensual.

The Neoclassicists, such as Jacques-Louis David (pronounced Da-VEED), preferred the well-delineated form—clear drawing and modeling (shading). Drawing was considered more important than painting. The Neoclassical surface had to look perfectly smooth—no evidence of brush-strokes should be discernible to the naked eye.

France was on the brink of its first revolution in 1789, and the Neoclassicists wanted to express a rationality and seriousness that was fitting for their times. Artists like David supported the rebels through an art that asked for clear-headed thinking, self-sacrifice to the State (as in *Oath of the Horatii*) and an austerity reminiscent of Republican Rome.

Jacques-Louis David, Oath of the Horatii, 1784 (salon of 1785) oil on canvas, 3.3 x 4.25m (Louvre)

Neoclassicism is characterized by clarity of form, sober colors, shallow space, strong horizontal and verticals that render that subject matter timeless (instead of temporal as in the dynamic Baroque works), and Classical subject matter (or classicizing contemporary subject matter).

Romanticism
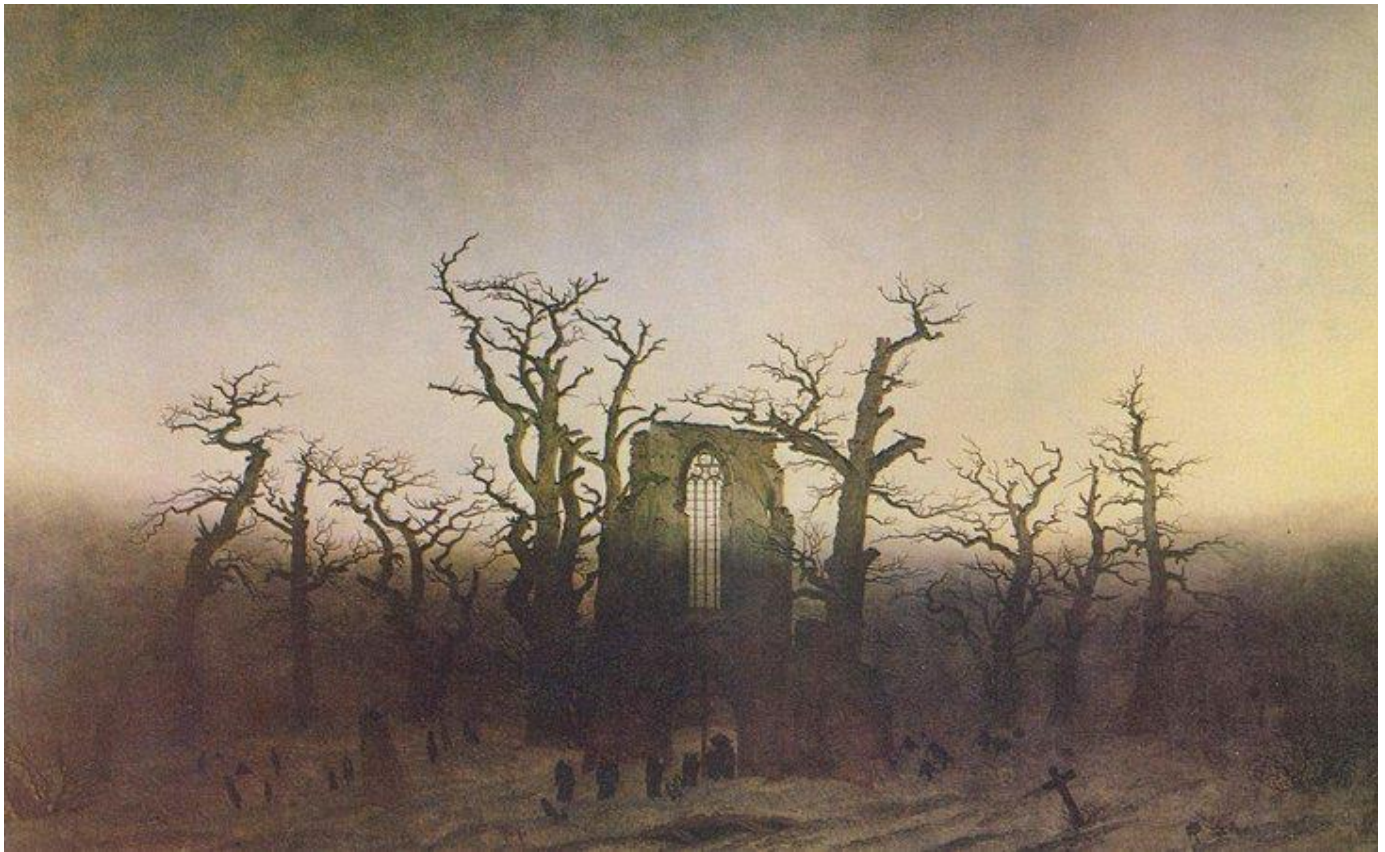
Caspar David Friedrich, The Abbey in the Oakwood, 1809-10, oil on canvas, 110 x 171 cm (Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin)

As is fairly common with stylistic rubrics, the word "Romanticism" was not developed to describe the visual arts but was first used in relation to new literary and musical schools in the beginning of the 19th century. Art came under this heading only later. Think of the Romantic literature and musical compositions of the early 19th century: the poetry of Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and William Wordsworth and the scores of Beethoven, Richard Strauss, and Chopin—these Romantic poets and musicians associated with visual artists. A good example of this is the friendship between composer and pianist Frederic Chopin and painter Eugene Delacroix. Romantic artists were concerned with the spectrum and intensity of human emotion.

Eugene Delacroix, *Liberty leading the People*, 1830, oil on canvas, 260 x 325 cm (Louvre, Paris)

Even if you do not regularly listen to classical music, you've heard plenty of music by these composers. In his epic film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the late director Stanley Kubrick used Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (written in 1896, Strauss based his composition on Friedrich Nietzsche's book of the same name, listen to it here). Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* similarly uses the sweeping ecstasy and drama of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, in this case to intensify the cinematic violence of the film.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Saturn Devouring One Of His Sons*, 1821-1823, 143.5 x 81.4 cm (Prado, Madrid)

Romantic music expressed the powerful drama of human emotion: anger and passion, but also quiet passages of pleasure and joy. So too, the French painter Eugene Delacroix and the Spanish artist Francisco Goya broke with the cool, cerebral idealism of David and Ingres' Neo-Classicism. They sought instead to respond to the cataclysmic upheavals that characterized their era with line, color, and brushwork that was more physically direct, more emotionally expressive.

Realism

The Royal Academy supported the age-old belief that art should be instructive, morally uplifting, refined, inspired by the classical tradition, a good reflection of the national culture, and, above all, about beauty.

But trying to keep young nineteenth-century artists' eyes on the past became an issue! The world was changing rapidly, and some artists wanted their work to be about their contemporary environment—about themselves and their own perceptions of life. In short, they believed that the modern era deserved to have a modern art.

The Modern Era begins with the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Clothing, food, heat, light and sanitation are a few of the basic areas that "modernized" the nineteenth century. Transportation was faster, getting things done got easier, shopping in the new department stores became an adventure, and people developed a sense of "leisure time"—thus the entertainment businesses grew.

Paris transformed

In Paris, the city was transformed from a medieval warren of streets to a grand urban center with wide boulevards, parks, shopping districts and multi-class dwellings (so that the division of class might be from floor to floor—the rich on the lower floors and the poor on the upper floors in one building—instead by neighborhood).

Therefore, modern life was about social mixing, social mobility, frequent journeys from the city to the country and back, and a generally faster pace which has accelerated ever since.

Gustave Courbet, *Les Demoiselles du bord de la Seine (Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine)*, 1856, oil on canvas, 174 x 206 cm (Musée du Petit, Palais)

How could paintings and sculptures about classical gods and biblical stories relate to a population enchanted with this progress?

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the young artists decided that it couldn't and shouldn't. In 1863 the poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire published an essay entitled "The Painter of Modern Life," which declared that the artist must be of his/her own time.

Courbet

Gustave Courbet, *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849-50, oil on canvas, 314 x 663 cm (Musee d'Orsay, Paris)

Gustave Courbet, a young fellow from the Franche-Comté, a province outside of Paris, came to the "big city" with a large ego and a sense of mission. He met Baudelaire and other progressive thinkers within the first years of making Paris his home. Then, he set himself up as the leader for a new art: Realism— "history painting" about real life. He believed that if he could not see something, he should not paint it. He also decided that his art should have a social consciousness that would awaken the self-involved Parisian to contemporary concerns: the good, the bad and the ugly.

Édouard Manet

Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130 x 190 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

Manet's complaint—" They are raining insults upon me!" to his friend Charles Baudelaire pointed to the overwhelming negative response his painting *Olympia* received from critics in 1865. Baudelaire (an art critic and poet) had advocated for an art that could capture the "gait, glance, and gesture" of modern life, and, although Manet's painting had perhaps done just that, its debut at the salon only served to bewilder and scandalize the Parisian public.

Manet had created an artistic revolution: a contemporary subject depicted in a modern manner. It is hard from a present-day perspective to see what all the fuss was about. Nevertheless, the painting elicited much unease and it is important to remember—in the absence of the profusion of media imagery that exists today—that painting and sculpture in nineteenth-century France served to consolidate identity on both a national and individual level. And here is where the *Olympia's* subversive role resides. Manet chose not to mollify anxiety about this new modern world of which Paris had become a symbol. For those anxious about class status (many had recently moved to Paris from the countryside), the naked woman in *Olympia* coldly stared back at the new urban bourgeoisie looking to art to solidify their own sense of identity. Aside from the reference to prostitution—itself a dangerous sign of the emerging margins in the modern city— the painting's inclusion of a black woman tapped into the French colonialist mindset while providing a stark contrast for the whiteness of Olympia. The black woman also served as a powerful emblem of "primitive" sexuality, one of many fictions that aimed to justify colonial views of non-Western societies.

Impressionism

Claude Monet, *Impression Sunrise*, 1872, oil on canvas, 48 x 63 cm (Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris). This painting was exhibited at the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874.

Apart from the salon

The group of artists who became known as the Impressionists did something ground-breaking in addition to painting their sketchy, light-filled canvases: they established their own exhibition. This may not seem like much in an era like ours, when art galleries are everywhere in major cities, but in Paris at this time, there was one official, state-sponsored exhibition—called the Salon—and very few art galleries devoted to the work of living artists. For most of the nineteenth century then, the Salon was the only way to exhibit your work (and therefore the only way to establish your reputation and make a living as an artist). The works exhibited at the Salon were chosen by a jury—which could often be quite arbitrary. The artists we know today as Impressionists— Claude Monet, August Renoir, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot, Alfred Sisley (and several others)— could not afford to wait for France to accept their work. They all had experienced rejection by the Salon jury in recent years and felt that waiting an entire year between exhibitions was too long. They needed to show their work and they wanted to sell it.

Edgar Degas, *The Ballet Class*, 1871-1874, oil on canvas, 75 x 85 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

The artists pooled their money, rented a studio that belonged to the photographer Nadar, and set a date for their first collective exhibition. They called themselves the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Printmakers and their first show opened at about the same time as the annual Salon in May 1874. The Impressionists held eight exhibitions from 1874 through 1886.

Lack of finish

Monet, Renoir, Degas, and Sisley had met through classes. Berthe Morisot was a friend of both Degas and Manet (she would marry Édouard Manet's brother Eugène by the end of 1874). She had been accepted to the Salon, but her work had become more experimental since then. Degas invited Morisot to join their risky effort. The first exhibition did not repay the artists monetarily, but it did draw the critics, some of whom decided their art was abominable. What they saw wasn't finished in their eyes; these were mere "impressions." This was not a compliment.

Berthe Morisot, *The Cradle*, 1872, oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

The paintings of Neoclassical and Romantic artists had a finished appearance. The Impressionists' completed works looked like sketches, fast and preliminary "impressions" that artists would dash off to preserve an idea of what to paint more carefully at a later date. Normally, an artist's "impressions" were not meant to be sold but were meant to be aids for the memory—to take these ideas back to the studio for the masterpiece on canvas. The critics thought it was absurd to sell paintings that looked like slap-dash impressions and to present these paintings as finished works.

Landscape and contemporary life

Courbet, Manet and the Impressionists also challenged the Academy's category codes. The Academy deemed that only "history painting" was great painting. These young Realists and Impressionists questioned the long-established hierarchy of subject matter. They believed that landscapes and genres scenes (scenes of contemporary life) were worthy and important.

Claude Monet, *Coquelicots, La promenade (Poppies)*, 1873, 50 x 65 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

Light and color

In their landscapes and genre scenes, the Impressionist tried to arrest a particular moment in time by pinpointing specific atmospheric conditions—light flickering on water, moving clouds, a burst of rain. Their technique tried to capture what they saw. They painted small commas of pure color one next to another. When a viewer stood at a reasonable distance their eyes would see a mix of individual marks; colors that had blended optically. This method created more vibrant colors than colors mixed as physical paint on a palette.

Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877, oil on canvas, 75 x 104 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

An important aspect of the Impressionist painting was the appearance of quickly shifting light on the surface of forms and the representation of changing atmospheric conditions. The Impressionists wanted to create an art that was modern by capturing the rapid pace of contemporary life and the fleeting conditions of light. They painted outdoors (*en plein air*) to capture the appearance of the light as it flickered and faded while they worked.

Post-Impressionism

Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 92.1 cm (The Museum of Modern Art)

Vincent van Gogh: A rare night landscape

The curving, swirling lines of hills, mountains, and sky, the brilliantly contrasting blues and yellows, the large, flame-like cypress trees, and the thickly layered brushstrokes of Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night* are ingrained in the minds of many as an expression of the artist's turbulent state-of-mind. Van Gogh's canvas is indeed an exceptional work of art, not only in terms of its quality but also within the artist's oeuvre, since in comparison to favored subjects like irises, sunflowers, or wheat fields, night landscapes are rare. Nevertheless, it is surprising that *The Starry Night* has become so well known. Van Gogh mentioned it briefly in his letters as a simple "study of night" or "night effect."

His brother Theo, manager of a Parisian art gallery and a gifted connoisseur of contemporary art, was unimpressed, telling Vincent, "I clearly sense what preoccupies you in the new canvases like the village in the moonlight… but I feel that the search for style takes away the real sentiment of things" (813, 22 October 1889). Although Theo van Gogh felt that the painting ultimately pushed style too far at the expense of true emotive substance, the work has become iconic of individualized expression in modern landscape painting.

Arguably, it is this rich mixture of invention, remembrance, and observation combined with Van Gogh's use of simplified forms, thick impasto, and boldly contrasting colors that has made the work so compelling to subsequent generations of viewers as well as to other artists. Inspiring and encouraging others is precisely what Van Gogh sought to achieve with his night scenes. When *Starry Night over the Rhône* (image below) was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants, an important and influential venue for vanguard artists in Paris, in 1889, Vincent told Theo he

hoped that it "might give others the idea of doing night effects better than I do." *The Starry Night*, his own subsequent "night effect," became a foundational image for Expressionism as well as perhaps the most famous painting in Van Gogh's oeuvre.

Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night over the Rhone*, 1888, oil on canvas, 72 x 92 cm (Musée d'Orsay)

Paul Cézanne

Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Apples*, 1895-98, oil on canvas, 68.6 x 92.7 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Categorizing the style of Paul Cézanne's (Say-zahn) artwork is problematic. As a young man he left his home in Provence in the south of France in order to join with the avant-garde in Paris. He was successful, too. He fell in with the circle of young painters that surrounded Manet, he had been a childhood friend of the novelist, Emile Zola, who championed Manet, and he even showed at the first Impressionist exhibition, held at Nadar's studio in 1874.


Paul Cézanne, *Paul Alexis reading to Émile Zola*, 1869-1870, oil on canvas (São Paulo Museum of Art)

However, Cézanne didn't quite fit in with the group. Whereas many other painters in this circle were concerned primarily with the effects of light and reflected color, Cézanne remained deeply committed to form. Feeling out of place in Paris, he left after a relatively short period and returned to his home in Aix-en-Provence. He would remain in his native Provence for most of the rest of his life. He worked in the semi-isolation afforded by the country but was never really out of touch with the breakthroughs of the avant-garde.

Like the Impressionists, he often worked outdoors directly before his subjects. But unlike the Impressionists, Cézanne used color, not as an end in itself, but rather like line, as a tool with which to construct form and space. Ironically, it is the Parisian avant-garde that would eventually seek him out. In the first years of the 20th century, just at the end of Cézanne's life, young artists would make a pilgrimage to Aix, to see the man who would change painting.
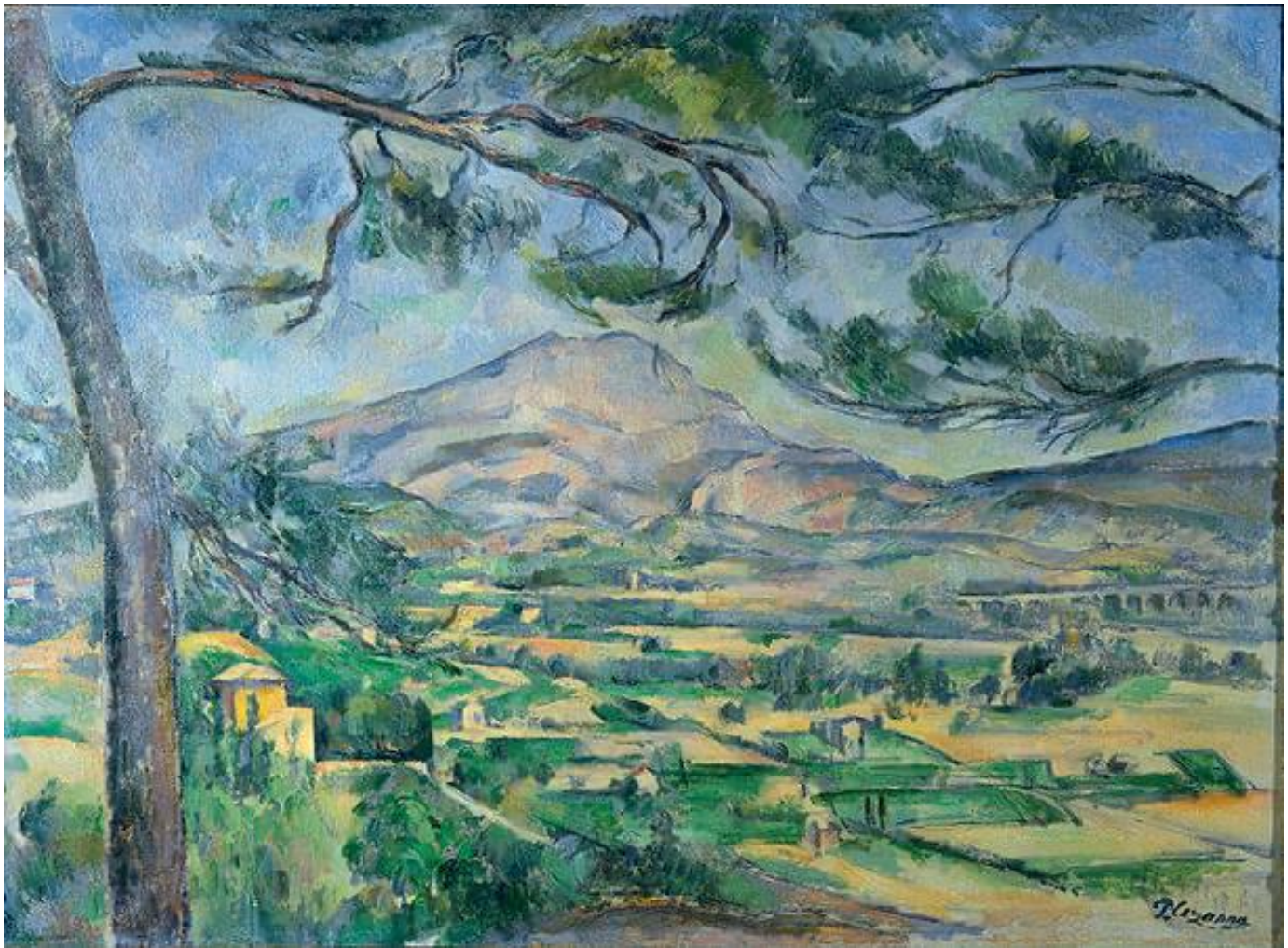
Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, c. 1887, oil on canvas, 66.8 x 92.3 cm (Courtauld Institute of Art, London)

Paul Cézanne is often considered to be one of the most influential painters of the late 19th century. Pablo Picasso readily admitted his great debt to the elder master. Similarly, Henri Matisse once called Cézanne, "…the father of us all." For many years The Museum of Modern Art in New York organized its permanent collection so as to begin with an entire room devoted to Cézanne's painting. The Metropolitan Museum of Art also gives over an entire large room to him. Clearly, many artists and curators consider him enormously important.

Japan's Edo Period (1615-1868) and the art of *Ukiyo-e*

The genre of *ukiyo-e* (literally translatable as "pictures of the floating world") comprises paintings and prints, though woodblock prints were its main medium. It flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries, supported by Japan's middle class. *Ukiyo-e* works were collaborations between painters, publishers, carvers, and printers, with subject matter drawn from the transitory (thus "floating"), but enjoyable worlds of pleasure quarters, the popular theater, and urban life, especially the streets of Edo (the most powerful city in Japan from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Renamed Tokyo in 1868). *Ukiyo-e* also featured parodies of classical themes set in contemporaneous circumstances.

Utagawa Kunisada I (Toyokuni III), *Visiting Komachi (Kayoi Komachi)* (detail), from the series *Modern Beauties as the Seven Komachi (Tōsei Bijin Nana Komachi)*, c. 1821-22, published by Kawaguchiya Uhei (Fukusendō), woodblock print: ink and color on paper, 36.5 x 25.5 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

In the print above titled *Visiting Komachi* by Utagawa Kunisada I, the empty carriage helps us identify that the specific story being illustrated, is the one known as "*Visiting Komachi*" (*Kayoi Komachi*). According to legend, Komachi, renowned for her beauty and talent, attracted the attention of many suitors, including General Fukakusa, who sought to become her lover. Komachi tested his devotion by asking him to spend 100 nights outside her door, in the garden, irrespective of weather conditions. He agreed and marked each night on the shaft of her carriage but died on the last night because of the harsh winter. The scene illustrated in Kunisada's print may be from the very end of the story, when Komachi learns about his death and goes to see the carriage. Other versions of this story circulated orally in Japan over the centuries, and some were used as plotlines for plays in the Japanese *Noh* tradition of musical drama.

Katsushika Hokusai's *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, also called *The Great Wave* has become one of the most famous works of art in the world—and debatably the most iconic work of

Japanese art. Initially, thousands of copies of this print were quickly produced and sold cheaply. Despite the fact that it was created at a time when Japanese trade was heavily restricted, Hokusai's print displays the influence of Dutch art, and proved to be inspirational for many artists working in Europe later in the nineteenth century.

Katsushika Hokusai, *Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa oki nami ura),* also known as *The Great Wave,* from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji (Fugaku sanjūrokkei)*, c. 1830-32, polychrome woodblock print, ink and color on paper, 10 1/8 x 14 15 /16″ / 25.7 x 37.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Beginning in 1640, Japan was largely closed off to the world and only limited interaction with China and Holland was allowed. This changed in the 1850s, when trade was forced open by American naval commodore, Matthew C. Perry. After this, there was a flood of Japanese visual culture into the West. At the 1867 International Exposition in Paris, Hokusai's work was on view at the Japanese pavilion. This was the first introduction of Japanese culture to mass audiences in the West, and a craze for collecting art called Japonisme ensued. Additionally, Impressionist artists in Paris, such as Claude Monet, were great fans of Japanese prints. The flattening of space, an interest in atmospheric conditions, and the impermanence of modern city life—all visible in Hokusai's prints—both reaffirmed their own artistic interests and inspired many future works of art.

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Chapter 28: Early Twentieth Century

Modern Art

Left: Umberto Boccioni, States of Mind: The Farewells, 1911, oil on canvas, 70.5 x 96.2 cm (MoMA); Right: Norman Rockwell, Breaking Home Ties, 1954, oil on canvas, 112 x 112 cm (private collection)

If asked, most people would probably say that modern art is not true to reality. Indeed, modern art is practically defined by its bizarre distortions of reality; this is one reason why Norman Rockwell, whose work is more recent than Umberto Boccioni's, is not considered a modern artist. But looking like reality — what art historians call "naturalism" — is only one way of being true to reality. As we shall see, the attempt to create art that was more true to reality than traditional naturalism was the motivation for some of the most radical modern art, even including Boccioni's *States of Mind: The Farewells*.

Modern art reminds us that what is popularly considered "realistic" in art is in fact only based on sense perceptions, which are inevitably partial, and which in many cases distort reality. By observing nature more closely, discarding artificial conventions, correcting for perceptual distortions, absorbing new scientific theories, and engaging in spiritual investigations, many modern artists rejected traditional naturalism in order to seek higher truths.

Fauvism
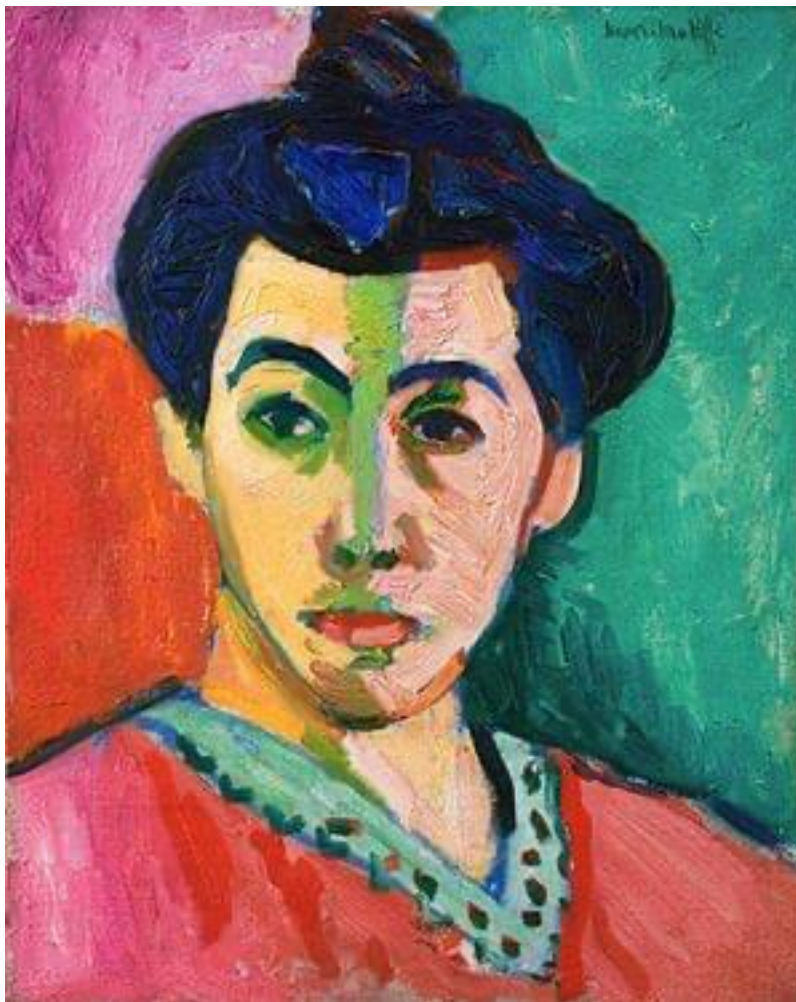
Henri Matisse, *The Green Line*, 1905, oil on canvas, 40.5 x 32.5 cm (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen)

Fauvism developed in France to become the first new artistic style of the 20th century. In contrast to the dark, vaguely disturbing nature of much fin-de-siècle, or turn-of-the-century, Symbolist art, the Fauves produced bright cheery landscapes and figure paintings, characterized by pure vivid color and bold distinctive brushwork.

"Wild beasts"

When shown at the 1905 Salon d'Automne (an exhibition organized by artists in response to the conservative policies of the official exhibitions, or salons) in Paris, the contrast to traditional art was so striking it led critic Louis Vauxcelles to describe the artists as "*Les Fauves*" or "wild beasts," and thus the name was born.

Henri Matisse, *Woman with a Hat*, 1905, oil on canvas, 79.4 x 59.7 cm (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

One of several Expressionist movements to emerge in the early 20th century, Fauvism was short lived, and by 1910, artists in the group had diverged toward more individual interests. Nevertheless, Fauvism remains significant for it demonstrated modern art's ability to evoke intensely emotional reactions through radical visual form.

The expressive potential of color

The best known Fauve artists include Henri Matisse, André Derain, and Maurice Vlaminck who pioneered its distinctive style. Their early works reveal the influence of Post-Impressionist artists, especially Neo-Impressionists like Paul Signac, whose interest in color's optical effects had led to a divisionist method of juxtaposing pure hues on canvas. The Fauves, however, lacked such scientific intent. They emphasized the expressive potential of color, employing it arbitrarily, not based on an object's natural appearance.

While paintings such as Vlaminck's *The River Seine at Chatou* (1906) appear to mimic the spontaneous, active brushwork of Impressionism, the Fauves adopted a painterly approach to enhance their work's emotional power, not to capture fleeting effects of color, light or atmosphere on their subjects. Their preference for landscapes, carefree figures and lighthearted subject matter reflects their desire to create an art that would appeal primarily to the viewers' senses.
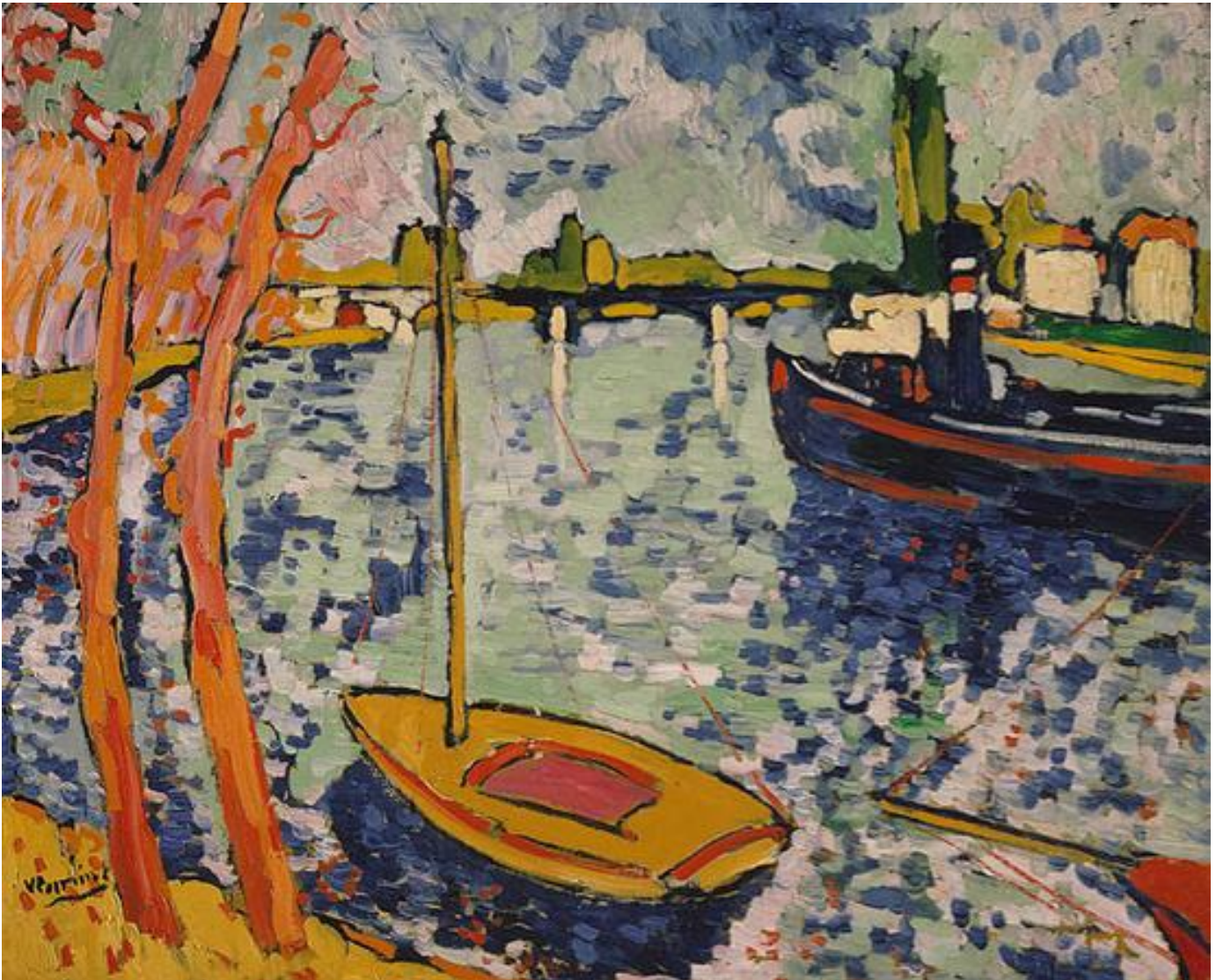
Maurice de Vlaminck, *The River Seine at Chatou*, 1906, oil on canvas, 82.6 x 101.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Like many modern artists, the Fauves also found inspiration in objects from Africa and other non-western cultures. Seen through a colonialist lens, the formal distinctions of African art reflected current notions of Primitivism–the belief that, lacking the corrupting influence of European civilization, non-western peoples were more in tune with the primal elements of nature.

Blue Nude (Souvenir of Biskra) of 1907 shows how Matisse combined his traditional subject of the female nude with the influence of primitive sources. The woman's face appears mask-like in the use of strong outlines and harsh contrasts of light and dark, and the hard lines of her body recall the angled planar surfaces common to African sculpture. This distorted effect, further heightened by her contorted pose, clearly distinguishes the figure from the idealized odalisques of Ingres and painters of the past.
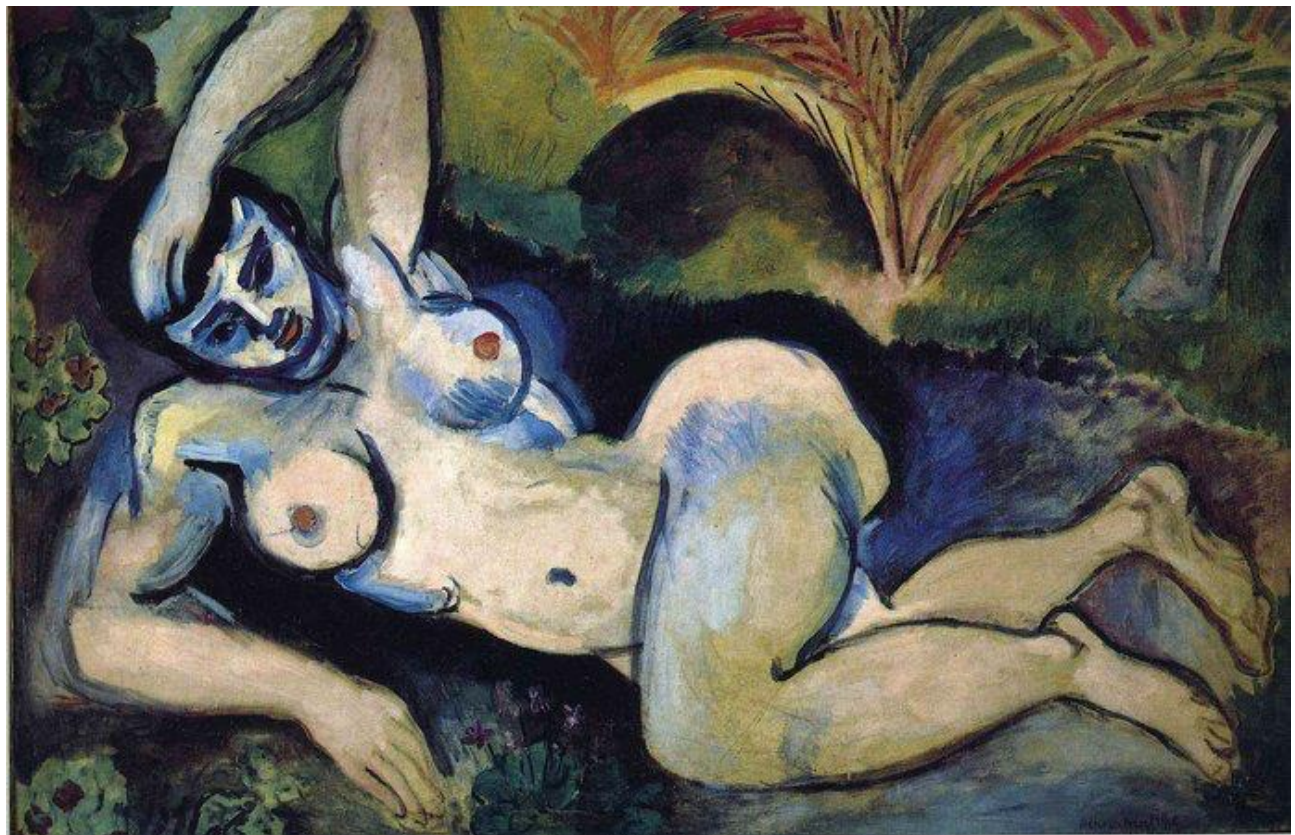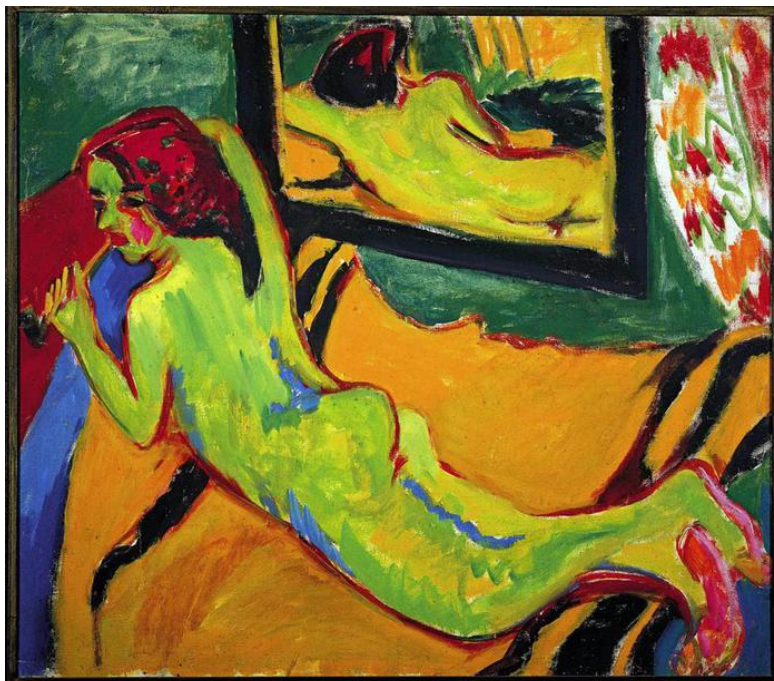
Henri Matisse, *The Blue Nude (Souvenir de Biskra),* 1907, oil on canvas, 92.1 x 140.3 cm (Baltimore Museum of Art)

The Fauves' interest in Primitivism reinforced their reputation as "wild beasts" who sought new possibilities for art through their exploration of direct expression, impactful visual forms and instinctual appeal.

Expressionism

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Reclining Nude in Front of Mirror*, 1909-1910, oil on canvas, 83.3 x 95.5 cm (Brücke-Museum, Berlin)

Imagine a painting where the magentas scream, the greens glare, and coarse brushstrokes become more ominous the longer you look at them. Paintings like this, where the artist uses color, line, and visible techniques to evoke powerful responses from the viewer date from the early twentieth century but continue expressive traditions that can be found throughout art's history (see, for example, work by Francisco Goya). When capitalized as "Expressionism," however, the term refers more specifically to an artistic tendency that became popular throughout Europe in the early twentieth century. Like many categories in art history, Expressionism was not a name coined by artists themselves. It first emerged around 1910 as a way to classify art that shared common stylistic traits and seemed to emphasize emotional impact over descriptive accuracy. For this reason, artists like Edvard Munch straddle the line between Post-Impressionist developments in late 19th century painting and early 20th century Expressionism. Likewise, the Fauves in France exhibited similar characteristics in their work and are often linked to Expressionism.

Die Brücke

In 1905, four young artists working in Dresden and Berlin, joined together, calling themselves Die Brücke (The Bridge). Led by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, the group wanted to create a radical art that could speak to modern audiences, which they characterized as young, vital, and urban. Drawn from the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth-century German philosopher, the name "Die Brücke" describes their desire to serve as a bridge from the present to the future. While each artist had his own personal style, Die Brücke art is characterized by bright, often arbitrary colors and a "primitive" aesthetic, inspired by both African and European medieval art. Their work often addressed modern urban themes of alienation and anxiety, and sexually charged themes in their depictions of the female nude.

Erich Heckel, *Fränzi Reclining*, 1910, woodcut, 35.6 x 55.5 cm (The Museum of Modern Art)

Der Blaue Reiter

Based in the German city of Munich, the group known as Der Blaue Reiter lasted only from their first exhibition at the Galerie Thannhausen in 1911 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Created as an alternative to Kandinsky's previous group, the more conservative Neuen Künstlervereinigung München (New Artists Association of Munich or NKVM), Die Blaue Reiter took its name from the motif of a horse and rider, often used by founding member Vasily Kandinsky.

Vasily Kandinsky, Cover of *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, Piper Verlag, Munich, 1912

This motif appeared on the cover of the Blue Rider Almanac (above), published in May 1912, and reflects Kandinsky's interest in medieval traditions and the folk art of his Russian homeland. In contrast to Die Brücke, whose subjects were physical and direct, Kandinsky and other Die Blaue Reiter artists explored the spiritual in their art, which often included symbolism and allusions to ethereal concerns. They thought these ideas could be communicated directly through formal elements of color and line, that, like music, could evoke an emotional response in the viewer. Conceived by Kandinsky and Franz Marc, the almanac included essays by themselves and other German and Russian artists, musical compositions by Expressionist

composers, such as Arnold Schönberg, and Kandinsky's experimental theater piece, "Der gelbe Klang" (The Yellow Sound). This range of content shows Der Blaue Reiter's efforts to provide a philosophical approach not just for the visual arts, but for culture more broadly. These ideas would become more fully developed at the Bauhaus where Kandinsky taught after the war (Marc died during the Battle of Verdun in 1916).

Franz Marc, *The Large Blue Horses*, 1911, oil on canvas, 41.6 × 71.3 inches (Walker Art Center)

Cubism

Georges Braque, Landscape of l'Estaque, 1907, oil on canvas, 37 x 46 cm. (Musée d'Art moderne, Troyes, France)

During the summer of 1908, Braque returned to Cézanne's old haunt for a second summer in a

row. Previously he had painted this small port just south of Aix-en-Provence with the brilliant irrevent colors of a Fauve (Braque along with Matisse, Derain, and others defined this style from about 1904 to 1907). But now, after Cézanne's death and after having met Picasso, Braque set out on a very different tack, the invention of Cubism.
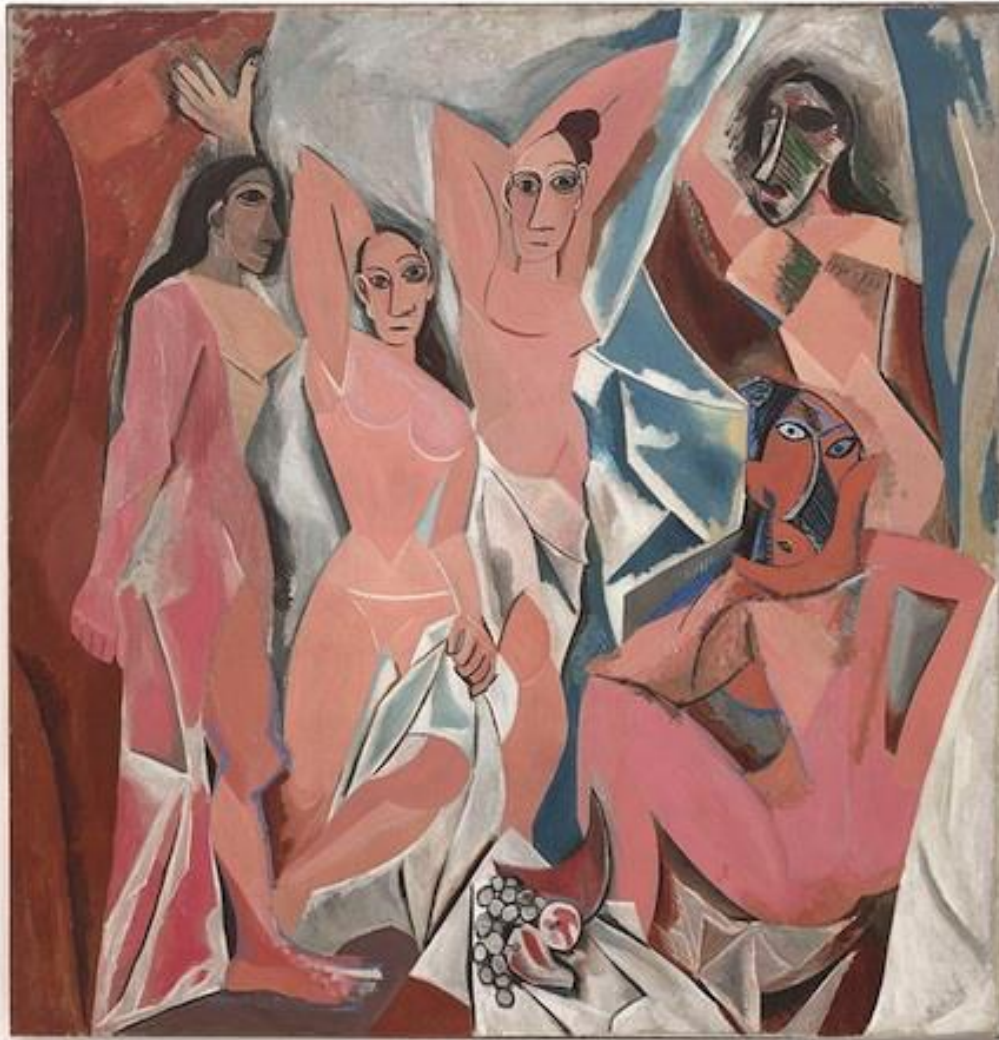
Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907, oil on canvas, 8 x 7 feet and 8 inches (Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Cubism is a terrible name. Except for a very brief moment, the style has nothing to do with cubes. Instead, it is an extension of the formal ideas developed by Cézanne and broader perceptual ideas that became increasingly important in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These were the ideas that inspired Matisse as early as 1904 and Picasso perhaps a year or two later. We certainly saw such issues asserted in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. But Picasso's great 1907 canvas is not yet Cubism. It is more accurate to say that it is the foundation upon which Cubism is constructed. If we want to really see the origin of the style, we need to look beyond Picasso to his new friend Georges Braque.

A New Perspective

The young French Fauvist, Georges Braque that had been struck by both the posthumous Cézanne retrospective exhibition held in Paris in 1907 and his first sight of Picasso's radical new canvas, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Like so many people that saw it, Braque is reported to have

hated it—Matisse, for example, predicted that Picasso would be found hanged behind the work, so great was his mistake. Nevertheless, Braque stated that it haunted him through the winter of 1908. Like every good Parisian, Braque fled Paris in the summer and decided to return to the part of Provence in which Cézanne had lived and worked. Braque spent the summer of 1908 shedding the colors of Fauvism and exploring the structural issues that had consummed Cézanne and now Picasso. He wrote:

It [Cézanne's impact] was more than an influence, it was an invitation. Cézanne was the first to have broken away from erudite, mechanized perspective…1

Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902-04, oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 36 3/16 inches (73 x 91.9 cm) (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Like Cézanne, Braque sought to undermine the illusion of depth by forcing the viewer to recognize the canvas not as a window but as it truly is, a vertical curtain that hangs before us. In canvases such as *Houses at L'Estaque* (1908), Braque simplifies the form of the houses (here are the so called cubes), but he nullifies the obvious recessionary overlapping with the trees that force forward even the most distant building.

Georges Braque, *Houses at l'Estaque*, 1908, oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm (Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland)

Brothers of Invention

When Braque returned to Paris in late August, he found Picasso an eager audience. Almost immediately, Picasso began to exploit Braque's investigations. But far from being the end of their working relationship, this exchange becomes the first in a series of collaborations that lasts six years and creates an intimate creative bound between these two artists that is unique in the history of art.

Pablo Picasso, *The Reservoir, Horta de Ebro*, 1909, oil on canvas, 24-1/8 x 20-1/8″ (Museum of Modern Art, New York, fractional and promised gift)

Between the years 1908 and the beginning of the First World War in 1914, Braque and Picasso work together so closely that even experts can have difficulty telling the work of one artist from the other. For months on end they would visit each other's studio on an almost daily basis sharing ideas and challenging each other as they went. Still, a pattern did emerge, and it tended to be to Picasso's benefit. When a radical new idea was introduced, more than likely, it was Braque that recognized its value. But it was inevitably Picasso who realized its potential and was able to fully exploit it.

Tough Art

By 1910, Cubism had matured into a complex system that is seemingly so esoteric that it appears to have rejected all esthetic concerns. The average museum visitor, when confronted by a 1910 or 1911 canvas by Braque or Picasso, the period known as Analytic Cubism, often looks somewhat put upon even while they may acknowledge the importance of such work. I suspect that the difficulty, is, well…, the difficulty of the work. Cubism is an analysis of vision and of its representation and it is challenging. As a society we seem to believe that all art ought to be easily understandable or at least beautiful. That's the part I find confusing.

Georges Braque, *The Portuguese*, 1911, oil on canvas, 116.8 x 81 cm (Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland)

Futurism

Can you imagine being so enthusiastic about technology that you name your daughter Propeller? Today we take most technological advances for granted, but at the turn of the last century, innovations like electricity, x-rays, radio waves, automobiles and airplanes were extremely exciting. Italy lagged Britain, France, Germany, and the United States in the pace of its industrial development. Culturally speaking, the country's artistic reputation was grounded in Ancient, Renaissance and Baroque art and culture. Simply put, Italy represented the past.

Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913 (cast 1931), bronze, 43 7/8 x 34 7/8 x 15 3/4″
(Museum of Modern Art, New York)

In the early 1900s, a group of young and rebellious Italian writers and artists emerged determined to celebrate industrialization. They were frustrated by Italy's declining status and believed that the "Machine Age" would result in an entirely new world order and even a renewed consciousness.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the ringleader of this group, called the movement Futurism. Its members sought to capture the idea of modernity, the sensations and aesthetics of speed, movement, and industrial development.

Dynamism of Bodies in Motion

The Futurists were particularly excited by the works of late 19th-century scientist and photographer Étienne-Jules Marey, whose chronophotographic (time-based) studies depicted the mechanics of animal and human movement.

A precursor to cinema, Marey's innovative experiments with time-lapse photography were especially influential for artist Giacomo Balla. In his painting *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, the artist playfully renders the dog's (and dog walker's) feet as continuous movements through space over time.

Giacomo Balla, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912, oil on canvas, 35 1/2 x 43 1/4 ” (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo)

Entranced by the idea of the "dynamic," the Futurists sought to represent an object's sensations, rhythms and movements in their images, poems and manifestos. Such characteristics are beautifully expressed in Boccioni's most iconic masterpiece, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (see above).

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Chapter 29: Between World Wars

Dada

When you look at Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, a factory-produced urinal he submitted as a sculpture to the 1917 exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York, you might wonder just why this work of art has such a prominent place in art history books.

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* (original), photographed by Alfred Stieglitz in 1917 after its rejection by the Society of Independent Artists

You would not be alone in asking this question. In fact, from the moment Duchamp purchased the urinal, flipped it on its side, signed it with a pseudonym (the false name of R. Mutt), and attempted to display it as art, the piece has generated controversy. This was the artist's intention all along—to puzzle, amuse, and provoke his viewers.

Fountain was submitted to the Society of Independent Artists, one of the first venues for

experimental art in the United States. It is a new form of art Duchamp called the "readymade"—a mass-produced or found object that the artist transformed into art by the operation of selection and naming. The readymades challenged the very idea of artistic production, and what constitutes art in a gallery or museum. Duchamp provoked his viewers—testing the exhibition organizers' liberal claim to accept all works with "no judge, no prize" without the conservative bias that made it difficult to exhibit modern art in most museums and galleries. Duchamp's *Fountain* did more than test the validity of this claim: it prompted questions about what we mean by art altogether—and who gets to decide what art is.

Duchamp's provocation characterized not only his art, but also the short-lived, enigmatic, and incredibly diverse transnational group of artists who constituted a movement known as Dada. These artists were so diverse that they could hardly be called a coherent group, and they themselves rejected the whole idea of an art movement. Instead, they proclaimed themselves an anti-movement in various journals, manifestos, poems, performances, and what would come to be known as artistic "gestures" such as Duchamp's submission of *Fountain*.

Dada artists worked in a wide range of media, frequently using irreverent humor and wordplay to examine relationships between art and language and voice opposition to outdated and destructive social customs. Although it was a fleeting phenomenon, lasting only from about 1914-1918 (and coinciding with WWI), Dada succeeded in irrevocably changing the way we view art, opening it up to a variety of experimental media, themes, and practices that still inform art today. Duchamp's idea of the readymade has been one of the most important legacies of Dada.

Berlin Dada

Dada arrived in Germany in 1917 when Richard Huelsenbeck, a German poet who had spent time at the Café Voltaire, brought the ideas he encountered in Zurich to Berlin. Here, Dada became even more overtly political. Using the readymade, new photographic technologies, and elements from everyday life, including mass media imagery, Huelsenbeck and his collaborators critiqued modern bourgeois society and the politics that had led to the First World War.

Berlin Dadaists embraced the tension and images of violence that characterized Germany during and after the war, using absurdity to draw attention to the physical, psychological, and social trauma it produced. Employing strategies ranging from a Cubo-Futurist rendering of form to mixed-media assemblage, they satirized the immorality and corruption of the social elite, including cultural institutions such as museums. Many of these works were featured alongside manifestoes and other textual works in Dada journals.

Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, 1919-1920, photomontage and collage with watercolor, 114 x 90 cm (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie)

During the Weimar Republic, artists such as Hannah Höch produced collages using imagery from magazines and other mass media to provoke the viewer to critically evaluate and challenge cultural norms.

Surrealism

Psychic freedom

Historians typically introduce Surrealism as an offshoot of Dada. In the early 1920s, writers such as André Breton and Louis Aragon became involved with Parisian Dada. Although they shared the group's interest in anarchy and revolution, they felt Dada lacked clear direction for political action. So, in late 1922, this growing group of radicals left Dada, and began looking to the mind as a source of social liberation. Influenced by French psychology and the work of Sigmund Freud, they experimented with practices that allowed them to explore subconscious thought and identity and bypass restrictions placed on people by social convention. For example, societal norms mandate that suddenly screaming expletives at a group of strangers—unprovoked, is completely unacceptable.

Envisioning Surrealism: automatic drawing and the exquisite corpse

In the autumn of 1924, Surrealism was announced to the public through the publication of André Breton's first "Manifesto of Surrealism," the founding of a journal (*La Révolution surréaliste*), and the formation of a Bureau of Surrealist Research. The literary focus of the movement soon expanded when Max Ernst and other visual artists joined and began applying Surrealist ideas to their work. These artists drew on many stylistic sources including scientific journals, found objects, mass media, and non-western visual traditions. (Early Surrealist exhibitions tended to pair an artist's work with non-Western art objects). They also found inspiration in automatism and other activities designed to circumvent conscious intention.

Surrealist artist André Masson began creating automatic drawings, essentially applying the same unfettered, unplanned process used by Surrealist writers, but to create visual images. In *Automatic Drawing* (above), the hands, torsos, and genitalia seen within the mass of swirling lines suggest that, as the artist dives deeper into his own subconscious, recognizable forms appear on the page.

Another technique, the *exquisite corpse*, developed from a writing game the Surrealists created. First, a piece of paper is folded as many times as there are players. Each player takes one side of the folded sheet and, starting from the top, draws the head of a body, continuing the lines at the bottom of their fold to the other side of the fold, then handing that blank folded side to the next person to continue drawing the figure. Once everyone has drawn her or his "part" of the body, the last person unfolds the sheet to reveal a strange composite creature, made of unrelated forms that are now merged. A Surrealist Frankenstein's monster, of sorts.
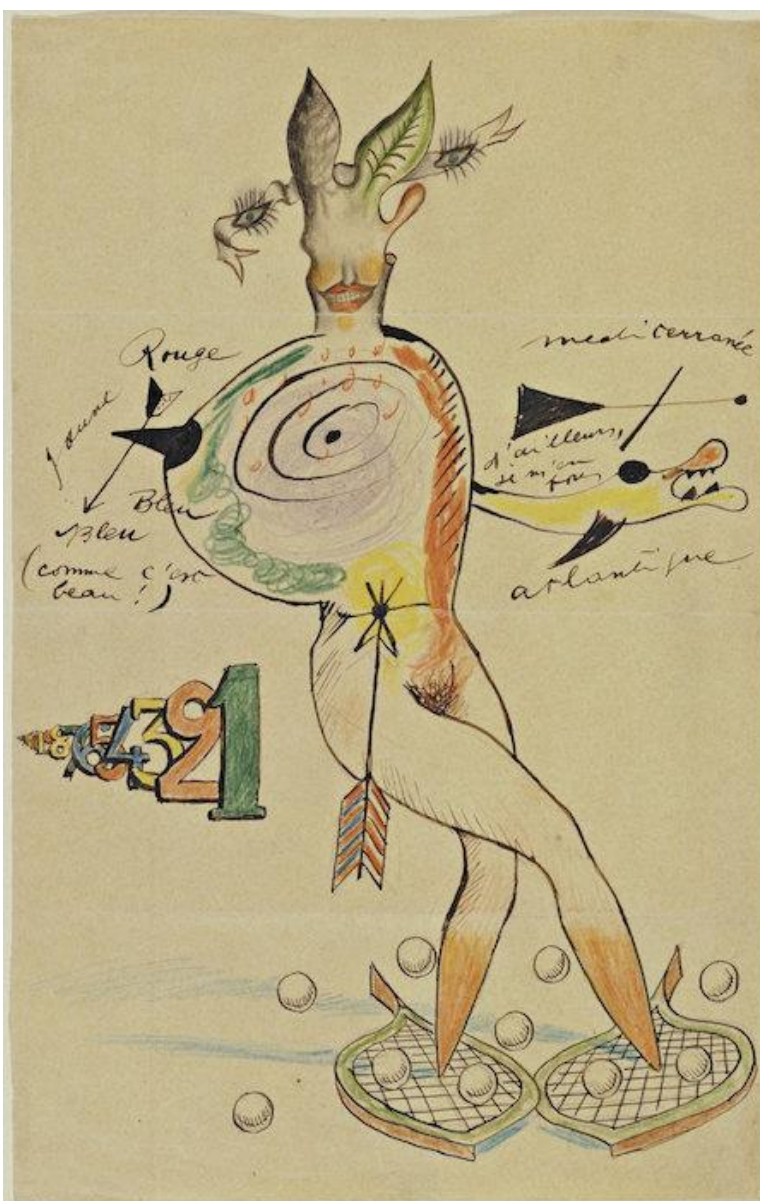
Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, Max Morise, and Man Ray, *Untitled (Exquisite Corpse),* 1926-27, colored pencil, pencil, and ink on paper, 35.9 x 22.9 cm (MoMA)

Whereas automatic drawing often results in vague images emerging from a chaotic background of lines and shapes, exquisite corpse drawings show precisely rendered objects juxtaposed with others, often in strange combinations. These two distinct "styles," represent two contrasting approaches characteristic of Surrealists art, and exemplified in the early work of Yves Tanguy and René Magritte.

Left: Yves Tanguy, *Apparitions*, 1927, oil on canvas, 92.07 x 73.02 cm (Dallas Museum of Art); right: René Magritte, *The Central Story*, 1928, oil on canvas (Private collection)

Tanguy began his painting *Apparitions* (left) using an automatic technique to apply unplanned areas of color. He then methodically clarified forms by defining biomorphic shapes populating a barren landscape. However, Magritte, employed carefully chosen, naturalistically-presented objects in his haunting painting, *The Central Story*. The juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated objects suggests a cryptic meaning and otherworldliness, similar to the hybrid creatures common to exquisite corpse drawings. These two visual styles extend to other Surrealist media, including photography, sculpture, and film.

Automatism

Max Ernst, *The Horde*, 1927, oil on canvas 114 x 146.1 cm (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam)

An inchoate mob of savage creatures surges toward the viewer in Max Ernst's *The Horde*, a painting that was made using automatic techniques intended to make the artist's unconscious thoughts visible. In keeping with Freudian theories, Ernst's unconscious is a site of turmoil where monstrous figures overwhelm rational understanding. *The Horde* suggests the dread associated with childhood fears of nameless beasts lurking in the closet and under the bed. The figures in Ernst's painting are terrifying because they are both familiar and utterly strange; we recognize them as creatures of our own imagination as much as the artist's.

Realism as subversive

The realistic representation of the world of the unconscious reached its apogee in the paintings of Salvador Dalí, who adopted an extremely detailed realistic technique reminiscent of nineteenth-century academic painting. This was an explicit attempt to turn academic naturalism into a subversive technique.

Salvador Dalí, *The Lugubrious Game*, 1929, oil and collage on cardboard, 44.4 x 30.3 cm

The vivid realism of Dalí's bizarre scenes seems to confirm that the world they represent is just as real as scenes encountered in ordinary waking life. In paintings such as *The Lugubrious Game*, Dalí minutely depicted his psychological obsessions, which were largely derived from Freud's theories of infantile eroticism.

The artist's profile floats horizontally in the center of the painting and generates a bizarre collection of objects, human figures, animals, and insects. Explicit and symbolic depictions of male and female genitalia abound, as do direct references to Freud's theories of castration anxiety and anality. In this painting and many others Dalí portrays a universe in which the most apparently innocent objects, from a seashell to a man's hat, acquire erotic significance.

Philosophical conundrums
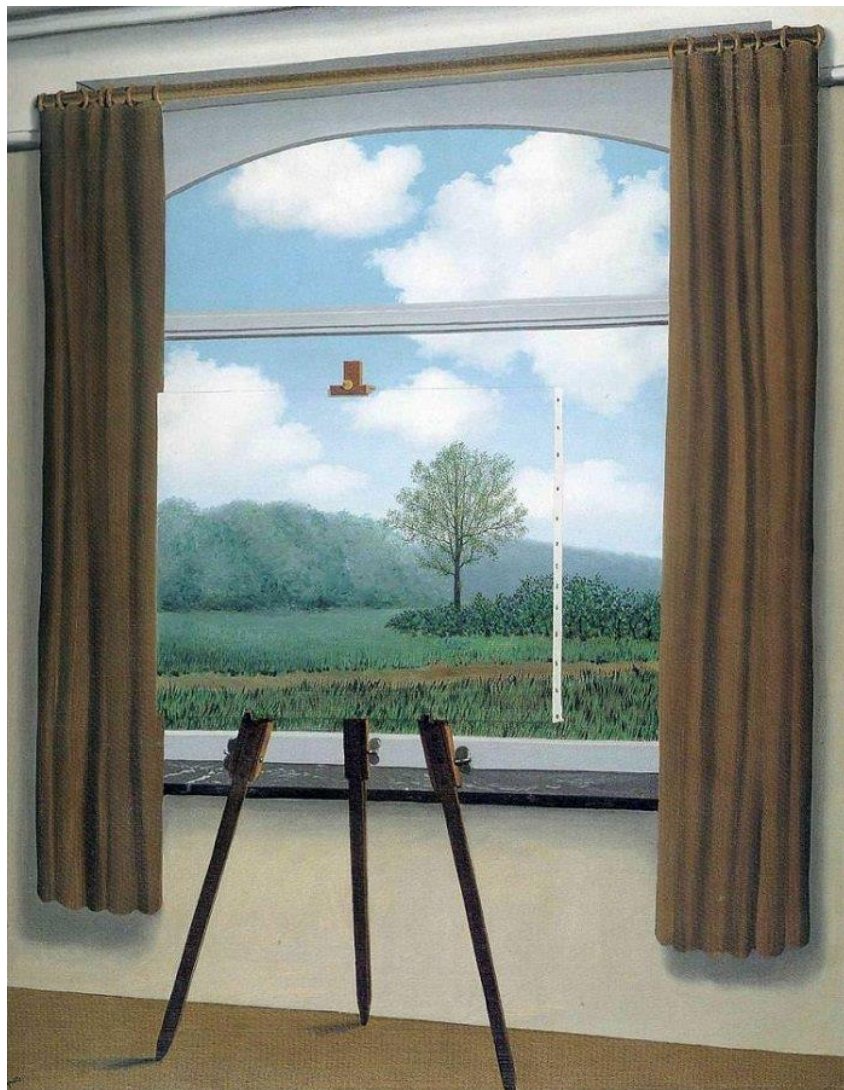
René Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1933, oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 inches (National Gallery of Art, Washington)

In contrast to Dalí's often obscene and intentionally shocking imagery, René Magritte used realistic painting techniques to present philosophical conundrums about the nature of representation and its relation to reality and language. In *The Human Condition*, Magritte depicts the way a painting's representation "replaces" reality, leading us to consider the many assumptions we make about realistic images and their relationship to what they represent.

René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, 1929, oil on canvas, 23 ¾ x 32 inches (LACMA)

The Treachery of Images presents the disjunctions between the written phrase "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" (This is not a pipe) and the depiction of a pipe above it. Representation is not reality, although it may look like it; nor is language to be trusted as a source of truth about what is real. The painting of a pipe is not a pipe; but the word "pipe" is not a pipe either. By undermining comfortable assumptions about the human ability to understand reality through language and representation, Magritte's works demonstrate that we make the world we think we know. Everything is, in the end, a question of representation (in words or images) in which we choose to believe, or not.

Suprematism as a new realism

Russian artist Kasimir Malevich declared Suprematism as a new "realism" in painting, a statement that may seem puzzling given that the paintings are all basic geometric forms on a white background. By making this claim Malevich rejected the conventional understanding of realism in painting as the representation of the world we see.

Kasimir Malevich, *Black Square*, 1915, oil on linen, 79.5 x 79.5 cm (State Tretyakov Gallery)

There are two different ways to understand Malevich's alternative conception of realism. The first is formal: the painter's basic formal elements of surface, color, shape, and texture are real things in themselves. They are not signs referring to anything else or images representing real things outside the painting. *Black Square* is a black square of paint on canvas, nothing more, nothing less. It makes no reference to any other object; it is a real thing in itself.

Looking at Kasimir Malevich's paintings in the Museum of Modern Art

The second way to understand Suprematism as a "new realism" is in relation to a reality beyond the one we normally experience. Mystical traditions and theories of multi-dimensional, non-Euclidean space were popular within artistic and literary circles in the early 20th century. Malevich was particularly interested in the mystical geometry of Peter Ouspensky, who believed artists were able to see beyond material reality and communicate their visions to others. In a pamphlet written for The Last Futurist Exhibition, Malevich echoes this conception of the artist:

"I transformed myself in the zero of form . . . I destroyed the ring of the horizon and escaped from the circle of things, from the horizon-ring that confines the artist and the forms of nature.

T. Anderson, ed. K. S. Malevich: Essays on Art 1915-1933, vol. 1 (Copenhagen, 1969), p. 19.

This is a description of the artist as a superior being who leads the way to a new consciousness. Suprematism was the result, a non-objective art of "pure feeling," unconcerned with representation of the visible world.

Constructivism

The Constructivists were a group of avant-garde artists who worked to establish a new social role for art and the artist in the communist society of 1920s Soviet Russia. They were committed to applying new methods of creation aligned with modern technology and engineering to art, and eventually to utilitarian objects. Their overall approach was theoretical and scientific, and they rejected the stereotype of the artist as intuitive and inspired.

They made a distinction between composition, which resulted from the artist's intuition, and construction, based on scientific laws. Rodchenko's *Spatial Constructions* were examples of the latter, forms structured by logical deduction, not intuition. They were considered "lab work" rather

than art objects and were made to demonstrate theoretical concepts.

Obmokhu Exhibition, Moscow, 1921

The work of Vladimir Tatlin was a major touchstone for the Constructivists. His Monument to the Third International, a model for a structure intended to house Communist Party functions, was a paradigm of the Constructivists' efforts to synthesize art and engineering to create modern utilitarian forms for the new era. Tatlin himself, however, rejected the Constructivists' dedication to the scientific production of works. Although his art was not engaged with spiritual concerns, as Malevich's was, he believed the artist's intuition could not be replaced by scientific laws.

Photo of Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*

After the 1921 Obmokhu exhibition the Constructivists left their theoretically-oriented lab works behind and became dedicated to utilitarian production. Their abstract formal ideas helped to shape designs for furniture and clothing, posters and theatrical productions, architecture and even manufacturing techniques. This turn to utilitarian projects was motivated in large part by the requirements and expectations of Soviet society and the massive drive to modernize and industrialize the country.

The Constructivists' theories and ideas also became part of international conversations about the fundamental elements of art, designing for the modern world, and the education of artists. Another major focus for these debates was the German Bauhaus, and they resonated across the 20th century and continue to this day.

De Stijl

De Stijl is one of the most recognizable styles in all of modern art. Consisting only of horizontal

and vertical lines and the colors red, yellow, blue, black, and white, De Stijl was applied not only to easel painting but also to architecture and a broad range of designed objects from furniture to clothing. This is not inappropriate. Despite its close association with Piet Mondrian, the artist thought of it not as his personal style, but as De Stijl – *The* Style; it was objective and universal, applicable to all people and all things.
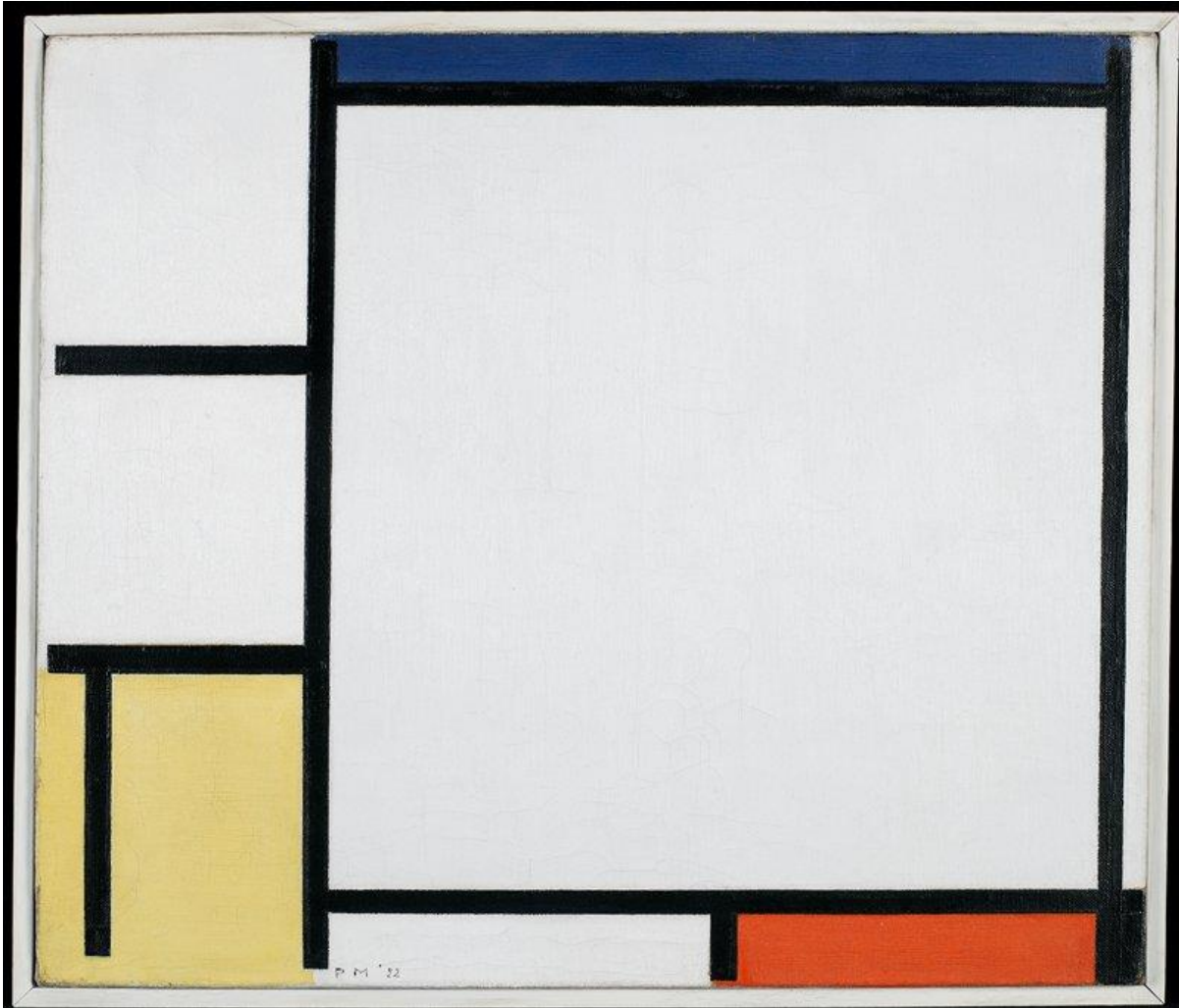
Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black*, 1922, oil on canvas, 41.9 x 48.9 cm (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

The elements of De Stijl are the artist's equivalent of the physicist's fundamental building blocks: protons, neutrons, and electrons. With a bucket of each of these atomic building blocks, you could make anything in the universe, from hydrogen (one proton + one electron), to oxygen (eight protons + eight electrons + eight neutrons), to water (two hydrogen atoms + one oxygen atom), to a protein, a paramecium, and eventually even a person.

Similarly, if you have buckets of pure red, yellow, blue, black and white paint, you could represent absolutely anything. It is in this sense that De Stijl is universal, "the" style, and not just the personal style of Piet Mondrian or the style of some specific region or period in time. Although our own historical moment tends to celebrate cultural and individual differences and reject "absolutes" or "universals," De Stijl has a decent claim to being, as its name asserts, *The Style* for all things, all time, and all people everywhere.

Modern Architecture: A New Language

The move to modernism was introduced with the opening of the Bauhaus school in Weimar Germany. Founded in 1919 by the German architect Walter Gropius, Bauhaus (literal translation "house of construction") was a teaching and learning center for modern industrial and architectural design. Though not a movement or style in itself, Bauhaus instructors and staff reflected different artistic perspectives, all of them born from the modern aesthetic. It was partly the product of a post- World War I search for new artistic definitions in Europe. Gropius's commitment to the principle of bringing all the arts together with a focus on practical, utilitarian applications. This view rejected the notion of "art for art's sake", putting a premium on the knowledge of materials and their effective design. This idea shows the influence of Constructivism. Bauhaus existed for fourteen years, relocating three times, and influencing a whole generation of architects, artists, graphic and industrial designers and typographers.

In 1924 Gropius designed the Bauhaus main building in Dessau. Its modern form includes bold lines, an asymmetric balance and curtain walls of glass. It's painted in neutral tones of white and gray accented by strong primary colors on selected doors.

Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany, 1925-26, Image in public domain

A comparative building is Dutch architect Garret Rietveld's *Schroder House*, (below) also from 1924. The design is based on the reductive abstract style of De Stijl. As much as the focus was on materials and "New Objectivity", the Bauhaus and the Schroder house help solidify the modern aesthetic first expressed by Louis Sullivan in America thirty years earlier.

Gerrit Rietveld, Schroder House, 1924. Utrecht, The Netherlands. Image licensed through Creative Commons.

Gropius, Rietveld and the German born architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe were most responsible for creating a new design language for the modern age. Van der Rohe later moved to the United States and was a force in creating sleek steel framed skyscrapers with metal and glass "skins". See his IBM Plaza building below.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *IBM Plaza*, 1971, Chicago, Illinois. Image licensed through Creative Commons.

Frank Lloyd Wright is considered one of the 20th century's greatest architects. Wright designed

buildings, churches, homes and schools, but is best known for his design of Falling Water, a home in the Pennsylvania countryside for Chicago department store owner Edgar Kaufman. His design innovations include unified open floor plans, a balance of traditional and modern materials and the use of cantilevered forms that extends horizontal balance.

Falling Water, Bear Run, Pennsylvania. 1937. Image by Sxenko and licensed through Creative Commons.

The American architect Philip Johnson took the modern aesthetic to an extreme with his Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut. Completed in 1949, its severe design sits comfortably in the rural landscape surrounding it. Steel vertical supports echo nearby tree trunks and large glass panels act as both walls and windows. Like Meis van der Rohe, Johnson was a leader in developing and refining an architecture characterized by rectilinear forms, little or no surface decoration and plenty of glass. By the mid 20th century most major cities in the world were building skyscrapers designed in this International Style.

Philip Johnson, *Glass House.* 1949. New Canaan, CT. Image by Staib. License: CC BY-SA 3.0

Not all architects shared this enthusiasm for the modern style. Antoni Gaudi realized his own vision in design that gave organic shapes to his structures. The exterior of Casa Batllo (1905, pictured below) in Barcelona shows a strong influence from the decorative Art Nouveau style with its undulating forms and strong ornamentation.

Gaudi's greatest architectural effort is La Sagrada Familia basilica in Barcelona. Started in 1884 and unfinished to this day, its massive and complex facades, extensive stained glass and multiple towers are bridges across three centuries of architectural design.

Antoni Gaudi, *Casa Batllo*, 1905, Barcelona, Spain.
Image in the public domain

Antoni Gaudi, *La Sagrada Familia*, started in 1884.
Barcelona Image in the public domain

Latin American Modernism

From as early as the pre-Columbian era, there existed networks of exchange among the early civilizations of Latin America, through trade networks that stretched from Mesoamerica to South America. Limited by technology and transportation, forms of indigenous contact were mainly restricted to the American continent. With the arrival of European conquistadores (Spanish for "conquerors"), the panorama changed entirely. Starting in the sixteenth century, and now exposed to Africa, through the Atlantic Slave Trade, and Asia, through the trade network of the Manila Galleon, Latin America entered into an era of global contact that continues to this day.

The Manila Galleon trade brought Japanese screens to Mexico inspiring locally made objects like this. Folding Screen (biombo) with the Siege of Belgrade (visible) and Hunting Scene (reverse), c. 1697-1701, Mexico, oil on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 229.9 x 275.8 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

With the nineteenth-century struggles for independence, collaborations across countries increased, not to mention alliances were formed, that although unsuccessful, nevertheless tried to articulate the idea of a collective Latin American entity. During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, namely as a result of socio-political transformations, migration, exile, and diaspora (the dispersion of people from their homeland), travel became a trademark of modern art, further contributing to the internationalism of Latin American art. As a result of these networks of exchange, which began before colonization and continue to this day, Latin American art is difficult to categorize. It is in fact hybrid and pluralistic, the product of multi-cultural conditions.

Mexican Muralism: *Los Tres Grandes*—David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco

David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Dates in Mexican History* or the *Right for Culture*, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), 1952-56, (Mexico City, photo: Fausto Puga)

At the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City visitors enter the rectory (the main administration building), beneath an imposing three-dimensional arm emerging from a mural. Several hands, one with a pencil, charge towards a book, which lists critical dates in Mexico's history: 1520 (the Conquest by Spain); 1810 (Independence from Spain); 1857 (the Liberal Constitution which established individual rights); and 1910 (the start of the Revolution against the regime of Porfirio Díaz). David Alfaro Siqueiros left the final date blank in *Dates in Mexican History* or the *Right for Culture* (1952-56), inspiring viewers to create Mexico's next great historic moment.

At the end of the Revolution the government commissioned artists to create art that could educate the mostly illiterate masses about Mexican history. Celebrating the Mexican people's potential to craft the nation's history was a key theme in Mexican muralism, a movement led by Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco—known as *Los tres grandes*. Between the 1920s and 1950s, they cultivated a style that defined Mexican identity following the Revolution.

The muralists developed an iconography featuring atypical, non-European heroes from the nation's illustrious past, present, and future—Aztec warriors battling the Spanish, humble peasants fighting in the Revolution, common laborers of Mexico City, and the mixed-race people who will forge the next great epoch, like in Siqueiros' UNAM mural. *Los tres grandes* crafted epic murals on the walls of highly visible, public buildings using techniques like fresco, encaustic, mosaic, and sculpture-painting.

One of the earliest government commissions for a post-Revolution mural was for the National Preparatory School, a high school in Mexico City affiliated with UNAM. During the 1920s *Los tres*

grandes and other artists completed works throughout the school's expansive exteriors and interiors.

Destruction of the old order

José Clemente Orozco, *Destruction of the Old Order* (detail), 1926 (National Preparatory School, Mexico City)

Orozco painted nearly two dozen murals at the school including Destruction of the Old Order, 1926. It depicts two figures in peasant attire who watch nineteenth-century neoclassical structures fracture into a Cubist-like pile, signaling the demise of the past. Just as Siqueiros' UNAM murals anticipate an unrealized historic event, the "new order" implied in Orozco's work is the world these men will encounter once they turn to face the viewer. These anonymous men are unlikely heroes given their modest attire, yet they represent a new age where the Revolution has liberated the masses from centuries of repression.

Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas (Las dos Fridas)*, 1939, oil on canvas, 67-11/16 x 67-11/16″ (Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City)

Sixty, more than a third of the easel paintings known by Frida Kahlo are self-portraits. This huge number demonstrates the importance of this genre to her artistic oeuvre. *The Two Fridas*, like *Self-Portrait With Cropped Hair* (below), captures the artist's turmoil after her 1939 divorce from the artist Diego Rivera. At the same time, issues of identity surface in both works. *The Two Fridas* speaks to cultural ambivalence and refers to her ancestral heritage. *Self-Portrait With Cropped Hair* suggests Kahlo's interest in gender and sexuality as fluid concepts.

Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940, oil on canvas, 40 x 27.9 cm (Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico City)

Kahlo was famously known for her tumultuous marriage with Rivera, whom she wed in 1929 and remarried in 1941. The daughter of a German immigrant (of Hungarian descent) and a Mexican mother, Kahlo suffered from numerous medical setbacks including polio, which she contracted at the age of six, partial immobility—the result of a bus accident in 1925, and her several miscarriages. Kahlo began to paint largely in response to her accident and her limited mobility, taking on her own identity and her struggles as sources for her art. Despite the personal nature of her content, Kahlo's painting is always informed by her sophisticated understanding of art history, of Mexican culture, its politics, and its patriarchy.

Modern art in São Paulo

1922 was an important year for avant-garde activities in Brazil. During the week of February 11–18, which was also Carnival and the centennial celebration of Brazil's declaration of independence from Portugal, a multidisciplinary event, known as *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week) took place at the Municipal Theatre of São Paulo. It featured an art exhibition, poetry readings, music, and dance festivals organized by the painter Emiliano di Cavalcanti, and poets Oswald de Andrade and Mario de Andrade (no relation to Oswald).

Modern Art Week was intended to announce the São Paulo avant-garde's break with earlier art. The exhibition of art included works by the sculptor Victor Brecheret, who returned to Brazil from Rome in 1919, paintings by Anita Malfatti, completed during her time in Berlin and New York, and di Cavalcanti, along with numerous other painters, sculptors, and architects. One of the other painters who would play a significant role in the development of Brazilian modernism was Tarsila do Amaral.

The controversy surrounding Malfatti's paintings

Anita Malfatti, *The Fool*, 1913, oil on canvas, 61 cm x 50.6 cm (Museum of Contemporary Art of University of São Paulo, Brazil)

When Malfatti exhibited a selection of her paintings, including *The Fool* and *The Man of Seven Colors*, the art critic Monteiro Lobato attacked her in an influential São Paulo newspaper ("A Propósito da Exposição"). He described her painting as "beastly" and "deformed," the latter a satirical play on the translation of her Italian last name ("mal fatti"); he declared her painting to be

akin to art produced by the mentally insane, work born of "paranoia and mystification," and finally he dismissed her as "a girl who paints."

Anita Malfatti, *The Man of Seven Colors*, 1915–16, charcoal and pastel on paper, 62 x 46 cm (Museu de Arte Brasileira, São Paulo)

Describing her as an amateurish follower of the "excesses" of Picasso, Lobato described two kinds of artists, those who see things "normally," in the tradition of Praxiteles, Raphael, Rubens, and Rodin, and feel called to preserve the rhythm of life aesthetically, and, those who see things as "deformed" and "sadistic." He wrote that such artists, Malfatti among them, were merely "shooting stars" destined to oblivion. Lobato was surely offended both by her expressionistic and non-naturalistic use of color but also by her engagement with the male nude, which was still taboo for women artists.

Malfatti's approach was, however, entirely in keeping with modern art in Berlin and New York where she had studied with Lovis Corinth and Homer Boss. It was Boss who had challenged her to use pure color, as seen in the high key yellow, green, and blue in both *The Fool* and *The Man of Seven Colors*.

In *Man of Seven Colors* she used expressive lines to emphasize the sculptural quality of the nude body and areas of pure color to emphasize figural torsion. The fact that the nude is headless suggests a distancing from the individual portrayed, and the potential erotic charge. The painting engages the viewer more emotionally and cerebrally than sexually, given the model's modest posture.

Social Realism

Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, oil on canvas, 84.1 x 152.4 cm / 33-1/8 x 60″ (Art Institute of Chicago)

In place of meaningful interactions, the four characters inside the diner of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* are involved in a series of near misses. The man and woman might be touching hands, but they aren't. The waiter and smoking man might be conversing, but they're not. The couple might strike up a conversation with the man facing them, but somehow, we know they won't. And then we realize that Hopper has placed us, the viewer, on the city street, with no door to enter the diner, and yet in a position to evaluate each of the people inside. We see the row of empty counter stools nearest us. We notice that no one is making eye contact with any one else. Up close, the waiter's face appears to have an expression of horror or pain. And then there is a chilling revelation: each of us is completely alone in the world.

The slickness of the paint, which makes the canvas read almost like an advertisement, and immediate accessibility of the subject matter draws the viewer into Hopper's painting. But he does not tell us a story. Rather than a narrative about men and women out for a festive night on the town, we are invited to ask questions about the characters' ambiguous lives. Are the man and woman a couple? Where are they coming from? Where are they going? Who is the man with his back to us? How did he end up in the diner? What is the waiter's life like? What is causing his distress?

Nighthawks is one of Hopper's New York City paintings, and the artist said that it was based on a real café. Many people have tried to find the exact setting of the painting, but have failed. In his wife's diaries, she wrote that she and Hopper himself both served as models for the people in the painting. Despite these real-life details, the empty composition and flat, abstracting planes of color give the canvas a timeless feel, making it an object onto which one can project one's own reality. Perhaps this is why it has lent itself to so well to many parodies, even appearing as a motif on an episode of The Simpsons.

When it was completed the canvas was bought almost immediately by the Art Institute of Chicago where it remains, and has been wildly popular ever since. The painting's modern-day

appeal can also be understood because of its ability to evoke a sense of nostalgia for an America of a time gone-by. Despite its inherent universality, the dress of the four people—the woman evoking a pin-up doll, the men in their well-tailored suits and hats, the worker in his soda jerk costume—as well as the "Phillies" advertisement, firmly plant the painting in a simpler past, making it a piece of Americana.

But perhaps *Nighthawks'* enduring popularity can be explained because of its subtle critique of the modern world, the world in which we all live. Despite its surface beauty, this world is one measured in cups of coffee, imbued with an overwhelming sense of loneliness, and a deep desire, but ultimate inability, to connect with those around us.

Harlem Renaissance

From the 1920s until the 1940s, Harlem was the epicenter of African American culture. Known as the Harlem Renaissance, this period of cultural richness and collaboration redefined how the African American experience was expressed in art, music, and literature. In his painting *Ambulance Call* (below), Jacob Lawrence evokes the vibrant sense of community and energy in Harlem, even without depicting the city itself.

After World War I, during what is known as the Great Migration, millions of African Americans relocated from agrarian regions in the southern states to cities in the North. Hoping to escape the brutal racism and violence of the Jim Crow South, they were attracted by the economic opportunities provided by the growth of industry in the northern states. The range of people included in Lawrence's painting speaks to the diverse backgrounds that were brought together in neighborhoods such as Harlem.

Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series, Panel No. 1: During World War I There Was A Great Migration North By Southern African Americans.* 1940-41, tempra on board. (The Phillips Collections). Image by Steven Zucker CCBY-NC-SA 2.0

African Americans in the North continued to face racism and systemic discrimination. Lawrence's painting speaks to one of the inequities they suffered: the lack of access to quality healthcare. Harlem Hospital was insufficiently staffed for the size of the local community and although the ambulance attendants and paramedic shown here are black, there were few job opportunities for African Americans in the medical field.

Jacob Lawrence, *Ambulance Call.* 1948, tempera on board, (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art). Image by Lluís Ribes Mateu CC BY-NC 2.0

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Chapter 30: Postwar Modern Movements

Mark Rothko, *No. 16 (Red, Brown, and Black)*, 1958, oil on canvas, 8′ 10 5/8″ x 9′ 9 1/4″ (The Museum of Modern Art) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The New York School

The group of artists known as Abstract Expressionists emerged in the United States in the years following World War II. As the term suggests, their work was characterized by non-objective imagery that appeared emotionally charged with personal meaning. The artists, however, rejected these implications of the name.

They insisted their subjects were not "abstract," but rather primal images, deeply rooted in society's collective unconscious. Their paintings did not express mere emotion. They communicated universal truths about the human condition. For these reasons, another term—the New York School—offers a more accurate descriptor of the group, for although some eventually relocated, their distinctive aesthetic first found form in New York City.

The rise of the New York School reflects the broader cultural context of the mid-Twentieth Century, especially the shift away from Europe as the center of intellectual and artistic innovation in the West. Much of Abstract Expressionism's significance stems from its status as the first American visual art movement to gain international acclaim.

Art for a world in shambles

Barnet Newman, an artist associated with the movement, wrote:

"We felt the moral crisis of a world in shambles, a world destroyed by a great depression and a fierce World War, and it was impossible at that time to paint the kind of paintings that we were doing—flowers, reclining nudes, and people playing the cello." [1]

Barnett Newman, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950-51, oil on canvas, 242.2 x 541.7 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Although distinguished by individual styles, the Abstract Expressionists shared common artistic and intellectual interests. While not expressly political, most of the artists held strong convictions based on Marxist ideas of social and economic equality. Many had benefited directly from employment in the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. There, they found influences in Regionalist styles of American artists such as Thomas Hart Benton, as well as the Social Realism of Mexican muralists including Diego Rivera and José Orozco.

The growth of Fascism in Europe had brought a wave of immigrant artists to the United States in the 1930s, which gave Americans greater access to ideas and practices of European Modernism. They sought training at the school founded by German painter Hans Hoffmann, and from Josef Albers, who left the Bauhaus in 1933 to teach at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and later at Yale University. This European presence made clear the formal innovations of Cubism, as well as the psychological undertones and automatic painting techniques of Surrealism.

Whereas Surrealism had found inspiration in the theories of Sigmund Freud, the Abstract Expressionists looked more to the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung and his explanations of primitive archetypes that were a part of our collective human experience. They also gravitated toward Existentialist philosophy, made popular by European intellectuals such as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Given the atrocities of World War II, Existentialism appealed to the Abstract Expressionists. Sartre's position that an individual's actions might give life meaning suggested the importance of the artist's creative process. Through the artist's physical struggle with his materials, a painting itself might ultimately come to serve as a lasting mark of one's existence. Each of the artists involved with Abstract Expressionism eventually developed an individual style that can be easily recognized as evidence of his artistic practice and contribution.

Action Painting

Jackson Pollock, *One: Number 31*, 1950, 1950, oil and enamel paint on unprimed canvas, 269.5 x 530.8 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Artists of the New York School fall into two broad groups: those who focused on a gestural application of paint, and those who used large areas of color as the basis of their compositions. The leading figures of the first group were Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner, and above all Jackson Pollock. Pollock's innovative technique of dripping paint on canvas spread on the floor of his studio prompted critic Harold Rosenberg to coin the term action painting to describe this type of practice. Action painting arose from the understanding of the painted object as the result of artistic process, which, as the immediate expression of the artist's identity, was the true work of art. Helen Frankenthaler also employed experimental techniques by pouring thinned pigments onto untreated canvas.
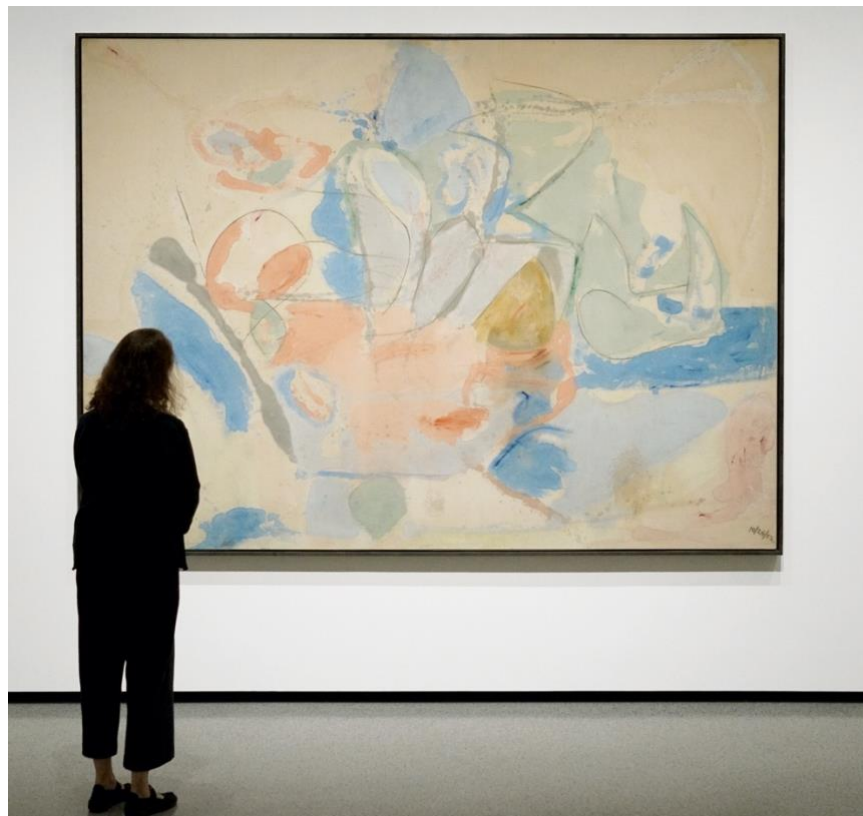
Helen Frankenthaler, *Mountains and Sea,* 1952, oil and charcoal on unsized, unprimed canvas (National Gallery of Art Washington). Image by Steven Zucker CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Color Field Painting

The second branch of Abstract Expressionist painting is usually referred to as Color Field painting. Two central figures in this group were Mark Rothko, known for canvases composed of two or three soft, rectangular forms stacked vertically, and Barnett Newman, who, in contrast to Rothko, painted fields of colour with sharp edges interrupted by precise vertical stripes he called "zips" (see *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950–51, above). Through the overwhelming scale and intense color of their canvases, Color Field painters like Rothko and Newman revived the Romantic aesthetic of the sublime.

Mark Rothko, *No. 3/No. 13,* oil on canvas (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) Image by Steven Zucker CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Robert Rauschenberg's Combines and Assemblage

Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon*, 1959, oil, pencil, paper, metal, photograph, fabric, wood, canvas, buttons, mirror, taxidermied eagle, cardboard, pillow, paint tube and other materials, 207.6 x 177.8 x 61 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) © 2014 Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Is *Canyon* a painting or sculpture? Its upper half is a mass of materials that include bits of a shirt, printed paper, a squashed tube of paint, and photographs all seemingly held in place by broad slashes of house paint, while its lower half consists of a stuffed bald eagle with outstretched wings about to lift off from an opened box. The box seems to balance precariously upon a beam that tilts downward to the right; its end point meets the frame. As if that were not enough, that beams suspends a pillow dangling below the frame and squeezed in half by the cloth string that holds it.

Combines

Canyon belongs to a group of artworks called "Combines," a term unique to this artist who attached extraneous materials and objects to canvases in the years between 1954 and 1965. What makes Robert Rauschenberg so significant for this period—the postwar years—is how he challenged conventional ways of thinking about advanced modern art; especially the art of "The New York School," who were praised for their heroic abstraction. Rauschenberg' s art violated the rules.

Rauschenberg did know other artists who took a similar approach and challenged the narrow parameters of the formalists wing of the New York School and its rejection of popular culture and illusionism. His immediate circle included the painter Jasper Johns, the choreographer Merce Cunningham and the avant-garde composer John Cage. On the West Coast Edward Keinholz and Wallace Berman were creating artworks that would come to be called "Assemblage"—think collage on a large scale. In Paris, Arman, Jean Tinguley and Jacques de la Villeglé incorporated the debris of the city; junk and cast off commodities incorporated into artworks that became know

as Nouveau réalism (New realism).

Jasper Johns, *Flag*, 1954-55 (dated on reverse 1954), encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric mounted on plywood, three panels, 42-1/4 x 60-5/8″ /107.3 x 153.8 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Edward Kienholz, *Back Seat Dodge '38,* 1964, Paint, fiberglass and flock, 1938 Dodge, recorded music, and player, chicken wire, beer bottles, artificial grass, and cast plaster figures. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Image by Amaury Laporte CC BY-NC 2.0

Canyon is more than an accumulation of debris, however. Note the skeins of paint, brushed, scribbled, clotted, dripping in the style of the abstract expressionists. Rauschenberg was also closely aligned with the New York School—particularly the older abstract expressionists—whose work he admired. But he nevertheless expressed a profound ambivalence towards this group: "*There was something about the self-assertion of abstract expressionism that personally always put me off, because at that time my focus was as much in the opposite direction as it could be.*"[2]

Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon* (detail), 1959, oil, pencil, paper, metal, photograph, fabric, wood, canvas, buttons, mirror, taxidermied eagle, cardboard, pillow, paint tube and other materials, 207.6 x 177.8 x 61 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) © 2014 Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Pop Art

At first glance, Pop Art might seem to glorify popular culture by elevating soup cans, comic strips and hamburgers to the status of fine art on the walls of museums. But, then again, a second look may suggest a critique of the mass marketing practices and consumer culture that emerged in the United States after World War II. Andy Warhol's *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (1962) clearly reflects this inherent irony of Pop. The central image on a gold background evokes a religious tradition of painted icons, transforming the Hollywood starlet into a Byzantine Madonna that reflects our obsession with celebrity. Notably, Warhol's spiritual reference was especially poignant given Monroe's suicide a few months earlier. Like religious fanatics, the actress's fans worshipped their idol; yet, Warhol's sloppy silk-screening calls attention to the artifice of Marilyn's glamorous façade and places her alongside other mass-marketed commodities like a can of soup or a box of Brillo pads.

Andy Warhol, *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, 1962, silkscreen on canvas, 6′ 11 1/4″ x 57″ (211.4 x 144.7 cm) (Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Genesis of Pop

In this light, it's not surprising that the term "Pop Art" first emerged in Great Britain, which suffered great economic hardship after the war. In the late 1940s, artists of the "Independent Group," first began to appropriate idealized images of the American lifestyle they found in popular magazines as part of their critique of British society. Critic Lawrence Alloway and artist Richard Hamilton are usually credited with coining the term, possibly in the context of Hamilton's famous collage from 1956, *Just what is it that makes today's home so different, so appealing?* Made to announce the Independent Group's 1956 exhibition "This Is Tomorrow," in London, the image prominently features a muscular semi-nude man, holding a phallically positioned Tootsie Pop.

Richard Hamilton, *Just what is it that makes today's home so different, so appealing?,* 1956, collage, 26 cm × 24.8 cm (10.25 in × 9.75 in) (Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany)

Pop Art's origins, however, can be traced back even further. In 1917, Marcel Duchamp asserted that any object—including his notorious example of a urinal—could be art, as long as the artist intended it as such. Artists of the 1950s built on this notion to challenge boundaries distinguishing art from real life, in disciplines of music and dance, as well as visual art. Robert Rauschenberg's desire to "work in the gap between art and life," for example, led him to incorporate such objects as bed pillows, tires and even a stuffed goat in his "combine paintings" that merged features of painting and sculpture. Likewise, Claes Oldenberg created *The Store*, an installation in a vacant storefront where he sold crudely fashioned sculptures of brand-name consumer goods. These "Proto-pop" artists were, in part, reacting against the rigid critical structure and lofty philosophies surrounding Abstract Expressionism, the dominant art movement of the time; but their work also reflected the numerous social changes taking place around them.

Post-War Consumer Culture Grabs Hold (and Never Lets Go)

The years following World War II saw enormous growth in the American economy, which, combined with innovations in technology and the media, spawned a consumer culture with more leisure time and expendable income than ever before. The manufacturing industry that had expanded during the war now began to mass-produce everything from hairspray and washing machines to shiny new convertibles, which advertisers claimed all would bring ultimate joy to their owners. Significantly, the development of television, as well as changes in print advertising, placed new emphasis on graphic images and recognizable brand logos—something that we now take for granted in our visually saturated world.

1950s Advertisement for the American Gas Association

It was in this artistic and cultural context that Pop artists developed their distinctive style of the early 1960s. Characterized by clearly rendered images of popular subject matter, it seemed to assault the standards of modern painting, which had embraced abstraction as a reflection of universal truths and individual expression.

Irony and Iron-Ons

In contrast to the dripping paint and slashing brushstrokes of Abstract Expressionism—and even of Proto-Pop art—Pop artists applied their paint to imitate the look of industrial printing techniques. This ironic approach is exemplified by Lichtenstein's methodically painted Benday dots, a mechanical process used to print pulp comics.

(L) Roy Lichtenstein, *Girl with a Ball*, 1961, oil on canvas, 60 1/4 x 36 1/4″ (153 x 91.9 cm) (Museum of Modern Art, New York); (R) Detail of face showing Lichtenstein's painted Benday dots)

As the decade progressed, artists shifted away from painting towards the use of industrial techniques. Warhol began making silkscreens, before removing himself further from the process by having others do the actual printing in his studio, aptly named "The Factory."

Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962, acrylic on canvas, 2054 x 1448 mm (Tate) © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. 2015

Andy Warhol, *Campbell's Soup Cans* (detail), 1962. Synthetic polymer on canvas. Image by Steven Zucker CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Similarly, Oldenburg abandoned his early installations and performances, to produce the large-scale sculptures of cake slices, lipsticks, and clothespins that he is best known for today.

Claes Oldenburg, *Clothespin*, 1976, cor-ten steel, 14 x 3.73 x 1.37 m, Philadelphia (photo: Ellen Fitzsimons, CC: BY-NC-SA)

Minimal Art and Earthworks

A reductive abstract art

Although many works of art can be described as "minimal," the name Minimalism refers specifically to a kind of reductive abstract art that emerged during the early 1960s. At the time, some critics preferred names like "ABC," "Boring," or "Literal" Art, and even "No-Art Nihilism," which they believed best summed up the literal presentation and lack of expressive content characterizing this new aesthetic. While scholars have recently argued for a broader definition of Minimalism that would include artists in a number of disciplines, the term remains closely linked to sculpture of the period.

Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1969, ten copper units, each 9 x 40 x 31″ with 9″ intervals (Guggenheim Museum, New York)

Donald Judd's *Untitled* (1969) is characteristic in its use of spare geometric forms, repeated to create a unified whole that calls attention to its physical size in relationship to the viewer. Like most Minimalists, Judd used industrial materials and processes to manufacture his work, but his preference for color and shiny surfaces distinguished him among the artists who pioneered the style.

Lack of apparent meaning

What most people find disturbing about Minimalism is its lack of any apparent meaning. Like Pop Art, which emerged simultaneously, Minimalism presented ordinary subject matter in a literal way that lacked expressive features or metaphorical content; likewise, the use of commercial processes smacked of mass production and seemed to reject traditional expectations of skill and originality in art. In these ways, both movements were, in part, a response to the dominance of Abstract Expressionism, which had held that painting conveys profound subjective meaning. However, whereas Pop artists depicted recognizable images from kitsch sources, the Minimalists exhibited their plywood boxes, florescent lights and concrete blocks directly on gallery floors, which seemed even more difficult to distinguish as "Art." (One well-known story tells of an art dealer, who visited Carl Andre's studio during the winter and unknowingly burned a sculpture for firewood while the artist was away.) Moreover, when asked to explain his black-striped paintings of 1959, Frank Stella responded, "What you see is what you see." Stella's comment implied that, not only was there no meaning, but that none was necessary to demonstrate the object's artistic value.
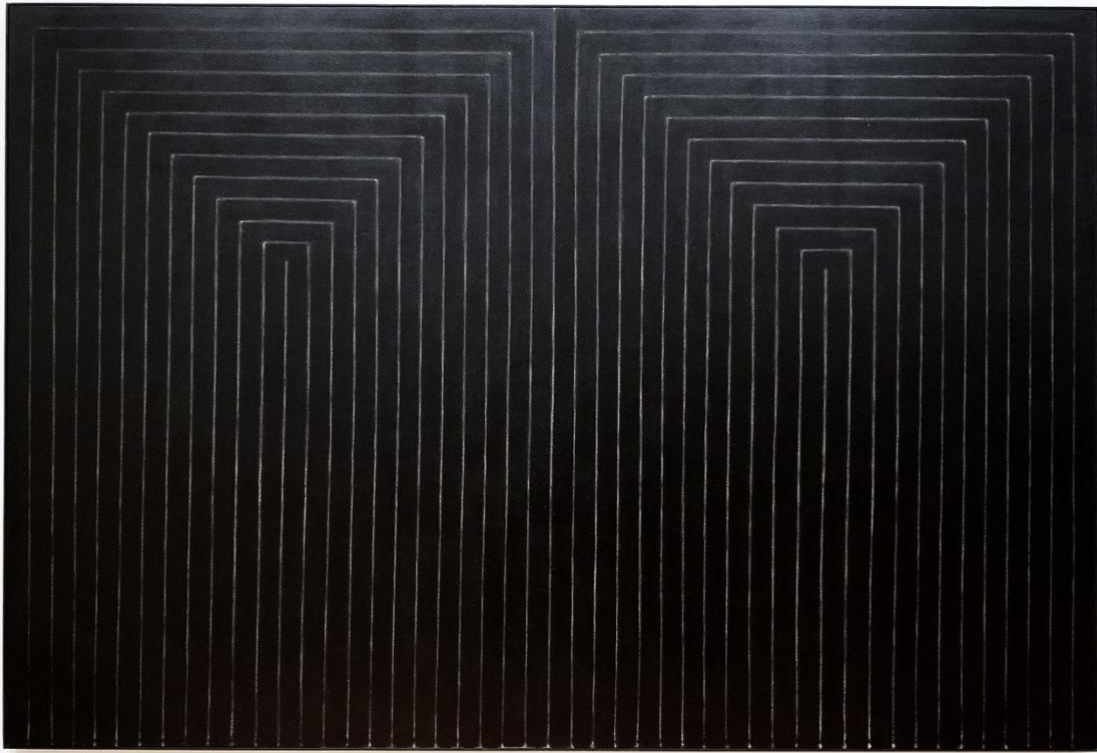
Frank Stella, *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor, II*, 1959, enamel on canvas, 230.5 x 337.2 cm (The Museum of Modern Art)

Earthworks

Land art, earthworks (coined by Robert Smithson), or Earth art is an art movement in which landscape and art are inextricably linked, so in this way it is site-specific. It is also an art form created in nature, using organic materials such as soil, rock (bed rock, boulders, stones), organic media (logs, branches, leaves), and water with introduced materials such as concrete, metal, asphalt, or mineral pigments. Sculptures are not placed in the landscape; rather, the landscape is the means of their creation. Earth-moving equipment is often involved. The works frequently exist in the open, located well away from civilization, left to change and erode under natural conditions. Many of the first works of this kind, created in the deserts of Nevada, New Mexico, Utah or Arizona, were ephemeral in nature and now only exist as video recordings or photographic documents.

Robert Smithson was an American land artist. His most famous work is *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a 1,500-foot long spiral-shaped jetty extending into the Great Salt Lake in Utah constructed from rocks, earth, and salt. It was entirely submerged by rising lake waters for several years, but has since re-emerged.

Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty, 1970. (Great Salt Lake, Utah) Image by Soren.harward License CC-BY-SA-2.0

Using rocks and earth, Smithson built a spiral-shaped relief in the lake bed. Best viewed from above, the piece is altered by the shifting waters over time and in this way is forever linked to the environment it was intended for.

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude, known as Christo and Jeanne-Claude, are a married couple who created site-specific environmental works of art. Their works nearly always entail wrapping a large area of space or piece of architecture in a textile, and include the wrapping of the Reichstag in Berlin and the Pont-Neuf bridge in Paris, the 24-mile (39 km)-long artwork called *Running Fence* in Sonoma and Marin counties in California, and *The Gates* in New York City's Central Park. The purpose of their art, they contend, is simply to create works of art for joy and beauty and to create new ways of seeing familiar landscapes.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Reichstag*, 1971-95, © Christo (photo: Jotefa, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Conceptual and Performance Art

Conceptual Art

In 1972 the De Saisset Art Museum at Santa Clara University in the San Francisco Bay Area gave the artist Tom Marioni several hundred dollars to help cover expenses for mounting an exhibition of his work at the institution. Instead of using the money to purchase art materials, Marioni bought an older model used car, a Fiat 750, which he carefully maneuvered into the museum for the opening of his show. The vehicle, parked on top of an oriental rug, formed the centerpiece for this exhibition, titled *My First Car*. Was this really art, or was it a scam to get the museum to pay for a car the artist wanted? After learning about the show, the University President concluded that it was more of the latter and ordered the show closed. Presumably he was put off by how *My First Car* profited Marioni without involving any technical skill or hard work on the part of the artist.
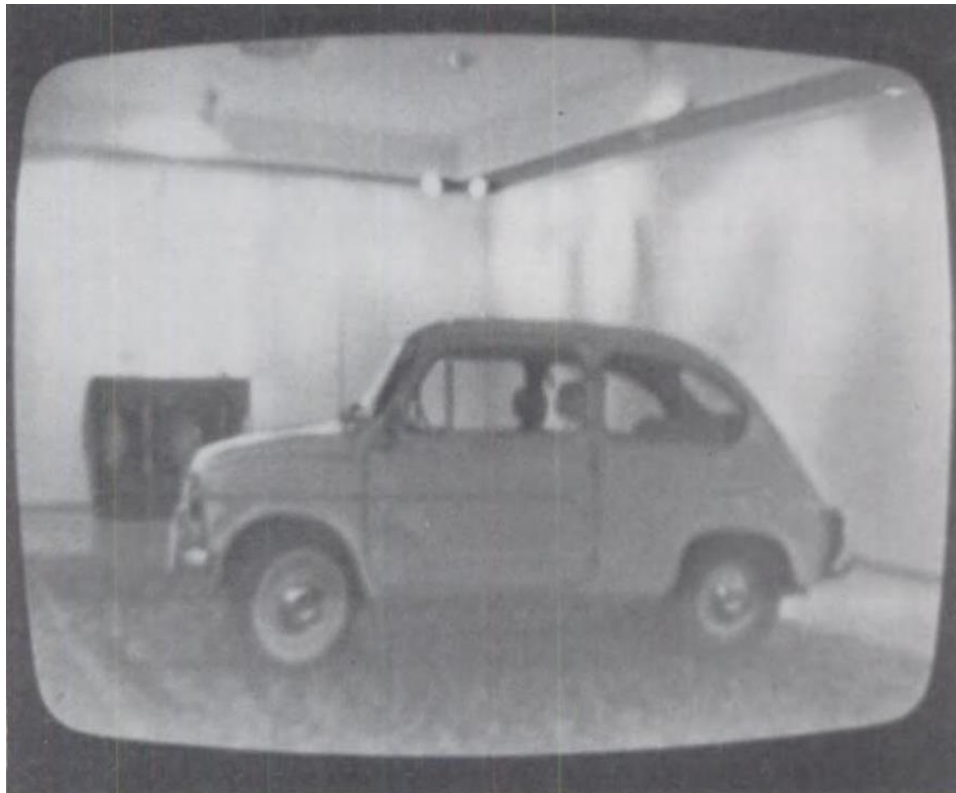
Tom Marioni, My First Car, 1972, De Saisset Gallery, Santa Clara, California (photo from Performance Anthology: Source Book of California Performance Art, eds. Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong)

Marioni's work was in many ways typical of the late 1960s and early 1970s art practices that came to be known as Conceptual art. As the term suggests, Conceptual art placed emphasis upon the concept or idea, and deemphasized the actual physical manifestation of the work. Thus an artist did not need manual skill to produce his work, and in fact could get away with not making anything at all. Rather than being a mere prank (as many dismissed it at the time), Marioni's work was a proposal for a new kind of art that deliberately disavowed art's traditional role as a showcase for the creative genius and technical abilities of the artist.
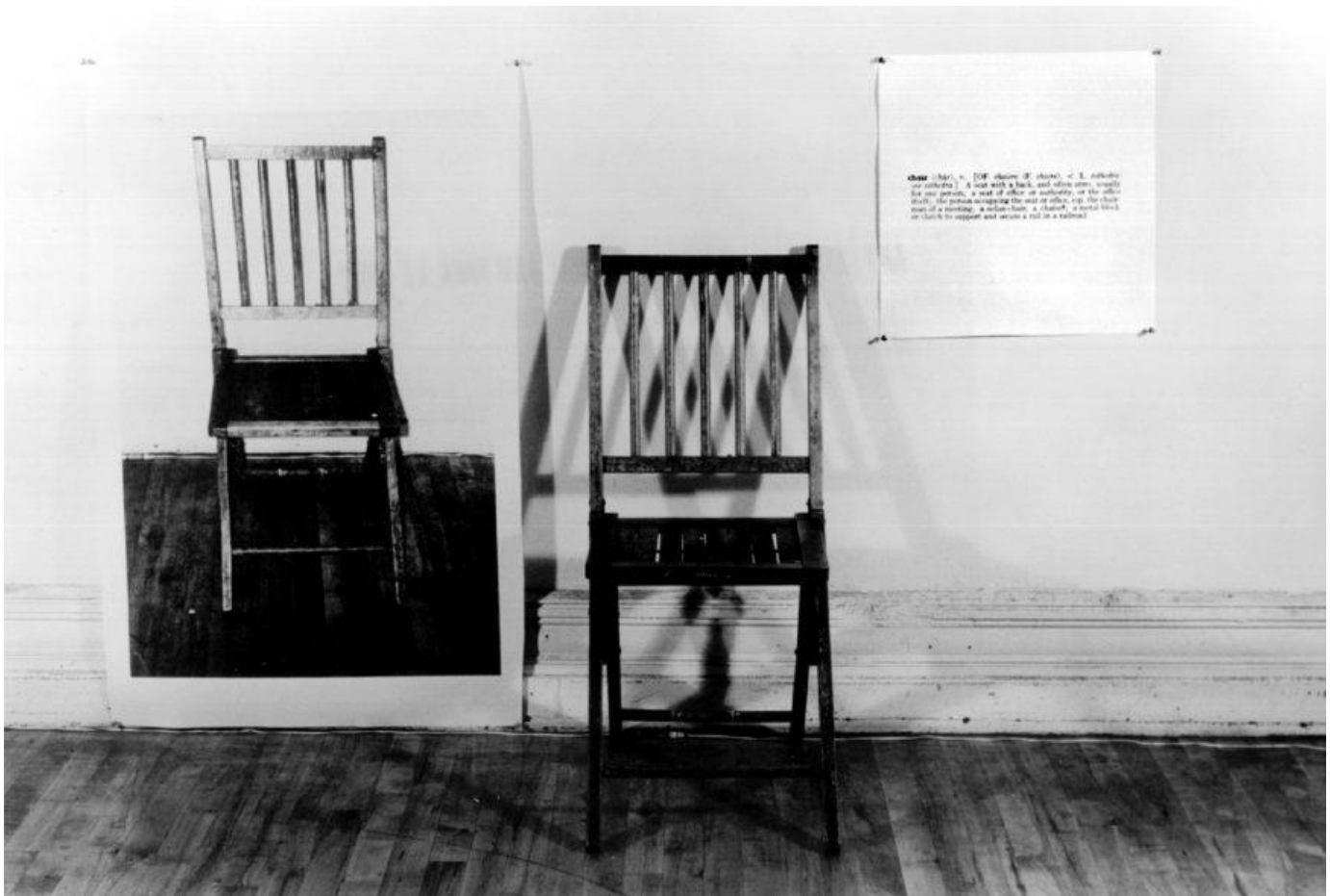
Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, wood folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of "chair" (MoMA)

In the case of *One and Three Chairs*, by artist Joseph Kosuth, the central idea was to explore the nature of representation itself. We know instinctively what a "chair" is, but how is it that we actually conceive of and communicate that concept? Kosuth presents us with a photograph of a chair, an actual chair, and its linguistic or language-based description. All three of these could be interpreted as representations of the same chair (the "one" chair of the title), and yet they are *not* the same. They each have distinct properties: in actuality, the viewer is confronted with "three" chairs, each represented and experienced—read—in different ways.

Today there are few female artists who are more visible to a wide range of international audiences than Yayoi Kusama, who was born in 1929 in Japan. Kusama is a self-taught artist who now chooses to live in a private Tokyo mental health facility, while prolifically producing art in various media in her studio nearby. Her highly constructed persona and self-proclaimed life-long history of insanity have been the subject of scrutiny and critiques for decades. Art historian Jody Cutler places Kusama's oeuvre "in dialogue with the psychological state known as narcissism," as "narcissism is both the subject and the cause of Kusama's art, or in other words, a conscious artistic element related to content."[3]

Installation view, *Infinity Mirror Room–Phalli's Field* (or *Floor Show*), (no longer extant) Castellane Gallery, New York. 1965 (photo ©Eiko Hosoe)

In 1965, she mounted her first mirror installation *Infinity Mirror Room-Phalli's Field* at Castellane Gallery in New York (above). A mirrored room without a ceiling was filled with colorfully dotted, phallus-like stuffed objects on the floor. The repeated reflections in the mirrors conveyed the illusion of a continuous sea of multiplied phalli expanding to its infinity. This playful and erotic exhibition immediately attracted the media's attention.

Performance Art

Following World War II, performance emerged as a useful way for artists to explore philosophical and psychological questions about human existence. For this generation, who had witnessed destruction caused by the Holocaust and atomic bomb, the body offered a powerful medium to communicate shared physical and emotional experience. Whereas painting and sculpture relied on expressive form and content to convey meaning, performance art forced viewers to engage with a real person who could feel cold and hunger, fear and pain, excitement and embarrassment—just like them.

Some artists, inspired largely by Abstract Expressionism, used performance to emphasize the body's role in artistic production. Working before a live audience, Kazuo Shiraga of the Japanese Gutai Group made sculpture by crawling through a pile of mud. Georges Mathieu staged similar performances in Paris where he violently threw paint at his canvas. These performative approaches to making art built on philosophical interpretations of Abstract Expressionism, which held the gestural markings of action painters as visible evidence of the artist's own existence. Bolstered by Hans Namuth's photographs of Jackson Pollock in his studio, moving dance-like around a canvas on the floor, artists like Shiraga and Mathieu began to see the artist's creative act as equally important, if not more so, to the artwork produced. In this light, Pollock's distinctive drips, spills and splatters appeared as a mere remnant, a visible trace left over from the moment of creation.

Shifting attention from the art object to the artist's action further suggested that art existed in real space and real time. In New York, visual artists combined their interest in action painting with

ideas of the avant-garde composer John Cage to blur the line between art and life. Cage employed chance procedures to create musical compositions such as 4'33". In this (in)famous piece, Cage used the time frame specified in the title to bracket ambient noises that occurred randomly during the performance. By effectively calling attention to the hum of fluorescent lights, people moving in their seats, coughs, whispers, and other ordinary sounds, Cage transformed them into a unique musical composition.

Yoko Ono, *Bed-in* (Yoko Ono and John Lennon in bed at the Hilton hotel Amsterdam). 1969. Image by Eric Kock CC0 1.0 Public Domain

Drawing on these influences, new artistic formats emerged in the late 1950s. Environments and Happenings physically placed viewers in commonplace surroundings, often forcing them to participate in a series of loosely structured actions. Fluxus artists, poets, and musicians likewise challenged viewers by presenting the most mundane events—brushing teeth, making a salad, exiting the theater—as forms of art. A well-known example is the "bed-in" that Fluxus artist Yoko Ono staged in 1969 in Amsterdam with her husband John Lennon. Typical of much performance art, Ono and Lennon made ordinary human activity a public spectacle, which demanded personal interaction and raised popular awareness of their pacifist beliefs.

Early Feminism

Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1974–79, ceramic, porcelain, and textile, 1463 x 1463 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

The Dinner Party is a monument to women's history and accomplishments. It is a massive triangular table—measuring 48 feet on each side—with thirty-nine place settings dedicated to prominent women throughout history and an additional 999 names are inscribed on the table's glazed porcelain brick base. This tribute to women, which includes individual place settings for such luminary figures as the Primordial Goddess, Ishtar, Hatshepsut, Theodora, Artemesia Gentileschi, Sacajawea, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Emily Dickinson, Margaret Sanger, and Georgia O'Keeffe, is beautifully crafted. Each place setting has an exquisitely embroidered table runner that includes the name of the woman, utensils, a goblet, and a plate.

What drove Chicago to embark on such a large and controversial feminist project? She was inspired, in part, by her pioneering work in feminist education. She started the Feminist Art Program at California State University, Fresno in 1970. The following year she founded the Feminist Art Program (FAP) at the newly established California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) with the abstract painter Miriam Schapiro. The galleries were still under construction when Chicago arrived at CalArts, so the FAP had their exhibition in an abandoned mansion that was slated to be demolished shortly after. The resulting installation, *Womanhouse*, was a testament to Chicago's method of teaching, which begin with consciousness raising and then progressed to realizing a message through whatever medium was most suitable, whether it was performance, sculpture, or painting.

In 1972, the artist Eleanor Antin decided she would make an "academic" sculpture:

"I got out a book on Greek sculpture, which is the most academic of all….This piece was done in

the method of the Greek sculptors…carving around and around the figure and whole layers would come off at a time until finally the aesthetic ideal had been reached."

Of course she did no such thing—make an academic sculpture, that is. What she produced instead was a work entitled *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* in which the typical marble or bronze medium of sculpture was replaced with a grid of 148 black and white photographs of the artist's naked body. They are arranged in 37 vertical columns, corresponding to the number of days Antin spent following a diet plan proposed in a popular magazine for women. Each row consists of four photographs showing back, front, and side profiles, with a text panel at the bottom listing each day, time, and the artist's weight. When first exhibited, the photographs were simply pinned to the wall, eschewing the conventional use of frames in the display of art.
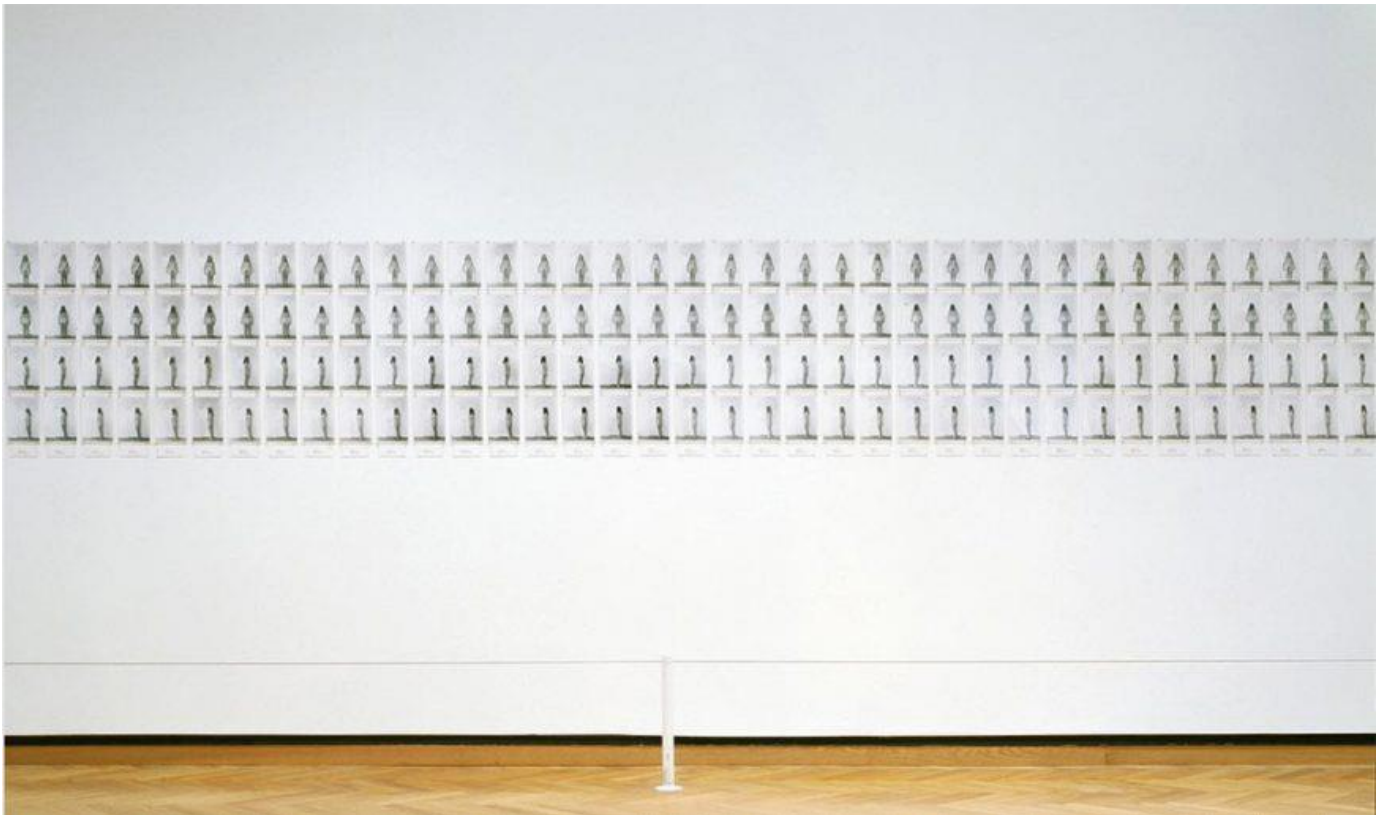
Eleanor Antin, *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1972, 148 gelatin silver prints and text panels, each photograph 17.7 x 12.7 cm (The Art Institute of Chicago)

Carving: A Traditional Sculpture could be seen as one answer to the rhetorical question posed by art historian Linda Nochlin's now famous essay published one year earlier: "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Nochlin's argument was that the history of art included few women, not because there were few women artists of note, but because art history was an extension of a patriarchal system in which women were excluded from almost everything. The answer Nochlin proposed was not to simply re-insert women into history, but to scrutinize the very structure of history itself: to analyze the role of women within patriarchy, and by extension in the history of art.
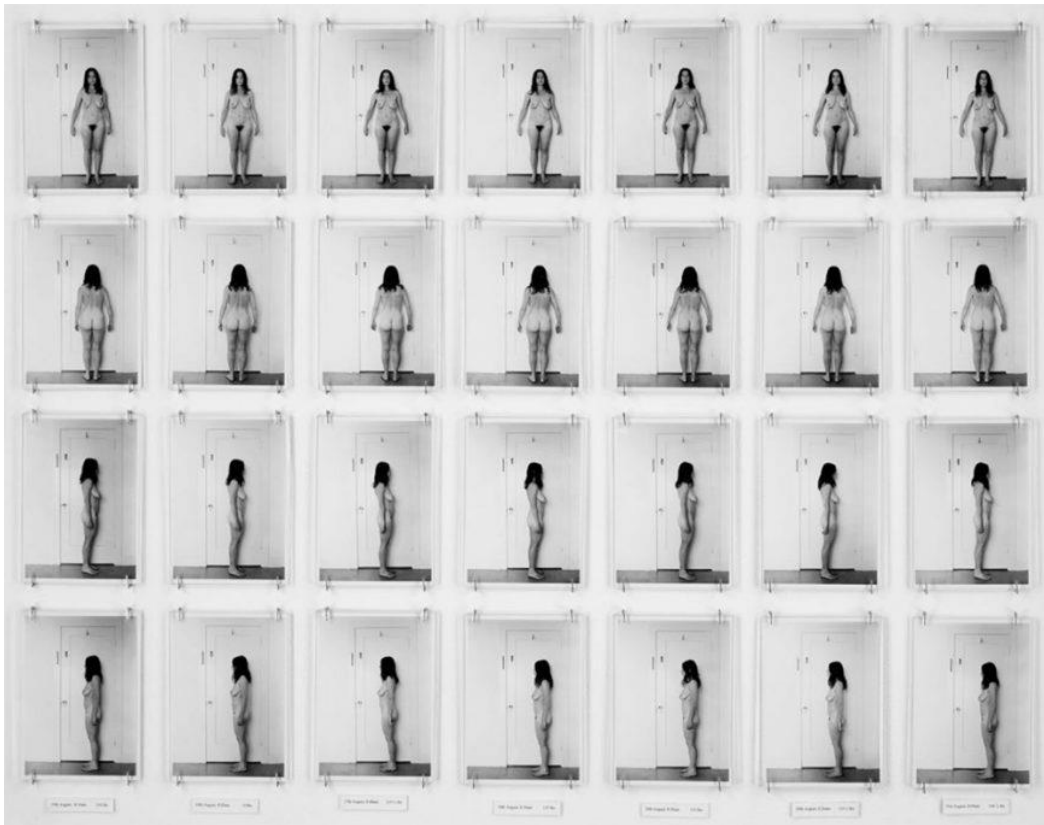
Eleanor Antin, *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1972 (detail) (Henry Moore Foundation)

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Chapter 31: Postmodernity and Global Cultures

"Getting" Contemporary Art

It's ironic that many people say they don't "get" contemporary art because, unlike Egyptian tomb painting or Greek sculpture, art made since 1960 reflects our own recent past. It speaks to the dramatic social, political and technological changes of the last 50 years, and it questions many of society's values and assumptions—a tendency of postmodernism, a concept sometimes used to describe contemporary art. What makes today's art especially challenging is that, like the world around us, it has become more diverse and cannot be easily defined through a list of visual characteristics, artistic themes or cultural concerns.

Minimalism and Pop Art paved the way for later artists to explore questions about the conceptual nature of art, its form, its production, and its ability to communicate in different ways. In the late 1960s and 1970s, these ideas led to a "dematerialization of art," when artists turned away from painting and sculpture to experiment with new formats including photography, film and video, performance art, large-scale installations and earth works. Although some critics of the time foretold "the death of painting," art today encompasses a broad range of traditional and experimental media, including works that rely on Internet technology and other scientific innovations.
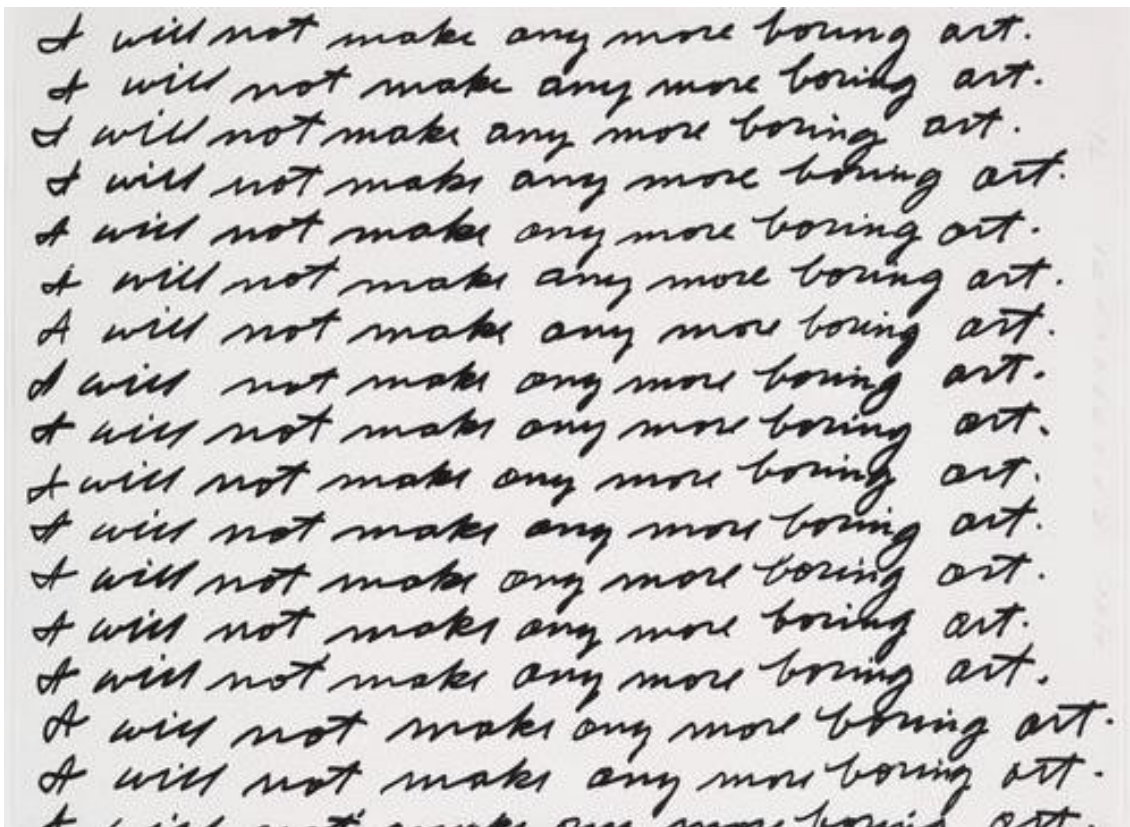
John Baldessari, *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, 1971, lithograph, 22-7/16 x 30-1/16″ (The Museum of Modern Art). Copyright John Baldessari, courtesy of the artist.

Contemporary artists continue to use a varied vocabulary of abstract and representational forms to convey their ideas. It is important to remember that the art of our time did not develop in a vacuum; rather, it reflects the social and political concerns of its cultural context. For example, artists like Judy Chicago, who were inspired by the feminist movement of the early 1970s, embraced imagery and art forms that had historical connections to women.

In the 1980s, artists appropriated the style and methods of mass media advertising to investigate issues of cultural authority and identity politics. More recently, artists like Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Wall in Washington D.C., and Richard Serra, who was loosely associated with Minimalism in the 1960s, have adapted characteristics of Minimalist art to create new abstract sculptures that encourage more personal interaction and emotional response among viewers.

These shifting strategies to engage the viewer show how contemporary art's significance exists beyond the object itself. Its meaning develops from cultural discourse, interpretation and a range of individual understandings, in addition to the formal and conceptual problems that first motivated the artist. In this way, the art of our times may serve as a catalyst for an on-going process of open discussion and intellectual inquiry about the world today.

Postmodern and Contemporary Architecture

Postmodern architecture began as an international style whose first examples are generally cited as being from the 1950s, but did not become a movement until the late 1970s and continues to influence present-day architecture. Postmodernity in architecture is generally thought to be heralded by the return of "wit, ornament and reference" to architecture in response to the formalism of the International Style.

Michael Graves's *Portland Building* from 1982 personifies the idea behind postmodernist thought. A reference to more traditional style is evident in the patterned column-like sections. Overt large-scale decorative elements are built into and onto the exterior walls, and contrasts between materials, colors and forms give the building a graphic sense of visual wit.

Michael Graves, *Portland Municipal Services Building*, 1982, Portland, Oregon. Image by Steve Morgan, licensed through Creative Commons.

We can see how architecture is actively evolving in the contemporary work of Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid. Gehry's work is famous for its rolling and bent organic forms. His gestural, erratic sketches are transformed into buildings through a computer aided design process (CAD). They have roots in postmodernism but lean towards a completely new modern style. They have as much to do with sculpture as they do with architecture. Seattle's *Experience Music Project* is an example of the complexity that goes into his designs. Its curves, ripples and folds roll across space and the multi-colored titanium panels adorning the exterior accentuate the effect. It's even designed for a monorail train to run through it!
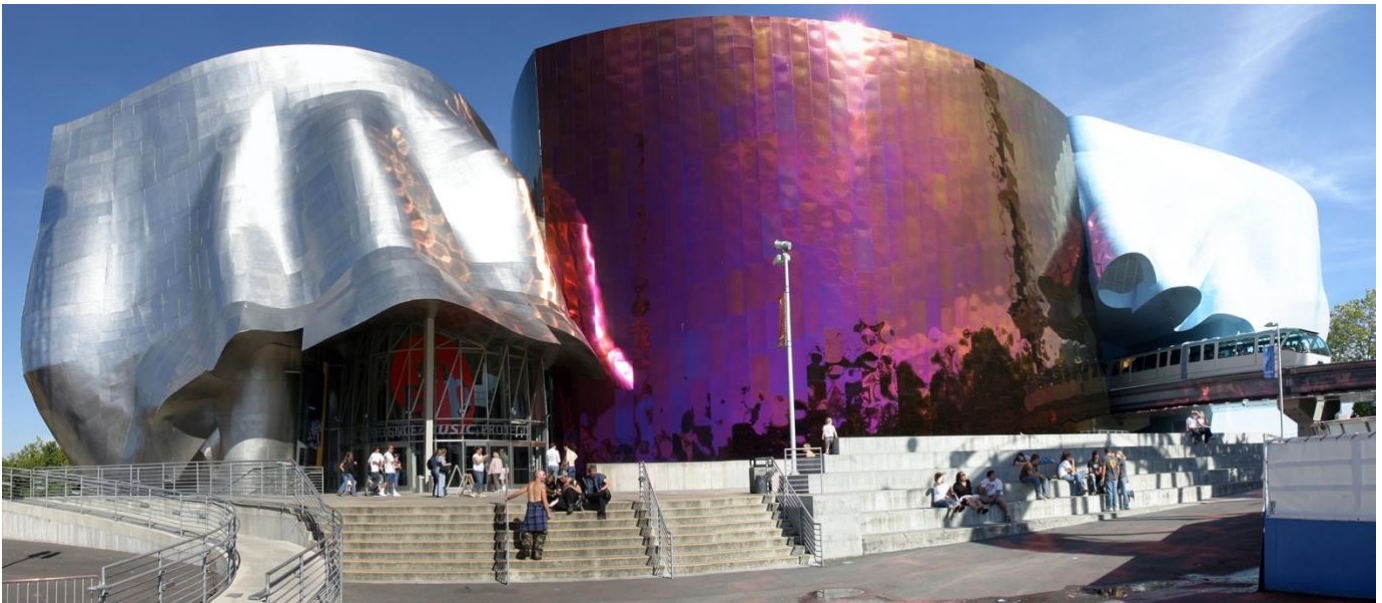
Frank Gehry, *The Experience Music Project*, 2000. Seattle Washington. West façade with the monorail passing through. Image by: Cacophony. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

Hadid's designs use soft and hard geometry with lots of cantilever and strong sculptural quality. In 2004 Hadid became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, architecture's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. Her work defines and influences architectural style in the 21st century. For example, her design for an inclined rail station in Innsbruck, Austria is futuristic, balancing abstract forms and ornament with utility.

Zaha Hadid, *Norpark Rail Station*, Innsbruck, Austria. 2004-2007. Image: Hafelekar. Licensed through Creative Commons.

Appropriation and Ideological Critique

Dangerous Art

In 2011, artist Ai Weiwei was arrested in China following a crack down by the government on so-called "political dissidents" (a specific category that the Chinese government uses to classify those who seek to subvert state power) for "alleged economic crimes" against the Chinese state. Weiwei has used his art to address both the corruption of the Chinese communist government and its outright neglect of human rights, particularly in the realm of the freedom of speech and thought. Weiwei has been successful in using the internet (which is severely restricted in China) as a medium for his art. His work is informed by two interconnected strands, his involvement with the Chinese avant-garde group "Stars" (which he helped found in 1978 during his time in the Beijing Film Academy) and the fact that he spent some of his formative years in New York, engaging there with the ideas of conceptual art, in particular the idea of the readymade. Many of the concepts and much of the material that Weiwei uses in his art practice are informed by post-conceptual thinking.

Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2010, one hundred million hand painted porcelain seeds (Tate Modern)

Handpainted seeds (detail), Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2010, one hundred million hand painted porcelain seeds (Tate Modern)

Weiwei has exhibited successfully in the West in many major shows, for example, the 48th Venice Biennale in Italy (1999) and Documenta 12 (2007). He also exhibited *Sunflower Seeds* (October, 2010) in the Turbine Hall in the Tate Modern. In this work, Weiwei filled the floor of the huge hall with one hundred million porcelain seeds, each individually hand-painted in the town of Jingdezhen by 1,600 Chinese artisans. Participants were encouraged to walk over the exhibited space (or even roll in the work) in order to experience the ideas of the effect of mass consumption on Chinese industry and 20th-century China's history of famine and collective work. However, on October 16, 2010, Tate Modern stopped people from walking on the exhibit due to health liability concerns over porcelain dust.

Brilliant patterns

The Art of Kara Walker, a "PBS Culture Shock" web activity, tests the participant's tolerance for imagery that occupies the nebulous space between racism and race affirmation. Though the activity gives the participant only two options at the end (whether or not to feature one of Walker's silhouettes on the "Culture Shock" homepage), the activity explores the multiple and complex reactions Walker's work elicits. Yet to focus solely on the controversy Walker's art generates is a disservice to her artistic training and the strength of her art, especially in a stunning and absorbing installation like *Darkytown Rebellion*. Here, a brilliant pattern of colors washes over a wall full of silhouettes enacting a dramatic rebellion, giving the viewer the unforgettable experience of stepping into a work of art. Walker's talent is not about creating controversy for its own sake, but building a world that unleashes horrors even as it seduces viewers.

Kara Walker, *Darkytown Rebellion*, 2001, cut paper and projection on wall, 4.3 x 11.3m, (Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg) © Kara Walker

Identity and the Body
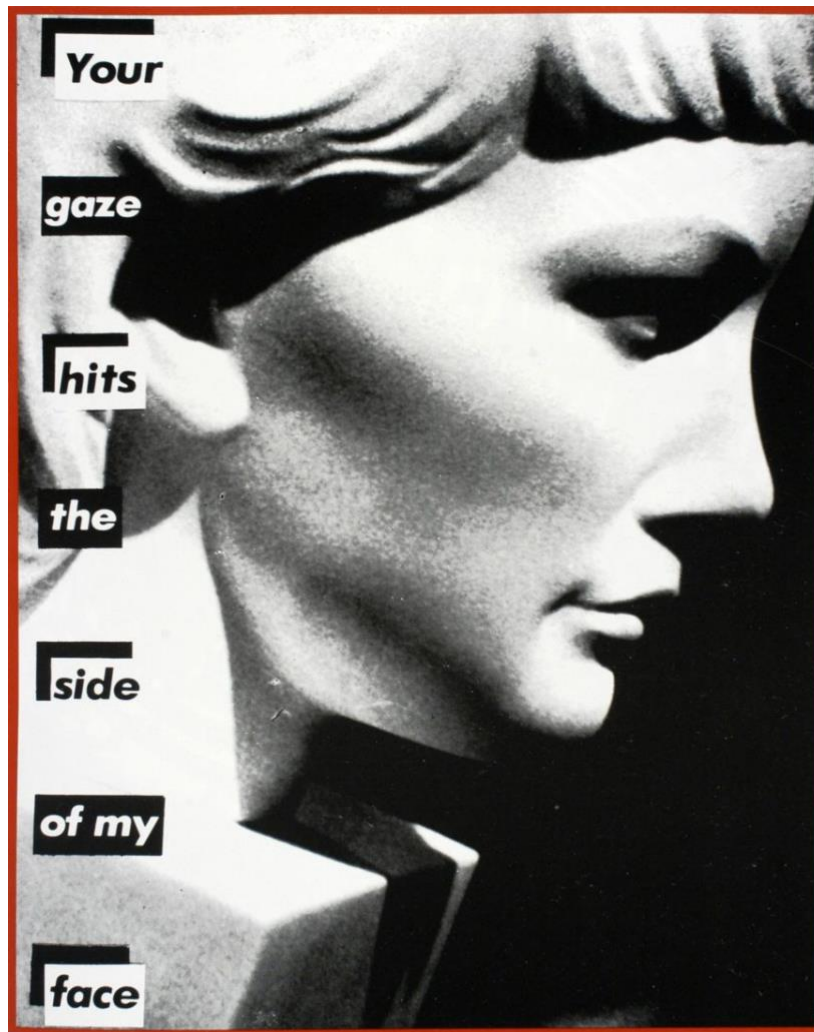
Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face)*, 1981

Has an artwork ever been more direct in acknowledging that the simple act of looking is a gendered (and gendering) act? "Your gaze hits the side of my face," admonishes Barbara Kruger in *Untitled* (1981). The phrase is made stark and impersonal by arranging the words in a vertical stack, like those of a ransom note, to the left of a photograph of a female portrait bust in profile. Notice how the head is equally depersonalized; a stylized version in the classical tradition whose neck disappears into a block of stone, the suggestion here is that women are rendered inert in the act of being looked at. With an assumed male viewer — the subject of the possessive phrase "your gaze" — the subject of the portrait bust readily conforms to patriarchal fantasies of the passive female object.

Kruger's art is characterized by a visual wit sharpened in the trenches of the advertising world where the savvy combination of graphic imagery and pithy phrasing targeted a growing population of consumers in the post-World War II years. The portrait bust she uses for *Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face)* is a found picture, one of any number the artist would have encountered in her early career in graphic design. This included a stint at *Mademoiselle* magazine, whose glossy pages were a virtual catalogue of stereotypical images of femininity. In the late 1970s, Kruger began to choose for her photomontages images of women that were often heightened examples of such stereotypes to which her addition of text would, often humorously, expose and thereby deconstruct the supposed realism of such imagery.

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Questions),* 1990/2018 (Geffen Contemporary; photo: rocor, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Much like the factory murals and posters of Russian avant-garde art, Kruger sought a broader audience outside the gallery. Her work would appear on billboards, train station platforms, bus stops, public parks, and even matchbook covers. In the early 2000s the street clothing brand Supreme acknowledged that Barbara Kruger was an inspiration for their logo, a white Futura font within a red box. Despite its critical stance toward the advertising industry, Kruger's unique graphic style couldn't help but ultimately become influential in packaging and product design.

Logo for the clothing brand Supreme

Did the promotional and publicity structures of a consumer society eventually absorb postmodernism and thereby render its critique neutral?

Shirin Neshat's photographic series *Women of Allah* examines the complexities of women's identities in the midst of a changing cultural landscape in the Middle East—both through the lens of Western representations of Muslim women, and through the more intimate subject of personal and religious conviction.

While the composition—defined by the hard edge of her black chador against the bright white background—appears sparse, measured and symmetrical, the split created by the weapon implies a more violent rupture or psychic fragmentation. A single subject, it suggests, might be host to internal contradictions alongside binaries such as tradition and modernity, East and West, beauty and violence. In the artist's own words, "every image, every woman's submissive gaze, suggests a far more complex and paradoxical reality behind the surface." [1]

Shirin Neshat, *Rebellious Silence, Women of Allah* series, 1994, black and white RC print and ink, photo by Cynthia Preston ©Shirin Neshat (courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels)

Banality and Kitsch
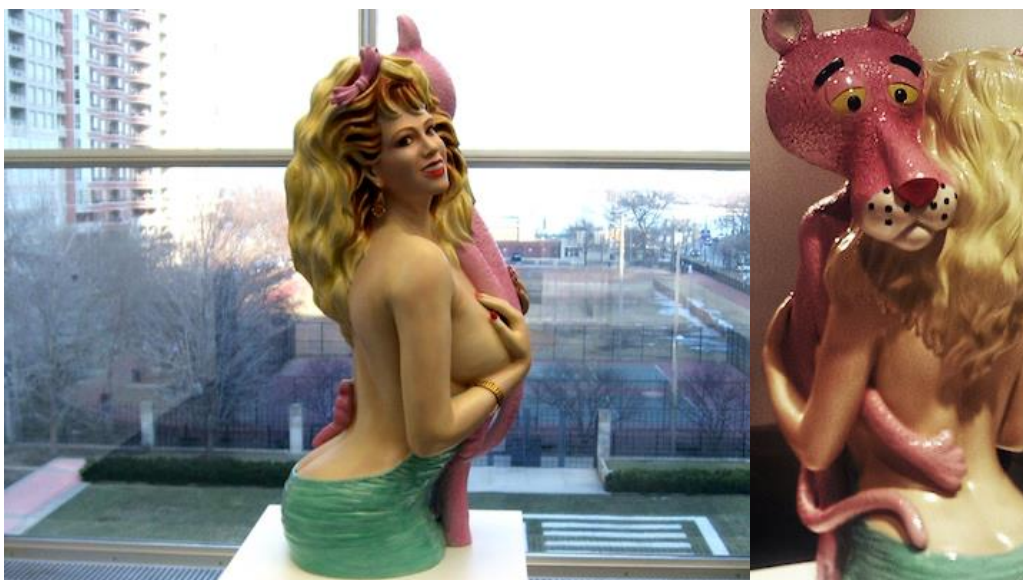
Jeff Koons, *Pink Panther*, 1988, glazed porcelain, 104.1 x 52 x 48.2 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) (photo: LP, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Imagine walking into an art gallery and seeing overgrown toys, or cartoon characters presented as sculpture. If, in 1988, you had wandered into the Sonnabend Gallery on West Broadway in New York City, this is indeed what you would have witnessed: it was an exhibition entitled "Banality" by New York artist Jeff Koons presenting some twenty sculptures in porcelain and polychromed wood.

A glazed porcelain statue entitled *Pink Panther* belongs to that body of work. It depicts a smiling,

bare-breasted, blond woman scantily clad in a mint-green dress, head tilted back and to the left as if addressing a crowd of onlookers. The figure is based on the 1960s B-list Hollywood star Jayne Mansfield—here she clutches a limp pink panther in her left hand, while her right hand covers an exposed breast. From behind one sees that the pink panther has its head thrown over her shoulder and wears an expression of hapless weariness. It too is a product of Hollywood fantasy—the movie of the same name debuted the cartoon character in 1963. The colors are almost antiquated; do they harken back to the popular culture of a pre-civil rights era as a politically regressive statement of nostalgia? And what about the female figure—posed in a state of deshabille (carelessly and partially undressed)? At a time of increased feminist presence in the still male-dominated art world this could only be perceived as a rearguard move. Or was Koons—a postmodern provocateur like no other—simply parodying male authority as he had done in some of his other work?

Artists—postmodern artists—were supposed to counter the banality of evil that lurked behind public and popular culture, not giddily revel in it as Koons seemed to do. There appeared to be nothing serious about any of the works in the "Banality" exhibition: a life-sized bust of pop icon Michael Jackson and his pet monkey Bubbles; a ribbon-necked pig—especially egregious—in polychromed wood escorted by cherubic youths, two of which are winged. And of course *Pink Panther,* a work that seemed destined to insult rather than inform. It all seemed like kitsch posing as high art.

Jeff Koons, *Michael Jackson and Bubbles*, 1988, ceramic, glaze and paint, on view at Versailles, 2014 (photo: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra, CC BY 2.0)

But postmodernism stopped short of fully embracing kitsch by insisting on a degree of self-aware critical distance. This is where Koons found a fault line that he fully exploited with works like *Pink Panther*. Hummel figurines and other popular collector's items are the basis for the art in

"Banality." Koons rendered these saccharine and sentimental little figural groupings—cartoonish emblems of childhood innocence—at a life-size scale as an assault upon sincerity but also as an assault upon taste, and it is here that even the most daring of postmodern advocates drew a line in the sand. Like the modernist distinction between art and an everyday object, *Pink Panther* challenged the distinction between an ironic appropriation of a mass-culture object and the object itself (seemingly without critical distance) thereby challenging the whole critical enterprise of postmodernism itself.

Ritual, spirituality, and transcendence

Left: Bill Viola, *The Crossing*, 1996, video/sound © Bill Viola (photo: stunned, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0); right: Bill Viola, *The Crossing*, 1996, video/sound © Bill Viola (image: SFMOMA)

Bill Viola's *The Crossing* is a room-sized video installation that comprises a large two-sided screen onto which a pair of video sequences is simultaneously projected. They each open in the same fashion: a male figure walks slowly towards the camera, his body dramatically lit from above so that it appears to glow against the video's stark-black background. After several minutes he pauses near the foreground and stands still. He faces forward, staring directly into the lens, motionless.

At this point the two scenes diverge; in one, a small fire alights below the figure's feet. It spreads over his legs and torso and eventually engulfs his whole body in flames; yet, he stands calm and completely still as his body is immolated, only moving to raise his arms slightly before his body disappears in an inferno of roaring flames. On the opposite screen, the event transpires not with fire but with water. Beginning as a light rainfall, the sporadic drops that shower the figure build up to a surging cascade of water until it subsumes him entirely. After the flames and the torrent of water eventually retreat, the figure has vanished entirely from each scene, and the camera witnesses a silent and empty denouement.

Between 1974 and 1976, Viola lived in Italy, where religious paintings and sculptures are often displayed in-situ, in the cathedrals for which they were commissioned. The continuing integration

of historical art into contemporary public and religious life inspired Viola to design installations that mimicked the forms of devotional paintings, diptychs, predellas and altarpieces—formats that encourage intimate contemplation of religious icons. Later traveling throughout Japan and other parts of East Asia, Viola observed the same active level of engagement with art. In Tokyo, for instance, he witnessed museum visitors placing offerings at the feet of sculptural bodhisattvas or other religious statuary.

For viewers, the experience of viewing Viola's works need not be spiritually inscribed. In many cases, his works appeal to or reflect raw human emotions (the theme of his acclaimed exhibition *The Passions*) or universal life experiences. While *The Crossing* can be interpreted in light of a host of religious associations, the act of "self-annihilation" represented in the figure's disappearance at each conclusion also serves as a metaphor for the destruction of the ego. In the artist's words, this action "becomes a necessary means to transcendence and liberation," [1] especially in the face of life's inevitable unpredictability.

Histories, Real and Imagined

Refusing Style

"I can't see it…is it me?" I watched a young woman step closer to the canvas titled, Uncle Rudi. She was now physically closer and she was looking hard, but the image kept its distance.

Gerhard Richter, *Uncle Rudi*, 1965, oil on canvas, 87 x 50 cm (Lidice Gallery, Lidice, Czech Republic) used with permission of the Gerhard Richter studio

Meaning in Gerhard Richter's art can also keep its distance. The elusiveness of meaning is, in some ways, a central subject of Richter's art. Since the early 1950s, Richter has painted a huge number of subjects in wildly conflicting styles. For most artists, one style emerges and evolves slowly, almost imperceptibly, over the course of their career. This is because artists often continue to work through problems that remain relevant and perhaps, because they achieve a degree of recognition and the market then demands that style. In other words, collectors often want what is known. Artists who abandon their signature style do so at some risk to future sales. Still, some artists do push in startlingly new directions. Willem de Kooning abandoned abstraction for the figure against the advice of his dealer, and Pablo Picasso famously pursued opposing styles simultaneously—think of his volumetric, even bloated Neoclassicism compared to the collages where he pressed flat every volume in sight.

Uncle Rudi, the painting the woman had stepped closer to see, is painted in the grays of a black and white photograph. It is small and has the intimacy of a family snapshot. We see a young man smiling proudly and awkwardly. He is clearly self-conscious as he poses in his new uniform. One has the sense that a moment before he was talking to the person behind the camera, likely a friend or family member. Rudi would die fighting soon after the photograph that is the basis for this painting was taken. This is the artist's uncle, the man his grandmother favored and the adult

the young Richter was to model himself after. But nothing in this painting is clear. Not the relationship between the artist and his uncle, not the tension between Rudi's innocent awkwardness and his participation in Nazi violence, not even in the relationship between the photograph and Richter's painting. The artist has drawn a dry brush across the wet surface of the nearly finished painting, and by doing this, he obscures the clarity of the photograph, denying us the easy certainty we expect. Richter reminds us that *Uncle Rudi*, like all images, promise and then fail to bring us closer to the people, things or places represented.

Confronting Art History

Kehinde Wiley, *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*, 2005, oil paint on canvas, 274.3 x 274.3 cm (108 x 108 in) (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York) © Kehinde Wiley

In this large painting, Kehinde Wiley, an African-American artist, strategically re-creates a French masterpiece from two hundred years before but with key differences. This act of appropriation reveals issues about the tradition of portraiture and all that it implies about power and privilege. Wiley asks us to think about the biases of the art historical canon (the set of works that are regarded as "masterpieces"), representation in pop culture, and issues of race and gender. Here, Wiley replaces the original white subject—the French general-turned-emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (below)—with an anonymous black man whom Wiley approached on the street as part of his "street-casting process." Although Wiley does occasionally create paintings on commission, he typically asks everyday people of color to sit for photographs, which he then

transforms into paintings. Along the way, he talks with those sitters, gathering their thoughts about what they should wear, how they might pose, and which historical paintings to reference.

Napoleon Leading the Army is a clear spin-off of Jacques-Louis David's painting of 1800-01 (below), which was commissioned by Charles IV, the King of Spain, to commemorate Napoleon's victorious military campaign against the Austrians. The original portrait smacks of propaganda. Napoleon, in fact, did not pose for the original painting nor did he lead his troops over the mountains into Austria. He sent his soldiers ahead on foot and followed a few days later, riding on a mule.

Left: Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, 1803 version, oil on canvas 275 × 232 cm (Österreichische Galerie Belvedere); right: Kehinde Wiley, *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*, 2005, oil paint on canvas, 274.3 x 274.3 cm (108 x 108 in) (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York)

Through his demonstration of extraordinary painting skill and his use of famous portraits, Wiley could be seen as wryly placing himself in line with the history of great master painters. Here, for example, he has signed and dated the painting just as David did, painting his name and the date in Roman numerals onto the band around the horse's chest. Wiley makes another reference to lineage in the foreground where he retains the original painting's rocky surface and the carved names of illustrious leaders who led troops over the Alps: NAPOLEON, HANNIBAL, and KAROLUS MAGNUS (Charlemagne). But Wiley also includes the name WILLIAMS—another insistence on including ordinary people of color who are often left out of systems of representation and glorification. Not only is Williams a common African-American surname, it hints at the imposition of Anglo names on black people who were brought by force from Africa and stripped of their own histories.

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Chapter 18: Ancient South Asia

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[1] Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 37.

[2] R.U.S. Prasad, *The Rig-Vedic and Post-Rig-Vedic Polity (1500 B.C.E. – 500 B.C.E.)* (Delaware: Vernon Press, 2015), 107.

[3] Patrick Olivelle *The early Upanisads: annotated text and translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.

[4] Johannes Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha: studies in the culture of early India* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 15 – 54.

[5] Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 40.

[6] Vidya Dehejia, "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art," *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 3 (1990): 376.

[7] ibid., 379.

[8] Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 65 – 66.

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Chapter 20: Early Art of Oceania and the Americas

Notes

[1] Patrick Vinton Kirch, "Peopling of the Pacific: A Holistic Anthropological Perspective," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010), pp. 131-148.

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Chapter 22: Arts of the Islamic World

Notes

[1] I am grateful to Dr. Alireza Fatemi for generously providing this translation.

[2] Roxburgh, "On the Brink of Tragedy," p. 182.

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Chapter 23: Arts of Asia: 5th – 15th Centuries

Notes

[1] Borobudur and many other archaeological sites in South and Southeast Asia often have orientalized narratives attached to them wherein colonizers "discover" or "bring to light" ancient monuments. These distortions discount the real and living history of the site.

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Chapter 28: Early Twentieth Century

Notes

[1] As quoted in William Rubin, *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1989, p.353.

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Chapter 29: Between World Wars

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Chapter 30: Postwar Modern Movements

Notes

[1] Barnett Newman, "Response to the Reverend Thomas F. Mathews," in *Revelation, Place and Symbol (Journal of the First Congress on Religion, Architecture and the Visual Arts)*, 1969.

[2] Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972): 90.

[3] Jody Cutler. 2011. "Narcissus, Narcosis, Neurosis: The Visions of Yayoi Kusama," in *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth*, edited by Isabelle Loring Wallace, Jennie Hirsh, (London: Ashgate Publishing ltd), p.89.

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Chapter 31: Postmodernity and Global Cultures

Notes

[1] Bill Viola, as quoted in "Emotions in Extreme Time: Bill Viola's Passions Project," in *The Passions*, John Walsh, ed. (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), p. 53.

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